

The Truth project.®

Leader's Guide

The Truth Project® Leader's Guide

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Practical Facilitation

Introduction

Thank you for stepping up and leading *The Truth Project*. Our prayer is that you have been personally impacted by the content and have felt God's call on your life to arise and lead this small group study in your home or church. Welcome to the journey! We believe that God will do a mighty work in the lives on those who choose to join your group.

What Is Your Role?

Right now, you are probably somewhat intimidated by this curriculum. We've given you 13 hours of Christian worldview content, asked you to invite others into your small group and eventually lead them through a transformational process in which they come face to face with God! Wow, no small task!

What Is Meant by *Facilitator*?

In this context, you should view your role not as a leader but as facilitator. By *facilitator*, we mean the following:

1. Create an environment in your home where individuals feel comfortable enough to wrestle authentically with this content.
2. Be authentic and real with your struggles and sin, which will provide the context for others to appropriately share their concerns and issues.
3. Encourage the members of your group to daily gaze upon the face of God, allowing Him to transform them in the process.

It Is Not Dependent on You

Secondarily, the success of your group is not dependent on you or your ability to lead a small group and bake wonderful brownies (though that helps!). What this is about is the opportunity to be a part of what God is doing in the lives of His people worldwide, leaving room for the Holy Spirit to work through this curriculum and begin to transform the minds and hearts of each person who participates in your small group. So, don't worry that this is all dependent on you—it is not. If you have been praying by name for each participant in your group, then we believe God will honor those petitions and begin a great work in the lives of those who join your study.

Who to Invite

Introduction

According to the Barna Research Group, only 9 percent of born-again believers hold a biblical worldview. In essence, the church as a whole does not believe what it says it believes. Therefore, divorce rates mirror our culture, sexual addiction is on the rise in the church and a large portion of church-goers live a life devoid of purpose. We believe this curriculum, through God's transformational power, can assist in reintroducing the Body of Christ to a life lived with meaning, purpose and value which ultimately makes a difference in our modern world.

Target Audience

Your target audience should be believers—individuals who profess Christ as Lord. *The Truth Project* series relies heavily on Scripture as the divine and authoritative Word of God, those who do not believe in the power and authority of God's Word as the presuppositional foundation of their lives will not benefit completely from this study.

Target Age Group

What we have learned through Del's teaching over the past 15 years is that this curriculum is suited for high school students and older. We encourage you to open up this study to young adults and college students. Because they are the future generation of leaders both in society and in our churches, we believe God has positioned this resource to impact them in mighty ways.

How to Invite

Introduction

One of the key components to getting your group off the ground is inviting others to join your group. You will need to rely on prayer and also the ability to clearly articulate the vision and content of the curriculum.

The beginning point is obviously prayer. Pray that God will divinely appoint each member who chooses to join your small group. Seek His will in not only how, but also whom you invite into your home.

As you pray for God to move in the lives of those in your sphere of influence, begin thinking about how you can promote your small group.

Quick Tips

Here are several quick suggestions to spread the word about your upcoming group:

1. Show the Disc 1 promo teaser in service on Sunday morning.
2. Show the promo video in your Sunday school or adult Bible class.
3. Place bulletin inserts in the church newsletter.
4. Place an announcement in the church newsletter.
5. Put posters in strategic locations throughout your church.
6. Print and hand out invitations.

What Is *The Truth Project*?

Now that you are armed with promotional resources, you are almost ready to begin the invitation process. Prior to doing so, develop a concise description of what *The Truth Project* is and be ready to communicate it clearly to those who ask you about this innovative curriculum. Here's a brief description that we use when someone asks us, "What is *The Truth Project*?"

"The Truth Project is a small group video curriculum designed to build a systematic and comprehensive biblical worldview in the lives of believers. Each lesson looks at life from a biblical perspective, studying the very nature and character of God and how He has revealed himself to us."

Prayer

Prayer and the Gospel of Mark

There is a fascinating story in the Gospel of Mark. We find it in chapter nine, beginning in verse 14. A man brings his demon-possessed son to Jesus' disciples to be healed, but the disciples cannot drive the demon out. The father then asks Jesus to heal his son and Jesus in turn casts the demon out, and the young boy is restored.

A short while later, the disciples come to Jesus in private and ask, "Why could not we cast this demon out?" To which Jesus replied, "these only come out through prayer."

This story gives us a glimpse into the power that the lies of the world, the flesh and the devil have in the lives of those around us—so powerful in many cases that only the faithful, persistent prayer of the saints can break the stronghold. You will soon experience this, if you have not already. There may be members of your small group who have been taken captive by the lies of the world. As a result, your prayers and petitions are vital to the work God wants to do in transforming their lives.

The Foundation for Your Small Group

We believe prayer is the foundation for your small group. If you do nothing else, pray by name for each member of your group on a weekly basis. We have seen the power of prayer firsthand in the lives of others who have gone through this study, as God continues to transform lives when we invite Him to do so. Remember, the success of your group is not dependent on your ability to lead an excellent discussion. The most important thing you can give every member of your small group is the time you spend in prayer on their behalf.

Action Items

You may also want to encourage the members of your group to pray for one another. A practical tip is to hand out note cards each week with participants' names on them, asking each person to take a card and commit to pray for one individual throughout the week.

1. Pray weekly by name for each member of your group.
2. Encourage members to pray for one another by rotating names each week.
3. Start and end each meeting with prayer.
4. Keep the prayer time focused on group members, not individuals outside the group.

Thank you again for partnering with us!

