

One of the greatest responsibilities we have as a church family is to teach and pass on the knowledge of the Gospel. Paul's own words in 1 Cor. 15:3 summarizes it quite well, "For I delivered to you as of first importance what I also received". From Jesus and the Apostles in the 1st Century to us in the 21st Century is a long unbroken chain of receiving the Gospel from the previous generation and delivering the Gospel to the next one. The **"I believe..."** series fits into this unbroken chain.

Yet, the depths of the Gospel and the knowledge of God are far greater than just a 6-week series. This is merely an introduction to the great teachings of the Christian Faith. In many ways, 2nd Century Church Father Irenaeus summarises our purpose well...

"We send you as if we were a manual of essentials, that by little you may attain to much, learning in short space all the members of the body of the truth, and receiving in brief the demonstration of the things of God. So shall it be fruitful to your own salvation, and you shall put to shame all who inculcate falsehood, and bring with all confidence our sound and pure teaching to everyone who desires to understand it."
(*Demonstration of Apostolic Preaching, 1*).

It is our hope that through journeying through the 6-week series you will be better equipped in your faith and life as a Christian, to serve God's people here at St. Peter's and beyond (Eph. 4:12-16). Each week we will be looking at, what we consider, some of the key teaching about the Faith. For us as a church leadership, these are the "non-negotiables" or "essentials" to having a healthy Christian faith and life.

Finally, each study is structured on two major themes in the Bible. Firstly, the primary aim of life is to know God or be in a living relationship with Him (cf. Jn. 10:10; 17:3; Jer. 9:23; 31:31-34; Ezk. 36:23-28; 37:14). You were made to glorify God (know Him, trust in Him, delight in and live for Him). Secondly, your identity (who you are and how you are supposed to live) is tied to knowing God (what you know and believe about Him); since you are made in His image (Gen. 1:26-27). Salvation is about restoring God's image in you (cf. Rom. 8:28-29; 2 Cor. 3:18; Col. 3:10). As we know, believe and live for God, we will discover who we are as well.

May you be richly blessed in your journey in the **"I believe..."** series.

In Christ with much affection,

Carel Pienaar
Phil. 1:21

God Speaks...

STUDY 1

Tertullian of North Africa

(2nd Century) on the use of both Old and New Testament books, “(The church) combine the law and the prophets (OT) with the Gospels and the letters of the apostles (NT)” (De Praescriptione, 36:5)

Terms used when talking about the Bible:

1. Revelation:

The words of the Bible were “revealed” by God the Holy Spirit.

2. Inspiration:

God the Holy Spirit ensures that the revealed message of God is written down by the author (in their own style, personality & context). In this way God’s Word is perfectly kept.

3. Illumination:

God the Holy Spirit enables the reader and person listening to the Bible to understand and see the reality/truth of the Words

The Bible

is written in 3 languages (Hebrew, Aramaic and Greek) over a period of approximately 1500 years by about 40 different authors. It is a collection of 66 Books (39 Old Testament and 27 New Testament); yet they form a unity with Jesus at the Centre (cf. Lk. 24:27). God is the ultimate author (cf. 2 Tim. 3:16; 2 Pet. 1:20-21).

1 Clement 42:1-2

(a letter older than most New Testament letters), “The Apostles were given the Gospel for us by the Lord Jesus Christ, and Jesus Christ was sent forth from God. Thus Christ came from God and the Apostles from Christ”



Willing to die for God's Word? John Huss

(1369-1415 - Bohemia)

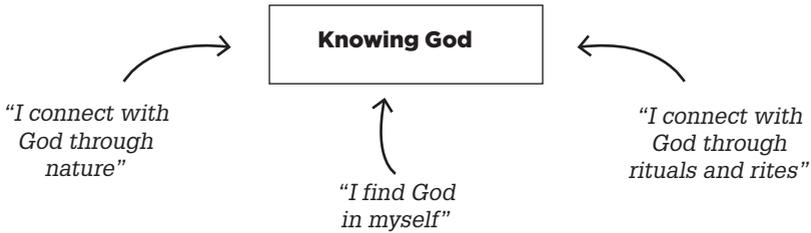
Huss was a strong advocate that the Bible should be the sole authority of God’s people. Yet, the Papacy could not accept such a teaching and so condemned Huss as a heretic and burned him at the stake in 1415. All followers of this idea were heavily persecuted in Bohemia.

F.F. Bruce on the Authority of the Bible

(20th Century), “One thing must be emphatically stated. The New Testament books did not become authoritative for the church because they were formally included in a canonical list; on the contrary, the church included them in her canon because she already regarded them as divinely inspired” (New Testament Documents p. 22).”

Further Reading: “Taking God at His Word” by Kevin De Young

People have explored many avenues to know and be in relationship with God. Below are three general options people take. What do you think of these three things?



Investigating

Read Hebrews 1:1-4... God has spoken through His Son

1. What claim does Hebrews 1:1 make about God?
 - Hebrews 1:5-13, 5:5-6; 7:17 and 21 quotes various passages from the Old Testament... What phrase does Hebrews use before quoting an Old Testament passage (Just look at: **1:5, 6, 7, 8, 10, 13**)?
2. What has changed in v. 2?
3. What do we learn about the Son in vv. 2-4?
4. Why is the Son qualified to be the final word of God?

