



VOL. 5

Salvation & Church

MILESTONES

Connecting God's Word to Life

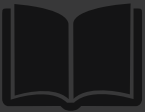




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MILESTONES

Connecting God's Word to Life



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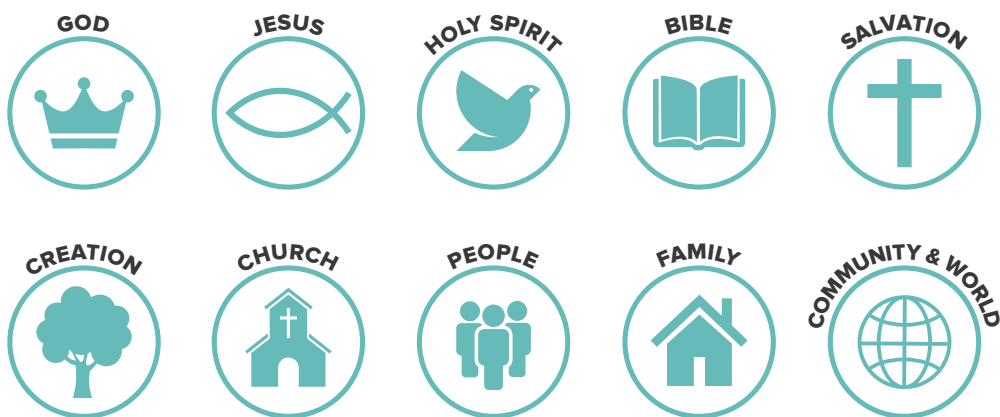
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MILESTONES / INTRODUCTION

Milestones is from the creators of *Bible Studies for Life: Students*, which exists to point students and student leaders to the application of biblical teaching to everyday life through weekly group Bible studies and additional resources. Every lesson within *Bible Studies for Life* contains a bible study that points students to Jesus, is rooted in Scripture, and provides application for living in today's context. The topics and subjects chosen in each quarter of *Bible Studies for Life* fit within a larger framework called *Levels of Biblical Learning*. *Levels of Biblical Learning* consists of ten theological topics we believe students should grasp before graduating high school. These include:



Within these ten topics are 52 theological statements, which make up the core content students would be exposed to and learn each year as they go through *Bible Studies for Life*. The quarterly topics and Scripture passages that make up each lesson in *Bible Studies for Life* are tied the framework of *Levels of Biblical Learning*, which guides the Scripture selection.

While we are able to connect students to the *Levels of Biblical Learning* and the theological statements in each lesson of *Bible Studies for Life*, we wanted to provide a resource capable of going deep into the weight and significance these levels have for personal faith and discipleship. This is what *Milestones* seeks to do. Over the course of six volumes, each of the 52 theological statements will be explored in depth, noting both the theological importance and personal application each has for everyday life. By going through these six volumes, we hope students will grow in their personal knowledge and understanding of God and His world. We also pray that God will use these resources to equip another generation to boldly proclaim the truth of the gospel in a world where Jesus—the truth—is desperately needed.

MILESTONES / HOW TO USE

This Bible-study book includes eight weeks of content for group and personal study. Each session is divided into the following components:

ENGAGE

Each session opens with a *Levels of Biblical Learning Statement*, which gives an overview of the session's topic. Following the statement, each session contains an introduction to help your group as you begin your time together, setting up a natural transition into the material for each week.

DISCUSS

The Discuss section expands upon the *Levels of Biblical Learning Statement*. During this time, groups will explore Scripture, answer questions, and engage with additional content to help explain the session statement.

LIVE IT OUT

The Live It Out section is designed to close out your group time by calling out three specific points of application under the headings of Christ, Community, and Culture. By doing so, this section seeks to demonstrate specifically what the session material teaches us about Christ, how to live in Community, and how to engage with Culture.

DOING, BEING, AND APOLOGETIC STATEMENTS

This section also contains Doing, Being, and Apologetic statements. These statements are directly related to the *Levels of Biblical Learning Statement*, and provide opportunity for the group to expand on what these doctrinal truths communicate about us as individuals, how we are to live, and how we might engage culture apologetically.

DEVOTIONS

Three personal devotions are provided for each session to take students deeper into Scripture and to supplement the content introduced in the group study. With biblical teaching and introspective questions, these sections challenge students to grow in their understanding of God's Word and to respond in faith.

