



# Life, Joy and The Pursuit of God

Pinellas Park 2015 Study Guide  
Quarter 2



*“And out of that hopeless attempt has come nearly all that we call human history—money, poverty, ambition, war, prostitution, classes, empires, slavery—the long terrible story of man trying to find something other than God which will make him happy.”*

*C.S. Lewis, Mere Christianity*

*How do we find joy? People pay a lot of lip service to it, but in reality each day is spent searching for it like an elusive snipe in a hunt that will only humiliate and mock. The Bible tells us over and over to “rejoice,” and yet the fact that we live in a broken world invades that same space and robs us of it.*

*I recently read a list of things a person can do to find joy in their life. The list began with “play with children” and continued through such things as “dress up for no reason,” “eat a cupcake,” “create something,” “walk in the rain,” “play in the mud,” and so on. At the end of the list, and fittingly so, was this admonition – “surrender it all to God.”*

*No matter what we do and who we are, to fully experience life and find joy we must have the ability to tie what we do and who we are back to God, His purpose and meaning. This is why the fool says in his heart “there is no God.” It works to his own detriment and robs him of not just power, but the joy of purpose and meaning. It robs him of knowing that life is about something more than self and things that turn to dust or ashes or rust or far worse.*

*In 2015 the challenge will be to once again delve into the scripture, but do so from beginning to end considering each topic as a point of truth that reveals the mind of God to us in brilliant form. Beginning at Genesis we will consider various topics that go along with each text and mine those wonderful nuggets of truth to sustain and grow our faith and find our joy.*

*Only three resources are needed for this journey – your Bible, this notebook, and a heart that is ready to seek God and the truth that he has revealed to us, whether we will always find that comfortable or not, which I doubt we will. You should also know that these notes were produced using primarily the English Standard Version of the Bible and may be easier to study and read with that version.*

*American Scientist and inventor George Washington Carver once said, “I love to think of nature as an unlimited broadcasting station, through which God speaks to us every hour, if we will only tune in.” If he does such through nature, then think of the joy and meaning we will find in reading and studying and meditating upon His word.*



*“There is not one blade of grass, there is no color in this world that is not intended to make us rejoice.”*

*- John Calvin*

## **Lesson 7 - Babel, World Religions and Cultures**

Reading – Genesis 9-11

Notes

Why do Buddhists, Muslims, Hindus and other adherents to the various world religions believe the way they do about the god or gods that they worship? From where do these beliefs come? How are we to perceive them today, in light of what the Bible says?

Would you believe that it all goes back to Babel? When you search most commentaries and internet websites you will find that once you get beyond the stories for children that Babel is most often interpreted as the time when God created all the languages because man was filled with pride and had to be humbled and dispersed. Yet, that is really not the whole story. Babel is but a short story, but a powerful turning point in the history of humanity.

In order to grasp it fully we must go back in Genesis to the time just after the flood of Noah. The family of Noah came out of the ark and entered into a covenant with God. God promised never to destroy the world by water anymore and placed a rainbow in the sky as a sign of the covenant. He also gave men the command to multiply, fill the earth and have dominion over all living things.

For the longest time this does not seem to happen and several events occur that set up one of the most life-changing events in human history. First, Canaan ends up bearing a curse to be the servant to Shem and Japheth because Ham, his grandfather, looked upon the nakedness of Noah while he was passed out in seemingly a drunken stupor. God also makes this very specific statement about Shem and his relationship with God. “Blessed be the Lord, the God of Shem” (9:26), seemingly excluding the other two sons.

The second big thing that happens is the building of the tower of Babel and a city surrounding it (11). We would know this city as Babylon, located in modern Iraq.

There is today a great amount of speculation about why the people built the city and tower. Some say the men did not believe the promise of God to not



destroy the earth by water and this lack of faith prompted the building of a great tower to rise above it. It is highly unlikely since this is never even implied in the text. Others say that it was simply a matter of pride as man grew in numbers and made advancements, especially in building. Certainly the idea of “making a name for themselves” might imply such an infraction against God. Yet, perhaps there is even more to the story when considered in light of the preceding statements about the “God of Shem” and the chapters that follow, which find God having to call Abraham out of a land of widespread paganism and idolatry. Babel, we submit, is the bridge between these two ideas and the explanation for how such paganism would arise and become prevalent.

