Rose Bible Basics:

What Christians Believe at a Glance

A FREE downloadable version of this guide is available at rose-publishing.com. Click on “News & Info,” then on “Downloads.”

The leader guide covers each chapter of this book and includes teaching tips, additional resources, and answer keys for the study guide worksheets. The study guide includes reproducible worksheets and/or discussion questions for each chapter.

What participants will gain from this study:
- Identify key Christian beliefs.
- Know why the creeds are important for understanding the essentials of Christianity.
- Be able to answer important questions about who Jesus is.
- Be able to correct misunderstandings about the Trinity and the deity of Jesus.
- Learn the differences and similarities between 12 major denominations.
- Understand why and how Christians are baptized.
- Compare four different ways that Christians view the book of Revelation.
- Learn what the Bible teaches about heaven.
LEADER GUIDE

Spend time in prayer before each session and pray for each participant.

CHAPTER 1: ESSENTIAL DOCTRINE MADE EASY

Main Idea
These essential doctrines unify Christians who seek to have a biblical faith, though Christians may not agree on how they work out the details of their faith.

Teaching Tips
Introduce participants to the purposes of this study. Ask them what they hope to gain from the study or why they joined this study.
Ask participants to share about their own religious background. This will help you better plan the following sessions to meet the needs of the group.
Clarify with participants that these essential doctrines are what must be true for salvation to be possible, not that all these must be believed for a person to be saved (see “To Believe or Not to Believe?” section). Be careful to avoid communicating to participants that they might not be saved because they don’t quite understand or have doubts about some of these doctrines.

Digging Deeper
This We Believe by Gen. Eds. John N. Akers, John H. Armstrong, and John D. Woodbridge (Zondervan, 2000); Each chapter is written by well-known Christians to explain the basic principles of Christianity.
To prepare for this session use a systematic theology handbook to look up theological terms or concepts that you are not familiar with. See for example: Systematic Theology: An Introduction to Biblical Doctrine by Wayne Grudem (Zondervan, 1994); Introducing Christian Doctrine 2nd Ed. by Millard Erickson (Baker, 2001).
Also see the resources listed at the end of the chapter.

Worksheet Key
(1) God (2) Persons (3) good works (or deeds) (4) human being (5) perfect (or sinless)
(6) God (or divine) (7) human (8) rescue (or save) (9) works (or deeds) (10) death
(11) bodily (12) Jesus / Christ (13) represents (or mediates/intercedes for) (14) coming

CHAPTER 2: CREEDS AND HERESIES: THEN & NOW

Main Idea
Creeds help us distinguish between essential and nonessential Christian beliefs.

Teaching Tips
If you are unsure of how to pronounce some of the terms in this chapter, before the session, go to Dictionary.com (http://dictionary.reference.com/). This website has on-screen and audio pronunciation guides for most of the terms used in this chapter.
Close the session by reading the Apostles’ Creed aloud together. Print out the creed for each participant or put the creed on a screen for participants to follow along.

CHAPTER 3: THE TRINITY

Main Idea
There is only one God, and this God exists as one essence in three persons: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

Teaching Tips
This chapter jumps right into the discussion of what Christians believe about the Trinity. However, it might be useful to begin the session by discussing: (1) Why is believing in the Trinity important? (2) How does belief in the Trinity make a difference in a Christian's spiritual life? Then move the teaching time into a discussion about the definition and scriptural basis of the Trinity.

The worksheet activity provided for this chapter may take considerable time so plan your session accordingly. This activity can be done at the beginning or middle of the session.

Worksheet
If the class is large enough, break them into three smaller groups. Assign each group a different list of verses from the three sections of worksheet. If the class is small, have all participants complete the worksheet together. When the groups complete their portion of the worksheet, list all the attributes and activities they found from the Scriptures onto a whiteboard or easel pad. Ask participants: What similar attributes and activities do you notice across all three: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit? Remember, this activity is not a competition. It encourages participants to interpret Scripture themselves, and to see how the Bible teaches the doctrine of the Trinity using a variety of passages taken together, rather than just all in one verse.

