# Theological and Educational Foundation

## Introduction

This document describes the theological foundation and educational goals of Cursed to Bless. It aims to inform the producer, translator, and director. It can also help other church leaders understand the goals of the resource.

### Biblical Theology: The ‘big story’ of the Bible

The theological foundation of Cursed to Bless is Biblical Theology. A good definition of Biblical Theology is,

“a way of reading the Bible as one story, by one author, about one Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. Biblical theology teaches us to read every passage of Scripture in light of the person and work of Christ (see, for example, Luke 24:27, 44-47; John 5:39).”[[1]](#footnote-20)

A less technical name for Biblical Theology is the ‘big story’ of the Bible. The ‘big story’ of the Bible obviously contains within it many sub-stories or threads woven together. The particular thread pursued in Cursed to Bless is cursing and blessing! The curse that came on Adam as a result of his sin is lifted from us by Jesus, the second Adam, who takes the curse in our place. His death and resurrection is the way God brings us back into His blessing. Galatians 3:13-14 is a key text.

Christ redeemed us from the curse of the law by becoming a curse for us, for it is written: “Cursed is everyone who is hung on a pole.” He redeemed us in order that the blessing given to Abraham might come to the Gentiles through Christ Jesus, so that by faith we might receive the promise of the Spirit.

A summary of the ‘big story’ of the Bible we have used in writing Cursed to Bless is:

God, with amazing grace, sent the Lord Jesus into our world to take the curse of death due to our rebellion, and by his resurrection restore the blessings of life with him forever. We receive this by faith in Jesus, proclaiming him and living a life of love as we wait for him to return to bring an end to this evil world and usher in the new world, the Kingdom of God.

Another thread which brings unity to the ‘big story’ of the Bible is ‘the Kingdom of God’. This term has different meanings to different people depending on one’s doctrinal or denominational background. The meaning used by us was coined by Graeme Goldsworthy in his book ‘Gospel and Kingdom’, and is:

God’s people, in God’s place, under God’s rule.

Goldsworthy’s work and insights have been ably explained at a popular level by Vaughan Roberts in his book, ‘God’s Big Picture’. [[2]](#footnote-21)

God’s promises to Abraham found in Genesis 12:1-3 (and more widely Genesis 12-17) are most significant in developing the Kingdom of God theme. God promises that from Abraham would come a people, who would live in a land, and who would receive His blessing. This blessing would extend from this people to the whole world. God’s promises show that He is determined to bring about His good purposes to establish His eternal Kingdom for the benefit of the people of the world.

Our efforts in writing Cursed to Bless is simply an attempt to put the ‘big story’ of God’s Word as articulated by these men (and many others!) into a different medium that benefits God’s people.

### Biblical Theology and Life

God has spoken to us through His Word, the Bible, not just to inform us but to transform us. He rescues us from our slavery to sin and death and fills us with His Spirit to make us like His Son, the Lord Jesus. As a result, we will enjoy life forever with Him. Biblical Theology, like all good theology, leads to transformed lives. It is the wonderful privilege of Christian preachers and teachers to make plain the links between the truth of God’s Word (theology) and the lives of the listeners. This is our aim.

One of the major issues in life which C2B aims to address and to bring transformation to our lives is that of *suffering*. We do this through a ‘life-connection’ question: “If God is so good, why is life so hard?”. This question is repeated in different forms throughout the series We aim to answer this question using the ‘big story’ of the Bible. We are convinced that this is the best way for all of us to be transformed in our lives now as we struggle through this often-hard life. Specifically, we see that suffering:

* helps us become more like Jesus who suffered for us (1 Peter 2:18-25),
* produces much fruit (Romans 5:3-5; James 1:2-4),
* helps us long for heaven (Romans 8:18-25),
* indicates we are truly children of our Heavenly Father (Hebrews 12),
* refines our faith (1 Peter 1; James 1),
* occurs when we put sin to death,
* shows the world that we value God more than anything.