Hebrews 1:1-4 does not tell us how Jesus' spoken words and works (the final word) were recorded or preserved (you can read Jn. 14-17), but 2 Timothy 3:14-17 gives us a succinct explanation...

Read 2 Timothy 3:14-17... The Spirit Inspired

Timothy is called to continue in the Apostle Paul's teaching (v. 14; cf. 1:13-14) and the Old Testament Scriptures (v. 15). In vv. 15b-17 we are told why...



1. How much of Scripture is God-breathed? (v. 16)
2. What does that phrase “God-breathed” mean? Read some examples what the Bible says about itself...

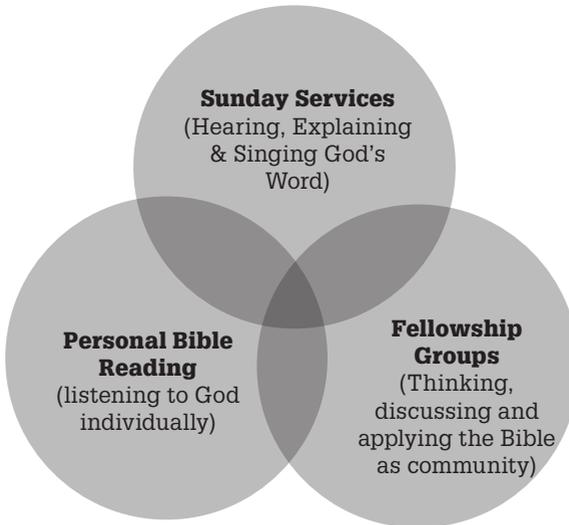
OLD TESTAMENT (Prophets)	NEW TESTAMENT (Teaching of the Apostles)
<p>“And as He spoke to me, the Spirit entered into me and set me on my feet, and I heard Him speaking to me” (Ezk. 2:2)</p>	<p>“But the Helper, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, he will teach you all things and bring to your remembrance all that I have said to you.” (John 14:26)</p>
<p>“Thus says the LORD” (at least 1 953 references in Old Testament)</p>	<p>“When the Spirit of truth comes, he will guide you into all the truth, for he will not speak on his own authority, but whatever he hears he will speak, and he will declare to you the things that are to come.” (John 16:13)</p>
<p>“But as for me, I am filled with power, with the Spirit of the Lord, and with justice and might, to declare to Jacob his transgression and to Israel his sin” (Micah 3:8)</p>	<p>“I am speaking the truth in Christ - I am not lying; my conscience bears me witness in the Holy Spirit” (Romans 9:1)</p>
<p>“They made their hearts diamond-hard lest they should hear the law and the words that the Lord of hosts had sent by his Spirit through the former prophets. Therefore, great anger came from the Lord of hosts.” (Zech. 7:12)</p>	<p>“For I would have you know, brothers, that the gospel that was preached by me is not man’s gospel. For I did not receive it from any man, nor was I taught it, but I received it through a revelation of Jesus Christ.” (Galatians 1:11-12)</p>
<p>“For no prophecy was ever produced by the will of man, but men spoke from God as they were carried along by the Holy Spirit.” (2 Pet. 1:21)</p>	<p>“I was in the Spirit on the Lord’s day, and I heard behind me a loud voice like a trumpet” (Rev. 1:10)</p>

3. Who is the ultimate author of the Bible?
4. How do we hear God speak to us today?
5. How will God’s Word impact our lives? (vv. 15b, 16-17)



Thinking & Living

1. Why is the Bible so important in the Christian Life? How should Christians view the Bible?
2. Why are the three other options (the universe, people and religion) not satisfying?
3. At St. Peters we encourage people to connect with God through His Word in the following ways...



4. Why would it be good for you to be involved in all three these areas? (Maybe share with one another how God's Word has impacted your life in one of these three areas)

WATCH readscripture.org app video:
www.youtube.com/watch?v=7hUs4TXRuVk

Take up the challenge to use the readscripture.org app. and in a couple of months share how God has impacted your life as you started the journey of reading His Word.



God is Trinity

STUDY 2

Suffering for the Trinity... Athanasius (298-373 A.D. - Egypt)

Athanasius became the bishop of Alexandria in 328 A.D. at the age of 30 and served as the bishop till his death in 373 A.D. Even so, during his 45 years as bishop, 17 of those years were spent in exile. He was exiled 5 times by different Emperors for one reason: He believed in the Trinity.

God is Infinite Mystery...

We might say, "I believe God is one substance and three persons", but can we really understand this? The reality is that we cannot fully grasp anything about God. Gregory of Nyssa (4th Century) puts it this way, "And so one who severely studies the depths of the mystery, receives secretly in his spirit, indeed, a moderate amount of apprehension of the doctrine of God's nature, yet he is unable to explain clearly in words the ineffable depth of this mystery." (The Great Catechism, III)



"We believe in one God, the Father Almighty,

Maker of heaven and earth, and of all things visible and invisible.

And in one Lord Jesus Christ, the only begotten Son of God, begotten of the Father before all worlds, Light of Light, very God of very God, begotten, not made, being of one substance with the Father; by whom all things were made; who for us men, and for our salvation, came down from heaven, and was incarnate by the Holy Spirit of the Virgin Mary, and was made man; he was crucified for us under Pontius Pilate, and suffered, and was buried, and the third day he rose again, according to the Scriptures, and ascended into heaven, and sits on the right hand of the Father; from there he shall come again with glory, to judge the quick and the dead; whose kingdom shall have no end.

