

Making Biblical Decisions

Study Guide

LESSON
EIGHT

THE EXISTENTIAL
PERSPECTIVE: BEING GOOD



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HOW TO USE THIS LESSON AND STUDY GUIDE

This study guide is designed for use in conjunction with the associated video lesson. If you do not have access to the video, the study guide will also work with the audio and/or text versions of the lesson. Additionally, the lesson and study guide are intended to be used in a learning community, but they also can be used for individual study if necessary.

- **Before you watch the lesson**
 - **Prepare** — Complete any recommended readings.
 - **Schedule viewing** — In the Notes section of the study guide, the lesson has been divided into sections that correspond to the video. Using the time codes found in parentheses beside each major division, determine where to begin and end your viewing session. IIM lessons are densely packed with information, so you may also want to schedule breaks. Breaks should be scheduled at major divisions.
- **While you are watching the lesson**
 - **Take notes** — The Notes section of the study guide contains a basic outline of the lesson, including the time codes for the beginning of each section and key notes to guide you through the information. Many of the main ideas are already summarized, but make sure to supplement these with your own notes. You should also add supporting details that will help you to remember, describe, and defend the main ideas.
 - **Record comments and questions** — As you watch the video, you may have comments and/or questions on what you are learning. Use the margins to record your comments and questions so that you can share these with the group following the viewing session.
 - **Pause/replay portions of the lesson** — You may find it helpful to pause or replay the video at certain points in order to write additional notes, review difficult concepts, or discuss points of interest.
- **After you watch the lesson**
 - **Complete Review Questions** — Review Questions are based on the basic content of the lesson. You should answer Review Questions in the space provided. These questions should be completed individually rather than in a group.
 - **Answer/discuss Application Questions** — Application Questions are questions relating the content of the lesson to Christian living, theology, and ministry. Application questions are appropriate for written assignments or as topics for group discussions. For written assignments, it is recommended that answers not exceed one page in length.

Notes

I. Introduction (0:27)

Our words, thoughts and deeds are inseparably related to our nature. Our actions always reflect our being.

Existential perspective: centers on the persons that make ethical decisions.

- character
- nature
- the kinds of people we are and ought to be

II. Creation (4:18)

A. God (5:08)

All true moral goodness is rooted in God himself.

1. Being (5:35)

God's attributes are inseparable from his person; they define who he is.

Scripture commonly describes and names God according to his attributes:

- Father of compassion
- God of all comfort
- God Almighty
- God of Justice
- God of Peace
- Holy One
- King of Glory

All God's essential attributes are "immutable" — they can never change.

2. Goodness (9:04)

Goodness: moral purity and perfection.

God is the ultimate standard of morality. There is no external standard of goodness by which he or we can be judged.

Each of God's attributes is:

- a perspective on his entire being.
- dependent on the others
- qualified by the others

B. Humanity (13:44)

Humanity was created to reflect God's goodness.

1. Image (15:00)

God, the great king over all creation, appointed human beings to be his living images.

God created us with qualities that reflected his own perfections.

2. Blessing (18:52)

Whatever God blesses and approves is good, and whatever God curses and condemns is evil.

God blessed Adam and Eve because they had the innate attribute of goodness.

3. Cultural Mandate (20:25)

God appointed humanity:

- to be his vassal kings on the earth
- to fill, subdue and rule it for his glory

Humanity was:

- able to build a holy, righteous kingdom fit for God's habitation
- able to minister in the Lord's manifest presence without being destroyed
- morally pure in our being
- able to choose and to act in morally good ways

III. Fall (22:40)

Sin damaged humanity's being, and thereby destroyed our goodness.

A. Nature (23:54)

Nature: Our fundamental character, the central aspects of our being.

The fundamental character of the human race became morally evil.

B. Will (26:57)

Will: personal faculty for deciding, choosing, desiring, hoping, and intending.

When God cursed the human race, our wills were corrupted, making it impossible for us to want to please God.

Sin taints everything we think, say and do.

There is a sense in which unregenerate people:

- obey God's commands
- do things that are good

Works must pass five tests in order to be truly good:

- They must be works that God commands.
- They must be of good use to ourselves and to others.
- They must proceed from a heart that is purified by faith.
- They must be done in a right manner.
- They must be done for the right end, which is the glory of God.