Biblical Theology also serves as a means of addressing the scourge of the ‘prosperity gospel’. This false teaching is understandably attractive to millions around the world, promising to bring blessings to people who are suffering. Everyone wants blessing, but the ‘prosperity gospel’ fails to deliver and increases suffering rather than providing true comfort and hope through the gospel. It totally misunderstands or misrepresents God’s Word, often only quoting a few out-of-context Bible verses to support their teaching. Also, and even more seriously it fails to honour or even acknowledge the Lord Jesus. It is best refuted by an understanding of the big story of the Bible[[3]](#footnote-23). The Bible teaches that the fulfilment of God’s purpose to bless us are not found in this earthly life but in the life to come, the New Creation, or heaven. This future hope of ultimate blessing comes only through faith in the death, resurrection and ascension of our Lord Jesus.[[4]](#footnote-24)

### Educational Approach

As noted in *Understanding Cursed to Bless*, we want to help oral, rote-educated christians in developing countries to see how the whole Bible fits together into a single story of salvation, with Jesus and his gospel of grace at its heart. There are five key challenges to helping this resource's audience: poverty, scale, rote education, orality, and prosperity teaching. These challenges call for a different approach to traditional formal education.

The large *scale* of christians who would benefit from discipleship resources, together with their *lower and volatile incomes*, means a traditional course, with their large upfront fees over a long period of time, is generally unviable. Cursed to Bless is a free resource that is accessible to anyone with a basic feature phone that can play MP3 files, or via an app on smartphones. It can be shared freely and even be broadcast on local radio. We have developed a concept of a paid day conference that grants a certificate for those interested in a deeper and more formal step after completing the series. By unbundling the business model of a traditional course, we can have both a very large reach with a viable credentialed option.

A *rote learning* culture in the education systems of the Global South can discourage asking questions and learning deeply from first principles. Although our audience have heard most of the Bible stories, they lack a strong sense of how the Bible fits together as one whole. *Cursed to Bless* is an informal drama, without a formal teacher role, that puts the audience in the middle of engaging dilemmas between contrasting model characters, encouraging them to think through it. The lessons include discussion in a small group, encouraging reflection rather than simple repetition of an answer. Since it is a form of entertainment drama, it is 'safe' to ask questions.

The *oral culture* of our audience, while it varies across contexts, generally means that learning by reading and even reading for leisure are uncommon. Rather, they have a strong preference for learning orally through stories and drama. Concrete thinking and discussion is preferred over abstract concepts. Cursed to Bless offers an entertaining and relevant story dealing with concrete situations illustrating abstract truths through characters and life situations that the audience can identify with. It relies on dialogue and repetition. The simple dramas can be enacted as part of the learning process. It offers learning within a format that they already know and enjoy and feel confident with. The characters model asking questions and thinking deeply under the godly guidance of their pastor.

A *worldview* that God blesses those who are 'good enough' and views God as a means to earthly wealth is usually deep seated and hard to change with traditional formal education. Cursed to Bless uses the power of drama in the audience's heart language to contrast God's way of grace with our own way of works, and thus challenge and transform deep beliefs through the deep emotional bond with the protagonist. The series intentionally includes a negative model character who explicitly proposes this worldview into the conversation, to help the audience externalise their deep beliefs. It uses conflict, comedy and emotion to engage the audience. The positive and negative models provide starkly contrasting views, pitting the protagonist (and the audience that identifies with him) in the middle, requiring him to think deeply and be transformed over time.

Educational Entertainment, and specifically the Sabido Method, is an established and proven format, used in secular contexts around the world by organisations such as USAID, Australian Broadcasting Corporation and the BBC. See the *References and Other Resources* section in the *Production Guide* for more.

Historically, there have been two helpful ways of helping an oral learner access God's written word: Bible storying and literacy education. Cursed to Bless adds a third approach, telling a story of characters like the audience as they wrestle together with a passage. This helps the audience to learn all types of passages (not just narrative ones) in an accessible way, with concrete models and application contexts.

The drama and interactive questions are guided by a set of learning outcomes, which were written and reviewed first. These implement a basic framework inspired by Bloom's taxonomy of *know, understand, and apply*.