And in the Holy Spirit, the Lord and Giver of life, who proceeds from the Father, who with the Father and Son together is worshiped and glorified, who spoke by the prophets. In one holy catholic and apostolic church; we acknowledge one baptism for the remission of sins; we look for the resurrection of the dead, and the life of the world to come. Amen"
(Nicene-Constantinople Creed 381 A.D)

There is a common view which argues that...
“It doesn’t really matter what religion you hold to; every religion’s view of God is really the same. We all worship the same God in the end.”

1. What do you think of this?
2. What do you understand by the word “Trinity”?

Investigating

Read John 14:5-11 & 15-31...

1. Notice the different persons of the Trinity described in John 14:5-11 & 15-31... Discuss them by using the following table...

The Persons:	Father	Jesus (Son)	Spirit
How is each person distinguished? (name, space, time)			
What does each person do? (role)			
How does each person relate to the other?			
How are they united or one?		(cf. Jn. 1:1; 10:30-33; 20:28)	

Read John 17:20-26...

1. What does Jesus desire for His people now? (vv. 21-23, 26)
2. How will this be made possible? (consider John 14:16-17, 20, 23, 26)
3. Why does Jesus desire this for His people? (v. 21, 23) (cf. Jn. 13:35)
4. What does Jesus desire for His people in the future? (v. 24; consider John 14:2-3)

WATCH this clip on the Trinity as a summary of what we just looked at:
www.youtube.com/watch?v=eAvYmE2YYIU&index=4&list=PLHOSzn1yNec-HZjvHooeb4BSDSeHhEoh



Thinking & Living

“The doctrine of the Trinity is the glory of the Christian religion.

It tells us that ultimate reality is personal relationship. God is ultimate reality, and is the ground of all other reality, and yet God is not a single monad or an impersonal absolute, but God is relationship. God is Trinity” (Broughton-Knox, The Everlasting God)

1. How does the Trinity show the uniqueness of the Christian Faith?
2. How does knowing God is Trinity give us confidence that the following is true...
 - “God is love” (1 John 4:8)
 - “I am the Way, the Truth and the Life” (Jn. 14:6) (Jesus’ Words about Himself)
 - “Surely, I am with you always, to the very end of the age” (Matt. 28:20) (Jesus words to His people)
3. How do the following explanations of God fall short of God being Trinity?
 - There is one God, but He made two lesser gods called Jesus and the Spirit; like the Son makes light and heat, so the Father made the Son and Spirit (Jehovah Witnesses, Arianism)
 - There is only one God, but He “appeared” under different names throughout history (Father, Son and Holy Spirit); like an actor who can change his identity with every new movie or like water that can change its form (liquid, gas or solid) (Modalism)
 - The Bible reveals three gods, being no different from Hindu pluralism. The only difference is that they are united in their plans; like a bunch of generals in a war-room agreeing on the battleplan (Tri-theism)
 - The Father, Son and Holy Spirit are just parts of God. The Father is like a big lump of clay and the Son and Spirit are little lumps taken from that clay (Partialism)

- 4.** How does God is Trinity help us understand...
- Why God created humanity as a community, “Let us make man in our image, after our likeness...So God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them” (Gen. 1:26-27)?
 - Why God rescues humanity into a community (the Church), “His intent was that now, through the church, the manifold wisdom of God should be made known...” (Eph. 3:10)?
 - Why being part of a local church (attending, serving and loving other Christians) is absolutely essential to Christian life, “Be imitators of God” (Eph. 5:1)?
- 5.** How does the Trinity (God is One Being, but Three persons who exist in perfect love and complement One Another by fulfilling diverse roles) change how you live/appreciate (mirror/image God)...
- Relate to your family (husband & wife, parents & children)
 - View and celebrate diversity within God’s family (church)
 - Seek to love and maintain unity in God’s family



God is in control

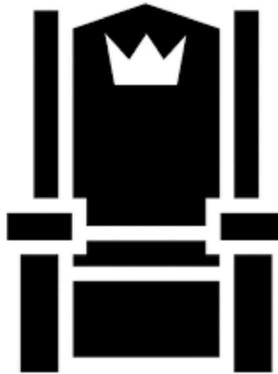
STUDY 3

“His dominion is an eternal dominion; His Kingdom endures from generation to generation. All the peoples of the earth are regarded as nothing. He does as He pleases with the powers of heaven and the peoples of the earth. No one can hold back His hand or say to Him: ‘What have you done?’” **(Daniel 4:34-35)**

Comfort in Suffering... John G. Paton (1824-1907)

1858 John & Mary Paton set sail from Scotland to the New Hebrides to share the Good News of Jesus with the people on the Island of Tanna. Sadly, within the first year of arriving, Mary and their newborn son died of a fever. Alone, John dug the graves of his family. He served alone on the island for 4 years before being driven off in 1862. Even so, John Paton mobilised more missionaries from Australia and Britain and returned to the New Hebrides. He would continue to share the Good News of Jesus and serve the people of the New Hebrides until his death in 1907. What kept him going? He believed that God is Sovereign and that whatever befalls him has a divine purpose. As he writes, “Feeling immovably assured that my God and father was too wise and loving to err in anything that he does or permits, I looked up to the Lord for help, and struggled on in His work”