Lesson 1

Veritology: What Is Truth?

Introduction

In this initial episode, students receive a general introduction to the overall scope and purpose of *The Truth Project*. This series is designed to take participants on a guided worldview tour, following the points of the worldview compass, a tool designed to direct our thinking with regard to four fundamental issues: truth, God, man, and the social order. Along the way, we attempt to build a logical, systematic framework by which to organize and evaluate the various truth claims encountered during the tour. Our ultimate goal is not simply to gain knowledge, but to look upon the face of God—and to be transformed in the process.

Themes

Our destination in Lesson 1 lies due north. The focal point for this first hour of discussion is the concept of truth itself. What is truth? Why is it important? What role does it play in the biblical view of the world, God's purpose for the cosmos, His will for mankind, His plan of salvation, and the way we live our personal lives?

In his comments on this subject, Dr. Del Tackett demonstrates how truth was fundamental to the mission of Jesus Christ in the world; how it forms the heart of the cosmic battle that has been raging since the beginning; how this battle has divided the world into two opposing camps or sides; how lies, the antithesis of truth, take human hearts and minds captive by the power of deception; and how every man and woman now has to choose between God's truth claims and the opposing perspective of the world, the flesh, and the devil.

To answer the question "What is truth?" Dr. Tackett consults the 1828 edition of Webster's Dictionary, which defines truth as "conformity to fact or reality." We also see how popular notions of truth (represented by man-on-the-street interviews) contrast sharply with the biblical concept (as articulated by John Stonestreet, Os Guinness, and R.C. Sproul).

Points to Watch For

Dr. Tackett concludes that, in almost every case, the perspective of contemporary culture stands in direct opposition to the truth-centered worldview presented in the Bible. In the process of making this case, he advances the bold claim that our culture is not only filled with lies but is also heading in the direction of social insanity. As a result, he proposes that Pilate's query—"What is truth?"—is the most important question facing our society today. He ends Lesson 1 by challenging his audience with this all-important question: Do you really believe that what you believe is really real?

The Meeting

1. Before starting the video, challenge your people to fill in the quotations in their study guide as they watch. This fun exercise will help them stay alert. Their guide also contains the answers to this exercise.
2. Watch the video together.
3. Start the discussion. Each group member's study guide contains key points and questions. You may use these as a map for your brief group discussion.

Lesson 2

Philosophy and Ethics: Says Who?

Introduction

In this second installment of our worldview tour, Dr. Tackett takes students into the northeast quadrant of the compass for an introduction to philosophy and ethics, the two outside pillars of our Temple of Truth framework of foundational concepts. In essence, the message of this lesson parallels the precept of Proverbs 23:7—“As a man thinks in his heart, so is he.” There is a formal and vital connection between our ideas about the nature of the world (philosophy) and our understanding of right and wrong behavior (ethics).

Themes

Philosophy, according to Dr. R.C. Sproul, is “a scientific quest to discover ultimate reality.” This would seem to indicate that philosophical ideas about truth are closely aligned with the biblical definition given in Lesson 1: truth = reality. In this connection, it’s worth noting that the 1828 edition of Webster’s Dictionary included the following affirmation: “True religion and true philosophy must ultimately arrive at the same principle.” Significantly, Webster’s original definition of the word also asserted that philosophy aims “to enlarge our understanding of God.” God, of course, has been edited out of subsequent editions of the dictionary.

This is consistent with the perspective of contemporary culture, which has been taken captive by the unfounded assumption that “the cosmos is all there is or ever was or ever will be” (Carl Sagan). Another way to say this is that current thought pictures reality as a closed box—a cosmic cube—in which there is no room for anything that cannot be sensually or materially perceived. The problem is that with the lid of the box closed and God excluded, philosophy is deprived of a universal reference point and thus crippled in its “scientific quest for ultimate reality.” As a result, it cannot answer the most basic questions about right and wrong behavior.

Points to Watch For

Dr. Tackett persuasively argues that even the most outspoken adherents of “cosmic cube” thinking and relativistic ethics—thinkers like Carl Sagan and William Provine—cannot possibly live by their own reductionist and materialistic principles. On the other side of the coin, he suggests that many contemporary Christians have been unwittingly taken captive by the assumptions of our age (“conformed to this world”). He concludes the lesson by challenging students to think more aggressively about what it means to be “transformed by the renewing of your mind” (Romans 12:2).

The Meeting

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2. Watch the video together.
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Lesson 3

Anthropology: Who Is Man?

Introduction

Lesson 3 takes us into the western regions of the compass, where we engage in an in-depth examination of biblical and contemporary ideas about the nature of the human race. The focus of the discussion is anthropology: Who is man? Where did he come from? What is the meaning and purpose of his existence? In the course of this study, Dr. Tackett demonstrates that the answers we bring to these questions have a direct bearing on our approach to another pressing problem, one of the thorniest and most challenging of all—Why is there evil in the world?

Themes

Having established the importance of determining whether the cosmos is to be viewed as an open or a closed box, Dr. Tackett now moves on to examine another defining aspect of any comprehensive worldview: its basic assumptions about mankind. Here again we discover a fundamental conflict between Christianity and the perspective of contemporary culture. The Bible teaches that man consists of both body and spirit and is created in the image of God; our culture assumes that he is purely material, the product of mindless, purposeless forces. The Bible says that man has rebelled against God and fallen from his original state of innocence; contemporary thought maintains that he is “basically good.” The Bible affirms man’s need for divine grace, redemption, and regeneration; popular thinking asserts that “self-actualization” is the key to happiness and fulfillment.