Specifically within each episode:

* Interaction is required of the audience throughout the episode, by either speaking the answer to a simple question or pausing the audio to discuss a more open question.
* At the start of each episode, the host asks an open, safe discussion question that primes the audience to start thinking about the topic covered.
* The use of a life situation which offers an authentic context in which the episode's truths can be applied. This helps the audience go beyond simply repeating answers to abstract questions. This is inspired by Case Based Learning, which has been an effective educational technique. Additionally, the life situation can offer a concrete illustration of the truths that aids understanding.
* The life situation is presented at the start, but its resolution is delayed until after the Bible study segment. The host asks the audience what they think the protagonist should have done in the situation. This not only keeps the audience engaged through the Bible study, but motivates them to listen carefully as the passage offers the key to resolving the situation.
* Modelling is a key educational element. As the characters go through their Bible study, the pastor leads them through important habits such as praying at the start and end, looking carefully at the text, considering the passage’s context, asking questions, and applying the passage to their lives. As the audience hears these good patterns repeated every episode, we trust they can gently learn *how* to do things like a learning together in a Bible study. On the other hand, one of the characters offers *negative modelling,* and we use a bit comedy to communicate how *not* to do Bible study in a light-hearted way.
* Repetition is used at key points. Each episode starts with the same introduction, anchoring it to the fundamental question of promised blessing in a suffering world that the series is addressing. The main point of each episode is repeated verbatim at the start (to prime the audience) and the very end (to summarise and reinforce). More broadly, the episodes have a consistent structure to maintain the audience's confidence in interacting with the resource. Key themes are also repeated across episodes.
* Bible memorisation is used, with the group memorising a passage for each episode which summarises the lessons learnt.
* Often, the characters will refer to previous episodes to integrate learning across the series.
* Each episode ends asking the audience the same question that the characters discussed, to help take the lesson deeply into life.

### Episode summaries

Each episode summary below has the following elements:

* **Reading**: the passage that the characters read and discuss at their Bible study. The audience is encouraged to read this for themselves for each episode.
* **Memory verse**: a brief verse that the characters and audience are encouraged to memorise as a summary of the application of what they’ve learnt.
* **Main idea**: a one sentence summary of the episode. This is noted by the host at the start and end of the episode.
* **Pointing to the Lord Jesus**: a one sentence summary of how the passage is fulfilled in, and helps us understand, Jesus.
* **Learning Outcomes**: a more detailed description of what we want the audience to learn. Together with the application goals, we want the audience to *know*, *understand*, and *apply*. The dialogue and assessment questions were written to cover these. They should all align with the main idea.
* **Application**: specific and practical ways in which we hope the audience will apply the episode’s lesson in their lives. These are echoed by the characters during the Bible study.