“For truly in this city there were gathered together against your holy servant Jesus, whom you anointed, both Herod and Pontius Pilate, along with the Gentiles and the peoples of Israel, to do whatever your hand and your plan had predestined to take place.” **(Acts 4:27)**



“Blessed is the man whose sin the Lord will not impute to him, and in whose mouth there is no guile. This blessedness comes upon those who have been chosen by God through Jesus Christ our Lord; to whom be glory for ever and ever. Amen.” **(1 Clement, 50:6-7; written between 60-70 A.D.)**

“Ignatius... to the church at Ephesus in Asia, blessed with greatness through the fullness of God the Father, predestined before the ages for lasting and unchangeable glory forever, united and elect through genuine suffering by the will of the Father and of Jesus Christ our God...” **(Ignatius, Letter to the Ephesians, 0:0; written between 98-117 A.D.)**

“By his majestic word he established the universe, and by a word he can destroy it. “Who will say to him, ‘What have you done?’ Or who will resist the might of his strength?” He will do all things when he will and as he wills, and none of those things decreed by him will fail.” **(1 Clement 27:4-5; written between 60-70 A.D.)**

“Accept as good the things that happen to you, knowing that nothing transpires apart from God.” **(Epistle to Barnabas, 19:6; written somewhere between 70-130 A.D.)**

Further Reading: “Chosen by God” by R.C. Sproul

1. What does it mean to say, "God is Sovereign"?
2. What are some alternatives or common objections to this?

Investigating

Read Ephesians 1:1-14... The Sovereign Plan of God

Notice that the context of these verses is praise, "*Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ...*" (v. 3). Vv. 4-14 is really Paul telling us why God the Father should be praised...

WHAT spiritual blessings did God the Father give us "In Christ"?	WHEN did God the Father determine this?	HOW did God the Father determine this?	WHY did God the Father determine this?
Vv. 5, 7, 9-10, 14	V. 4 (notice the tense of all the verbs in vv. 4-14: Past, Present or Future?)	Vv. 4, 5, 7, 9, 11	Vv. 6, 12, 14
Why do we need God to act first? (cf. Ephesians 2:1-3)			
When did we become aware that we are part of God's plan? (vv. 13-14; cf. 2:4-5, 8-10)			



Thinking & Living

“Without the Spirit it is not possible to behold the Word of God, nor without the Son can any draw near to the Father for the knowledge of the Father is the Son, and the knowledge of the Son of God is through the Holy Spirit; and, according to the good pleasure of the Father, the Son ministers and dispenses the Spirit to whomsoever the Father wills and as He wills.”

Irenaeus (2nd Century, Apostolic Preaching 7)

1. Do you find this comforting? Why?
2. How are we actively involved in God’s plan? Paul highlights two.

What do we do here?	What do we do here?
1:13; 3:7-9	1:17-18; 3:16-21; 6:19-20

3. How does God’s sovereignty give us assurance that...
 - a) Suffering and evil will not have the final say
(cf. Acts 2:22-24; Romans 8:28-30)
 - b) We will see conversions when we share the Good News of Jesus
 - c) Our prayers are powerful
 - d) God’s promises are always true
4. How do you know you are part of God’s sovereign plan? Where do you find assurance that God chose you? (Eph. 1:13; cf. Rom. 10:8-13)

“If we seek for the paternal mercy and favour of God, we must turn our eyes to Christ, in whom alone the Father is well pleased... we cannot find the certainty of our election in ourselves; and not even in God the Father, if we look at him apart from the Son. Christ, then, is the mirror in which we ought, and in which, without deception, we may contemplate our election”

– John Calvin (16th Century, Institutes 3.24.5)

5. If God uses our prayers and evangelism, consider how you can be part of God's plan here at St. Peters...



God became a man

STUDY 4

“In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God... And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us” (John 1:1, 14)

Who is Jesus? Some wrong conclusions...

The Bible claims (explicitly and implicitly) that Jesus is God and Man. Yet, many people who have tried to understand how this can be, have made some wrong conclusions. Here are some of them...

1. Ebionites: some Jews in the 1st Century viewed Jesus as only a human being empowered by God to be a prophet.

2. Docetism: some Greeks in the 2nd Century viewed Jesus as only God, but only appeared (like a hologram) to be human.

3. Apollinaris: this 4th Century teacher argued that Jesus had a human body, but Jesus' soul was Divine; almost like a ghost-in-the-shell idea. Jesus had no human soul, mind or emotions.

4. Eutyches: this 5th Century teacher thought that Jesus became a hybrid “third-thing” when His Divine and Human nature came together. In this view, Jesus is neither God nor man, but something else entirely.

The major problem with all these views is that if Jesus isn't fully God and fully man, then He cannot identify with us or God. If He cannot identify, then He cannot represent, substitute or mediate for us and God. If he cannot do that, then there is no salvation or hope.

Pope Leo I and the Council of Chalcedon (451 A.D.)...

Although the church always claimed that **Jesus is fully God and fully man**, many contested this. One person who dedicated his life to give clarity on the identity of Jesus was Pope Leo I. Quite an influential figure in the 5th Century, Pope Leo I single-handedly met Attila the Hun and persuaded him not to attack Rome and turn around. He was also instrumental in keeping some stability during a time when the entire Western Roman Empire was in a state of collapse.



