



Life, Joy and The Pursuit of God

Pinellas Park 2015 Study Guide
Quarter 3

“ Faith includes
noticing the mess, the
emptiness and discomfort,
and letting it be there until
some light returns. ”

— ANNE LAMOTT

“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.

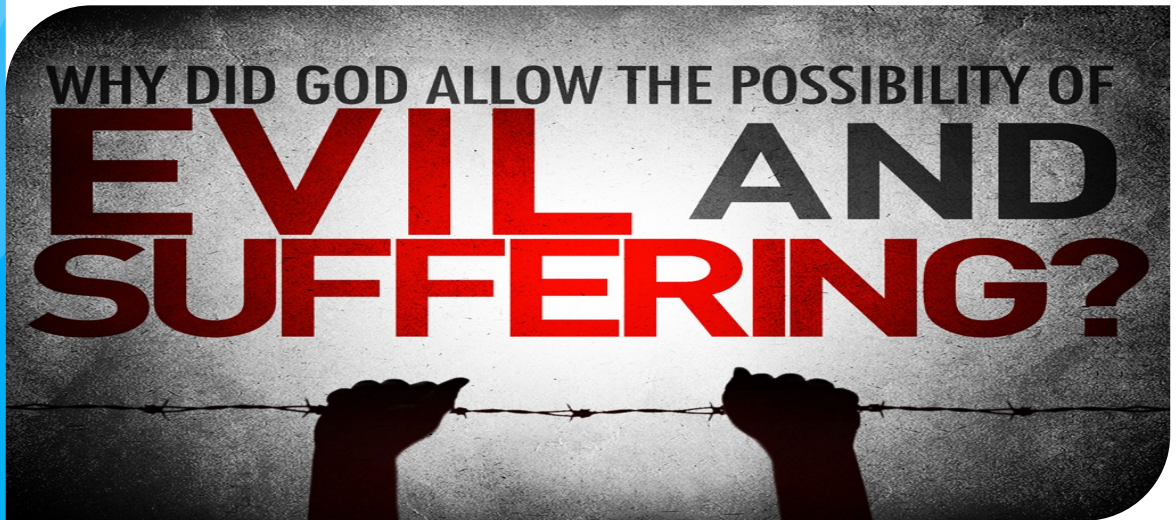
I recently read a list of things a person can do to find joy in their life. The list began with “play with children” and continued through such things as “dress up for no reason,” “eat a cupcake,” “create something,” “walk in the rain,” “play in the mud,” and so on. At the end of the list, and fittingly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



God whispers to us in our pleasures, speaks in our conscience, but shouts in our pains: it is His megaphone to rouse a deaf world.

--C.S. Lewis

Lesson 13 – Why do Men Suffer?

Reading – Genesis 9-11

Questions

1. When we experienced pain and suffering, disease and death, we often ask what questions about God?
2. Do these questions constitute a legitimate argument against the existence of God? Why not?
3. Name some Bible characters that experienced “bad things” that we might label as “evil,” “pain,” or “suffering.”
4. Why do we go to the Bible to find the answers to the question of why a loving, all-powerful God would allow people to suffer?

5. What do we mean when we say the love of God values freedom?

Count it all joy, my brothers,
when you meet trials of various
kinds, for you know that the
testing of your faith produces
steadfastness.

