

The **Bible** Unpacked

Concise Study Series

A look at the Bible's teaching
for new and young believers

paul mallison

The Bible Unpacked™

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A look at the Bible's teaching
for new and young believers

Section I. What to Know

Composed by Paul Mallison

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A Quick Word

This series of studies aims to present an overview of the Bible's teachings in a clear and readable order. There are two booklets in the series, based on the two sections of the book *The Bible Unpacked - Concise Edition*. Each booklet has four parts, with questions added.

See *Topics in This Series* towards the end of this booklet for a full listing of all the topics included.

The material contains Bible verses. Before the verses are headings, which reflect what the verses say – in particular the parts of the verses in *italics*. The verses are sometimes followed by a comment.

The verses often have a brief introduction. Usually these state who is speaking and often who they are speaking to. Apart from God and Jesus Christ, the main speakers are:

- Moses – who lead the Israelites out of Egypt and taught them God's laws;
- David – Israel's greatest king who wrote many of the psalms, most of which are essentially prayers;
- Paul, Peter, John and other leaders of the early church – who spoke to various groups and wrote letters to believers.

Note that although each part has five major headings and also five questions at the end, there is not usually one question for each heading.

For free downloads and information on other study series based on editions of *The Bible Unpacked*, go to: www.thebibleunpacked.net.

Paul Mallison

Suggestions for Study Groups

Preliminary matters:

- Beforehand the leader should: check the context of any verses they are not familiar with; and review the questions. If need be, they should compose questions more applicable to the group.
- Each person should have a Bible, for things such as checking a verse's context. It would also be helpful to have Bible commentaries on hand.
- Pray before beginning the study. Ask God for help in understanding the meaning of the verses and to affect your lives through them. Also pray together at the end.

Doing the study:

- Ideally, read the material and answer the questions prior to the meeting. Then share answers and discuss any issues arising from the material in the meeting.
- Alternatively, read the material and answer the questions in the meeting – reading either aloud as a group or individually (prior to sharing answers). If reading as a group, **try having one person read the headings, another read the verses and another read the comments.** Additionally, a fourth person could read the Bible references.

General or concluding questions:

If time permits, conclude with one or more of the following questions:

- What is something that you either: **did not know** before; gained **greater insight** into; or **needed reminding** of?
- What verse would be helpful to memorize and bear in mind during the next week?
- In taking the verses seriously, is there anything you should change in:
 - (a) how you relate to God or to other people; or
 - (b) any other area of your life (e.g. attitudes, values or behavior)?

Are there any specific steps you could take to do this?

Part A. God and Spiritual Powers

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To grow in a relationship with God, it is essential that we learn what he is like. Similarly, it is important to understand what the Bible teaches about Jesus Christ and the Holy Spirit, who are very closely related to God. It is also very helpful to know about the other spiritual forces that impact our lives – both the good ones and the bad ones.

God's Being

God is spirit

God is spirit, and those who worship him must worship in spirit and truth. JOHN 4:24 NCV™

God's nature is spirit; he is a spiritual being. So God is not a physical being, in contrast to people and particularly to idols.

God is everywhere

[GOD:] *I am everywhere— both near and far, ²⁴in heaven and on earth. There are no secret places where you can hide from me.*

JEREMIAH 23:23–24 CEV

God has limitless power

Nothing is impossible for God! LUKE 1:37 CEV

God knows everything

God is greater than our feelings, and *he knows everything.*

1 JOHN 3:20B CEV

God's Character

God is holy and acts justly

[PEOPLE PRAISING GOD:] *You alone are holy. All the nations will come and worship you, because your just actions are seen by all.*

REVELATION 15:4B GNT

God is holy – perfect in all he is and does. As a result, God always acts justly and does not put up with wrongdoing.

God is merciful and loving

[GOD:] I am the LORD God. *I am merciful and very patient with my people. I show great love, and I can be trusted.* EXODUS 34:6B CEV

Note that “LORD” is the personal name of God.

Jesus Christ

Jesus Christ is the Son of God

We have a great high priest, who has gone into heaven, and he is *Jesus the Son of God*. HEBREWS 4:14A CEV

Jesus Christ has the nature of God

For *it was by God's own decision that the Son has in himself the full nature of God*. COLOSSIANS 1:19 GNT

Jesus Christ is greater than all things

Christ is exactly like God, who cannot be seen. *He is the first-born Son, superior to all creation*. COLOSSIANS 1:15 CEV

The Holy Spirit

The Holy Spirit is the Spirit of God

And do not grieve *the Holy Spirit of God* ... EPHESIANS 4:30A NET

This is speaking of the Holy Spirit as God's spirit. Bear in mind that when the Bible speaks of the Holy Spirit, it is in effect speaking of God himself.