If the idea and motive of the people was simply to stay together and be great then why build a tower. The Bible reveals that they settled and built a city to stay in one place. Why a tower? Such a tower or “high place,” as it might be called in other contexts, typically denoted a place of worship. Fast forward a few years to the building of the Jewish temple and you see that even the adherents to worship of the one true God built their place of worship on a mountain. In ancient times this apparently was the norm. Ziggurats, as they were called, were built not for man to inhabit, but for the god or gods to inhabit. Some of them even contained rooms where the gods supposedly lived.

This, of course, adds new dimension to the idea of “making a name for ourselves.” Not only were they saying we want to be great, but that we want to be great by our own creation, down to and including the god that we worship. No specific god or gods are mentioned, but the seed of paganism is planted and grows so that by the time of Abram, descendent of Shem, it is widespread.

For this combination of sins – pride, failure to fulfill God’s command to disperse and multiply and to seek a god of their own creation – God confounds the language and scatters the people. Why do this? What did it accomplish? For one thing, it kept men from accepting the ideas on a wholesale level. It not only created a foundation for the languages and races that we see today,

“The times of ignorance God overlooked, but now he commands all people everywhere to repent...”

Acts 17:30

but sought to separate the chosen line of Shem from those who would be given over to these false gods.

A man by the name of George Smith once discovered some broken fragments of an ancient cuneiform text, which was related to the building of Babel. The fragments tell us how certain men had “turned against the father of all gods” and how the “thoughts of their leaders heart was evil.” This, of course, sounds a lot like the days leading up to the flood.

Of course, much of this may be difficult to establish, aside from the outcome. Men are dispersed and thus diverse languages, cultures, races and even religious practices are established. Consider the following verses that shed light on the matters.

Deuteronomy 32:7-9 – Here God is said to divide and affix the boundaries for all people, but that Jacob is His portion.

Jeremiah 10:16; 51:19 – repeats the sentiment of Deuteronomy.

Deuteronomy 29:25, 26 make it clear that there was a division on earth not just of languages and race, but of religious pursuits, which God, in the New Testament says that he “winked at” (Acts 17:30). Earlier in Acts, Luke records that “in times past suffered all nations to walk in their own ways” (Luke 14:16; cf. Romans 1:28; 3:23-25; Ps. 50:21).

Of course this division was in some ways rapid. It is very difficult and would have been confusing (thus the name Babel) when the languages changed. It caused instant division and you can just about imagine how people who spoke the same language began to withdraw from those that were now foreigners to them. The fact that language unites people is well seen in our country in the various sub-

communities within some of our larger cities and towns – China Town, Little Havana, etc. This probably happened rather quickly.

Some changes, however, took place over a larger period of time. Growing up hearing the stories about God, creation and the great flood, these people slowly perverted these stories and eventually incorporated them into tales about their chosen gods. History records many of these ancient cultures share very similar creation and flood stories, adapted to their own gods.

For instance, One Egyptian story of creation is that the Chaos Goose and the Chaos Gander produced an egg that was the sun, Ra (Re). The gander was identified with Geb, the earth god. The Chinese, Babylonians, Greeks and nearly every other ancient culture have such myths, adapted into their culture. Furthermore, there are at least 275 known stories of the flood. Thus, in nearly an instant the world would change and the various peoples would move in very different directions, God choosing for himself a people through which he would bring the savior and be a blessing to all other nations (Genesis 18:17-19; 12:3). Genesis 10:8-25 seems to suggest that it was during the time of Peleg that this division occurred and the consequences were in full bloom by the days of Abram.

Skipping over hundreds of years of history showing God's interaction with this "special people" that would time and again move away from Him and then back to him in various degrees, we come to the New Testament and time of Christ. Here we find the narrowing of the path, so to speak, in God's plans.