CHAPTER 4: LIFE OF JESUS

Main Idea
Jesus is the Christ and the Son of God. He came to save the world and made that salvation possible through his death and resurrection.
Teaching Tips
Open this session by having participants brainstorm all the words they think of when they hear the name Jesus. Write all the words on a whiteboard or easel pad. Identify which themes you see emerging. Explain that as Christians we are to become like Jesus, so how we view him affects how we live our lives.

Digging Deeper
*Names of Jesus* pamphlet (Rose Publishing). Explores who Jesus is through what his names and titles reveal.

*100 Prophecies Fulfilled by Jesus* (Rose Publishing). Shows how Jesus is the Messiah anticipated in the Old Testament.

*Evidence for Jesus: Discover the Facts that Prove the Truth of the Bible* by Ralph Muncaster (Harvest House, 2004).

Worksheet Key
(1) False  (2) e  (3) d  (4) False  (5) c

CHAPTERS 5: DENOMINATIONS COMPARISON

Main Idea
Christians are unified in several core beliefs, however there is much diversity in the specifics of other beliefs and practices.

Teaching Tips
This chapter does not cover in detail the history of each denomination. You can use this activity to explore briefly the background of each denomination. Use the resources listed below to write a short “How did this denomination begin?” paragraph for each denomination. Print each paragraph on one side of a piece of paper and on the other side print a picture representing the denomination. Hand out the papers, one to each participant, and have them read the paragraph to the group while showing the picture on the reverse side of the paper. If participant attendance is consistent, you can assign one denomination to each participant at the end of the previous session. Then each participant can come back this session and share with the group what they found out about the roots of that denomination.

This chapter is packed with facts and information, so be sure to allow time for discussing the practical aspects of this topic. For example, discuss: With so many denominations, how can believers still see themselves as one Body of Christ? How can diverse denominations work together to further the mission of the kingdom of God?

Digging Deeper


See also www.religionfacts.com/christianity/denominations.htm

Worksheet Key
(1) b   (2) e   (3) c   (4) a   (5) g   (6) h   (7) d   (8) f   (9) j   (10) i

CHAPTER 6: BAPTISM

Main Idea
Baptism is an important part of the Christian faith, but Christian groups practice baptism differently.

Teaching Tips
Prior to this session research your church’s/denomination’s official view of baptism. Is baptism part of their statement of faith? What Scriptures do they use to explain their stance on baptism? Is baptism required for church membership or leadership? Share this with the group. Remember that the topic of baptism can be controversial. For many people, their baptism—or their children’s baptism—is a meaningful and personal event in their life. Some participants may be believers who have not been baptized. In expressing the importance of baptism for Christians, be careful avoid sounding accusatory or causing them doubt their salvation. Instead, focus on the experience and blessing of baptism in a Christian’s life, as well as Jesus’ command to be baptized.

Digging Deeper
Understanding Four Views on Baptism, Baptist View by Thomas J. Nettles, Reformed View by Richard L. Pratt, Jr., Lutheran View by Robert Kolb, Churches of Christ View by John D. Castelein (Zondervan, 2007)

Worksheet Key
(1) False  (2) False  (3) d  (4) e  (5) True

CHAPTER 7: UNDERSTANDING THE BOOK OF REVELATION

Main Idea
The book of Revelation provides hope and encouragement for all believers, although believers may interpret the book in different ways.

Teaching Tips
Open the session by reading Revelation 1:1–8, John’s opening words. Explain that from the beginning of the book the focus is on the “Lord God and Jesus Christ our savior,” and that is what needs to be kept in mind as one reads Revelation. This will help set the tone for the session, keeping the focus on God and the truth that Scripture is God’s revelation to us so that we might glorify him.
Key questions to consider: (1) Are the Old Testament promises and covenants for all believers today, or only for the people of Israel? (2) Should we look more to the blessings of the future, or here on earth? (3) Are the promises in Revelation only for believers, or for all people? How a person answers these questions conditions how he or she reads the book of Revelation.

Digging Deeper
Four Views of the End Times pamphlet (Rose Publishing). Diagrams comparing four views on the millennium.