The Holy Spirit is linked with God's presence

[JOHN, TO BELIEVERS:] *We know that God lives in us because of the Spirit God gave us*. 1 JOHN 3:24B NCV™

Those who have God's Spirit (the Holy Spirit) have God living in them.

God, Jesus and the Holy Spirit are very closely associated

[JESUS, TO HIS DISCIPLES:] Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them *in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit*, ... MATTHEW 28:19 NET

The phrase "the name of" denotes a single name. Here it is applied to all three of God, Jesus Christ and the Holy Spirit. As such it points to a very close relationship between the three of them.

Angels, Satan and Demons

Angels are very powerful beings who serve God

Praise the LORD, *you angels of his, you powerful warriors who carry out his decrees and obey his orders!* PSALMS 103:20 NET

Satan is evil

Then *the evil one* [Satan] comes and snatches the message from their hearts. MATTHEW 13:19B CEV

Satan has been condemned

God has already judged the ruler of this world. JOHN 16:11B CEV

Demons are evil and powerful spiritual beings

[PAUL, TO BELIEVERS:] For we are not fighting against human beings but against *the wicked spiritual forces in the heavenly world, the rulers, authorities, and cosmic powers of this dark age.* EPHESIANS 6:12 GNT

Demons fear God

[JAMES, EXHORTING HIS READERS:] You believe there is one God. Good! But *the demons believe that, too, and they tremble with fear.* JAMES 2:19 NCV™

How can we relate to God if we cannot see him?

What things show that God is a personal being?

What is "holiness"?

What does the Bible mean in saying that Jesus Christ is the Son of God? What makes him God's Son?

List three things that you know about the Holy Spirit.

Part B. God and the World: Basics

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Having a grasp of the topics in this chapter is fundamental to understanding God's relationship with the world. Furthermore, knowing about these things is necessary for appreciating the significance of Jesus Christ.

God's Creation

God has made all things

For you created all things, and by your will they were given existence and life. REVELATION 4:11 GNT

All things belong to God, because he made everything

The earth and everything on it belong to the LORD. The world and its people belong to him. ²The LORD placed it all on the oceans and rivers. PSALMS 24:1–2 CEV

The second verse speaks poetically of God creating the world.

What God has made shows us things about him

God's eternal power and character cannot be seen. But from the beginning of creation, God has shown what these are like by all he has made. ROMANS 1:19 CEV

Every creature's life is dependent on God

Every living creature is in the hands of God. JOB 12:10 CEV

God's Sovereignty

God is the ruler of all things

[DAVID, TO GOD:] You are the source of wealth and honor; *you rule over all.* 1 CHRONICLES 29:12A NET

No one can effectively oppose God

No one can oppose him or stop him from doing what he wants to do. JOB 23:13B GNT

God has control over people's lives

[DANIEL, TO KING BELSHAZZAR:] But you didn't honor *God, who holds in his power your very life and all your ways.* DANIEL 5:23B ISV

God's Word

The Bible is God's word

Everything in the Scriptures is God's Word. 2 TIMOTHY 3:16A CEV

The Scriptures are the writings contained in the Bible – God's word.

God's word has laws for our relationship with God

[GOD:] *Do not worship any god except me. ...⁵ Don't bow down and worship idols. ...⁷ Do not misuse my name. ...⁸ Remember that the Sabbath Day belongs to me. ...¹⁰ ... No one is to work on that day...*

EXODUS 20:3, 5A, 7–8, 10B CEV

God's word has laws for our relationships with people

Respect your father and your mother ...¹³ Do not murder. ¹⁴ Be faithful in marriage. ¹⁵ Do not steal. ¹⁶ Do not tell lies about others. ¹⁷ Do not want anything that belongs to someone else. EXODUS 20:12–17A CEV

The Problem of Sin

Sin is breaking God's law

Whoever sins is guilty of breaking God's law, because sin is a breaking of the law. 1 JOHN 3:4B GNT

All people have sinned

All of us have sinned and fallen short of God's glory. ROMANS 3:23 CEV

The last phrase speaks of failing to live up to a standard that fits in with God's glory. This is basically due to sin.

Sin leads to the punishment of eternal death

For the payoff of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord. ROMANS 6:23 NET

God's holiness and justice mean that unforgiven sin must be punished with everlasting death. It involves everlasting separation from God, in hell.