As Luke said, "And the times of this ignorance God winked at; but now commandeth all men everywhere to repent." This past, divided period fraught with ignorance and neglect of God and his rightful place on the throne of our existence, is over. The days of worshipping other gods - whether Buddha, Ra, Baal, or Mohammad - are over. God has rebuilt that city and he is the tower. It is not in Israel or Mecca. It is spread worldwide, but is not a building. It is the church, that one "big tent," as someone once put it, under which all nations are now

gathered to worship and praise and honor Him. When did this happen and how?

As God's plan unfolded to reveal the "last days," Jesus Christ came into the world and, much like Babel, changed it forever. He began the process of gathering all nations, teaching that the kingdom of God was "at hand" and that they should repent (Mt. 3:2; 4:17; 10:7; 20:21). His fellow Jew killed him (John 1:1-14), and killed him after he preached and taught for three years, but the grave could not hold him. He rose again and then ascended to heaven. Before he left, however, he revealed to his followers that things were going to change and pointed toward Pentecost as the time when this change would be confirmed.

When the Day of Pentecost came the Apostles were tarrying in Jerusalem as Christ instructed them (Luke 24:49). On that day they were endued with the power of the Holy Spirit and the Apostles, speaking in all the languages of the people present by this power, proclaim the salvation of God and how men can receive it by receiving Christ through repentance and remission of sins (Acts 2:1-38). Those who obeyed God added to the church (Acts 2:47), the universal body of believers and body of Christ. Today, all men are called to God through Christ (John 14:6ff). Men throughout the ages past have created and formed and were "appointed" various beliefs, but must today come to Christ. Pentecost is the answer to the confusion of Babel and once again united man not under a prideful name, but under the name of God by His Son.

If we understand this brief synopsis of ancient history then we can know and understand the reasoning behind many of the ancient religious practices that resulted from. More importantly, we can understand the desperate need to retrieve men from that world of confusion left over from Babel and bring them to the light of Christ for clarity. When we say the "gospel is for all," we must realize that "all" was a product of Babel. The shadow of that fallen tower points directly to the foundation of the church and it's calling men back to God. It, the church, however, will not fall, but be delivered up to God at the end of this age.



This most beautiful system, The Universe, could only proceed from the dominion of an intelligent and powerful Being.

### **Lesson 8 – Noah, Nephilim and Ne’er Do Wells**

WVBS – “The Reality of Noah’s Ark”

Scripture reading – Genesis 4-9; Heb. 11:7

The story of Noah and the ark that he and his family built has been much aligned throughout history, including modern attacks that have come in the form Hollywood dramatics that twist and pervert the truth about those ancient times and events. In previous generations it has been labeled a myth or legend. What is the truth of Noah’s ark and the great flood?

Notes

1. What does the name “Noah” mean?
2. What defined the life, attitudes and actions of Noah?
3. How do we know that the descendants of Seth were faithful for several generations?
4. In what ways did the lineage of Cain flourish? Where did they fail?
5. How did the lineage of Cain affect the lineage of Seth?

6. How did Noah stand out among those who made up his generation?

7. Was the flood universal (covering the world) or local?

The Lord saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every intention of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually

*Genesis 6:5*

For your Thoughts:

8. About how old was Noah when God comes to him?

9.

10. What were the dimensions of the ark?

11. How many different levels (floors) were there on the ark?

12. Aside from building the ark, what other activities consumed Noah's time?

13. About how long did it take to build the ark?

14. How did the animals get to and into the ark?

15. How many days of warning did God give Noah right before the flood?

16. Why was the rain of the flood not a "normal" rain?

17. How long was the earth totally submerged?

18. How long were Noah and family in the ark?





The Bible is the most accurate history textbook the world has ever seen.

*Clifford Wilson*

### **Lesson 9 – Alleged Contradictions**

#### **WVBS – Is The Bible Reliable**

Reading – See below list of scripture

In order to facilitate efficacious note taking we will give each verse or verses where an alleged contradiction occurs and then ask for the alleged contradiction and why it is untrue.