Christianity presents evil as the product of the cosmic battle that rages within man—the conflict between humanity as it was meant to be and what it has actually become as a result of sin. Godless philosophy and psychology, on the other hand, can suggest only one possible solution to the problem of evil in the world: Man must throw off the restraints of social conventions and institutions (i.e., any kind of moral standard) and pursue “self-fulfillment” to the fullest possible extent. This is what Dr. Tackett calls “the pernicious lie.”

Points to Watch For

Some viewers—even those who consider themselves Christians—may have difficulty accepting the idea that “self-fulfillment” and the call to “follow your heart” are inconsistent with a Christian worldview. Others may object to Dr. Tackett’s assertion that a great deal of the radical social and political activism we see in the world today is driven primarily by secular man’s sinful desire to throw off the shackles of “God’s social design.” All will find it stimulating and profitable to wrestle with the question he poses: Why do nonbelievers and evolutionists find evil so troubling?

The Meeting

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2. Watch the video together.
3. Start the discussion. Each group member's study guide contains key points and questions. You may use these as a map for your brief group discussion.

Lesson 4

Theology: Who Is God?

Introduction

Having explored the concept of truth and examined the biblical view of human nature—two basic issues that had to be settled before we could move on to the present discussion—Dr. Tackett now takes us to the eastern point of the compass. Here he proceeds to lay the third and most important foundation of our “Truth Temple”: theology, the branch of study and investigation that grapples with the question, “Who is God?” Knowing God, he argues, ought to be our passion and our highest goal. For until we look upon His face, we cannot rightly know ourselves or begin to grasp the meaning of our existence in the world.

Themes

Knowing God is absolutely central to the meaning of human life, for it is only in the context of an intimate, personal relationship with Him that we experience eternal life. At the same time, there is no assignment more daunting, no task more demanding, no challenge more overwhelming, than that of seeking to understand the being, nature, character, and attributes of the eternal Creator, who is himself the ultimate source of all truth (Colossians 2:3). So impossibly huge is this endeavor that we could not hope to tackle it at all except for the fact that He has graciously revealed himself to us in His Word. Apart from this revelation, mankind gropes and struggles in the darkness to piece together even the most flawed and rudimentary concept of God.

In line with this thought, R.C. Sproul asserts that ours is an era in which the knowledge of God has been eclipsed—not completely destroyed, but obscured and shadowed by lies and misconceptions. Given this situation, it is essential that we establish two main points: 1) that God exists; and 2) that the Bible, the vehicle of His self-revelation, is utterly reliable. Following Sproul’s lead, Dr. Tackett uses a significant portion of this tour to respond to attacks that have been leveled against God’s Word over the course of history (another aspect of the cosmic battle). He answers the objections of Voltaire, Robert Ingersoll, and liberal theologians such as Julius Wellhausen and the members of the Jesus Seminar. He also illustrates the Bible’s historical accuracy by helping us resolve an apparent scriptural discrepancy concerning the dates of King Jehoram’s reign.

But the heart of this episode’s message hits much closer to home. For in the end, Dr. Tackett makes it clear that we cannot truly know ourselves until we have begun to know God in the fullness and richness of His multifaceted nature and character—not only as the God of mercy and grace, but also as the God who is a consuming fire, jealous for the purity of the covenant relationship (El Qanna).

When this knowledge dawns upon us, we can expect two things to happen. First, the revelation of God’s character will, like a mirror, reveal things to us about ourselves, so that we, along with the prophet Isaiah, are compelled to cry, “Woe is me, for I am undone!” (Isaiah 6:5). But then secondly, as He raises us out of our despair and shows us who we are and who we can be in Him, we will be granted the gift of a new name—a whole new concept of our being, our identity, and our purpose in life with God. Once again, the fruit of this experience will be personal transformation.

Points to Watch For

During the course of this tour, the theme of the cosmic battle is revisited several times and from a number of different angles. As in the first three episodes, Dr. Tackett consistently returns to the point that fallen man resists the truth, and that, as Christians, we are thus called to “cast down” arguments against the knowledge of God, “bringing every thought into captivity to the obedience of Christ” (2 Corinthians 10:5). Man, says Dr. Tackett, has a tendency to “play fast and loose” with God’s Word, not because he is seriously interested in ascertaining the facts about biblical history, but because he is unwilling to face the convicting power of divine revelation as it applies to his personal life. In the final analysis, God’s Word is the main thing standing in the way of “self-actualization” as it is promoted by the gurus of contemporary culture. Some students may find it difficult to accept this idea.

The Meeting

1. Before starting the video, challenge your people to fill in the quotations in their study guide as they watch. This fun exercise will help them stay alert. Their guide also contains the answers to this exercise.
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Lesson 5

Science: What Is True?

Introduction

In this, our fifth worldview tour, we head northwest, enter the cavern of nature, gaze upon the jewels of creation, and establish yet another important pillar in the Temple of Truth: science. In the process, we discover that whereas “the heavens declare the glory of God; And the firmament shows His handiwork” (Psalm 19:1)—so that the Creator’s “invisible attributes are clearly seen” (Romans 1:20)—mankind has nevertheless chosen to ignore the obvious truth, twisting scientific investigation into a vehicle for propagating a godless philosophy of human independence and self-determination.