God's Judgment

God repays people according to what they have done

[PAUL, SPEAKING OF GOD'S FINAL JUDGMENT:] *On that day everyone will see God's right judgments. ⁶God will reward or punish every person for what that person has done.* ROMANS 2:5B–6 NCV™

God's judgment is inescapable

[PAUL, TO HIS READERS:] When you judge people for doing these things but then do them yourself, *do you think you will escape God's judgment?* ROMANS 2:3 NET

God warns people of judgment, allowing it to be avoided

[GOD:] *There are times, Jeremiah, when I threaten to uproot, tear down, and destroy a nation or kingdom. ⁸But if that nation I threatened stops doing wrong, I will cancel the destruction I intended to do to it.* JEREMIAH 18:7–8 NET

What God says here regarding nations is also applicable to individuals.

Do you believe that God created the world? Why or why not?

In what ways do you think God exerts control over our lives?

Give a definition of sin.

What are some results of sin?

How should the statement that God is the judge of the world encourage us?

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Jesus Christ is at the center of God's relationship with the world. This is largely due to what he accomplished when he came into the world, which has great significance for each person's relationship with God.

God's Promised Messiah

God spoke of someone who would bring salvation

[GOD, AS SPEAKING TO THE MESSIAH:] *I will make you a light for all nations to show people all over the world the way to be saved.*
 ISAIAH 49:6B NCV™

This Messiah would die for people's sins, but then be raised

*But it was the LORD who decided to crush him and make him suffer. The LORD made his life a penalty offering ... [God, the LORD:]*¹¹ *“After his soul suffers many things, he will see life and be satisfied. My good servant will make many people right with God; he will carry away their sins.* ISAIAH 53:10A, 11 NCV™

The Scriptures show that Jesus is the Messiah

For with his strong arguments he [Apollos] defeated the Jews in public debates by *proving from the Scriptures that Jesus is the Messiah.*
 ACTS 18:28 GNT

The “Messiah” (Hebrew) and the “Christ” (Greek) mean the “anointed” or the “Anointed One”.

Jesus Christ's Mission

God sent Jesus Christ to take away sins

You know that *Christ came to take away sins.* 1 JOHN 3:5A CEV

The Jews compelled the Romans to kill Jesus

Pilate [the Roman governor] wanted to set Jesus free, so he spoke again to the crowds.²¹ *But they kept shouting, “Nail him to a cross! Nail him to a cross!” ...*²⁴ *Finally, Pilate gave in.* LUKE 23:20–21, 24 CEV

The crowd was led by the Jewish religious authorities.

But God raised Jesus from the dead

But God raised him from death ... ACTS 2:24A GNT

Salvation through Jesus Christ

Jesus Christ died for us

But *God showed how much he loved us by having Christ die for us, even though we were sinful.* ROMANS 5:8 CEV

Jesus died for us. He gave his life in place of our lives to pay the penalty for our sin. He did this so that we would not have to pay it ourselves with eternal death. Instead we can have eternal life. This is spiritual life which extends beyond physical death.

By Jesus' death our sins can be forgiven

For by the blood of Christ we are set free, that is, our sins are forgiven. EPHESIANS 1:7B GNT

The "blood of Christ" is a reference to his death for us.

So, through Jesus' death we can be at peace with God

[PAUL, TO THE BELIEVERS AT COLOSSE:] You used to be far from God. Your thoughts made you his enemies, and you did evil things. ²²But *his Son became a human and died. So God made peace with you, and now he lets you stand in his presence as people who are holy and faultless and innocent.* COLOSSIANS 1:21–22 CEV

The New Order

We are not made right by obeying the law – but by faith in Christ

For no one is put right in God's sight by doing what the Law requires; what the Law does is to make people know that they have sinned. ... ²²*God puts people right through their faith in Jesus Christ.* ROMANS 3:20, 22A GNT

We are unable to be made right with God through obeying the law, as we are not capable of obeying it all the time. But now because of what Jesus Christ has accomplished, we can be made right with God by faith in Christ and what he has done.

So, we are made right by God’s kindness, not by the law

[PAUL:] *I don’t turn my back on God’s undeserved kindness. If we can be acceptable to God by obeying the Law, it was useless for Christ to die.* GALATIANS 2:21 CEV

Paul was determined to acknowledge God’s undeserved kindness – in what he has done for us through Christ’s death – as being the means by which we are made acceptable to God.