Three views on the Rapture, Pretribulation by Paul D. Feinberg, Midtribulation by Gleason L. Archer, Posttribulation by Douglas J. Moo (Zondervan, 1996)

Four Views on the Book of Revelation, Preterist by Kenneth L. Gentry Jr., Idealist by Sam Hamstra Jr., Progressive Dispensationalist by C. Marvin Pate, Classical Dispensationalist by Robert L. Thomas (Zondervan, 1998)

Worksheet Key
(1) historicist (2) futurist (3) idealist (4) preterist (5) futurist

CHAPTER 8: WHAT’S SO GREAT ABOUT HEAVEN

Main Idea
Heaven is at the heart of God’s plan for creation; It’s all we ever dreamt of and more.

Teaching Tips
The issue of near-death experiences may arise during group discussion or teaching time. If it does, remind participants: (1) It is difficult to know what is happening in the unconscious mind during medical/physical trauma, so we should not be quick to rely on every near-death experience story; (2) Always compare personal testimonies against what Scripture says; and (3) Focus on what we do know about heaven that has been revealed in the Bible.

Digging Deeper
Heaven: Your Real Home by Joni Erickson Tada (Zondervan, 1997)
Surprised by Hope: Rethinking Heaven, the Resurrection, and the Mission of the Church by N.T. Wright (Harper One, 2008).

Worksheet Key
(1) False (2) False (3) e (4) c (5) True

Feedback
To improve future studies, be sure to get feedback from the group about teaching style, meeting location, discussion time, material covered, length of study, and group size. Choose a method that best suits your group: Anonymous evaluation sheet, e-mail response or questionnaire, open discussion. (See the feedback questions at the end of the study guide.)

The inclusion of a work or website does not necessarily mean endorsement of all its contents or of other works by the same author(s).

STUDY GUIDE

The study guide which begins on the following page includes a reproducible worksheet and/or discussion questions for group discussion or personal reflection.

Essential Doctrine Made Easy

Worksheet

Fill in the blanks.

Essential Doctrine:
#1. There is only one _________________.
#2. God is one essence, but three _________________.
#3. We are sinful and cannot please God by our own ________________ alone.
#4. Jesus became a ________________ through supernatural conception in Mary’s womb.
#5. Jesus was ________________. Thus he is able to represent us before God.
#6. Jesus Christ is, in essence, _________________.
#7. Jesus Christ was fully ________________, as well as fully divine.
#8. God—and God alone— is able to ________________ us.
#9. Faith, not ________________, connects us to God.
#10. Only Christ’s sinless life, sacrificial ________________, and bodily resurrection can bring us to God.
#11. Jesus rose ________________ from the grave.
#12. ________________ ascended, body and soul, to God.
#13. Christ ________________ our best interests before God.
#14. Jesus is ________________ again soon, and we should be ready.

Discussion Questions
1. Which essential doctrines do you think are easiest for people to accept, and which ones most difficult? Why?
2. How does understanding the “bad news” of human depravity, help us appreciate the “good news” of Jesus?
3. How does learning more about the Christian faith affect one’s walk with God?
4. What is God’s promise to believers for the future?
5. What is the significance of Jesus’ resurrection?
6. If someone were to ask you, “What is grace?” what would you say?
Creeds and Heresies: Then & Now

Worksheet

1. What are creeds?
   b. Statements that join Christians in unity in “one Lord.”
   c. Statements that help believers identify false teaching.
   d. All of the above
   e. None of the above

2. Doctrine is from the Latin word *doctrina* meaning:
   a. Healing or health
   b. I believe
   c. Teaching or learning
   d. Acknowledge

3. Which is not true of Gnosticism?
   a. The material world is evil—and an illusion.
   b. It is seen in much of today’s pop spirituality.
   c. It’s a form of pantheism.
   d. God and his creation are separate.

4. True or False? The Apostles’ Creed was written by the apostles not long after they completed the four Gospels.

5. True or False? Creeds help Christians articulate how their beliefs differ from other teachings.

Discussion Questions

1. Does your church use creeds? If so, in what way?
2. How do creeds help unify believers?
3. What stood out to you as you read the section on heresies in early church history?
4. Why was defending the deity of Jesus so important to the early church?
5. What are the creeds relationship to the Bible? Should believers treat them differently or the same?
The Trinity

Worksheet
Look up each Scripture passage below and list all the attributes and activities described. (Some are already begun for you.)

