

GOD IN ACTION



ONE ARMY: We see a God-raised, Spirit-filled Army for the 21st century - convinced of our calling, moving forward together

We will...

- ☐ deepen our spiritual life
- ☐ unite in prayer
- ☐ identify and develop leaders
- ☐ increase self-support and self-denial

ONE MISSION: Into the world of the hurting, broken, lonely, dispossessed and lost, reaching them in love by all means

We will...

- ☐ emphasise our integrated ministry
- ☐ reach and involve youth and children
- ☐ stand for and serve the marginalised
- ☐ encourage innovation in mission

ONE MESSAGE: With the transforming message of Jesus, bringing freedom, hope and life

We will...

- ☐ communicate Christ unashamedly
- ☐ reaffirm our belief in transformation
- ☐ evangelise and disciple effectively
- ☐ provide quality teaching resources

**God in Action Bible Study Manuel produced by Captain Michael Ramsay at the Swift Current Corps of The Salvation Army, September 2012.*

Doctrines of The Salvation Army

1. We believe that the Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments were given by inspiration of God; and that they only constitute the Divine rule of Christian faith and practice.
2. We believe that there is only one God, who is infinitely perfect, the Creator, Preserver, and Governor of all things, and who is the only proper object of religious worship.
3. We believe that there are three persons in the Godhead - the Father, the Son and the Holy Ghost - undivided in essence and co-equal in power and glory.
4. We believe that in the person of Jesus Christ the Divine and human natures are united, so that He is truly and properly God and truly and properly man.
5. We believe that our first parents were created in a state of innocence, but by their disobedience they lost their purity and happiness; and that in consequence of their fall all men have become sinners, totally depraved, and as such are justly exposed to the wrath of God.
6. We believe that the Lord Jesus Christ has, by His suffering and death, made an atonement for the whole world so that whosoever will may be saved.
7. We believe that repentance towards God, faith in our Lord Jesus Christ and regeneration by the Holy Spirit are necessary to salvation.
8. We believe that we are justified by grace, through faith in our Lord Jesus Christ; and that he that believeth hath the witness in himself.
9. We believe that continuance in a state of salvation depends upon continued obedient faith in Christ.
10. We believe that it is the privilege of all believers to be wholly sanctified, and that their whole spirit and soul and body may be preserved blameless unto the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ.
11. We believe in the immortality of the soul; in the resurrection of the body; in the general judgment at the end of the world; in the eternal happiness of the righteous; and in the endless punishment of the wicked.

In this Bible Study we will be looking at different ways in which God is active in our world today. We will look at various scriptures and ask ourselves, ‘what are we going to do about it’?

Lesson 1: 2 Timothy 3:1-4:5 (John 5:31-40)

We believe that the Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments were given by inspiration of God; and that they only constitute the Divine rule of Christian faith and practice.

Background and context: Assuming Pauline authorship of 2 Timothy, Paul probably wrote this letter while he was in prison in Rome under Emperor Nero in the mid-60s CE. Now, this imprisonment was different than other imprisonments that Paul had suffered. Previously Paul was under house arrest – an electronic monitoring type of situation, albeit before electronics of course - where Paul had a fair bit of leniency in his imprisonment. Now, however, he is in a dungeon. Tradition has it that this is Paul’s final imprisonment as well. He will only leave the dungeon for the grave. Paul will die via capital punishment here in Rome and he is now in prison awaiting that conclusion. The conditions in the dungeon were probably not as bad as those for the people today trapped in Guantanamo Bay but Paul’s experience may not be entirely dissimilar and probably even worse than prisons in this country. It certainly is not the house arrest that Paul had experienced earlier. This is a new style of imprisonment for Paul and this is what life is like for Paul as he is writing this letter to his friends and church family.

2 Timothy 3:1-9 speaks about those who oppose the truth. How can we tell what is the truth?

What qualities abound in those who oppose the truth?

2 Timothy 3:10-16 speaks about persecution that arises from proclaiming the Scriptures. What happened to Paul when he preached the scriptures?

What can happen when we preach the scriptures? Does this apply to 21st Century Canada?

What good is scripture?