Themes

Having completed our brief introductory discussion of the nature and character of God, we turn now to consider a very different question: What does “the stuff in the box” really tell us when we honestly look at it? Dr. Tackett argues that scientific investigation—“the systematic study of the structure and behavior of the physical and natural world through observation and experiment”—is also a valid way of ascertaining truth. For when we open the box, we find that it is filled with voices that speak to us loudly about the majesty and power of the One who has created the physical universe. Everywhere we look—whether up at the grandeur of the stars and galaxies or deep into the tiny and elegantly designed inner workings of a living cell—there is evidence that the cosmos is the handiwork of an intelligent, rational mind. In the contemplation of nature, we come face to face with the truth that God exists and that He has revealed himself to us, not only through His written Word (special revelation) but also through the works of His hands (general revelation).

Our natural reaction to this experience should be like that of a child: wonder, marvel, and praise for the Creator. But because of the effects of the Fall and the polarizing influence of the cosmic battle, man shows a tendency to deny what is plain to the senses and to “exchange the truth of God for a lie” (see Romans 1:25). Driven by this impulse, he transforms straightforward scientific inquiry, which properly concerns itself with particulars, into an all-embracing philosophy, which claims to establish universals on the basis of the “stuff in the box.” The result is the propagation of a worldview that “scientifically” excludes the Creator, thus “freeing” mankind from accountability to a higher authority.

Central to this philosophy are the assertions of Darwinian evolutionary theory. By keeping the details of creation’s story completely inside “the box,” evolution effectively rules out the existence of God. Herein lies the heart of the debate over intelligent design. Atheist C. Richard Bozarth actually goes so far as to claim that “evolution destroys utterly and finally the very reason Jesus’ earthly life was supposedly made necessary.” It is exactly this kind of philosophical assumption that inspires the visceral antagonism of evolutionists toward anyone who dares question the validity of their theory. This is why Darwinists so fervently assert that “evolution is no longer merely a theory, but an established fact.” But the truth of the matter, as Dr. Tackett and his guest experts demonstrate in great detail, is that the theory is not supported by the evidence. Many inside the scientific community are beginning to recognize this. But they dare not

acknowledge it publicly because of the worldview issues at stake. As Dr. David Berlinski says, “The consequences are serious.”

Points to Watch For

The essence of Dr. Tackett’s message may be summed up as follows: Fallen man ignores the plain evidence of objective scientific inquiry and promotes the atheistic philosophy of evolutionary theory primarily because he is determined to do as he pleases without answering to a higher authority. This charge may make some group participants uncomfortable precisely because it hits so close to home. Dr. Tackett also illustrates the point that ideas have consequences by drawing a historical connection between Darwinian theory and the horrors of Nazi Germany. Some students may feel inclined to debate his assertions in this regard.

The Meeting

1. Before starting the video, challenge your people to fill in the quotations in their study guide as they watch. This fun exercise will help them stay alert. Their guide also contains the answers to this exercise.
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Lesson 6

History: Whose Story?

Introduction

The word *remember* is central to the message of Lesson 6. On this tour we set up the fourth and final pillar in the Temple of Truth—history—and take a close look at the importance of maintaining a firm grip on the past. In the process, a proper appreciation of historical context—in other words, our place in God’s “larger story”—is fundamental to an accurate understanding of almost every aspect of our lives. History provides us with indispensable insights into the meaning of existence, God’s plan and purpose for the ages, man’s responsibility toward the Creator, and his duty toward his fellow creatures.

Themes

Dr. Tackett’s key Scripture passage for this discussion is Isaiah 46:9-11: “Remember the former things of old, for I am God, and there is no other; I am God, and there is none like Me, Declaring the end from the beginning, And from ancient times things that are not yet done.... Indeed, I have spoken it; I will also bring it to pass.” Two major thoughts arise from these verses. First, God is sovereign, or absolutely in control. History is in the most literal sense His story. Nothing happens at random or by chance. The hairs of our heads are numbered, and the details of our lives are threads in the great tapestry of His overarching providential plan. Second, we as human beings cannot understand our place in the world without cultivating a vision of ourselves as part of this larger story. This is why the Bible contains so many exhortations to “remember” what God has done in the past, whether through the device of “memorial stones,” annual festivals, tassels, phylacteries, or the discipline of “hiding His Word in our hearts.” If we do not remember, we run the risk of becoming myopic, proud, and self-sufficient, eventually incurring our own destruction (see Deuteronomy 8). This is not necessarily physical destruction, but rather a complete loss of identity, purpose, and meaning, or what Amos refers to as a famine of “hearing the words of the LORD” (Amos 8:11).

Here, too, we come face to face with the implications of man’s fallen nature and encounter yet another manifestation of the cosmic battle. Man resists the idea of a sovereign God.

He wants to control his own destiny, live inside his own “little story,” and free himself from all connections with or references to an all-inclusive divine plan. Thus he devises ways to propagate the “pernicious lie” of self-determination (“I am my own god,” or “I believe in myself”) by taking the larger story of history into his own hands and turning it into a powerful tool for the manipulation of other people and the accomplishment of his own selfish purposes. Historical revisionism, or the agenda-driven rewriting of history, operates on the basis of the premise, “If I can change your historical context, I can determine the way you view the present.”

This strategy is consistent with George Orwell’s observation that “he who controls the past controls the future” and Karl Marx’s dictum, “A people without a heritage are easily persuaded.” Postmodernism—the contemporary philosophical perspective that rejects both revelation and reason—takes this process to an extreme conclusion by denying the validity of all comprehensive truth systems, or what it calls metanarratives (including Christianity). Stated simply, the postmodern perspective maintains that there is no “larger story.” Instead, everyone must tell his or her own story and invent (if possible) his or her own concept of meaning and significance. In other words, history does not exist at all except as it exists in our own minds, where it can be edited and tailored to further our own goals in the present.