Attributes and Activities

Father
Psalm 100:3
1 John 3:20
Psalm 138:3
Genesis 1:1
Ephesians 1:4–5
Jeremiah 23:24
Romans 16:25–27
John 5:21

Creator. Owner of us. Authority over his creation.

Son
Colossians 1:16–17
John 5:21
Revelation 1:17–18
John 1:4
John 21:17
Philippians 4:13
Ephesians 1:22–23
Romans 8:10
Matthew 8:31–32

All creation through him. Without him nothing could exist. Supreme.

Holy Spirit
1 Corinthians 2:10–11
Hebrews 9:14
1 Corinthians 12:11
Ephesians 3:16
Psalm 139:7
Psalm 104:30
Romans 8:11

Knows the deep things of God. Reveals the things of God. The Spirit of God.

Compare all three lists. What similar attributes and activities do you notice across all three?

What does this tell us about God the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit?

The Trinity

Discussion Questions

1. After reading this chapter, what did you learn about the Trinity that you previously didn’t know or misunderstood?
2. Why is Jesus’ divinity important for our relationship with God?
3. The three Persons of the Trinity are in relationship with one another. Does God existing in relationship make a difference in how we should live? Why or why not?
4. What are some practical things you can do to help you relate to God as triune—Father, Son, and Holy Spirit?
5. What questions do you still have about the Trinity and would like to learn more about?
Life of Jesus

Worksheet

1. True or False? Jesus was human while on earth and became divine after his resurrection.

2. Which is part of Jesus’ message?
   a. Repentance
   b. Belief
   c. Himself
   d. (a) and (b)
   e. All of the above

3. Jesus referred to himself in the Gospels as:
   a. The gate
   b. The bread
   c. The book
   d. (a) and (b)
   e. All of the above

4. True or False? Jesus’ betrayal and execution came as a surprise to Jesus.

5. Which of the following is true about Jesus’ second coming?
   a. Jesus did not speak of it while on earth
   b. Only believers will see him when he returns
   c. Only believers will rule with him
   d. (b) and (c)

Discussion Questions

1. Books and movies portray Jesus in many ways: Jesus the revolutionary, Jesus the martyr, Jesus the rabbi, Jesus meek and mild, Jesus the healer, etc. How do you view Jesus when you read the Gospels?

2. When Jesus preached that the “kingdom of God is near” (Mark 1:15), what might his first-century Jewish audience have understood it to mean? What do you think people today understand it to mean?

3. What does it mean that Jesus was the Christ, the Messiah? How do people nowadays understand these terms?

4. In what ways did Jesus’ resurrection change the lives of his disciples? How does it change the lives of believers today?
Denominations Comparison

Worksheet
Match the following terms with their descriptions. (Use each only once)

1. ___ congracional
   a. Literally, “universal.” The faithful church in all its expressions worldwide.
2. ___ inerrant
   b. A form of church government in which each local church is self-governing; practiced by many denominational groups.
3. ___ evangelical
   c. Conservative Christians, mostly Protestant, who affirm the infallibility or inerrancy of the Bible.
4. ___ catholic
   d. A form of baptism in which a person is completely submerged under water; nearly always practiced in Baptist churches.
5. ___ Pope
   e. Without error; used by evangelicals with reference to the complete trustworthiness of the Bible in all matters on which it speaks.
6. ___ liturgical
   f. Adhering to the essentials of the Christian faith, especially as articulated in the early creeds.
7. ___ immersion
   g. The title, meaning “Father,” referring to the Bishop of Rome (head of the Roman Catholic Church).
8. ___ orthodox
   h. A form of corporate worship in which the priest or minister leads the congregation in readings and prayers from a prescribed text.
9. ___ Calvinism
   i. Books considered part of the Old Testament in Catholic or Orthodox theology but not in Protestant theology (e.g., 1 and 2 Maccabees, Wisdom of Solomon).
10. ___ Apocrypha
    j. The theological tradition particularly in the Reformed and Presbyterian church bodies.