James 1:2, 3

8. Is it unfair to give everyone the freedom to make bad decisions? Why not?

6. With the freedom of choice there is a choice in consequences. What does that mean?

9. How do the bad decisions of past generations affect us today? Give an example not mentioned in the video.

7. Why would God create a world where the innocent would suffer because of someone else's poor decisions?

10. How do the good decision of past generations affect us? Do we take the good with the bad?

11. How do natural laws of the universe and our world cause suffering? Give an example.

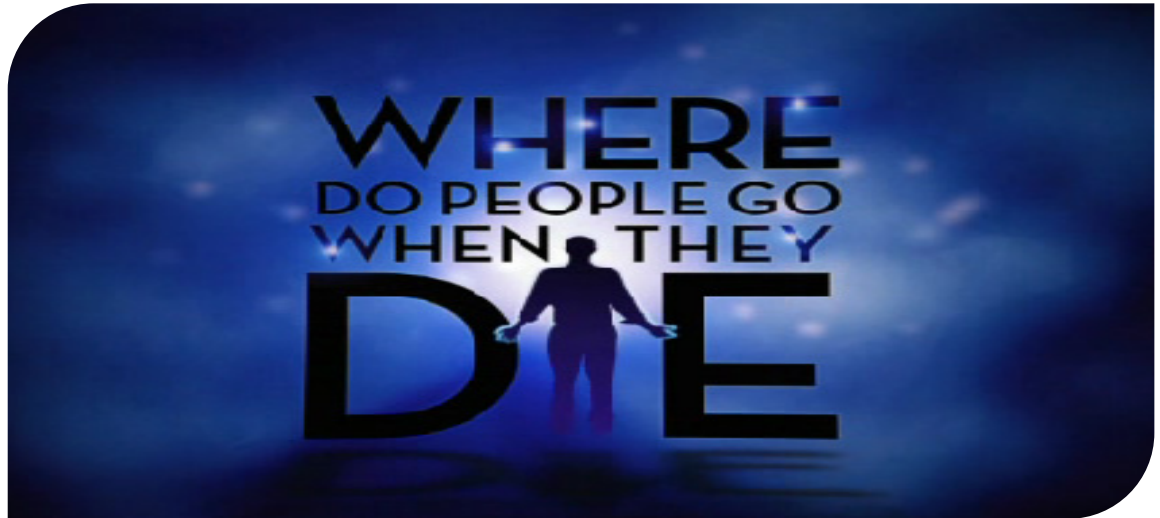
12. What would the world be like if these laws didn't exist? How could we change them to make them fair or "life-saving?"

13. Are there great benefits to suffering? What might they be?

14. What are some scriptures that speak about the benefits of pain and suffering?

15. Name some great characters in the Bible that are "forged by fire."

Notes:



Lesson 14 – He Slept With His Fathers...Where?

WVBS – “Where Do We Go When We Die?”

Notes

1. Why do we so often ask this question?
2. What are some of the “odd” answers given to this question?
3. How can a Christian know the answer to this question?
4. Where does the journey of the human soul begin? List the verses.
5. How does the Bible describe the physical body in which the soul dwells?
6. Ecclesiastes 12:1-5 details what?
7. Give some verses that talk about what happens to the soul when the body dies.

8. What did Paul mean when he said the “soul” will be unclothed?

9. What is “hades?”

10. Where is the paradise that Christ spoke of from the cross? What is it?

11. Luke 16:19-26 is a description of what?

12. What is Tartarus?

13. Why is the idea of “soul sleeping” untrue?

14. Why is Eccl. 9 not a good argument for “soul sleeping?”

15. What is the “Day of the Lord?”

And in Hades he lifted up
his eyes, being in torments,
and seeth Abraham afar
off, and Lazarus in his
bosom

Luke 16:23

16. What will happen on that day?

17. Will we have the same bodies at the resurrection?

18. What will that resurrected body be like?

19. What does Matthew 25:32 describe?

20. Why is the judgment day necessary?

For your Thoughts:



Lesson 15 – Angels Appeared to Abraham? – Part 1

WVBS – Angels (Part 1)

Notes:

1. How many Americans believe in angels? How many believe they have encountered an angel?
2. What do angels actually look like?
3. Do angels still bring messages of God today? How do we know?
4. What are some alleged angelic revelations that may be proved false?
5. Do you have a guardian angel personally?

6. What are some objections to the guardian angel idea?

For he will command
his angels concerning
you
to guard you in all
your ways

Psalm 91:11

Notes:

7. Do angels miraculously appear to people today, according to the Bible? Why or why not?

8. Are Angels to be worshipped?

9. Is Jesus Christ an archangel?



Lesson 16 - Angels Appeared to Abraham? - Part 2

WVBS - Angels (part 2)

Notes

1. How many references in the Bible to angels? What does the word "angel" mean?
2. What is the definition of "angel?"
3. What is the nature of angels? Give verses to support your answer.

4. Are angels created beings? When were they created?

5. What was the purpose for which angels were created?

Do not neglect to show hospitality to strangers, for thereby some have entertained angels unawares