Is the potential persecution worth it? If so how would we prove that it is worth it? What risks have we taken for the sake of God and the scriptures?

2 Timothy 4:1-5 speaks of a time when people will not put up with sound doctrine. Is that time now?

What is it like when people do not put up with sound doctrine? Are people doing this now?

What should we do when sound doctrine isn't even accepted in our community or our churches in this community?

John 5:31-40

Background and context: John, a first century fisherman was probably the author of this letter. John and his brother James (The sons of Zebedee) actually dropped their work mid-day and left their dad to run the family business without them to follow Jesus. John was known in the Gospel of John as ‘the disciple whom Jesus loved’ and had a prominent role in serving Jesus as a disciple and later as an apostle.

John 5:31-39 speaks about studying the scriptures. Why does Jesus say that we should study the scriptures?

How important is it to study the scriptures?

What would happen if we didn’t study the scriptures? What would we miss? Would it be anything really important?

Are we willing to commit to pray and read the scriptures a little bit everyday?

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Lesson 2: Genesis 1-4

We believe that there is only one God, who is infinitely perfect, the Creator, Preserver, and Governor of all things, and who is the only proper object of religious worship.

Background and Context: Genesis is the first book of the Pentateuch. Stories of the Patriarchs included within are very important for not only Christianity but also Judaism (established ca. 70 CE) and Islam (established ca. 610 CE)¹. Genesis records Creation, the Edenic Covenant, Noahic Covenant, Abrahamic Covenant, the patriarchs, and the journey into Egypt.

Genesis 1-2

God as Creator: Genesis 1:1-2:3

View *Room for Creation* (see Further Reading section) as we read the scriptures:

- ❑ What do we notice about the relationship between God and creation?
- ❑ What does it show us about the relationship between animals, people, etc. and their environments?
- ❑ What do we notice about God’s creation of and relationship to humankind?
- ❑ What was God’s general assessment of the environment he created and the inhabitants he created for the environment?

¹ Christians accept that Jesus is the Messiah prophesied in Genesis (and the other Scriptures) and that the Messianic Era commenced at His resurrection from the dead (Ca. 33 CE). The Rabbis responded to the destruction of the temple in relation to Jesus Christ’s resurrection by denying His Messiahship and creating the modern religion of Judaism through the drafting of a document banning the ancient sacrificial system and, among other things, removing the cornerstone of Temple worship from their ceremonies (Ca. 70 CE). Mohammed in turn responded to his rejection by the Jewish community, establishing Islam, after experiencing a vision (ca. 610 CE).

Genesis 2:4-25

- ❑ What is God's relationship to this environment that He created?
- ❑ What is man's relationship to God and the environment God created?
- ❑ What is our responsibility today for the environment? Does this still apply? If it does do we look after God's creation? How can we who are here today obey the command to look after God's creation?

Scriptures for further exploration re: creation: Psalm 33:6, Psalm 93; Isaiah 45:12; John 1:1-3; Colossians 1:15-17; Hebrews 11:3

God as Governor: Genesis 3

When God made this wonderful garden out of nothing at all for Adam and Eve to tend, He – as the governor of all things – just asked something very simple in return. God made the world for His people and He told them to take care of it and obey Him in two or three simple ways.

1. Genesis 1:28a: "God blessed them and said to them, 'Be fruitful and increase in number; fill the earth and subdue it...'"
2. Genesis 1:28b: "Rule over the fish of the sea and the birds of the air and over every living creature that moves on the ground.'"
3. Genesis 2:16-17: "And the LORD God commanded the man, 'You are free to eat from any tree in the garden; but you must not eat from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, for when you eat of it you will surely die.'"

God says 1) populate the earth, 2) take care of everything in it and 3) in doing this I'll let you eat anything you want in the garden – but just not the fruit from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, it's not safe. I'm saving that for something.

3. Genesis 2:16-17: “And the LORD God commanded the man, ‘You are free to eat from any tree in the garden; but you must not eat from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, for when you eat of it you will surely die.’”

- ❑ Read **Genesis 3**: How do people respond to God’s command to save the fruit of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil?
- ❑ What was the result of their response?
- ❑ What are some of the things that God asks us to do and how do we respond?