LEADER GUIDE

At the back of this book, you'll find a leader guide to help you prepare each week. This guide will help you gain a broad understanding of the content and learn ways to engage with students throughout your time together.

GOD'S PLAN FOR SALVATION



LEVELS OF BIBLICAL LEARNING STATEMENT



Before the beginning of time, God's plan for salvation centered on Jesus' death and resurrection, which make salvation possible.

Because of rebellion against God, all people have been cut off from a relationship with Him, and deserve eternal death and hell, which is the punishment for sin.

Being on the water, especially during the summer, offers us many ways to enjoy the outdoors or time with our friends. Whether you're tubing or wake boarding at the lake, swimming in the ocean, or jumping off the diving board at the community pool, you've probably cooled off from the summer heat by jumping in the water.

How much do you enjoy activities like this?

Regardless of what activity you choose, it's good to have a healthy respect for water. Most of the time we're at the water, we're not even aware of the lifeguard stations up and down the beach, the life preservers hanging near the pool, or the life-vests stowed under the boat seats. And though you hope you never have to use them, having access to one of these devices could be a matter of death.

Many people go through life thinking they're fine on their own. They think they don't need saving, in an eternal sense, believe they'll simply take care of themselves by praying or by being good. But sooner or later, we will all find out we're unable to save ourselves. Thankfully, God has a plan.

Why do we need God to save us?



PEOPLE'S REBELLION

When you know Christ as Savior, you'll still make mistakes. You'll also begin to recognize the bad habits you have that go against the things God desired for me. For the most part, you may behave respectfully toward your parents. But maybe sometimes you grumble under your breath when they ask you to do something. Maybe you're tempted to become irritated or angry, at your friends over things that don't really matter. Maybe you even promise yourself you'll never respond this way again. But the things you don't want to do, you do—again and again. And maybe it's tough to do the things you know you should do.

When have you noticed this pattern in your life?

Paul talked about this same thing in the Book of Romans:

For I do not understand what I am doing, because I do not practice what I want to do, but I do what I hate.

ROMANS 7:15

We all struggle with this issue, and the reason is because we are all, by nature, sinners.

Before sin entered the world, people had the privilege of living in a close relationship with God. However, things changed the moment Adam and Eve chose sin. They were cut off from God instead of having a close relationship with Him. Since then, sin and death has been passed down to all people, who are descended from Adam (Rom. 5:12). Because of this, all people are born with a sinful nature. We aren't sinners because we sin—the truth is that we sin because we are sinners. No matter how hard we may try to avoid sinning, we will sin anyway because it's our human nature. We are still responsible for our actions, though. Any time we act (or even think) in ways that aren't in line with God's standards, it's due to a lack of faith in Him and His best for us.

Many people believe we only need to be "good people"—that if we pray and are kind to people, God will be pleased with us. But this isn't true. Only Jesus lived this perfectly. The rest of us, even by choosing one faithless act are rebels who deserve God's displeasure. We've all sinned and fallen desperately short of God's glorious standard (Rom. 3:23).

What makes us sinners?

Why does God hold us responsible for our choices?

WHAT WE DESERVE

When we make choices to rebel against the authorities in our lives, there are consequences. All who have sinned—and that's all of us—have felt the pains associated with sinning because of the choices we've made. For disobeying our parents, we are grounded or have video game privileges revoked. For not completing assignments, we receive bad grades. For speeding, we have to pay the fines. For making foolish relationship choices, we have our hearts broken.

What's the worst punishment you've ever received for disobeying?

For different kinds of sins, there are potentially worse consequences. Sometimes, we may be tempted to think, This sin isn't really a big deal, and there really won't be any consequences. However, this is blatantly wrong! Any sin, no matter how big or small we may think it is, is brazen rebellion against God, is enough to sever our relationship with Him, and deserves His harshest punishment. Take a look at the way Isaiah describes the consequences of our sin.

But your iniquities are separating you from your God, and your sins have hidden his face from you so that he does not listen.

ISAIAH 59:2

But there is good news for us. Because God is patient and gracious, He often chooses to spare us from immediate judgment. There's no escaping this truth: Because we've all sinned, we all deserve death. Thankfully, this isn't the end of the story.

For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.

ROMANS 6:23

List the kinds of sins you struggle with.