C. Knowledge (34:35)

The Fall has prevented human beings from obtaining a proper knowledge of God's commands.

1. Access to Revelation (35:32)

The Fall limits the Holy Spirit's work of illumination and inward leading.

- **Illumination:** a divine gift of knowledge or understanding that is primarily cognitive.
- **Inward leading:** a divine gift of knowledge or understanding that is primarily emotive or intuitive.

God reveals himself in ways that bless those who love him and that curse those who hate him.

2. Understanding of Revelation (38:44)

Moral understanding:

- depends on more than mere cognition
- involves the whole person

Instead of accepting true knowledge from God, we believe the lies that our sinful hearts invent.

3. Obedience to Revelation (41:54)

There is a sense in which knowledge and obedience are essentially the same thing.

a. Obedience Leads to Knowledge

Reciprocal relationship:

- knowledge of God produces obedience to God
- obedience is a prerequisite for knowledge
- obedient application of God's word leads to knowledge

Just as obedience leads to knowledge, sin leads to ignorance.

b. Obedience Is Knowledge

Synonymous use:

- one concept follows and explains the other
- obedience or knowledge is provided as a definition for the other
- obedience or knowledge is used an example of the other

IV. Redemption (49:25)

Redemption:

- began immediately after the Fall, when God extended mercy to Adam and Eve
- did not immediately eradicate all the effects of the Fall

A. Nature (50:40)

When we are redeemed in Christ:

- the Holy Spirit gives us a good nature that loves God and hates sin
- we become capable of true goodness

When God redeems us, he recreates us, giving us new hearts and spirits that are righteous rather than sinful.

B. Will (54:55)

Will: our personal faculty for deciding, choosing, desiring, hoping, and intending.

When we come to faith in Christ:

- sin's hold over our will is broken
- the Holy Spirit indwells us, strengthening and moving our wills to love and to obey the Lord

Sin still indwells us, leaving us to struggle between the influence of sin and the influence of the Holy Spirit.

C. Knowledge (57:58)

1. Access to Revelation (58:11)

In redemption, we have greater access to illumination and inward leading.

The Holy Spirit:

- convinces us of the truth of the gospel and of many other things
- makes our consciences sensitive to God's character
- gives us godly intuitions

2. **Understanding of Revelation (1:00:05)**

The Holy Spirit:

- changes our hearts, so that we love God
- renews our minds, so that we are able to grasp the truths that God reveals

The Holy Spirit guards our hearts and our minds:

- destroying sin's ability to deceive us
- empowering us to understand revelation

3. **Obedience to Revelation (1:02:26)**

a. **Redemption Leads To Obedience**

Under the Holy Spirit's guidance and indwelling power, believers behave differently from the rest of the world.

Through his indwelling and redeeming presence, the Holy Spirit produces the fruit of righteousness in our lives.

b. Redemption Is Obedience

Conversion is an act of obedience.

Redeemed people are obedient to the Lord.

Redemption produces obedience to God, and obedience to God produces knowledge of God and his ways.

V. Conclusion (1:09:50)

3. How and in what way has human nature been affected by the Fall?

4. In what ways has the human will been effected by the Fall?

Application Questions

1. How can Christians find comfort in the fact that God's attributes are immutable? What comfort is to be found with the knowledge that God's attributes never conflict?
2. In what ways does the concept of the image of God as royal children dignify humanity?
3. How can a morally evil person who is living under the curse make seemingly morally good decisions (i.e. truthful, helpful, kind, etc.)?
4. The Fall corrupts human nature, enslaves the will, and severely damages our knowledge of God's revelation. What impact does this have on our efforts to evangelize the world? How should it inform our evangelism strategies?
5. Explain from your own life how knowledge of God has led to obedience.
6. In what ways have you seen your obedience to God's standard result in a more intimate knowledge of him?
7. In Christ, we have become capable of true goodness again, but we still struggle with sin. What strategies have you found helpful in resisting sin? What strategies have you found unhelpful in resisting sin?
8. In what ways do you see your church community loving God and obeying him? In what ways are you loving God and obeying him? Explain the connection between this love and obedience.
9. Why should the return of Jesus and the full application of his redeeming work bring Christians hope?
10. What is the most significant insight you have learned from this study?