Yet, his major contribution was his defense of Jesus' identity. Through his efforts and writings, Pope Leo I successfully got the church together to keep to the apostolic belief that Jesus is fully God and fully man at the Council of Chalcedon in 451 A.D. The heart of his message can be summarized in one of his Christmas sermons, *“It is one and the same Son of God Who exists in both natures, taking what is ours to Himself without losing what is His own”*

“It is here, in the thing that happened at the first Christmas, that the profoundest and most unfathomable depths of the Christian revelation lie... The Divine Son became a Jew; the Almighty appeared on earth as a helpless human baby... nothing in fiction is so fantastic as is this truth of the incarnation” **(J.I. Packer, Knowing God)**

Further Reading: “On the Incarnation” by Athanasius

1. What have you heard people say about Jesus before?
2. What do you think of the following quotes?

“Jesus, to me, is a great world teacher among others” (Mahatma Ghandi)

“Jesus said, I am a servant of ALLAH. HE has given me the Book, and has made me a Prophet” (Mohammed, Qur’an, Surah 19:30-35)



Investigating

Read Philippians 2:1-11...

In vv. 1-5, Paul reminds the church of their common experience of the Gospel (v. 1) and how they should live in response to the Gospel: unity (v. 2). This unity is fostered by humility (v. 3) and self-sacrifice (v. 4). In v. 5, Paul claims that this way of life is found “in Christ Jesus”...

1. Look at Phil. 2:6-8 and John 1:1-3, 14...
Jot down what each passage says about...

Jesus being God	Jesus being a Human Being

Read Philippians 2:5-11...

2. Look at Phil. 2:6-7... What did Jesus let go of to become a human being?
3. Look at Phil. 2:8... How far was Jesus willing to go in His role as a Servant?
4. How did God the Father respond (vv. 8-11)?
Why would Paul highlight the Father’s response (cf. 1:27; 2:12-13)?

WATCH Video and discuss how this summarizes what we just looked at:
www.youtube.com/watch?v=I6XMn-yH71E



Thinking & Applying

The New Testament continually claims that Jesus is both fully God and fully Man. Let's reflect on this reality broadly and in the light of Philipians...

1. Jesus being Fully God and Fully Man assures us that...

In Jesus we know God	"No one has ever seen God; the only God (Jesus), who is at the Father's side, He has made Him known" (Jn. 1:18; cf. 14:6-7)
In Jesus death is conquered and resurrection life assured	"For as by a man came death, by a man has come also the resurrection of the dead. For as in Adam all die, so also in Christ shall all be made alive." (1 Cor. 15:21-22)
Jesus is the perfect ransom for sin	"But when the fullness of time had come, God sent forth his Son, born of woman, born under the law, to redeem those who were under the law, so that we might receive adoption as sons" (Galatians 4:4-5)
Jesus is the perfect mediator	"For there is one God, and there is one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus, who gave himself as a ransom for all, which is the testimony given at the proper time" (1 Timothy 2:5-6)
Jesus is the perfect example of what it means to be human	"For to this you have been called, because Christ also suffered for you, leaving you an example, so that you might follow in his steps" (1 Peter 2:21)
Jesus really understands our struggles and suffering	"For we do not have a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, but one who in every respect has been tempted as we are, yet without sin." (Heb. 4:15)

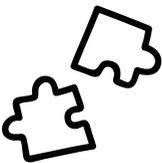
What of these strikes you? Discuss them...



“We are truly human as we reflect God’s glory (Gen. 1:26-27)... We’ve failed to be the images of God we were made to be... Jesus is the perfect person, the true image of God, the glory of the Father (Col. 1:15; Heb. 1:3; Jn. 1:14). And God’s agenda for change is for us to become like Jesus (Rom. 8:29)”
(Tim Chester, You can Change)

2. According to Philippians 2:1-11, what should be our response to Jesus’ incarnation?
3. How does Jesus’ example challenge the consumer attitude “What can I get out of this?” or “How can you give me what I want/need?”
4. How does Jesus’ example change how you relate to...
 - Your Church family? (St. Peters on Sunday/Fellowship Groups/being involved in ministries)
 - Your family? (home – spouse, children, relatives)
 - Who you work with? (employer, employees etc.)
5. Jesus was raised to life and exalted in His humanity (Phil. 2:8-11), what hope does this give us who follow Him?

“But our citizenship is in heaven, and from it we await a Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ, who will transform our lowly body to be like his glorious body, by the power that enables him even to subject all things to himself.” (Phil. 3:20-21)



God is Saviour

STUDY 5

“Justification by faith”... (Faith Alone)

A term often used in some Christian circles, but we don't always pause to just unpack it. “**Justification**” means to be declared or considered “right/just”. “**by faith**” is the way in which we are declared right. It is by trusting in/relying upon someone else rather than ourselves. That someone is Jesus Christ and His work on the Cross.

The 5 Solas (the heart of the Reformation)...

It is our basic belief that as sinners we cannot contribute anything to our salvation. God alone is the author of salvation and the 5 Solas highlight this...