## Series Summary

* 0: **Series Introduction** - Luke 24:27  
  Introduces the characters, tells how they come to join a Bible study, raises series’ overall question and theme, and explains the format.
* 1: **God Blesses People** - Genesis 1-2 (in two sections 1:1-2:3 and 2:4-25)  
  God is our supremely powerful and good Creator and Ruler who has blessed us abundantly.
* 2: **People Sin and God Curses** - Genesis 3  
  Our disobedience against God was a terrible act of rebellion and unbelief which brought God’s curse upon us. God removed us from his place (the Garden) so we are no longer his people enjoying his rule. Life is now hard and then we die.
* 3: **God Promises to Bless People Again** - Genesis 12:1-3 and Genesis 15:1-7  
  God promises Abraham that he will again bless the world through him. Abraham trusts God and God considers him righteous.
* 4: **God Blesses His People Israel** - Exodus 19:1-6, 20:1-3  
  God creates his own new people, Israel, rescues them from their enemies and gives them the Law so that they can live lives of love in his presence.
* 5: **God Blesses Israel and the World!** - 1 Kings 10:1-13  
  God establishes his people in his promised land, gives them his King to rule over them and abundantly blesses them and the world.
* 6: **People Sin Again and God Curses Again** - 1 Kings 11:1-13 and Deuteronomy 28:58-63  
  Solomon’s (and the people of Israel’s) disobedience against God shows just how stubbornly sinful people are and how deserving of God’s curse we are.
* 7: **God Promises to Bless People Yet Again!** - Jeremiah 31:31-34 and Ezekiel 36:24-28  
  God speaks through the prophets a message of hope that he will fulfil his promises, remove the curse, soften hard hearts by his Spirit and bring eternal blessing to his people.
* 8: **God Curses Jesus to Remove the Curse from People** - Matthew 27:27-54  
  God himself, in Jesus, came to pay the death penalty of the curse on us so that it could be removed from us.
* 9: **God Blesses Jesus to Bless the World** - Acts 2:22-39  
  The resurrection of Jesus exalts Jesus above all powers and proves that God has removed the curse and has brought blessing to his people. We join God’s people and receive the Holy Spirit by repenting of our sins and putting our faith in the Lord Jesus.
* 10: **God’s People Declare the Gospel of Jesus to the World** - Luke 24:36-53  
  The risen Lord Jesus confirms God’s purpose revealed in the Scriptures that through Him salvation has been achieved and this Gospel news must be declared to the world in the power of God the Holy Spirit.
* 11: **God’s People Live for the Glory of God** - 1 Peter 2:9-25  
  Just as Jesus lived a perfectly good life yet suffered for us, we too must live good lives and be prepared to suffer to show others just how glorious God is.
* 12: **God Blesses His People Forever** - Revelation 21:1-5, 21:22-22:5  
  Through Jesus the curse has been removed and the blessings that God originally intended for his people will be restored and increased! God will live with his people, in his place and ruling and blessing them forever. Now, while we wait, we bless each other by generously sharing our lives and our possessions to meet each other’s needs.

## 1. God Blesses People

Reading: **Genesis 1-2** (in two sections 1:1-2:3 and 2:4-25)

Memory verse: **Revelation 4:11**, You are worthy, our Lord and God, to receive glory and honor and power, for you created all things, and by your will they were created and have their being.

### Main idea

God is our supremely powerful and good Creator and Ruler who has blessed us abundantly.

### Pointing to the Lord Jesus

Everything we learn about God in these chapters is also seen in Jesus who is God in the flesh.

### Learning Outcomes

* Know that God is the supremely powerful and good Creator and Ruler of all people.
* Know that God abundantly blessed us.
* Understand that we were originally made as God’s people, living in God’s place and enjoying the blessings of God’s rule.
* Understand that the NT teaches us that Jesus is this good and all-powerful Creator God in the flesh who came to bless us with abundant life. Jesus demonstrated his power to do good and rule the world through his miracles and his gracious and compassionate life.

### Application

* We must give thanks, honour, praise and obedience to God.
* We must give thanks, honour, praise and obedience to Jesus.

## 2. People Sin and God Curses People

Reading: **Genesis 3**

Memory Verse: **Romans 6:23**, For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.

### Main idea

Our disobedience against God was a terrible act of rebellion and unbelief which brought God’s curse upon us. God removed us from his place (the Garden) so we are no longer his people enjoying his rule. Life is now hard and then we die.

### Pointing to the Lord Jesus

God, with amazing grace, sent Jesus into our world to remove the curse and restore his blessings to us.

### Learning Outcomes

* Know that Adam and Eve’s disobedience, and our subsequent personal disobedience was, and is, a terrible act of rebellion and unbelief against God.
* Know that because of our rebellion our world is under God’s curse which means that life is hard and then we die.
* Know that because of our rebellion we were removed from the garden and so are no longer God’s people, in God’s place enjoying the blessings of God’s rule.
* Know that God, with amazing grace, would remove the curse through a man (Genesis 3:15).
* Understand that Jesus is the man who removes the curse and restore his blessings to us.

### Application

* Grieve over our sin which has messed up God’s good world.
* Acknowledge that we are cursed forever unless we trust Jesus, who is God’s way of removing the curse.
* Thank God for Jesus!

## 3. God Promises to Bless People Again

Reading: **Genesis 12:1-3 and Genesis 15:1-7**

Memory Verse: **John 10:10b**, I have come that they may have life, and have it to the full.

