

## STUDY 1

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# What we have lost...

Deep down beneath the surface of our lives, we all have to acknowledge that something is not right. We are not what we are meant to be. There is more to life than just being born, growing up, getting an education, working, raising a family, accumulating things, and then dying. There are moments in life when there is a deep uneasiness that perhaps the most important reason for living has been overlooked or missed. We have lost something that material possessions, education, and even religion have not been able to replace.

As we look around us, we have to ask these questions. Why are there so many unhappy people? Why is the world filled with so much trouble? Why do people treat each other the way they do? Why is there so much fighting, war and unrest? Why is there so much suffering? Why can't we live together in peace and harmony? Surely this is not the way the world is meant to be! What has gone wrong? The Bible tells us the answer. It takes us straight to the root problem of all the trouble and unhappiness within us and around us.



## 1. A God-shaped emptiness

Yes, we have lost something. The Bible tells us we have lost God. Pascal, the French scientist said, *“There is a God-shaped emptiness within the heart of every person which cannot be filled by any other created thing, but only by God the Creator, made known through Jesus Christ.”*

The Bible tells us that our deepest need is spiritual. Above everything else, we need to know the God who made us. To grow up and live your life without ever knowing God in the way He wants you to know Him, would be to miss the central purpose for which you were created. You would go through life, like many people do, with a deep emptiness that nothing else can fill. You may try to fill this God-shaped emptiness with other things – work, money, pleasure, material things, and ‘gods’ of your own making. But these will never satisfy your deepest needs or change the human heart.

## 2 How it was meant to be

The Bible takes us back to the beginning. It tells us the way life was meant to be from the start. Until we understand this, we will never see our deep need. It tells us that there is a God who made us. We are not here by chance. The world and everything in it is made by God and belongs to God. We also belong to God because He created us in a special way. We are not just the highest form of animal life. We have been made in ‘God’s image’. God has put within us a part of His own nature. He has created us to have a special and unique relationship with Himself. He has made us with deep spiritual needs that only He can satisfy. He was always meant to be the centre of our lives. We were always meant to find our highest joy and fulfillment in Him. Our first parents knew God in this close way. They enjoyed a deep and personal

relationship with their Creator. He was their delight and joy. He was their reason for living. They lived in perfect harmony with God, with each other, and with themselves. There was nothing missing.

### 3. What went wrong?

Into this perfect world came something that changed all that. The Bible tells us that Satan, a beautiful created being at first, rebelled against God. He then brought his spirit of rebellion to our first parents. He deceived them and led them to distrust and disobey what God had clearly told them. They thought they could act independently of God and live without Him, but came under the control of Satan instead. In one terrible moment, their close and beautiful relationship with God was broken. They become separated from God and something changed within them. From that moment they died spiritually and began to die physically. But that was not all! The children of Adam and Eve inherited their sinful nature. From then on, like pollution at the source of a river, the poison of sin has flowed to all of Adam's descendants. In this way death (both spiritual and physical) has come to all people, because all have sinned.

This means there is something wrong inside every one of us right from the moment of birth. We have lost something . . . We have a spiritual emptiness that affects our relationship with God and everything else. This is the start of all our problems.

### 4. We have rebelled



God has the right to control everything in the world, including each of our lives. What we do in God's world, and with it, is important to God. He has never lost interest in His world, or in us. He continues to look after the world and keep it going. He knows all about us and yet He loves us. But we have rejected His love. Ever since Adam and Eve chose to disobey God, men and women everywhere have not wanted God to rule over their lives. They have chosen to be independent. They have turned their backs on the Creator of the universe. They have wanted to go their own way and do what they want to do. They have wanted to be free from God's rule and authority. Yet whether they realize it or not, they are not really free at all. Instead of being friends of God, they have become slaves of sin and servants of Satan who rules over their lives. The Bible calls this rebellion against God – sin.

We are all guilty of turning against the highest Ruler of the universe.

### 5 The sad results

We may not realize we have rejected God's rule over our lives. But the results are the same. This rebellion has broken our relationship with God. It has also spoiled our relationships with one another. It has brought all kinds of wrong things into human life – selfishness, fear, anger, pride, hatred, violence, injustice – and has resulted in broken relationships between people. But even worse than that, our rejection of God's love brings God's judgement upon us. We all stand guilty before God. We may not think that matters now. But the day is coming when all who have rejected God will stand before His judgement throne. Then all will realize how serious it is to turn their backs on God. They rejected God during their life. Now He rejects them and they will live eternally without Him. This is truly bad news! But what can we do about it? Isn't there some way we can get out of this deep hole that we are in?

# Explore further:

1. Read again the first two paragraphs in the study. Have you ever wondered why there are so many problems in life or why the world is filled with so much trouble?

often;                      sometimes;                      occasionally;                      never.

Have you come up with a satisfying answer? \_\_\_\_\_

2. In your quiet moments have you ever wondered or felt an uneasiness that perhaps you have overlooked or missed the most important reason for living?

sometimes;                      never.

How have you felt? \_\_\_\_\_

3. The Bible tells us that God made us in His own image (*See Genesis 1:26-27*). Why do you think God put a part of His nature within us? What was His purpose in this?

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4. If God created the world and made us in His image what right then does He have over the world and over your life?

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5. At the start of human history God wanted to have a personal relationship with our first parents (*See Genesis 1:27-31, 3:8-9*). If God wanted to have a personal relationship with them, what kind of relationship do you think He wants to have with you?

He is not interested in me;  
 He does not care;  
 He chooses to remain distant and uninvolved;  
 He wants a personal relationship with me also.

6. Something spoiled that close and beautiful relationship our first parents had with God. What went wrong according to *Genesis 3:1-10*?

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7. The Bible goes on to tell us the sad results of this broken relationship with God (*See Genesis 3:6-19*). This is the root of all our problems because we have also been affected. In what ways does the Bible say we have been affected? (*See Romans 5:12*).

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- 8. 'Sin' simply means to refuse God's rule over my life, to live independently of Him, to go my own way. Think back over your life. How have you been living in relation to God?  
(Tick whichever is true of you).

I have refused or ignored God's rule over my life;  
 I have lived independently or without reference to God;  
 I have lived the way I think best;  
 I have recognised God's ownership of my life;  
 I have tried to live the way God wants me to live.

- 9. What inward result does sin (or living independently of God) bring into our lives according to the following references?

Romans 6:23 (first half) \_\_\_\_\_

Romans 8:7-8 \_\_\_\_\_

What does God think about this? (See Romans 8:8) \_\_\_\_\_

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- 10. What are some of the outward results of sin in people's lives? (See Galatians 5:19-21)

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What does God think about this? (See Galatians 5:21) \_\_\_\_\_

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- 11. Romans 1:18-25 tells us that God is angry. Read this passage and write down why God is angry.

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- 12. What kind of relationship do you have with God right now? Do you feel separated and cut off from Him? Write down how you feel.

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Are you happy to stay separated from the God who created you and loves you or do you want to enter into a right relationship with Him? Write down what you want.

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## Bad News: Sin separates

"For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God"

Romans 3:23