Points to Watch For

As we have seen so often during the course of our first five tours, the essence of the cosmic battle or the conflict between truth and lies can be boiled down to a confrontation between the claims of the sovereign God and the claims of the sovereign self. It’s the old story of the Garden of Eden, where the serpent rewrote the past by asking, “Has God really said...?” and where man became completely caught up in his own “little story.” From beginning to end, Dr. Tackett’s message in Lesson 6 is that “it’s not all about you.” As Jesus put it, “He who seeks to save his life will lose it.” Given our current “self-actualizing” cultural climate, it is likely that some group participants will take exception to this idea. Others may have theological objections to Dr. Tackett’s statements about the relationship between God’s sovereignty and human free will, for he states very plainly that if we are only free agents, then we are completely without hope.

The Meeting

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Lesson 7

Sociology: The Divine Imprint

Introduction

During the course of Lesson 5 we took a good look at a few of the miraculous ways in which the physical universe declares the glory of its Maker. Now we turn south to consider some of the amazingly detailed reflections of God's nature inherent in the social order. According to Dr. Tackett, the evidences of the divine imprint that we see in this realm are even more awe-inspiring and more indicative of the heart of the Creator than the marvels of DNA replication or the complexities of the blood-clotting system. But for this very reason they also stand closer to the focal point of the cosmic battle.

Themes

We begin where we left off in the fifth tour: with the voice of nature making loud and unmistakable statements about the nature and character of God. "Ask the animals, and they will teach you," Job says, "or the birds of the air, and they will tell you" (Job 12:7-8, NIV). In this case, order is one of the overwhelming messages with which creation bombards us. From the atom to the solar system, from photosynthesis to the cleansing tides, from the human body to the design of a chicken egg—everywhere we look we see obvious indications of purposeful design in the things God has made. This, of course, is a serious problem for those who argue that the universe is the product of "random, mindless forces."

The same element of order is apparent in the social systems God has instituted. Dr. Tackett lays out six that he sees in Scripture: family, labor, church, state, community, and the relationship between man and his Maker. But the order we detect in this area is not simply an expression of the Lord's creative design. Instead, it flows out of His very nature. It is a reflection of who He is. As Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, the Triune God embodies in himself the ultimate resolution of the old philosophical problem of "the one and the many." He exemplifies diversity within unity, and the answer to why it is "not good for man to be alone" is bound up in the Triune Essence. Relationship, union, communion, intimacy, fellowship, love, and community—these things have existed from all eternity within the economy of the Godhead. Accordingly, they serve as the basis for the smooth and ordered functioning of creation.

It is for this very reason, Dr. Tackett argues, that basic social institutions such as marriage, family, and church have come under such heavy attack in our day. Just as the world, the flesh, and the devil hate the Creator with a fervent and undying hatred, so they inevitably stand opposed to the social order that bears the imprint of His divine nature.

As this tour unfolds, the principles of order and relationship are examined specifically as we find them manifested in three of the social systems designed by God: the family, the church, and the union between God and man ("The Intimate Three"). Dr. Tackett explains how the three-fold Trinitarian pattern is reflected in and fundamental to the internal functioning of each of these spheres. Special attention is given to the subject of the family and some of the pathologies associated with disregard for the divine plan in this crucial area of human life.

Points to Watch For

Statements from video interviewees poignantly highlight the pain, confusion, and deep emotional reactions connected with almost any examination of family life and family-related issues.

Similar emotions are almost certain to arise during group discussion. The video segments also present a broad range of popular definitions of “family,” a subject that has the potential to stir up equally diversified reactions from group participants. In addition, Dr. Tackett and his students fearlessly broach the often troublesome topic of authority and submission within the context of marriage, the church, and other aspects of God’s social design.

The Meeting

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2. Watch the video together.
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Lesson 8

Unio Mystica: Am I Alone?

Introduction

Lesson 8 takes us to the southeast sector of the Truth compass for a tour of the social sphere that Dr. Tackett characterizes as the heart and soul of Christianity: the Mystical Union (Latin, *Unio Mystica*) between God and man. Here, in the most intimate and profoundly mysterious sphere of the “Intimate Three” (family, church, and the God-man relationship), we have the privilege of pondering exactly what it is that Christ has purchased for us at the price of His precious blood shed on the Cross for our sins: not simply salvation from hell, but an invitation into communion with the Godhead, where we may experience an incomprehensible oneness with the Creator of the universe.

Themes

In our discussion of the family, we saw that the apostle Paul likens the bond between Christ and the church to the oneness shared between husband and wife (Ephesians 5:31-32). This oneness, he concludes, is a “profound mystery”—a concept that is difficult to fully grasp. On this tour, we proceed to examine an even deeper and more mysterious aspect of this bond: namely, that it is experienced not only within marriage and the corporate context of the body of Christ, but also on an intimate, personal level by the individual believer. This, says Dr. Tackett, is the greatest of all the wonders we will contemplate during the course of our study: that the God of the universe has come to make His dwelling both with us and in us.