- 1. Sola Scriptura (Scripture alone):** The Bible alone is God's Word and highest authority.
- 2. Sola Fide (Faith alone):** We are saved through faith in Jesus alone.
- 3. Sola Gratia (Grace alone):** We are saved by God's grace (undeserved gift of salvation) alone. We cannot earn His salvation. It is a gift given freely to all who will receive it by faith.
- 4. Solus Christus (Christ alone):** Jesus alone is Lord & Saviour. No one or nothing else can claim that place.
- 5. Soli Deo Gloria (to the glory of God alone):** We are not saved because we are worthy, but because God is worthy (He is good). He deserves all the praise and we should dedicate our lives to live for Him alone.

Big terms when thinking about the Cross...

- 1. Propitiation:** It is a sacrifice which absorbs or takes upon itself the wrath/judgment of God (covering the life of the offender/sinner by its life) and so sets the wrath aside.
- 2. Expiation:** the offense/sin is taken away, since the offense has been absorbed/taken by the sacrifice.



Martin Luther (1483-1546)

On 31 October, 1516, Martin Luther nailed his 95 theses on the door of All Saints Church in Wittenberg. This marked the beginning of the Protestant Reformation. Yet, this protest cost Luther dearly. He was excommunicated by the Roman Catholic Church and declared an outlaw by the Emperor. This permitted anyone to kill Luther without any legal consequences. He lived with this death sentence his entire life. Yet, what was it that made Luther so determined? Why suffer so much?

Ultimately, Luther rediscovered the heartbeat of the Gospel: Justification by Faith. We are saved not by anything we have done or can do, but by God and what He has done, is doing and will do in Christ Jesus. He understood, defended and proclaimed what we will be looking at in this study.

Further Reading: “The Cross of Christ” by John Stott

Everyone has and does sin (Rom. 3:23).
Sin deserves death (Rom. 6:23) **and defiles us** (Mk. 7:15)...

1. How can you be right with God when sin deserves death and defiles you?
2. What do you think “atonement” means?

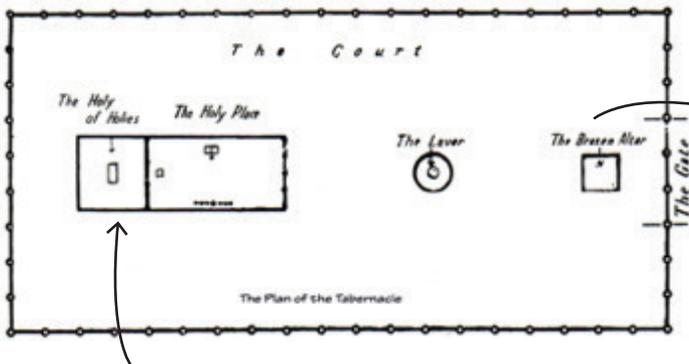


Investigating

Read Lev. 16:5-10, 15-17, 20-22... The Day of Atonement...

in Lev. 17:11, 14 God explains why blood should be used, “*For the life of the flesh is in the blood, and I have given it for you on the altar to make atonement for your souls, for it is the blood that makes atonement by the life*” A life needs to be given as a substitute for the life of another. Blood is the symbol. The Temple/Tabernacle was a copy of the Heavenly throne room of God (cf. Isaiah 6, Ezekiel 1 and Rev. 4-5 shows us the real Throne Room). The Ark of the Covenant with the mercy seat (atonement cover), symbolized God’s Throne itself. That the substitutionary blood of the offering was placed on the mercy-seat (atonement cover) points to whom the substitution is made (God on His throne).

1. The High Priest had to present two goats...



What happened to the first goat? (vv. 15-17)

What happened to the second goat? (vv. 20-22)

2. What did the “Day of Atonement” accomplish? (Leviticus 16:34)

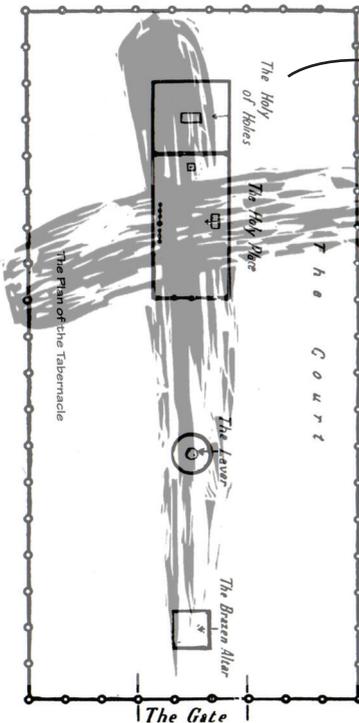
3. Read Isaiah 53:4-6... What does Isaiah foresee is going to happen with the Servant of the Lord? How does it correspond with the Day of Atonement?

The Day of Atonement
(Leviticus 16)

The Suffering Servant
(Isaiah 52-53)

Fulfilled in
Jesus Christ

4. Why did the Eternal Son of God (Heb. 1:1-3) become the human being Jesus? (Heb. 2:17)
5. How did Jesus make “atonement” for us? How does Jesus fulfil the Suffering Servant and Day of Atonement? Read and discuss the passages highlighted from Hebrews 9...