Why do all sins, even ones we may see as small, deserve God's punishment?

GOD'S PLAN FOR SALVATION

There are many ways we would characterize God. For instance, God is holy and powerful. He is kind and patient. He is loving, good, generous, wise, eternal—the list is endless!

What words would you add in describing God?

God is also just. Essentially, God is impartial and gives everyone exactly what we deserve. We may be tempted to believe God could choose to overlook sin and let people off the hook when it comes to the consequences of sin. But it doesn't—and can't—work like this. God's justice demands that He gives to all people what they deserve. And because of our sin, we all deserve death (Rom. 6:23).

God always knew people would rebel, and He had a plan to deal with our sin, because He loves us so much. Since He is just, God couldn't simply overlook sin. Thankfully for us, God is also gracious and merciful. Let's break down those qualities.

- **Gracious:** Grace is God's giving good things we don't deserve.
- **Merciful:** Mercy is God's withholding punishment we do deserve.

For God's justice to be satisfied (and to reveal His grace and mercy), a sinless person had to die in place of the sinful. Jesus—the only sinless person who ever lived—was willing to give His life for us. On the cross, Jesus exchanged His righteousness for our sin, and we've been freed from the consequences of our sin (2 Cor. 5:21).

The gift of salvation may be free to us, but it's certainly not free. Jesus paid a great price, and for us to receive this gift, we are called to follow Jesus in giving up our lives (Luke 9:23). Christians aren't perfect, but we are characterized by quickly turning from our sin when we recognize it. And when we do, God is happy to forgive us and instead give us eternal life in Christ (1 John 1:9).

What does it mean for us that God is just?

What is required for us to receive God's forgiveness?



BEING // Because salvation is a gift from God and has been secured by the sacrifice of Christ, we become children of God forever when we surrender to Him in faith and turn away from sin.

DOING // Though we can't work to earn salvation, true faith is evidenced in how we live. Therefore, we should seek to know and do all that God commands.

APOLOGETIC // Many people believe we will go to heaven as a matter of works—because they try to be good people, they pray, or they simply believe in God. Salvation can't be earned and comes only by faith in Jesus.

CHRIST

Without Jesus and His sacrifice for us, there would be no forgiveness of sin. We couldn't pay the debt we owed. But Jesus—perfect and holy—could and did take God's wrath for our sin on Himself on the cross.

Look up the following verses. What do each of these mean for your relationship with God.

- **Romans 3:23:**

- **Romans 6:23:**

- **2 Corinthians 5:21:**

- **1 John 1:9:**

Take a moment and pray, thanking God for the salvation that is available in Jesus.

COMMUNITY

The church is called to be a light to the world, which is lost in darkness. Today, many churches are working hard to reach the lost with the gospel—in their neighborhoods and around the world. But there's always room for us to grow in the area of evangelism.

What will you do with your group or church to reach the lost in your community?

What opportunities are available to reach those outside your community? How will you get involved?

CULTURE

Many in our world today believe we go to heaven when we live “good” lives. However, the truth is that no one is good (Rom. 3:10). Therefore, we are called to carry the message of the gospel to the whole world. We do this so they may understand the truth about God and themselves and receive the salvation we all so desperately need.

How is the message of the gospel offensive to people who don't understand it?

Write out one way you can communicate the gospel that will help people understand.

Whom will you share that message with this week?

Session 1

DEVOTIONS

THE DIFFERENCE OF REPENTANCE

Repentance is the observable difference between someone who is saved and someone who is not saved. The person who does not have the Holy Spirit can commit sins, feel no conviction for it, and enjoy it. The person who does have the Holy Spirit, will feel conviction when sinning and eventually repent. It's not that giving your life to Christ means you will never struggle with sin again. Rather, it means the fun of sin is ultimately ruined for you.

David, the same person who fought Goliath as a young man, King of Israel, and a guy known as "a man after [God's] own heart" (1 Sam. 13:14), still messed up. But when confronted with his sin, David responded appropriately. Check out his prayer of repentance:

Be gracious to me, God, according to your faithful love; according to your abundant compassion, blot out my rebellion. Completely wash away my guilt and cleanse me from my sin. For I am conscious of my rebellion, and my sin is always before me. Against you—you alone—I have sinned and done this evil in your sight. So you are right when you pass sentence; you are blameless when you judge. Indeed, I was guilty when I was born; I was sinful when my mother conceived me. Surely you desire integrity in the inner self, and you teach me wisdom deep within.