1. Genesis 1:28a: “God blessed them and said to them, ‘Be fruitful and increase in number; fill the earth and subdue it...’”

- ❑ Read **Genesis 11:1-9** what is humankind’s response to the command to fill the earth?
- ❑ What is God’s response to their actions?
- ❑ This is very similar to the command in **Acts 2 (especially 1-5, 42-47)** Recorded in Genesis 11 is God’s confusing of people’s language so that they would go to the ends of the earth. In Acts 2, God provides an understanding of various languages so that we can bring His Good News of salvation to the ends of the earth. How does this relate to Genesis 1 and Genesis 11?
- ❑ What is our responsibility to go and share the good news of salvation?

2. Genesis 1:28b: “Rule over the fish of the sea and the birds of the air and over every living creature that moves on the ground.”

- ❑ **Leviticus 25-26** records that we are directed that the land itself shall enjoy its Sabbath rest (**Leviticus 25:2, 26:33-35**) just as man was commanded to (Exodus 20: 8-11, Deuteronomy 5:15), and just as God did (Exodus 20:11, Genesis 2:3). If we, as ‘tenants’ of God’s land (**Leviticus 25:23**) fail in our responsibility to carry out this duty to take care of the land, then what did happen to Israel?

- ❑ What will happen to us (**2 Chronicles 36:20-21**)?

Scriptures for further exploration: Job 34:14-15; Psalm 65:9-13, 104:24-30; Isaiah 65:17-25; John 19:11; Romans 8:18-25; Colossians 1:17; Revelation 21:1-4.

God as Preserver

Genesis 4:

- ❑ **Genesis 4:1-12** records what Cain did to his brother; what were the consequences of Cain's actions?
- ❑ Cain pleaded for mercy, what did God do?
- ❑ God is the preserver of all things. **Job 12:10** records that, "In His hand is the life of every creature and the breath of all mankind." **Job 27:3** refers to the life within us as "the breath of God in my nostrils." **Job 33:4**: "The Spirit of God has made me; the breath of the Almighty gives me life." And Psalm **104:29** warns us "When You [God] hide Your face, they are terrified; when You take away their breath, they die and return to the dust." God is the preserver of all life. If He were to withdraw His spirit from us, we would perish (cf. also Job 32:8, 34:14; Psalm 33:6; Ecclesiastes 3:19).
- ❑ What happens if God ceases to be the preserver of all life?
- ❑ As God is the preserver of all life, what does this mean to us?
- ❑ As God is the creator and governor of all life and we are his managers of sorts, how can we be good stewards of the earth and all that the Lord has entrusted us to manage on His behalf?

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Lesson 3: John 1:1-18

We believe that there are three persons in the Godhead – the Father, the Son and the Holy Ghost, undivided in essence and coequal in power and glory.

Background and context: John, a first century fisherman, was probably the author of this letter. John and his brother James (The sons of Zebedee) actually dropped their work mid-day and left their dad to run the family business without them to follow Jesus. John was known in the Gospel of John as ‘the disciple whom Jesus loved’ and had a prominent role in serving Jesus as a disciple and later as an apostle.

What is the Word?

Have you ever tried to solve a word puzzle? Solve for the puzzle this word: In each section below answer the question, “What is the Word?”

1. John 1:1-3:

The Word:

- ☐ was in the beginning
- ☐ was with God
- ☐ was God

a. What (Who) is the Word?

2. John 1:3-5:

The Word:

- ☐ All things were made with this word
- ☐ Life was in this word
 - Light was in this life
 - This life was the light of man
 - This light shines in the darkness but is not understood

a. What (Who) is the Word?

b. What (Who) is the Light?

3. John 1:6-8:

The man:

- ☐ Was from God
- ☐ Was named John
- ☐ Witness to testify about the light
 - People could believe through the light
- ☐ Was not the light

b. What (Who) is the Man?

c. What (Who) is the Light?

4. John 1:9-13:

The Light

- ☐ Gives light to everyone
- ☐ Is coming into the world
- ☐ Made the world
- ☐ Was in the world
 - The world did not recognize him
- ☐ He came to that which was his
 - His own did not recognize him
- ☐ Gives the right to become children of God to Those who recognize and receive him
 - These children are born of God not people

c. What (Who) is the Light?