Dr. Tackett marshals an impressive array of scriptural passages and biblical images to illustrate both facets of this glorious truth. On the corporate side, he draws our attention to Jesus’ discourse on the vine and the branches and the importance of abiding in Him (John 15:5); the high priestly prayer of John 17, in which Christ speaks again and again of the oneness shared between the Father, the Son, and the body of believers (“I in them and You in Me”); the several passages in which Paul emphasizes the importance of unity in the church and the mutual edification of the various members of the body (1 Corinthians 12:12-31; Ephesians 2:19-22; 4:11-16; Galatians 3:28-29); and the many “one another” commandments with which Jesus and the apostles set forth their vision for our common life as Christians, including John 13:34-35; Romans 12:10; Ephesians 4:2; Colossians 3:16; and 1 Peter 1:22. On the personal, individual side, he cites Jesus’ statement to Nicodemus about being “born again” (John 3:7); His promise of the indwelling Spirit (John 14:16-17); Paul’s declaration that “if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation” (2 Corinthians 5:17); and the apostle’s astounding claim that “Christ lives in me” (Galatians 2:20). In connection with this discussion, Dr. Tackett points out that we must be careful not to “blur the spheres” by applying the unique and particular social laws of one realm to another realm—for example, by assuming that we can meet our need for Christian fellowship by worshiping God individually, or that we can enter into the wonder of the *Unio Mystica* simply by attending services at the local church.

As in all the social spheres, there is potential here for the emergence of dysfunctions and pathologies as the effects of the cosmic battle make themselves felt at the very core of man's relationship with God. Interestingly enough, marital imagery arises again in this connection: the Lord warns His people many times in Scripture against the danger of "prostituting" themselves or "going a-whoring" after other gods and idols (see Numbers 15:38-39). Just as spouses are to seek fulfillment of the sexual drive exclusively within the bonds of the marriage covenant, so we as believers are to confine our quest for significance to the covenant relationship with the Creator. For it is this powerful human hunger for significance, says Dr. Tackett, when directed outside God's covenant relationships, that constitutes the single most formidable barrier to intimacy, communion, and oneness. All too often, we forsake the Lord and cut ourselves off from others in an attempt to puff up our own sense of self-importance.

Points to Watch For

Especially important to the overall message of this lesson is the idea that oneness with God represents the heart of the Gospel; in other words, that Christianity is not primarily a moral, philosophical, or religious system, but rather a deep, intimate, and living relationship with a personal Creator. This, to return to a point made in Lesson 4, is the essence of "eternal life"—that is, knowing God just as intimately as Adam knew Eve. It is important to help students come to the place where they can not only begin to understand this concept rationally—something we can never fully achieve—but also to feel the wonder of it in a profoundly affecting way. This is the point at which the transformational aspect of this tour will come home to participants.

Some students may also need to wrestle with the implications of Dr. Tackett's warning about the danger of "blurring the spheres."

The Meeting

1. Before starting the video, challenge your people to fill in the quotations in their study guide as they watch. This fun exercise will help them stay alert. Their guide also contains the answers to this exercise.
2. Watch the video together.
3. Start the discussion. Each group member's study guide contains key points and questions. You may use these as a map for your brief group discussion.

Lesson 9

The State: Whose Law?

Introduction

In the southwest quadrant of our compass lie the spheres of the state, politics, and law. On this, the ninth of twelve worldview tours to be completed during the course of *The Truth Project*, we take a close and careful look at how these spheres are interconnected and how they relate to other aspects of the social realm: family, church, labor, community, and the relationship between God and man. Special attention is given to the design, structure, and role of the state, its place in God's plan for human society, and the rightful extent and limits of its power. The state, as we will see, has the capacity to exert a tremendous power for good in the affairs of mankind as long as it operates within its proper boundaries. But it also has the potential to become the most horrendously pathological and abusive of all the social spheres if not kept in check.

Themes

Significantly, Dr. Tackett begins this tour with a look at older ideas about the relationship between the state and the ethical realm. According to Webster's 1828 Dictionary, law, politics, and the state are, among other things, concerned with the preservation and improvement of a people's morals. Though few today would be inclined to accept this definition, a moment's reflection is sufficient to demonstrate how important it really is.

For as Dr. Tackett illustrates by considering a simple question—"Can the state steal?"—human governments are capable of error and transgression and must be held accountable to a higher ethical law if they are to be prevented from wreaking havoc in the lives of the citizens entrusted to their oversight and care.

God's perspective on the state, as we discover through a careful examination of the relevant scriptural passages, is that it is strictly subordinate to His sovereign dominion and control. Just as the Son is subject to the Father, the wife to the husband, and the elders of the church to the headship of Christ, so the authority of the state, within the economy of the divine design for the political sphere, is subject to and dependent upon the authority of God himself. Governors and magistrates hold their power purely as delegates and representatives of the King of all kings. They are appointed and armed with the sword in order that they might 1) punish evil and 2) condone good. Those who forget these principles and become puffed up with a sense of their own importance are, like Ahab (1 Kings 21), Nebuchadnezzar (Daniel 4:20-30), Uzziah (2 Chronicles 26), and Herod (Acts 12:21-23), liable to swift and severe judgment.

This last point is worthy of special attention; for, as the Bible and history demonstrate, when human rulers overstep their bounds, deny the sovereignty of the various social spheres, and seek to establish state control over every other area of human life, tyranny, oppression, and violence are sure to follow. The godless expansion of the power of the state has reared its ugly head many times in the past, most notably in the 20th century regimes of rulers such as Stalin, Lenin, Hitler, Mao, and Pol Pot. It is raising its head again in our own time, says Dr. Tackett. Without God, truth, or any higher moral standard, people are increasingly looking to the state as savior and the

supplier of every human need. In the face of this trend, Bible-believing Christians must have the courage to resist what Dr. Tackett calls “the rise of the state”—to stand firm, draw a line in the sand, and say, “This far and no more.”