“But when Christ appeared as a high priest of the good things that have come, then through the greater and more perfect tent (not made with hands, that is, not of this creation) he entered once for all into the holy places, not by means of the blood of goats and calves but **by means of his own blood, thus securing an eternal redemption**. For if the blood of goats and bulls, and the sprinkling of defiled persons with the ashes of a heifer, sanctify for the purification of the flesh, how much more will **the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered himself without blemish to God, purify our conscience from dead works to serve the living God.**” (Heb. 9:11-14)

“He has appeared once for all at the end of the ages to put away sin by the sacrifice of himself.” (Heb. 9:26)

3. How do you receive what Jesus has done for us on the Cross?
(Heb. 10:23; 35-39)

WATCH this video as a summary of what we have learned:
www.youtube.com/watch?v=G_OIRWGLdnw&list=PLHOSznlyYNec-HZjvHooeb4BSDSeHhEoh&index=10&t=0s



Thinking & Living

*“What is ‘propitiation’? It is a sacrifice that averts wrath through expiating sin, and cancelling guilt... This is the real heart of the Gospel: that Jesus Christ, by virtue of His death on the Cross as our substitute and sin-bearer, ‘is the propitiation of our sins’ (1 Jn. 2:2). Between us sinners and the thunder-clouds of divine wrath stands the Cross of the Lord Jesus”
(J.I. Packer, Knowing God, p. 176)*

1. How has this helped you understand what happened on the Cross?
2. How should we respond to Jesus’ sacrifice?
Have you responded this way yourself?
3. On what basis can you be in a right relationship with God now and forever?
4. Are you in a right relationship with God?
How can you be sure?
5. How does Jesus’ sacrificial death (serving us, Mk. 10:45), become the pattern of the Christian life?

“Therefore, we are ambassadors for Christ, God making his appeal through us. We implore you on behalf of Christ, be reconciled to God. For our sake he made him to be sin who knew no sin, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God.” (2 Cor. 5:20-21)

“For you know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though he was rich, yet for your sake he became poor, so that you by his poverty might become rich” (2 Cor. 8:9)



God is Holy

STUDY 6

When people encounter God's holiness...

When people encounter/meet their holy God, the response is almost unanimous. Moses hid his face, afraid of seeing God (Ex. 3:6). Israel was terrified (Ex. 20:18). Job fell silent and repented (Job 40:3-5; 42:6). Isaiah cursed himself (Is. 6:5). Ezekiel fell on his face (Ezk. 1:28). Habakkuk trembled (Hab. 3:16). The disciples were terrified of Jesus (Mk. 4:41). Paul fell to the ground (Acts 9:4). John fell down as if dead (Rev. 1:17). Yet, incredibly God's response is always the same... He reaches out in His holy love and grace.

"The God who is love is first and foremost light (holy), and sentimental ideas of His love as an indulgent, benevolent softness, divorced from moral standards and concerns, must therefore be ruled out from the start. God's love is holy love."

- **J.I. Packer (20th Century - Knowing God)**



"The word 'holy' calls attention to all that God is. It reminds us that His love is holy love, His justice is holy justice, His mercy is holy mercy, His knowledge is holy knowledge, His spirit is holy spirit." - **R.C. Sproul (20th Century - The Holiness of God)**

Understanding the word "Holy"...

The word "holy" is the only attribute of God that is repeated 3 times in the Bible, "holy, holy, holy" (Isaiah 6 and Revelation 4). It is the one word that defines God the most. And here is why...

1. God is holy in that **He is "other" or "transcendent"**. God alone is God and nothing in His creation can compare to Him (cf. Ex. 15:11; 1 Sam. 2:2).
2. God is holy in that **He is perfect in purity**. All of God's attributes (love, righteousness, mercy, patience) are holy in that they are perfect in purity. There is no flaw or fault in God. His perfection is often described as unapproachable light (cf. 1 Tim. 6:16; Ps. 104:2; James 1:17)
3. God is holy in that He has the **ability and right to arouse reverent awe and wonder**. Whenever anyone or anything encounters God, this is the response: awe (or terror), wonder and worship. Even inanimate creation responds (cf. Ex. 19:18; Is. 6:4; Rev. 4:1ff)

Further Reading: "The Holiness of God" by R.C. Sproul

1. What do you think and feel when you hear the word “holy”?
2. What do you think it means to “be holy” as God’s people?

“Only once in sacred Scripture is an attribute of God elevated to the third degree. Only once is a characteristic of God mentioned three times in succession. The Bible says that God is holy, holy, holy” (R.C. Sproul, The Holiness of God)



Investigating

Read Isaiah 6:1-8... Encountering God’s Holiness

In the Bible, we see a common pattern when people or creation encounter God’s holiness. Look at the three passages and see...

1. How God/Jesus is described, 2. How Creation responds, 3. How Isaiah and Peter respond and 4. how God/Jesus responded to them?

