



## Lesson Guide

### Lesson 4 - Theology: Who is God?

#### **Introduction**

Having explored the concept of truth itself and examined the biblical view of human nature – two basic issues that *had* to be settled before we could move on to the present discussion – Dr. Tackett now takes us to the eastern point of the compass and proceeds to lay the third and most important foundation of our “Truth Temple:” *Theology*, or that branch of study and investigation that grapples with the question, “Who is God?” *Knowing God*, he argues, ought to be our passion and our highest goal; for until we look upon *His* face, we cannot rightly know ourselves or begin to grasp the meaning of our existence in the world.

#### **Themes**

*Knowing God* is absolutely central to the meaning of human life, for it is only in the context of intimate, personal relationship with Him that we experience *eternal life*. At the same time, there is no assignment more daunting, no task more demanding, no challenge more overwhelming, than that of seeking to understand the being, nature, character, and attributes of the eternal Creator, who is Himself the ultimate source of all truth (Colossians 2:3). So impossibly huge is this endeavor that we could not hope to tackle it at all except for the fact that He has graciously *revealed* Himself to us in His Word. Apart from this *revelation*, mankind gropes and struggles in the darkness to piece together even the most flawed and rudimentary concept of God.

In line with this thought, R. C. Sproul asserts that ours is an era in which the knowledge of God has been *eclipsed* – not completely destroyed, but *obscured* and *shadowed* by lies and misconceptions. Given this situation, it is essential that we establish two main points: 1) that God exists; and 2) that the Bible, the vehicle of His self-revelation, is utterly reliable. Following Sproul’s lead, Dr. Tackett uses a significant portion of this tour to respond to attacks that have been leveled against God’s Word over the course of history (another aspect of the *Cosmic Battle*). He answers the objections of Voltaire, Robert Ingersoll, and liberal theologians such as Julius Wellhausen and the members of the Jesus Seminar. He also illustrates the Bible’s historical accuracy by helping us resolve an apparent scriptural discrepancy concerning the dates of King Jehoram’s reign.

But the heart of this episode’s message hits much closer to home. For in the end, Dr. Tackett makes it clear that we cannot truly know ourselves until we have begun to know God in the fullness and richness of His multifaceted nature and character – not only as the God of mercy and grace, but also as the God who is a consuming fire, *jealous* for the purity of the covenant relationship (*El Qanna*). When this knowledge dawns upon us, we can expect two things to happen. First, the revelation of God’s character will, like a mirror, reveal things to us about ourselves, so that we, along with the prophet Isaiah, are compelled to cry, “Woe is me, for I am undone!” (Isaiah 6:5). But then secondly, as He raises us out of our despair and shows us who we are and who we can be *in Him*, we will be granted the gift of a *new name* – a whole new

concept of our being, our identity, and our purpose in life *with God*. Once again, the fruit of this experience will be personal transformation.

### **Points to Watch For**

During the course of this tour, the theme of the *Cosmic Battle* is revisited several times and from a number of different angles. As in the first three episodes, Dr. Tackett consistently returns to the point that fallen man *resists* the truth, and that, as Christians, we are thus called to “cast down arguments and every high thing that exalts itself *against the knowledge of God*, bringing every thought into captivity to the obedience of Christ” (2 Corinthians 10:5). Man, says Dr. Tackett, has a tendency “play fast and loose” with God’s Word, *not* because he is seriously interested in ascertaining the facts about biblical history, but because he is unwilling to face up to the convicting power of divine revelation as it applies to his personal life. In the final analysis, God’s Word is the main thing standing in the way of “self-actualization” as it is promoted by the gurus of contemporary culture. Some students may find it difficult to accept this idea.

### **Discussion Questions** (Pick 3 or 4 for your discussion time)

(Make these questions your own. That is, don’t just “read” them, but become familiar with them so that they don’t appear as simply an item to get through. Go through them yourself before your group meets and ponder them.)

#### **1) Opening Question: (this may be the only question you need to ask)**

A. Ask your guests to list what they saw on the tour. Here are some of the key items: Majesty and enormity of who God is; His character & being as the ultimate source of all truth; eternal life & knowing God; El Qanna; what is your name?; the attack on God’s Word; the veracity of God’s Word; Joram & Jehoram; the Jesus Seminar, etc. List your own).