PSALM 51:1-6

What does it feel like to be aware of your own sin the way David was (v. 3)?

Ask the Holy Spirit to guide you as you examine your heart. Then, journal a prayer of confession of sin based on Psalm 51.

FORGIVENESS IS HERE

Like David, we all fall into sin from time to time. We all need forgiveness. Thankfully, our loving God sent His Son to make a way for that to happen. As we continue looking at David's prayer of repentance, we will see some parallels between His prayer and Jesus' crucifixion. Take a look:

Purify me with hyssop, and I will be clean; wash me, and I will be whiter than snow. Let me hear joy and gladness; let the bones you have crushed rejoice. Turn your face away from my sins and blot out all my guilt. God, create a clean heart for me and renew a steadfast spirit within me. Do not banish me from your presence or take your Holy Spirit from me. Restore the joy of your salvation to me, and sustain me by giving me a willing spirit. Then I will teach the rebellious your ways, and sinners will return to you.

PSALM 51:7-13

When Jesus was offered a drink on the cross, the stick used to raise it up to him was a hyssop plant (John 19:29). Even centuries before crucifixion was developed by the Romans as we know it today, there was foreshadowing of Christ cleansing our sin in David's prayer.

Although He could, God doesn't create a new physical heart in us when He cleanses us from sin. What does it mean for God to create a new heart in us (v. 10)?

What is the basis of David's sense of joy (v. 12)?

David's sin was fun in the moment, but ultimately led to the destruction of his joy. In this passage, he builds it back on its rightful foundation. Ask God to do the same in your heart now.

CONFRONTED WITH SIN

The prophet Nathan confronted David over how his sin had affected others (2 Sam. 12:1-15). Even if we cover the tracks of our sin, it affects others. Even the best kept secretive sin will eventually be brought to light. So, take a note from David on how confession is done.

Save me from the guilt of bloodshed, God—God of my salvation—and my tongue will sing of your righteousness. Lord, open my lips, and my mouth will declare your praise. You do not want a sacrifice, or I would give it; you are not pleased with a burnt offering. The sacrifice pleasing to God is a broken spirit. You will not despise a broken and humbled heart, God. In your good pleasure, cause Zion to prosper; build the walls of Jerusalem. Then you will delight in righteous sacrifices, whole burnt offerings; then bulls will be offered on your altar.

PSALM 51:14-19

Although an animal sacrifice was offered for forgiveness of sins in David's time, David knew God wanted his heart to be broken over his sin. Repentance came first. Then, David promised to offer the "righteous sacrifices" God commanded in the Old Testament. These are both acts of repentance and worship of a holy God.

When you repent, you can rest in the fact that you are forgiven and restored, not because you deserve it, but because God is gracious. How will you worship God deeply for the forgiveness He has offered you?

Painful though it is, such remorse for sin indicates salvation. Describe the "broken spirit" and "humbled heart" David referred to (v. 17).

LEADER GUIDE / SESSION 1

ENGAGE

Start the session by reading the *Levels of Biblical Learning Statement* on page 6. Then, use the introduction provided as a way to begin your group time before transitioning to the Discuss section.

DISCUSS

Be sure to read the Discuss section on pages 7-9 before coming together as a group. Doing so will allow you to be familiar with the material and will help you select which portions of the material you would like to cover in the allotted amount of group time. Look for places in the Discuss section where you can add a personal anecdote to a question or a Scripture passage to share in addition to what has been provided. Making preparations like these will help your group time run more smoothly and be more effective in the end.

LIVE IT OUT

After your group works through the Discuss section, take some time to move through the application found in the Live It Out section on pages 10-11. Look for specific, personal ways you can connect with the material from your own past. Sharing a personal story or illustration that connects with the lesson is a great way to connect with students and creates an atmosphere where students also feel comfortable sharing.

WEEKLY LEADER TIPS

- Introduce the personal devotions that follow Session 1, and remind students to complete the session devotions on pages 12-15 before your next meeting.
- Challenge students to memorize the Levels of Biblical Learning Statement for Session 1.
- Encourage students to be in the habit of building into their personal prayer lives with what they have learned this week.

WEEKLY LEADER NOTES

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