### Main idea

God promises Abraham that he will again bless the world through him. Abraham trusts God and God considers him righteous.

### Pointing to the Lord Jesus

God’s promises to Abraham come true fully and finally in Jesus.

### Learning Outcomes

* Know that God was committed to removing the curse He had placed on his creation.
* Know that God promised to create a people through Abraham, give them a land and bless them.
* Know that God promised he would bless all peoples of the world through Abraham.
* Understand that Abraham doesn’t work for or earn God’s promise of blessing.
* Understand that God’s promises to Abraham come true fully and finally in Jesus.

### Application

* Thank God for his grace that he promises to bless the world despite our sinfulness.
* Stop trying to earn God’s blessing through our own efforts.

## 4. God Blesses His People Israel

Reading: **Exodus 19:1-6, 20:1-3**

Memory Verse: **1 Peter 2:9-10**, But you are a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, God’s special possession, that you may declare the praises of him who called you out of darkness into his wonderful light. Once you were not a people, but now you are the people of God; once you had not received mercy, but now you have received mercy.

### Main idea

God creates his own new people, Israel, rescues them from their enemies and gives them the Law so that they can live lives of love in his presence.

### Pointing to the Lord Jesus

The story of Israel is in the Bible to lead us to understand how through Jesus we are saved from our enemies and become God’s people to live a life of love.

### Learning Outcomes

* Know that God’s first promise to Abraham of a people has been fulfilled (Genesis 12-50).
* Know that the Exodus is the beginning of the fulfilment of God’s promise of a land that continues into Joshua.
* Know that the Law was given after the people were saved from their enemies and not before. Obeying the Law was not the way the people were saved.
* Know that the Law showed the people the goodness of God and his desire to live with them.
* Know that the Law showed the people how to live a life of love for God and people.
* Understand that the story of Israel is in the Bible to lead us to see how through Jesus we are saved from our enemies of sin and death and become God’s people, obeying the Law of Christ, to live a life of love.

### Application

* Praise God that he is a promise-keeping, rescuing and loving God.
* Thank and trust Jesus who saved us from our greatest enemies of sin and death.
* Commit to living a life of love which fulfils the law of Christ.

## 5. God Blesses Israel and the World!

Reading: **1 Kings 10:1-13**

Memory Verse: **John 14:6**, Jesus answered, “I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me.

### Main idea

God establishes his people in his promised land, gives them his King to rule over them and abundantly blesses them and the world.

### Pointing to the Lord Jesus

The story of Israel is in the Bible to lead us to understand how through King Jesus God rules over and abundantly blesses his people and will establish them in the ultimate Promised Land, the New Creation.

### Learning Outcomes

* Know that God’s second promise to Abraham of a land has been fulfilled (Exodus- Joshua).
* Know that God’s third promise to Abraham of blessing has been fulfilled through his King who rules wisely over God’s people.
* Know that not only has God blessed his people Israel, but through them other nations are blessed eg. Sheba.
* Know that God is glorified in all this.
* Understand that the story of Israel is in the Bible to lead us to understand how through King Jesus God rules over and abundantly blesses his people and will establish them in the ultimate Promised Land, the New Creation.

### Application

* Praise God that all peoples, Jews and Gentiles, are included in the fulfilment of God’s promises.
* Praise God that through King Jesus God rules and abundantly blesses his people and will establish them in the ultimate Promised Land, the New Creation.
* Submit ourselves and our lives to the wise rule of King Jesus.

## 6. People Sin Again and God Curses Again

Readings: **1 Kings 11:1-13** and **Deuteronomy 28:58-63**

Memory Verse: **Romans 3:10-12**, There is no one righteous, not even one; there is no one who understands; there is no one who seeks God. All have turned away, they have together become worthless; there is no one who does good, not even one.

### Main idea

Solomon’s (and the people of Israel’s) disobedience against God shows just how stubbornly sinful people are and how deserving of God’s curse we are.

### Pointing to the Lord Jesus

We see more clearly than ever just how desperately we need a Saviour. That Saviour is King Jesus.