Points to Watch For

Dr. Tackett warns students at the outset of this tour that some may find themselves “conflicted” as they contemplate the implications of his message. This is because, as a result of the raging cosmic battle, many people in our day have been taken captive by the lie that the state, and not God, is to “go before us” as our savior and sustainer and the source of all good things. This discussion is calculated from beginning to end to expose and challenge this assumption. There are obvious implications here for the debate between proponents of “liberal” and “conservative” social policy (e.g., the “welfare state” and its opponents).

The Meeting

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Lesson 10

The American Experiment: Stepping Stones

Introduction

For this tour we remain in the southwest sector of the compass long enough to examine a special subcategory of our last topic of discussion: the design of the state. In particular, we take a brief look at the questions, “What should God’s minister on earth (Romans 13:4) look like? What is a proper form for this agency that is divinely appointed and commissioned to administer justice, punish evil, and encourage goodness among its citizens or subjects?” We approach this task by considering The American Experiment.

Themes

From the beginning, Dr. Tackett lays down three ground rules for this study: First, we will not seek to deify America; and second, we will not seek to deify the Founding Fathers. (The third ground rule is dealt with at the end of the lesson.) Having established these guidelines, he hastens to point out that there are compelling reasons for giving special attention to the subject of this tour. The American Experiment has the potential of being unusually conducive to a deeper understanding of God’s design for the state, precisely because it is unique in the history of the world. Here on these shores, and here alone, people with a strong Christian worldview have been afforded an unparalleled opportunity to create from scratch what they considered an ideal system of government—a system designed in careful conformity with the principles outlined in Lesson 9.

We begin by establishing the biblical character of that worldview. *The New England Primer*, the second best-selling book (after the Bible) of the colonial era, provides an intriguing window into the attitudes of early Americans. In particular, it reveals an outlook and a way of life powerfully shaped by the teachings of Scripture. The pervasiveness of this outlook is further demonstrated in statements made by America’s early political leaders, legal and social architects, and educational pioneers—people such as Benjamin Rush, George Washington, Benjamin Franklin, Samuel Adams, Charles Carroll, Noah Webster, and the founders of Harvard, Princeton, and Columbia Universities. In spite of the fact that not all of them were practicing Christians, these luminaries agreed with President John Adams that the success of America’s republican form of government would prove directly dependent upon the virtue and morality of her people, and that virtue and morality are necessarily founded upon religion—by which all meant the Christian religion. These early thinkers were convinced that the state must be held accountable to the authority of a higher ethical and spiritual standard—the “Natural Law” or the “Law of Nature’s God”—if the human rights abuses they had observed in Europe and throughout history were to be avoided on this continent.

Tragically, however, America is quickly turning away from these principles. It is hard to put a finger on the exact reasons, but one clear element came as Darwinian evolutionary theory made its influence felt in the field of law. In 1869, Harvard Law School Dean Christopher Langdell advanced the view that law is based not upon the transcendent standard of “Nature’s God,” but rather upon a fluid and constantly mutating body of “doctrine,” a set of purely human ideas that inevitably change “by slow degrees.” In other words, law and ethics, like biological species, are

continually “evolving.” Supreme Court Justice Oliver Wendell Holmes expanded on this theme by declaring that the law is “simply an embodiment of the ends and purposes of a society at a given point in its history,” thus effectively granting to the state the power to establish society’s ethical norms. John Dewey implemented these ideas in the realm of public education. “There is no God,” said Dewey (nicknamed “The Architect of Modern Education”), “and there is no soul. Hence, there are no needs for the props of traditional religion.”

These statements, says Dr. Tackett, bring us to the present moment. Today, America has largely forgotten God and denied the validity of her biblically based Christian roots. As a result, we see the power of the state expanding in our time. This, too, is a manifestation of the perennial cosmic battle, which is always fought most fiercely in the social realm. Ultimately, we must face the fact that The American Experiment is likely to fail altogether if we do not take intentional and deliberate steps to salvage it. This task falls primarily on the shoulders of Christian people. As believers, we need to remember God’s call to prayer and repentance in 2 Chronicles 7:13-14. There is nothing to be gained, says Dr. Tackett, by casting blame on non-Christians (this is the third ground rule for our study).

Points to Watch For

This last point should be kept in mind throughout the entire discussion. From beginning to end, Dr. Tackett seeks to communicate the thought that The American Experiment makes sense only when understood as the brainchild of Christians who operated on the basis of a biblical worldview. Just as the experiment was instigated by believers, so it must be carried on by believers—Christians who care deeply and passionately about their country—if it is to survive and continue to succeed.

The Meeting

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Lesson 11

Labor: Created to Create

Introduction

We now turn our attention to the northwest compass point and embark on a tour of our fifth social sphere: labor. By the time this tour is finished, we will have made a number of striking discoveries about this system. We will have found that creative labor is a vital element of God's plan for the social realm; that work is not a "curse," as it is often represented today, but an essential element of our humanity; that it is, in fact, rooted in the nature of God himself, the Original Worker. We will also learn that the structure of this sphere parallels that of the others we have already visited in that it also appears triune in design. And we will begin to see that the importance of work is closely related to our divinely given responsibility to care for the poor.

Themes

"What is work?" Present that question to a cross-section of the population and you'll probably receive a wide variety of answers. Unfortunately, within the context of contemporary culture it's increasingly likely that a preponderance of these responses will be negative in tone. Many people use phrases such as "a bummer," "what I have to do for money," or "the only way to get to Friday" to describe their feelings about work. Even Christians sometimes reference the Fall as support of their view that labor is nothing but a curse.