B. Ask your guests to point out the ones that were particularly interesting or striking to them and why.

C. Ask if this particular area struck anyone else as well.

D. Ask if there were other items that they saw that stood out to them. (You may want to read back through the list if you need to.)

#### **2) How did Jesus define “eternal life” in His John 17 prayer?**

(Knowing God)

**What was the point that Dr. Tackett was trying to make in saying that this was NOT just a clinical knowledge?**

(It was an intimate knowledge—a deep relationship.)

#### **3) What was the thing that Dr. Tackett said he found to be the most astounding thing of all?**

(That God dwells within the heart of man.)

**He asked the students if they really believed that this truth claim of God was really real. Do we?**

- 4) **There were three things that Dr. Tackett said happen to us when we gaze upon the face of God. What were they?**
- A. (Exposes us.) What does that mean?
  - B. (Exposes our culture.) What does this mean?
  - C. (Creates a desire to answer God's call to go for Him.) What does this mean?
- 5) **Thinking about the first one, that it exposes us, does anyone want to be bold and offer to admit that tonight ... did anything strike you?**  
(Some will be struck by the concept of El Qanna; some by God's infinity; some by the "new name" idea; some by the veracity of God's Word, etc.)
- 6) **Considering the second one, that it exposes our culture, what did our tour tonight reveal about our culture?**

### **Deeper Questions for Discussion**

- 7) **If *theology*, or the study of God, is the most important of the three foundations we are seeking to lay, why was it put aside until the fourth tour? What does this imply about our culture and our calling as modern ambassadors for Christ?**  
(Dr. Tackett says that, given our present cultural context, we were not ready to talk about God until we had first established the existence of *Truth as an objective reality* [a concept widely contested by many contemporary thinkers] and grappled with the biblical view of humanity and its broader implications. Generally speaking, this is the pattern we need to follow as representatives of truth in today's society. We can no longer take anything for granted: we must lay the groundwork carefully before moving on to talk about God and the Gospel message.)
- 8) **What does R. C. Sproul mean when he says that the knowledge of God has not been *destroyed* but rather *eclipsed* in our day? How has this come about? Can you think of examples of this *eclipsing, filtering, or shadowing* of the truth in your own experience or in the experience of your friends?**
- 9) (As long as man retains the least vestige of the divine image, the knowledge of God can never be completely destroyed. But it *can* be seriously clouded or marred by the intermixture of lies, distortions, and "cosmic cube" based notions of deity and spirituality.) **"This is eternal life," says Jesus, "that they may know You, the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom You have sent" (John 17:3). Why do you think Jesus defines eternal life in this way? What is the connection between *knowledge and life*?** (The point here is to highlight the distinction between mere *clinical* or *academic* knowledge and *intimate, relational* knowledge [as in "Adam *knew* Eve ..."]. To "know" God in the sense Jesus here intends is to establish a vital heart-connection with Him. Only in the context of such a relationship can we truly be said to "live.")
- 10) **Why are names so significant in the Bible? What are some of the names of God revealed to us in Scripture? How does knowing God's name impact our**

### **understanding of our own “name”?**

(Names have a meaning. Figuratively speaking, to know someone’s “name” is to grasp that person’s inner essence, vitality, and significance. It is only as we learn God’s name(s) – i.e., get to *know* Him in the sense defined in Question 3 – that we gain a “universal” context within which we can begin to understand our own place and purpose in the universe.)

### **11) Why is it important to establish that a “spiritual” book like the Bible is also historically accurate?**

(This question harks back to the definition of “truth” established in Lesson 1: “Conformity to fact or reality.” Those who divorce “truth” from reality [as in “everyone creates his or her own personal truth”] might possibly be able to reconcile their so-called “spirituality” with a factually inaccurate Bible. But those who believe that truth = reality cannot.)

### **12) Picture yourself in the Temple with Isaiah, beholding the glory and majesty of God firsthand. How would this experience change your life? What is there about you that simply *could not* remain the same after such a revelation?**

(This question is intended to remind us that our concept of truth – in this case, the overwhelming truth of God’s infinite holy nature – ought to impact our behavior. The point is to make this concept as immediate and personal for participants as possible.)