### Learning Outcomes

* Know that the people of Israel, even when God had blessed them with everything good, were still stubbornly sinful.
* Know that God’s rightful curse on them meant they (like Adam and Eve) would be exiled from the good land he’d given them.
* Know that life in exile was hard and there they died.
* Know that God still shows grace.
* Understand how stubbornly sinful we are and how gracious God is through King Jesus.

### Application

* Grieve over how stubbornly sinful we are and appreciate how deserving of God’s curse we are.
* Marvel at God’s amazing grace that comes to us through King Jesus.

## 7. God Promises to Bless People Yet Again!

Readings: **Jeremiah 31:31-34** and **Ezekiel 36:24-28**

Memory Verse: **Matthew 5:17**, Do not think that I have come to abolish the Law or the Prophets; I have not come to abolish them but to fulfill them.

### Main idea

God speaks through the prophets a message of hope that he will fulfil his promises, remove the curse, soften hard hearts by his Spirit and bring eternal blessing to his people.

### Pointing to the Lord Jesus

The coming of Jesus shows that God himself has come to fulfil the prophets’ message of hope.

### Learning Outcomes

* Know that God speaks through his prophets his message of hope to us stubbornly sinful people.
* Know that God will forgive our sins.
* Know that God promises to change our stubborn hearts through the power of his Holy Spirit.
* Know that God will bring eternal blessing to his people in his place, heaven.
* Understand that Jesus is the complete fulfilment of God’s promises to Abraham and the prophetic message of hope.

### Application

* Praise God for his patience in continuing to speak to us sinful people.
* Appreciate that Jesus is the complete fulfilment of all God’s plans in the Bible to remove the curse and bring blessing to the peoples of the world.

## 8. God Curses Jesus to Remove the Curse from People

Reading: **Matthew 27:27-54**

Memory Verse: **Galatians 3:13**, Christ redeemed us from the curse of the law by becoming a curse for us, for it is written: “Cursed is everyone who is hung on a pole.”

### Main idea

God himself, in Jesus, came to pay the death penalty of the curse on us so that it could be removed from us.

### Learning Outcomes

* Realise just how evil people are that they could do this to the perfectly good God that created them.
* Realise the loving commitment Jesus had towards all people.
* Know that Jesus removed the curse from us by taking the curse on himself when he died on the cross.
* Know that we cannot remove the curse by our obedience or good works. It is all of him.

### Application

* Feel the enormity, suffering and injustice of Jesus’ death.
* Be utterly humbled by his amazing grace towards us.
* Examine ourselves to see if we are relying on our obedience or putting our faith in Jesus.
* Repent of our sin and trust in Jesus as the only way that God will remove the curse on us.

## 9. God Blesses Jesus to Bless the World

Reading: **Acts 2:22-39**

Memory Verse: **1 Peter 1:3**, Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ! In his great mercy he has given us new birth into a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead,

### Main idea

The resurrection of Jesus exalts Jesus above all powers and proves that God has removed the curse and has brought blessing to his people. We join God’s people and receive the Holy Spirit by repenting of our sins and putting our faith in the Lord Jesus.

### Learning Outcomes

* Know that God raised Jesus to life and that He is seated in power and joy at God’s right hand.
* That Jesus is King over all.
* Know that the forgiveness of sins and the gift of the Holy Spirit comes to those who repent and believe in Jesus.
* Know that the gift of the Holy Spirit means God himself is living in us and that we are his people.
* Know that this is the most brilliant blessing imaginable and means we have the inheritance of eternal life (see Ephesians 1:13-14).
* Know that all this is what the OT Scriptures were pointing to.

### Application

* Is this what we believe?
* Have we turned from our rebellion against God and put our trust in King Jesus?
* Be assured that that our sins are forgiven and that we have received the Holy Spirit.

## 10. God’s People Declare the Gospel of Jesus to the World

Reading: **Luke 24:36-53**

Memory Verse: **Matthew 28:18-20**, All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age.”

### Main idea

The risen Lord Jesus confirms God’s purpose (revealed in the Scriptures) that through him salvation has been achieved and this Gospel news must be declared to the world in the power of God the Holy Spirit.

