

Basic Christianity
From An Urban Perspective Unit 1
Week 3: God's Solution

Note to instructor: Pray that God would use his power to change people's thinking about good works vs. God's grace and Jesus' sacrifice. Ask God to move their hearts to see that what Jesus did is truly all they need.

God's Solution

God is omniscient. That means he knows everything—including the future. Even before he created us, he knew what was going to happen. So he decided on a plan to deal with man's rebellion. We see his plan unfolding through the pages of scripture. In fact, that's really what **the Bible is: the revelation of God's plan for fallen humanity.**

Jesus is God's solution.

“But when the fullness of time came, God sent forth His Son...” – Galatians 4:4

Jesus in the Old Testament:

Note to instructor: Explain that information about Jesus in the Old Testament starts out small, like spring leading to a stream, a stream to a creek, a creek to a river. The amount of information about Jesus gradually grows as the story of the Bible proceeds. You don't have to cover all of these verses, but you should cover most of them.

Read **Genesis 3:15**. He (male descendant of Eve = Jesus) will crush Satan's head, but Satan will bruise him on the heel. This hints that **Jesus will defeat Satan on the cross (Colossians 2:14, 15), but be wounded by Satan in the process.**

Read **Genesis 3:21**. God covered their shame with the skins of dead animals. **This is a picture of “atonement”—God covered their sin by the death of an innocent animal.**

Read **Genesis 12:3**. God tells **Abraham that he will have a descendant who will bless the entire human race.** This is still not much info, but it is a hint that God has a plan centered on a special person who is a descendant of Eve and of Abraham. Later in the Old Testament, this person is called the “Messiah” or chosen one.

Skim **Genesis 22:1-14**. Instructors: Don't read the whole passage. Tell the story and bring out key scriptures: “son, only son”; “sacrifice.” Point out that this all happened on **Mt. Moria, the future site of the temple** and the same hill *where Jesus would be crucified*.

Read **Leviticus 17:11**. **God demanded that blood be shed to cover or atone for human sin.** This is a picture of what God would eventually do through Christ. Jesus blood would cover our sin so that God could forgive us.

Read **Leviticus 16:1-3**. Instructors: Don't read much more than this part of the chapter. Explain the main points: There were two goats. The high priest laid his hands on them and confessed the sins of the people. He chased one goat away into the wilderness, a picture of God removing the sin of the

people far away from them. Then he killed the other goat and sprinkled its blood on the lid of the Ark. Show a picture of the ark, and how it contained evidence that Israel sinned: manna (rejection of God's provision), the broken law tablets (rejection of God's law), Aaron's staff (rejection of God's authority). When the **angels looked down on the lid of the ark**, they saw the *sprinkled blood covering Israel's sin*. **God's anger was satisfied.**

Read **Psalm 22:6-18**. This is a very clear *description of Jesus' crucifixion*. That's why Jesus quoted the first verse of this Psalm ("my God, my God, why have you forsaken me") as he hung on the cross. God did indeed forsake Jesus on the cross, and Isaiah 53 explains why.

Read most of **Isaiah 53**. Isaiah describes a *suffering servant* who dies for the sins of the people. He is a human sacrifice for human sin. The ultimate sacrifice that all the earlier sacrifices in the temple pointed to. **When God sees the blood of his suffering servant, his anger toward our sin is satisfied** forever.

We've gone from a trickle to a wide river of information about Jesus. Isaiah 53 is filled with details about Jesus' life and death. It even hints that he will be resurrected ("he will prolong his days" – v. 10). Isaiah clearly explains why Jesus had to die for us. And all of this was written hundreds of years before he ever lived!

The Old Testament was the only Bible that early Christians had because the New Testament hadn't been written yet. But there was enough information about Jesus in the Old Testament to persuade people that he was their Messiah and savior, the one who God sacrificed for their sin!

This is one reason why I am still trying my best to follow God, even though I'm still so messed up. I can't shake how true this is! Where else are we supposed to go for hope? We have so much evidence here. What are you going to do with it?

Fulfillment in Christ:

At the beginning of his ministry, before very many people knew who he was, Jesus approached John the Baptist to be baptized. Listen to what John said:

"Behold, the Lamb of God who takes away the sins of the world!" – John 1:29

Do you understand now, why John calls him the lamb of God?

After Jesus died and was resurrected, he showed the disciples places where the Old Testament talked about him:

"He said to them, 'O foolish men and slow of heart to believe in all that the prophets have spoken! Was it not necessary for the Christ [Messiah] to suffer these things and to enter into His glory?' 27 Then beginning with Moses and with all the prophets, He explained to them the things concerning Himself in all the Scriptures." – Luke 24:25-27

If you've been coming to our teachings, you've probably heard us emphasizing that we're saved by Jesus' death for our sins and not by our good works. **God doesn't want us to do good works to earn his acceptance.**

What do these verses teach us? They **focus on Jesus as our sacrifice. He paid for our sins in full.** If we keep trying to approach God with our hands full of good works, we're telling him Jesus' sacrifice is not enough. That's why we need to come to God with empty hands and let Jesus' blood cover our sins.

Saving Faith

If Jesus *paid* for our sin on the cross, how should we respond to what he did?

“But to as many as received Him, to them He gave the right to become children of God, even to those who believe in His name.” – John 1:12.

God offers to make us children of God if we “receive” Jesus. Receiving Jesus involves believing he is our savior and accepting his gift of forgiveness.

God gives us salvation as a gift. We can't earn it. Maybe you associate the word “grace” with a prayer you say before dinner. But in the Bible, “grace” means “gift.”

**“By grace you have been saved through faith; and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God...”
– Ephesians 2:8 (NASB)**

Notice that God won't force us to receive him. Paul says we must exercise faith. But what does that mean?

Faith means *AGREEING* with God about our need for forgiveness and the adequacy of his provision in Christ. This means acknowledging that we in no way earn God's acceptance.

“Salvation is not a reward for the good things we have done, so none of us can boast about it.” –
Ephesians 2:9

Faith involves making a conscious *decision* to trust that Christ's death is able to cover our sins. This goes beyond just agreeing that Jesus can forgive, but trusting that he will forgive YOU.

e.g. Wheelbarrow analogy

So this is how we become right with God. We simply humble ourselves to receive what we could never earn. God wants us to be confident in our standing before him. Once the issue of forgiveness is out of the way, we are restored to permanent fellowship with God.

“...when you believed in Christ, he identified you as his own by giving you the Holy Spirit, whom he promised long ago. The Spirit is God's guarantee that he will give us the inheritance he promised and that he has purchased us to be his own people. He did this so we would praise and glorify him.” –
Ephesians 1:13b, 14

Receiving new life in Jesus Christ is where it all begins. Later in the course, we will discuss in detail how God works in our lives as believers.

Memory Verse: John 1:29