## **WESTMINSTER CONFSSION**

### **CHAPTER II.**

#### ***Of God, and of the Holy Trinity.***

I. There is but one only living and true God, who is infinite in being and perfection, a most pure spirit, invisible, without body, parts, or passions, immutable, immense, eternal, incomprehensible, almighty, most wise, most holy, most free, most absolute, working all things according to the counsel of his own immutable and most righteous will, for his won glory, most loving, gracious, merciful, long-suffering, abundant in goodness and truth, forgiving iniquity, transgression, and sin; the rewarder of them that diligently seek him; and withal most just and terrible in his judgments; hating all sin; and who will by no means clear the guilty.

II. God hath all life, glory, goodness, blessedness, in and of himself; and is alone in and unto himself all-sufficient, not standing in need of any creatures which he hath made, nor deriving any glory from them, but only manifesting his own glory in, by, unto, and upon them; he is the alone foundation of all being, of whom, through whom, and to whom, are all things; and hath most sovereign dominion over them, to do by them, for them, or upon them, whatsoever himself pleaseth. In his sight all things are open and manifest; his knowledge is infinite, infallible, and independent upon the creature; so as nothing is to him contingent or uncertain. He is most holy in all his counsels, in all his works, and in all his commands. To him is due from angels and men, and every other creature, whatsoever worship, service, or obedience he is pleased to require of them.

III. In the unity of the Godhead there be three Persons of one substance, power, and eternity: God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Ghost. The Father is of none, neither begotten nor

proceeding; the Son is eternally begotten of the Father; the Holy Ghost eternally proceeding from the Father and the Son.

## **Tour Guide Notes: Why Not Start With God?**

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I have been asked this question a number of times. We attempted to answer it in the DVD, but it was way too brief, and it demands a more detailed response.

We actually began with God in Tour 1. If you recall, we were dealing with the critical importance of truth, examining the very clear declaration by Jesus that the reason He was born was to testify to the truth. We established the reality that the primary battle that rages around us and within us is the battle between truth and lie. We then made the point that the ultimate source of truth is the very character, nature and being of God, and that the forces of evil, in reality, are ultimately arrayed against who He is. It was in this context that we pointed out that all of our tours were going to follow one central theme: “gazing upon His face”.

In Tour 2, we took note of the two presuppositions of our worldview: 1) that God exists and 2) that He has revealed Himself to us. That revelation, through His creation and through His Word, provided for us the fundamental answers to all of the critical philosophical questions of life. We examined, in contrast, the wandering futility of those who attempt to answer those questions without Him and the deep ethical consequences of that position. We paused briefly to look at the nature of God to discover that His laws are not capricious, but an expression of His character.

In Tour 3, we spent most of our time dealing with man, who he really is, the state that he is in, and the true solution to His problem. We began with God’s creation of man, the separation that occurred between God and man at the Fall, the glorious work that Christ undertook to redeem us from the curse of death, and the promised glory that awaits those who are His. We ended by noting the inability for those who deny God to have any basis for ethical notions or even ethical language. The problem of evil is a greater problem for those who stand opposed to the reality of God than for us.

In fact, every tour will focus upon God. In Tour 5, we will deal with Science. But we will begin with the reality that the heavens declare His glory and that all of science is meaningless without the beginning notion that we live in a rational, ordered universe rather than a random, purposeless one. In Tour 6, History, we will gaze upon the Sovereignty of God to comprehend that we are part of His larger story and not just one of a billion other pitiful creatures fighting to make our own little script successful. Tour 7 through 12 will take us on a fascinating tour that will examine one jewel after another, each pointing to some aspect of God’s nature.

So, we did begin with God and we will end with God. And we will look upon Him everywhere in between. But, to be honest, Tour 4 comes after one, two, and three, primarily because we live in a culture that has so bought the lies of the world, that we are not able to deal directly with the question “who is God” without some preparation. As the Old Testament priests underwent a lengthy ritual before they entered the Holy of Holies, so too, we must often prepare our hearts and minds before we engage this awesome question.

In the end, my prayer is that we will daily ask this question and daily seek its answer: “Who are you, O Lord?”