Hebrews 13:2

6. What is the work of the angels?

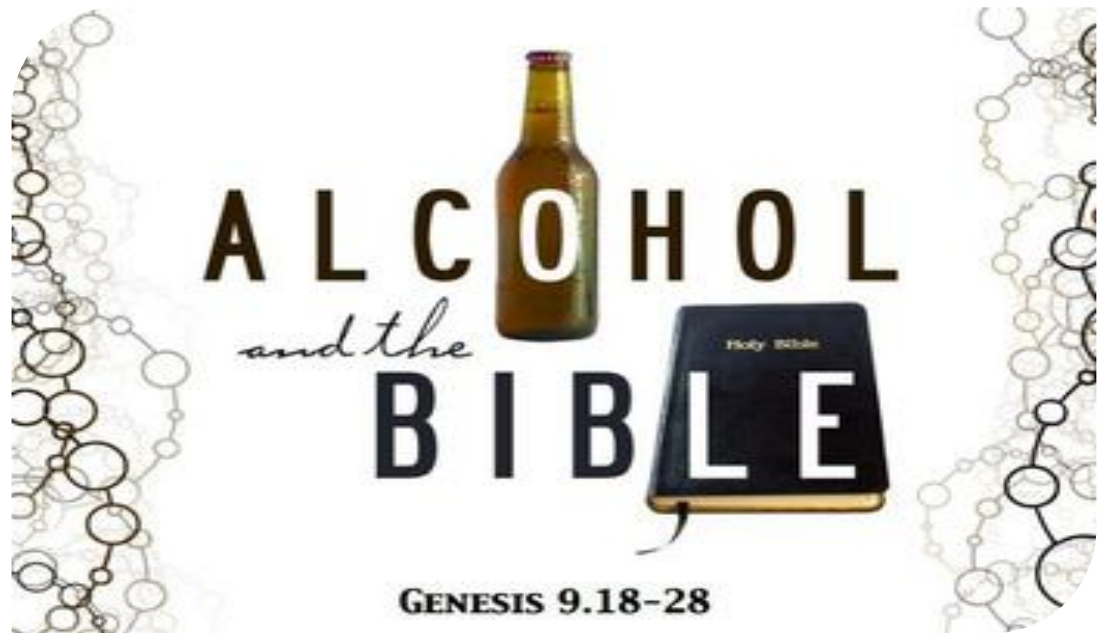
8. Genesis 24 is an interesting example of what?

9. When will all of see angels?

10. What does the parable of the dragnet teach about angels?

7. What are angels doing today?

Notes:



Lesson 17 - Drink, Drank, Drunk -Part 1

WVBS - The Truth about Drinking

Notes

1. What are the evil effects of the Bible? Give verses for each.
2. What is social drinking?
3. If the New Testament does not specifically forbid drinking then isn't it okay? Why or why not?

4. How much alcohol needs to be drunk in order for a person to be affected?

And do not get drunk
with wine, for that is
debauchery, but be
filled with the Spirit

Ephesians 5:18

5. What are “drinking parties” in 1 Peter and what does that mean for the Christian?

9. Did ancient men and women know how to stop the fermentation process?

10. Did Jesus turn water to alcoholic wine at the wedding feast at Cana?

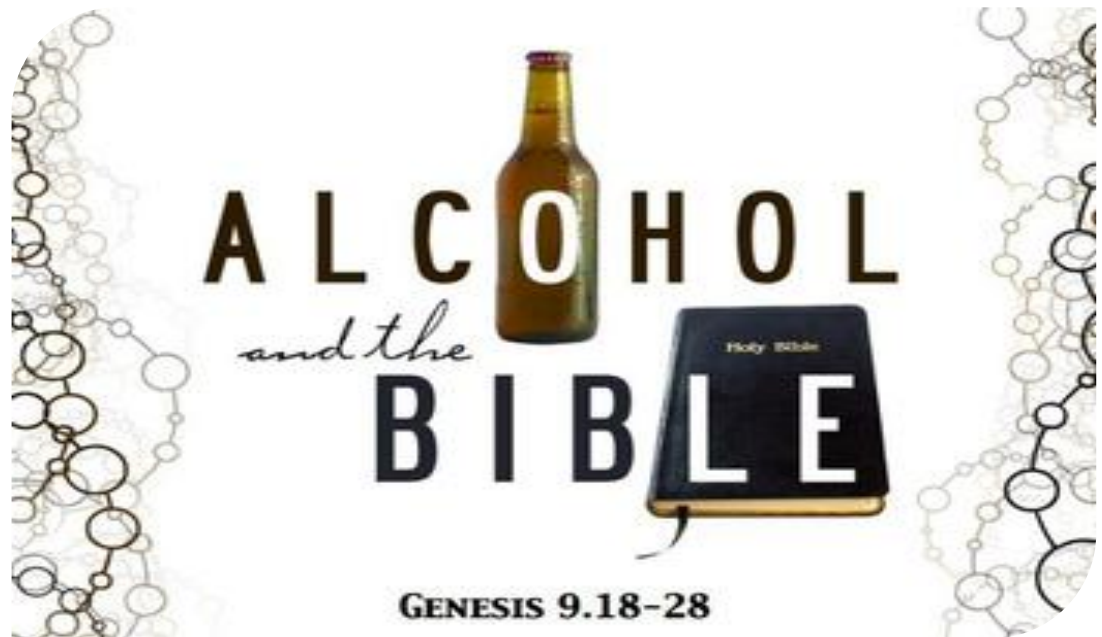
6. Does Ephesians 4:8 mean “moderation” is the Bible teaching on the matter?