1. 1 Corinthians 15:5
  - a. Alleged Contradiction –

- b. Why it's untrue –

2. Matthew 27:5 and Acts 1:18 –
  - a. Alleged contradiction –

- b. Why it's untrue –

3. Matthew 28:1 and Mark 16:1 and John 20:1
  - a. A alleged contradiction –

- b. Why it's untrue –



- 4. Mathew 4:1-11; Luke 4:1-13
  - a. Alleged contradiction –

- b. Why it's untrue –

- 5. Matthew 23:34; Luke 22:34, 60, 61; John 13:38; 18:27; Mark 14:30, 68, 72
  - a. Alleged contradiction –

- b. Why it's untrue

- 6. What is a good working definition of a true contradiction? What is required in order to have a true contradiction?

- 7. 2 Chronicles 24:20-21; Matthew 23:34-35
  - a. Alleged contradiction –

“Scripture  
cannot be  
broken”

John 10:35b

- b. Why it's untrue –

- 8. Genesis 11:1; 10:5
  - a. Alleged contradiction –

- b. Why it isn't true –

- 9. Acts 9:7 and 22:9
  - a. Alleged Contradiction

- b. Why it isn't true



*We are no longer seeking just a right to privacy and a protection from wrong. We also have a right – as heterosexual Americans already have – to see government and society affirm our lives*

*Jeff Levi, Homosexual spokesperson*

### **Lesson 10 – Sodom and Gomorrah Lifestyle**

#### **Pure Passion – Dr. Michael Brown, Tough Questions asked by homosexuals**

As we go through the video, write a synopsis of the answer to some “touch questions” about homosexuality.

Notes

1. I’m gay and Jesus loves me, so what’s wrong with that?
2. But Jesus never mentioned homosexuality, so isn’t it all about love and grace now?
3. But Jesus overturned the law, which is why we don’t have sacrifices anymore?
4. Everybody sin! We’re under grace now. Right?

5. But I was born this way.

6. I am a gay Christian and I've experienced God, and He is okay with my life.

7. What scriptures condemn homosexual practice?

8. It's not fair that God would condemn me for feelings I don't even want.

"Where the battle rages,  
there the loyalty of the  
soldier is proved, and to  
be steady on all the  
battlefield besides is  
mere flight and disgrace  
if he flinches at that  
point"

Martin Luther

9. How do I change? Does God zap me straight?

10. Is there evidence in the Bible God has actually changed homosexuals?

11. But you don't know the wicked things I've done. God could never forgive someone like me, could he?



“We were given the Scriptures to humble us into realizing that God is right, and the rest of us are just guessing.”

*Rich Mullins*

**Lesson 11 - The Sodom and Gomorrah Lifestyle (2)**

Video - Dr. Robert Gagnon - What the Bible teaches about homosexuality

Reading - 1 Corinthians 5, 6; Galatians 5

Notes

1. Why do we not stone homosexuals or people for other sins today?
2. Why does Paul tell the Corinthians church they should not be proud over the incest among them, but rather should have mourned?
3. Is tolerance loving or hateful, according to scripture?



4. How could Christ set the moral ethic bar high and still reach out to the worst of offenders to that ethic?

Jesus never said a word about homosexuality. In all of his teachings about multiple things – he never said that gay people should be condemned. I personally think it is very fine for gay people to be married in civil ceremonies.  
Jimmy Carter

5. How would Paul know Christ would condemn homosexuality, when Christ even used the word homosexual?
6. What different presumptions about homosexuality were there between Christ's ministry to Jews and Paul's ministry to the gentile world?
7. Do men and women image God in the same way?
8. How does this difference impact our view on homosexuality?
- Notes:



*"We may not pay Satan reverence, for that would be indiscreet,  
but we can at least respect his talents."*

*Mark Twain*

#### **Lesson 12 - What is Islam?**

**Video - WVBS "The Cross and the Crescent"**

**Reading - Genesis 16**

#### **Notes**

- 1. What is Sharia law and what role does it have in the practice of Islam?**
- 2. What date marks the beginning of Islam?**
- 3. What religions most likely influenced the formation of Islam?**
- 4. Mohammad supposed received his revelations from whom and where? For how long?**
- 5. What is Islam's view of God?**

6. When he could not convert more than about 40 people after 13 years of preaching and he started getting opposition, what did he do?