We can only be saved through Jesus Christ

Salvation is to be found through him alone; in all the world there is no one else whom God has given who can save us. ACTS 4:12 GNT

God has made Jesus Christ Lord of all

Then God gave Christ the highest place and honored his name above all others. ... ¹¹And to the glory of God the Father everyone will openly agree, “Jesus Christ is Lord!” PHILIPPIANS 2:9, 11 CEV

The kingdom of God has come, through Christ’s mission

He [Jesus] said, “The right time has come. The kingdom of God is near.” MARK 1:15A NCV™

In Jesus’ mission a more far-reaching, spiritual dimension of God’s reign was established. It exists primarily in the hearts and minds of God’s people. At the end of the age God’s kingdom and authority will be imposed over all things.

‘The Last Things’

Jesus Christ will return and judge all people

For the Son of Man [Jesus Christ] will come with his angels in the glory of his Father, and then he will reward each person according to what he has done. MATTHEW 16:27 NET

Those who believe in Jesus Christ will have eternal life

The one who believes in the Son has eternal life. The one who rejects the Son will not see life, but God’s wrath remains on him.

JOHN 3:36 NET

What makes you think Jesus was raised from the dead? (The group could make a list of reasons which could be used in talking to someone who is skeptical about it.)

How does Jesus Christ's death bring God's forgiveness of sins?

What does the Bible mean in saying that we are put right in God's sight by his "grace"?

How should Jesus Christ being "Lord of all" affect us?

How does the teaching about Jesus Christ's return encourage you?

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The Bible reveals a lot about how God relates to his own people – those who seek to follow him. The following includes teaching on key issues in God's relationship with each of his people, including what he does for them. Some of the verses in this topic are among the best-loved verses in the Bible.

The Standing of God's People

God's people belong to him

[PAUL, TO BELIEVERS:] You put your faith in Christ and were given the promised Holy Spirit to show that *you belong to God*.
EPHESIANS 1:13 CEV

God's people are his children

But *to all who did accept him [Jesus] and believe in him he gave the right to become children of God*. JOHN 1:12 NCV™

God's people are his children. For they are born of God (cf. v. 13) into spiritual life.

God's people have him as their God

[ABIJAH, A KING AND LEADER OF GOD'S PEOPLE:] But as for us, *the LORD is our God* and we have not rejected him. 2 CHRONICLES 13:10A NET

Keys to God's Interaction with His People

God is always with his people

[GOD:] I will be with you as I was with Moses. *I will always be with you; I will never abandon you*. JOSHUA 1:5B GNT

God knows his people

[GOD, TO MOSES:] *I know you by name*. EXODUS 33:17B ISV

God loves his people and is faithful to them

His love for us is strong and his faithfulness is eternal. Praise the LORD! PSALMS 117:2 GNT

God's Holy Spirit lives in and helps his people

[PAUL, SPEAKING TO TIMOTHY ABOUT THE GOSPEL MESSAGE:] You have been trusted with a wonderful treasure. *Guard it with the help of the Holy Spirit, who lives within you*. 2 TIMOTHY 1:14 CEV

God's Transformation of His People

God's people are given spiritual life

[JESUS:] *The Spirit is the one who gives life; human nature is of no help! The words that I have spoken to you are spirit and are life.*

JOHN 6:63 NET

Together with the Holy Spirit, Jesus' words bring life. This spiritual life involves being "alive to God" (Romans 6:11). With the Holy Spirit living in them, believers have a spiritual awareness that enables them to live in relationship with God. As such they are "alive to God".

God's people are being changed to be like Jesus Christ

They show the bright glory of the Lord, as *the Lord's Spirit makes us more and more like our glorious Lord.* 2 CORINTHIANS 3:18B CEV

God fills his people with joy and peace

May God, the source of hope, fill you with all joy and peace by means of your faith in him . . . ROMANS 15:13A GNT

God's Care of His People

God cares for his people

Leave all your worries with him, because *he cares for you.*

1 PETER 5:6 GNT

God helps his people in times of trouble

God is our shelter and strength, always ready to help in times of trouble. PSALMS 46:1 GNT

God provides for all their needs

[PAUL, TO BELIEVERS WHO HAD SUPPORTED HIM:] *And my God will fully supply your every need according to his glorious riches in the Messiah Jesus.* PHILIPPIANS 4:19 ISV

God's Plans for His People

God has plans for his people

[DAVID, TO GOD:] *You have made many wonderful plans for us. I could never speak of them all—their number is so great!* PSALMS 40:5B GNT

These plans include things for his people to do

God has made us what we are, and in our union with Christ Jesus *he has created us for a life of good deeds, which he has already prepared for us to do.* EPHESIANS 2:10 GNT

In spite of their troubles, God will fulfill his plans for them

[DAVID, TO GOD:] *When I am surrounded by troubles, you keep me safe. You oppose my angry enemies and save me by your power.* ⁸*You will do everything you have promised ...* PSALMS 138:7–8A GNT

How should knowing that God is always with his people affect the way we think and act?