### Learning Outcomes

* Know that Jesus really rose from the dead and ascended into heaven in his body.
* Know that the Old Testament taught the death and resurrection of King (Messiah) Jesus and that the gospel will be declared to all nations.
* Know that Jesus sent his Holy Spirit to empower Christians in the worldwide declaration of the gospel.

### Application

* Be convinced that because Jesus is God’s risen King he should be proclaimed and worshipped throughout the world.
* Be convinced that people remain under God’s curse unless they repent and put their faith in Jesus.
* Involve ourselves in the worldwide declaration of the gospel of Jesus and the making of his disciples of all peoples.

## 11. God’s People Live for the Glory of God

Reading: **1 Peter 2:9-25**

Memory Verse: **1 Peter 2:12**, Live such good lives among the pagans that, though they accuse you of doing wrong, they may see your good deeds and glorify God on the day he visits us.

### Main idea

Just as Jesus lived a perfectly good life yet suffered for us, we too must live good lives and be prepared to suffer to show others just how glorious God is.

### Learning Outcomes

* Know that God chose us and showed us mercy in order to declare his praises and live good lives for him.
* Know that our good lives and our sufferings show the world just how glorious our God is.
* Know that suffering in this world is normal for the Christian and to be expected because the Lord Jesus has not yet returned.
* Know that through suffering we are blessed because God is refining our faith and making us more like Jesus, our suffering Saviour.
* Know that the Christian life is a daily battle against our sinful natures, and that this is real suffering too.

### Application

* Be patient and joyful in suffering as we keep our eyes firmly fixed on Jesus.
* Keep fighting against our sinful natures and resisting temptation.
* Pray that others see our good lives and sufferings for our Lord and be moved to find out about Jesus and turn to him.

## 12. God Blesses His People Forever

Readings: **Revelation 21:1-5, 21:22-22:5**

Memory Verse: **James 1:12**, Blessed is the one who perseveres under trial because, having stood the test, that person will receive the crown of life that the Lord has promised to those who love him.

### Main idea

Through Jesus the curse has been removed and the blessings that God originally intended for his people will be restored and increased! God will live with his people, in his place and ruling and blessing them forever. Now, while we wait, we bless each other by generously sharing our lives and our possessions to meet each other’s needs.

### Learning Outcomes

* Know that because of our Lord Jesus we are God’s people and will live in God’s place (heaven) enjoying the blessings of his rule over us forever.
* Know that now we are greatly blessed by being part of a worldwide church family of brother and sister believers.
* Know that God gives us all we need to live for him through the sufferings and difficulties of this life.

### Application

* Determine to persevere through this hard life with joy, loving and encouraging each other, as together we wait to be with God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit, forever in heaven.
* “Rejoice in the Lord always!” (Philippians 4:4)
* “Come, Lord Jesus!” (Revelation 22:20)

1. How Biblical Theology Dismantles the Prosperity Gospel, Michael Schäfer. https://www.9marks.org/journal/prosperity-gospel/ [↑](#footnote-ref-20)
2. For an outline and review of ‘Gospel and Kingdom’ and ‘God’s Big Picture’ go to https://www.9marks.org/review/gods-big-picture-gospel-kingdom-and-according-plan-vaughan-roberts-and-graeme-gold/ [↑](#footnote-ref-21)
3. As Paul Barker notes on the best response to prosperity teaching: “What is really needed is a biblical theology approach. … If we really want to understand what the Bible has to say about prosperity we need to go beyond the verse-by-verse approach and study the broad stream of biblical flow and development.” Blessed to be Rich? A Biblical Theology of Blessing (1)” by Paul Barker, https://au.thegospelcoalition.org/article/blessed-to-be-rich-a-biblical-theology-of-blessing/ [↑](#footnote-ref-23)
4. See “How Biblical Theology Dismantles the Prosperity Gospel”, Michael Schäfer. https://www.9marks.org/journal/prosperity-gospel/ This article is in a set of very useful free downloadable articles in the 9Marks Journal found at this URL. [↑](#footnote-ref-24)