"Far from being moribund, Mohammedanism is a militant and proselytizing faith. It has already spread throughout Central Africa, raising fearless warriors at every step; and were it not that Christianity is sheltered in the strong arms of science...the civilization of modern Europe might fall..."

*Winston Churchill*

12. By 732 AD how much of the world had Islam conquered?

7. The word "Islam" means what?

8. What is the origin of the name "Allah?"

13. What has fueled the modern resurgence of the Islamic Ideology?

9. How many military campaigns did Mohammad lead personally?

14. About how many Islamic schools and mosques are there in the United States today?

10. The word "Quran" means what?

11. What does "supremacist Ideology" seek?

15. How many countries in the world are predominantly Muslim?

**16. What is “Jihad”?**

“Be peaceful, be courteous, obey the law, respect everyone; but if someone puts his hand on you, send him to the cemetery.”

Malcolm X, Nation of Islam

**17. What is the reward of the Martyr for Allah?**

**Our notes:**



# Life, Joy, and Pursuit of God At A Glance

**Lessons 1, 2 and 3** – Origins – God and the World (WVBS – “Truth Be Told”)

**Lessons 4 and 5** – Origins –The Bible (WVBS – “How We Got The Bible”)

**Lesson 6** – Origins - Serpent, Satan and Sin

**Lesson 7** – Babel, World Religions and Cultures

**Lesson 8** – Noah, Nephilim and Ne’er do wells (WVBS – “Reality...Noah’s Ark”)

**Lesson 9** – Alleged Contradictions and the Bible (WVBS )

**Lessons 10 and 11** – The Sodom and Gomorrah lifestyle (WVBS “Homosexuality”)

**Lesson 12** – What is Islam? (WVBS “Cross and the Crescent”)

**Lesson 13** – Plagues : Natural Event or Miraculous?

**Lesson 14** – Sinai, The Law and Monotheism

**Lessons 15 and 16** – Conquest Ethics – God Sanctioned Genocide?

**Lessons 17 and 18** – Drink, Drinking, Drunk (WVBS - “Truth About Drinking”)

**Lessons 19 and 20** – Counterfeit God’s

**Lessons 21 and 22** – The Heart of the Fool (WVBS “Answering the Atheist”)

**Lesson 23** – Power, Politics and Providence or God

**Lesson 24** – Origins – Son of Man, Son of God, Jesus Christ

**Lessons 25 and 26** – Origins – Historical Jesus

**Lesson 27**– Origins – The Holy Spirit

**Lesson 28** – How the Thief Was Saved?

**Lesson 29** – Mother Mary May I?

**Lesson 30** – Who Killed Jesus (WVBS – “Killing of Jesus”)

**Lessons 31 and 32** – Marriage and Divorce (WVBS “Marriage, Divorce and...”)

# Life, Joy, and Pursuit of God At A Glance

**Lessons 33 and 34** – What Jesus Taught about Money (WVBS “My God & Money”)

**Lesson 35** – What Jesus Taught about Fasting

**Lesson 36** – What Jesus Taught about Prayer

**Lesson 37** – What Jesus Taught about Forgiveness

**Lesson 38** – Jesus as the Only Way to Salvation (W.L. Craig – One True religion?)

**Lesson 39** – Modest Apparel and Worship (WVBS )

**Lesson 4 and 41** – Women’s Roles in the NT (WVBS “Women & Church”)

**Lesson 42** - Baptism and Salvation

**Lesson 43** – Faith, Works and Salvation

**Lessons 44 and 45** – Sex and Spirituality

**Lesson 46** – TV, Movies and Facebook, Oh My! (WVBS – “Managing Media”)

**Lesson 47** – The Early Church and Worship (WVBS “Truth about Worship”)

**Lessons 48 and 49** – Moral Issues Among Us (WVBS – Abortion, Swearing, etc.)

**Lesson 50** - False Teaching and Fellowship (WVBS “Should we Disfellowship?”)

**Lessons 51 and 52** – End Times – Left Behind? (WVBS )

# Joy!

...the settled assurance that God is in control of every aspect of my life...that all will be taken care of...the ability to give Him praise and honor no matter what happens.