5. John 1:14:

The Word

- ☐ Was in the world
- ☐ Became flesh
- ☐ Dwelled (lived) among us
- ☐ We have seen the Word's glory
 - The Word's glory is the glory of the only begotten Son (therefore the Word is the Son)
 - Came from the Father
 - Full of grace and truth

a. What (Who) is the Word?

d. Who is the Son?

6. John 1:14:

The Son

- ☐ John testified about Him
- ☐ Out of His fullness we receive grace
- ☐ Grace and truth came through Him (the Law came through Moses)
- ☐ He is Jesus Christ
- ☐ No one has ever seen God except Him
- ☐ He is the only begotten Son
- ☐ He is God himself
- ☐ He is in closest relationship with God
- ☐ He has made God known

d. Who is the Son?

7. Summary:

- a. What (Who) is the Word?**
- b. What (Who) is the Man?**
- c. What (Who) is the Light?**
- d. Who is the Son?**

What is the relationship between Jesus Christ and God?

Read Genesis 1:1-2, Matthew 28:18-20, Luke 1:26-37: What do we know about the relationship between God the Father, the Son, and the Spirit?

Scriptures for further exploration: Job 33:4; Luke 1: 30-33, 46-55; 4. John 14:16-26; 15:26, 16:12-15; 20:22-23; Romans 8:15-17; Galatians 4:6.

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Lesson 4: Luke 1:26-38

We believe that in the person of Jesus Christ the Divine and human natures are united, so that He is truly and properly God and truly and properly man.

Background and context: Luke, the author of the both Luke and Acts, was a 1st century physician. These two short books (letters) that he wrote read like a two-volume set. In the opening chapters of Volume 1, Luke contrasts Jesus Christ and Augustus Caesar, the leader of Rome, which was the paramount Superpower when Jesus was born. Caesar was worshipped as a god. He ruled the most powerful country in the world and was seen as a son of god in that his deceased adopted father Julius Caesar was also revered as a god. This ‘god-king’, ‘son of god’ won a brutal civil war and was arguably the most powerful of all the Roman rulers in history. He achieved a restless peace in the Mediterranean, known as the ‘Pax Romana’ through a series of wars but this wasn’t a real peace as, of course, many subjugated peoples were awaiting their opportunities to seek independence. Luke points out that Jesus, in contrast, truly is God, the Son of God, and the real Prince of Peace. Notice how different Jesus, the real King of Kings, is from Caesar Augustus or any other king or any leader of any superpower either past or present. Luke, in invoking Caesar Augustus’ name in Chapter 2 and this taxation is drawing this parallel and making this contrast for all of us to see for it is **only** the person of Jesus Christ the Divine and human natures are united, so that He is truly and properly God and truly and properly man.

Luke 1:26-38

1. Why would Mary be troubled by the words, “Greetings you who are highly favoured! The Lord is with you”?
2. Why do we think God sends an angel messenger to Mary?
3. Why do we think Luke repeatedly mentions that Mary is a virgin?
4. What news does Gabriel give Mary? What do we know about her child?
 - a. What does it mean to be called ‘Son of the Most High’?
 - b. What is the ‘throne of his father David’ to which this pericope refers?
 - c. How can he reign over the house of Judah*forever*?

5. Read Verse 35 (NIV): *The angel answered, "The Holy Spirit will come on you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you. So the holy one to be born will be called the Son of God..."*

a. How will Mary become pregnant?

b. What does this mean about the parentage of her son Jesus?

6. What does all of this mean for us here today?

John 3:16 (NKJV): *For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life.*

Scriptures for further exploration: Matthew 1:18-25; 4:1-11; Mark 1:41; 11:12; 14:32-42; Luke 2:52; 4:1-21; John 1:1-5, 14-18; 3:16-21; 4:6; 11:35; 14:1-11; 17:1-5; 2 Corinthians 8:9; Philippians 2:5-11; Colossians 1:15-17; Hebrews 1:1-3; 2:10-18; 5:1-10

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