In this lesson, Dr. Tackett makes the case that these disparaging attitudes toward work are completely at odds with the scriptural worldview. He even goes so far as to argue that they can be interpreted as yet another manifestation of the cosmic battle—in other words, that they are destructive lies. Far from being a curse, creative labor is a glorious privilege. It flows out of the heart of God himself, who labored six days to bring the world into existence, stamped His inventive and energetic image upon mankind, and placed Adam in the garden to tend it, beautify it, and increase its productivity. The creativity of man, then, while subject to the effects of the Fall, is nevertheless a mirror image of the creativity of God. It is designed to be a source of joy so fulfilling and wonderful that the Lord deemed it necessary to give us the fourth commandment in order to ensure that we would set our work aside and rest at least one day a week!

This sphere, like that of the family, the church, and the state, is founded upon relationships. These relationships, which are ordered according to scriptural principles (see, for example, Ephesians 6:5-9), fit the general triune pattern we have observed in other areas. God has granted the stewardship of His material goods to owners; and these owners are in turn accountable to Him for the use of His "stuff" and responsible for the welfare and productivity of the workers who operate under their direction and authority. Within this sphere, which Dr. Tackett calls the "engine room of culture," wealth is generated that has the potential to meet the physical needs of mankind; and the responsibility for the compassionate use of this wealth, he argues, falls primarily upon the shoulders of those who are engaged in the field of labor.

As a subheading of this topic, we also consider the implications of this discussion for media and the creative arts. Here, too, says Dr. Tackett, there is a fundamental “truth issue” at stake. For under the sovereignty of God and His eternal ethical standard, beauty in the arts should be consistent with goodness and truth. This is a subject of special concern in a time like ours when, as Dr. Francis Schaeffer averred, “whoever controls the media controls culture.” Within this context, it is imperative that Christians begin to make their influence felt in the field of creative art.

Points to Watch For

Participants on this tour may find themselves challenged—in some cases uncomfortably so—to reconsider their personal views of work. It may be important to handle the discussion in such a way that they will be gently encouraged to explore the joy of engaging in creative labor rather than made to feel guilty about having a “TGIF” attitude toward the work week. It’s also worth noting that Dr. Tackett’s ideas about compassion and relief for the poor—namely, that labor needs to create job opportunities for the needy rather than leaving this area of concern solely to the state—may become the occasion of some lively political and social debate.

The Meeting

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Lesson 12

Community & Involvement: God Cares; Do I?

Introduction

For this final installment of our “worldview tour” we head to the southeast compass point and gaze upon the face of God as it is revealed to us in the last of our six social spheres: the sphere of community and involvement. Here, perhaps more than in any other sphere or field of inquiry, we have an opportunity to draw near to the Creator and learn what it is that has compelled Him to draw near to us. We will find that the God of the Scriptures is in fact the Lord of the lonely, the Savior of the outcast, the Defender of the defenseless, and the Sustainer of all who find themselves in need. Our call is to become like Him by discovering what it means to love not only Him, but also our neighbor.

Themes

Involvement in this sphere—the sphere of community outreach, practical service, and active love expressed in Christian charity—has been a hallmark of the church for many centuries. For a number of reasons, claims Dr. Tackett, it has fallen into neglect in our day. Not only that, but the general call for involvement in culture at large, in all of the spheres, has actually become a matter of debate in some contemporary Christian circles. And yet a careful examination of Scripture reveals that believers have a mandate to reclaim their place in this important arena. We dare not, like Jonah, try to escape God’s call to be involved. Over and over again, the Scripture clearly presents the perplexing reality that God entrusts us with carrying out His mission and purpose with the world. We cannot deny the link and dependency God has created between His divine plan and the faithfulness with which His followers embody biblical truth in their behavior and reflect the heart of Jesus in their lives.

What is the heart of Jesus? This is not a difficult question to answer. In Matthew 11:28-29, Christ tells us plainly that He is gentle and humble in heart. The heart of Jesus stands radically opposed to the principle of “survival of the fittest.” It identifies closely with the plight of the weak and disenfranchised. It is a heart that compels Him to wash the feet of others and lay down His life for His friends. In doing these things, Jesus not only becomes our example, but He also reveals to us the deepest concerns of His Father in heaven (John 14:9).

We must realize that this is why Jesus sums up the entire law in two “great commandments”: “Love God with all your heart, soul, mind, and strength; and love your neighbor as yourself” (see Matthew 22:36-40). Here at the end of our tour we come back again to the great fountain-head and source of all truth, the divine nature itself. “God is love,” writes the apostle John, “and he who abides in love abides in God, and God in him” (1 John 4:16). And love, in the practical sense, means being a good neighbor to the people around us—like the Samaritan in Christ’s famous parable.

Points to Watch For

If God cares enough to get involved with the needs of people, we need to care and get involved as well. This is the thrust of Dr. Tackett's message. So forceful is his presentation of this concept that it is almost certain to impact participants at a deep emotional level.

When it does, they will probably ask the question that has been asked so many times before: "What should I do?" At this point it will be important to emphasize the thought that active love is not a matter of following a "to-do" list or establishing a system of rules or simple steps. Instead, it is a question of developing an attitude of humility, openness, sensitivity, and creative compassion. It is a matter of using our God-given gifts and talents in the service of others and pursuing the passions He has instilled in our hearts.

The Meeting

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