7. Is drinking “wine” good for your health?

11. Does the phrase “not given to much wine” argue for moderation, at least among deacons?

8. Can alcohol be consumed for medical reasons?

12. Does Luke 7:33-34 mean Jesus drank wine in moderation?



Lesson 18 – Drink, Drank, Drunk – Part 2

The Bible allows Christians to drink alcohol for medical reasons. Paul told Timothy, "Stop drinking only water and use a little wine because of your stomach and your frequent illness." (1 Timothy 5:23)

The Bible sometimes portrays alcohol as something good and enjoyable. In the law Jews could sell their crops and buy whatever their heart desired, including wine, and partake of it as a blessing. (Dt. 14:22-26) Psalm 104 says, "He makes grass to grow for the cattle, and plants for man to cultivate—bringing forth food from the earth; wine that gladdens the heart of man, oil to make his face shine, and bread that sustains his heart." (v. 14-15)

The Bible forbids drunkenness. Although the Bible never says that alcohol itself is sinful, it does say many times that drunkenness is a sin. God says, "Do not get drunk on wine, which leads to debauchery. Instead, be filled with the Spirit." (Ephesians 5:18) In fact, there are many verses in the Bible which speak out against drunkenness. (For a few examples, see Romans 13:13; Galatians 5:19-21; 1 Peter 4:3.)

The Bible forbids drinking if it offends fellow believers. God explains in Romans 14 and 1 Corinthians 8 that we should be considerate of other Christians who have different convictions than we do. Some Christians believe that alcohol is always sinful. And their convictions should be

respected. God says, "If your brother is distressed because of what you eat, you are no longer acting in love. Do not by your eating destroy your brother for whom Christ died. "For the kingdom of God is not a matter of eating and drinking, but of righteousness, peace and joy in the Holy Spirit...Let us therefore make every effort to do what leads to peace and to mutual edification....*It is better not to eat meat or drink wine or to do anything else that will cause your brother to fall.*" (Romans 14:15-21) That verse says it loud and clear: Don't drink alcohol if it will offend a brother or sister in Christ.

The Bible forbids drinking if it hinders the gospel. Paul explained in 1 Corinthians 9 that even though he was allowed to eat and drink anything he wanted, he was very careful not to do things that would hinder the gospel of Christ. He said, "Though I am free and belong to no man, I make myself a slave to everyone, to win as many as possible. "I became all things to all men so that by all possible means I might save some. I do all this for the sake of the gospel, that I may share in its blessings." (1 Corinthians 9:19-23)

If I was trying to teach someone who thought it was bad for Christians to drink, there's no way I would drink alcohol in front of that person!

The Bible warns that drinking is often dangerous and unwise. The Bible contains lots of warnings about how tempting and dangerous it is to get involved with alcohol. A wise mother told her son, "It is not for kings, O Lemuel - not for kings to drink wine, not for rulers to crave beer, lest they drink and forget what the law decrees, and deprive all the oppressed of their rights." (Proverbs 31:4-5) And Solomon, one of the wisest men who've

Be no longer a
drinker of water,
but use a little wine
for thy stomach's
sake and thine often
infirmities.

1 Timothy 5:23

ever lived, said, "Do not gaze at wine when it is red, when it sparkles in the cup, when it goes down smoothly! In the end it bites like a snake and poisons like a viper." (Proverbs 23:31)

These Bible passages suggest that it is often wise to totally stay away from alcohol since it can be a difficult thing to control. Alcohol can easily seduce you, and before you know it, it controls you. How many girls have had a few drinks and then ended up in bed with a strange man? How many adults have had a few drinks and then ended up in a serious car accident?

These situations are all too common. God is looking out for you when He warns you about the dangers of alcohol and drunkenness. Getting drunk causes you to lose control of yourself and do things - dangerous things - that you wouldn't do if you were sober.

There are right uses for alcohol that would not lead one to sin and allow for righteous living. But there are many things to consider with this topic, mainly because of the pervasive substance abuse that takes place in our world today and the nature of the alcohol of today, as opposed to the alcohol of ancient times. Each and every child of God must weigh the matter

for themselves and understand all that so often hangs in the balance. Too often our personal desires to do a certain thing will cloud our judgment or muddle our motives, which will often make a world of difference.

Notes:

**“It is not for kings to
drink wine, not for rulers
to crave beer...”**

Proverbs 31:4, 5

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 – Why do men suffer? – WVBS (“Evil Pain and Suffering”)

Lesson 14 – He slept with his fathers where?(WVBS “Where do we go when we die?”)

Lessons 15 and 16 – Angels appeared to Abraham? (WVBS – Angels)

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

Lessons 19 and 20 – Conquest Ethics

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.