Discussion Questions
1. What did you learn from this chapter that you didn’t know or misunderstood before?
2. Are you more familiar with liturgical or non-liturgical churches? If both, how was your experience in liturgical and non-liturgical churches different and similar?
3. How important is denominational affiliation in your family or among your Christian friends? How important is denominational affiliation to you?
4. What do you think are some reasons for why there are so many different denominations?
5. The apostle Paul says in Ephesians 4:25 that believers are “all members of one body.” How do you understand this in light of so many denominations?
Baptism

Worksheet

1. True or False? Those who practice infant baptism believe that the act of baptism itself saves a person.

2. True or False? The debate over baptism for believers vs. infants first began during the Protestant Reformation.

3. Which of the following was not emphasized as a part of baptism in church history?
   a. Initiation
   b. Identification
   c. Infusion
   d. Individuation

4. Believer’s baptism:
   a. Is usually practiced by immersion.
   b. Emphasizes faith as a human response to God’s grace.
   c. Closer to the Old Testament model of sacrifice, than circumcision.
   d. (a) and (b)
   e. All of the above

5. True or False? Initiation in baptism refers to entering into the life of Christ’s body.

Discussion Questions

1. What did you learn about baptism from this chapter that you didn’t know or misunderstood before?
2. What types of baptism services have you attended or been part of? Share your experience in the different types.
3. Why is baptism important in a believer’s life? Is baptism mandatory for believers?
4. In what ways is baptism a corporate (or community) act, rather than just an individual act?
Understanding the Book of Revelation

Worksheet
Fill in the blanks using the four views below (may be used more than once).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Historicist</th>
<th>Preterist</th>
<th>Futurist</th>
<th>Idealist</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

1. In the ______________ view, the events in Revelation are seen as symbolic descriptions of historical events throughout history.

2. In the ______________ view, nearly all of Revelation is yet to occur.

3. Only the ______________ view does not see the book of Revelation as prophetic.

4. In the partial ______________ view, most of Revelation is prophecy fulfilled in the first century AD, though final chapters of Revelation describe future events to occur at the end of time.

5. Dispensationalist premillennialists (and some historic premillennialists) interpret Revelation in the _____________ way.

Discussion Questions
1. What stood out to you as you read this chapter?
2. Which view are you most familiar with? Which view are you least familiar with?
3. When you read the book of Revelation which of the four approaches do you typically take?
4. How does a person’s view on the book of Revelation change how they see God’s plan for the future?
5. The apostle Paul writes in 2 Timothy 3:16 that “all Scripture is ... useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness.” In what ways do you see the book of Revelation being useful for believers today?
What’s So Great about Heaven

Worksheet

1. True of False? The physical world is evil, so we must focus on the spiritual which is good.

2. True of False? None of the features of this world will continue in the renewed creation.

3. Which of the following will end in the renewed creation?
   a. Marriage
   b. Death
   c. Work
   d. All of the above
   e. (a) and (b)

4. In heaven we will worship God always; This means that we will all:
   a. Sing hymns day and night.
   b. Be in church every day.
   c. Have an attitude of awe, gratitude, humility, and love.
   d. Be really bored.

5. True or False? Christ is the first example or “firstfruits” of all who will be raised into new life.

Discussion Questions

1. What do you remember learning about heaven when you were growing up?
2. At what times in your life do you most reflect on the afterlife? Give an example.
3. In what ways does having a belief in the reality of heaven change the way we live our lives now?
4. How can a person be sure that he or she will go to heaven?
5. What questions do you still have about heaven and would like to learn more about?
FEEDBACK

1. What did you learn through this study that deepened your relationship with God and/or helped you understand biblical teachings better?

__________________________________________________________________________
__________________________________________________________________________

2. What was your favorite thing about this study, and why?

__________________________________________________________________________
__________________________________________________________________________

3. How could the meeting location, setting, length, or time be improved?

__________________________________________________________________________
__________________________________________________________________________

4. Did you think the material covered was too difficult, too easy, or just right?

__________________________________________________________________________
__________________________________________________________________________

5. What would you like to see different about the group discussions?

__________________________________________________________________________
__________________________________________________________________________

6. What would you like to see different about the activities?

__________________________________________________________________________
__________________________________________________________________________

7. What topic would you like to learn more about?

__________________________________________________________________________
__________________________________________________________________________

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