Isaiah 6:1-8	Luke 5:1-11; 8:22-25	Revelation 4:1-11
<p>“I saw the Lord sitting upon a throne, high and lifted up; and the train of his robe filled the temple. Above him stood the seraphim... And one called to another and said: “Holy, holy, holy is the Lord of hosts; the whole earth is full of his glory!”</p>	<p>“When he (Jesus) finished speaking, he said to Simon, ‘Put out into deep water, and let down the nets for a catch’... When they had done so, they caught such a large number of fish that their nets began to break” “He got up and rebuked the wind and the raging waters; the storm subsided, and all was calm”</p>	<p>“There before me was a throne in heaven with one seated on the throne... In the centre, around the throne, were four living creatures... Day and night they never stop saying: ‘Holy, holy, holy is the Lord God Almighty, who was, and is and is to come’” “You created all things, and by your will they were created and have their being”</p>
<p>“At the sound of their voices the doorposts and thresholds shook and the temple was filled with smoke”</p>	<p>“they caught such a large number of fish that their nets began to break” “The storm subsided, and all was calm”</p>	<p>“Whenever the living creatures give glory, honour and thanks to him who sits on the throne and who lives forever and ever, the 24 elders fall down before him who sits on the throne, and worship him who lives forever and ever”</p>
<p>““Woe (accursed) to me!’ I cried. ‘I am ruined! For I am a man of unclean lips... my eyes have seen the King, the LORD Almighty”</p>	<p>“When Simon Peter saw this, he fell at Jesus’ knees and said, ‘Go away from me, Lord; I am a sinful man!”</p>	
<p>“Then one of the seraphim flew to me, having in his hand a burning coal that he had taken with tongs from the altar. And he touched my mouth and said: ‘Behold, this has touched your lips; your guilt is taken away, and your sin atoned for.”</p>	<p>And Jesus said to Simon, ‘Do not be afraid; from now on you will be catching men.’ And when they had brought their boats to land, they left everything and followed him.”</p>	<p>““You (Jesus) are worthy to take the scroll and to open the seals, because you were slain, and with your blood you purchased men for God from every tribe and language and people and nation. You have made them to be a kingdom and priests to serve our God, and they will reign on the earth”</p>

WATCH this video www.youtube.com/watch?v=I9vn5UvsHvM&t=0s&list=PLH0Szn1yYNec-HZjVHooeb4BSDSeHhEoh&index=7

3. How does the video help further clarify the truth that God is holy?



Thinking & Living

“So long as we do not look beyond the earth, we are quite pleased with our own righteousness, wisdom, and virtue; we address ourselves in the most flattering terms, and seem only less than demigods. But should we once begin to raise our thoughts to God, and reflect what kind of Being he is, and how absolute the perfection of that righteousness, and wisdom, and virtue... holy men were struck and overwhelmed whenever they beheld the presence of God... Men are never duly touched and impressed with a conviction of their insignificance until they have contrasted themselves with the majesty of God”

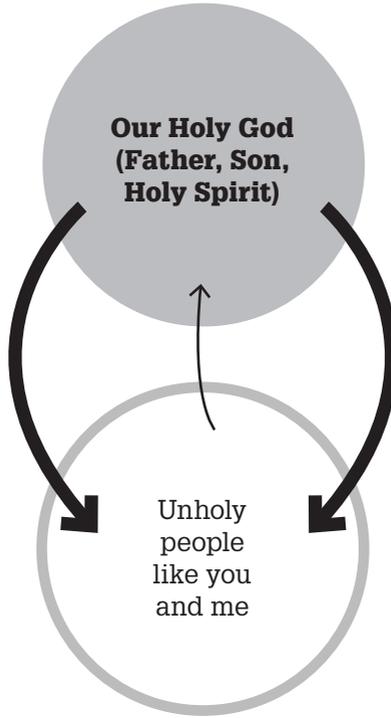
(John Calvin, Institutes 1:1:1-3).

1. Why were Isaiah, Peter and the disciples terrified when they encountered God’s holiness? What did they realize about themselves?
2. How do creation and the angels mirror how we should respond to God’s holiness? Why did they respond in such a way?
3. How does God’s response to Isaiah, Peter and the Church magnify His holy love?
4. What do we need to experience before we can enjoy God’s holy presence?

God’s holiness and love (displayed in Jesus’ atoning sacrifice) demands that we respond in changing our lives to become holy (mirroring Jesus) (cf. 1 Pet. 1:14-15; Eph. 5:1-2) and living lives of service-worship. Look at the diagram and discuss how God the Son (Jesus) and God the Holy Spirit make us holy...

God the Son makes us Holy...

“He has now reconciled in His body of flesh by His death, in order to present you holy and blameless and above reproach before Him” (Colossians 1:22)



God the Holy Spirit makes us holy...

“But when the goodness and loving kindness of God our Saviour appeared, he saved us, not because of works done by us in righteousness, but according to his own mercy, by the washing of regeneration and renewal of the Holy Spirit, whom he poured out on us richly through Jesus Christ our Saviour” (Titus 3:4-5)

Consider...



- Privately, consider which aspects of your life (thoughts, desires and actions) you know don't correspond with God's holiness (as He revealed Himself in the Bible). Realise your standard is not other people (2 Cor. 10:12), but God (Rom. 3:23).
- Realise Jesus has atoned for your impurity, sinfulness, unholiness. In Jesus you are holy.
- Realise that in Jesus you are empowered by God the Holy Spirit to change, become holy.
- Pray that God would continually transform you by the power of God the Holy Spirit (cf. Romans 8:1-30; 2 Cor. 3:18)
- How will you practically “put off” your old sinful life (thoughts, desires and actions) and “put on” your new identity of being holy in Jesus? (In your own time read and consider Ephesians 4:17-5:21)

“You shall be holy, for I am holy.” (1 Peter 1:16)