How do we or how can we actually know God?

In what ways does the Holy Spirit help God's people? (Do not limit your answer to only what is mentioned in the study.)

To what degree do you experience God's joy and peace? What should we do to know more of this joy and peace?

How specific do you think God's plans are for each Christian?

Topics in This Series

Section I. What to Know

Part A. God and Spiritual Powers

Part B. God and the World: Basics

Part C. God and the World: Jesus Christ

Part D. God and His Own People

Section II. What to Do

Part E. Relating to God


Part F. Church Life


Part G. Relating to People


Part H. Persevering

Overview of *The Bible Unpacked*


There are seven editions of *The Bible Unpacked*, as shown below. Each edition is an abbreviated version of the next longest edition. As such they have similar structures. Four of the editions have studies based on them, with the same text along with questions. For more details and free downloads of all the material, go to www.thebibleunpacked.net.

 **Two-Minute Edition:** *Key Bible teachings for people “on the run”*
For giving to non-Christians.


 **Pocket Edition:** *Key Bible teachings for seekers of truth*
Largely for giving to inquiring non-Christians or young new Christians.

 **Concise Edition:** *A look at the Bible’s teaching for new and young believers.* For either new or young Christians. Suitable to give to non-Christian friends. Has study series based on it.




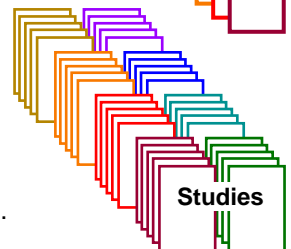
 **Foundations Edition:** *A compilation of the Bible’s teaching for believers consolidating their faith.* For newer Christians. Study series is ideal for studies with newer believers.




 **Intermediate Edition:** *A compilation of the Bible’s teaching for believers growing in the faith.* For developing a sound understanding of the faith. Studies are excellent for Bible study groups.



 **Comprehensive Edition:** *A compilation of the Bible’s teaching for believers established in the faith.* For a comprehensive knowledge of the faith. Useful as a study or a devotional tool - and preparing talks. Studies are ideal for studying topics in detail.



 **In-Depth Edition:** *A compilation of the Bible’s teaching for teachers and students of the Bible.* For Christians keen to gain a deep understanding of their faith. Useful for speakers preparing talks, study groups leaders, Bible students and Bible colleges. It is also in an electronic version, which is a PDF file.

**Electronic
Version**

An Appeal on Behalf of Persecuted Christians

Over 200 million Christians in at least 60 countries are denied basic human rights solely because of their faith. (Source: World Evangelical Alliance) Every year many Christians are killed because of their faith.

Through prayer, encouragement and practical assistance we can assist and fellowship with persecuted Christians in their suffering. You can play a vital part in this through contacting one of the organizations listed below. Most produce regular news/prayer letters.

Barnabas Fund – www.barnabasfund.org

It provides material and spiritual support in response to needs identified by local Christian leaders.

Christian Faith and Freedom – www.cffreedom.org

It advocates on behalf of and aids persecuted Christians.

Christian Solidarity International – www.csi-int.org

CSI works to defend religious liberty and help persecuted Christians.

Christian Solidarity Worldwide – www.csw.org.uk

It advocates for freedom of religion and justice for persecuted believers.

Compass Direct – www.compassdirect.org

This is a Christian news service providing news, reports, interviews and analyses of situations facing persecuted Christians.

Open Doors – sb.od.org; www.opendoors.org.au

It provides Bibles and other Christian materials, to prepare believers for persecution and equip them to maintain a witness to the Gospel.

Religious Liberty Commission – www.worldevangelicals.org/commissions/rlc/; www.ea.org.au/ea-family/Religious-Liberty.aspx

RLC defends and aids persecuted Christians. See also www.idop.org
Receive weekly updates by sending a blank email to join-rlpb@hub.xc.org.

The Bible League – www.bibleleague.org/persecuted; www.bibleleague.com

It supplies Bibles to persecuted Christians and also provides training.

Voice of the Martyrs – www.persecution.com; www.persecution.com.au

VOM provides Bibles, literature, radio broadcasts and other assistance to help persecuted Christians spread the gospel. They also send material aid.

Then the King will answer, 'I tell you the truth, anything you did for even the least of my people here, you also did for me.' Matthew 25:40 NCV

This series of studies is based on the
Concise Edition of The Bible Unpacked.

There are seven editions of *The Bible Unpacked.*
These aim to address the needs of
NON-CHRISTIANS through to MATURE CHRISTIANS,
from TEENAGERS to ADULTS.

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