

I N N O V A T O R



# INNOVATOR

## LESSON 1 CREATED BY GOD

You are not an accident.

You are not a mistake.

You are not less-than or useless.

You are intelligently and lovingly designed by God, the Creator of the universe who loves you more than you can imagine and wants to use you to fulfill an incredible purpose in this world. You have been given incredible talents, resources, and influence for the purpose of reaching your family, your school, your community, and our world for Christ.

In case you didn't know it, you know you are loved by God. Not only that, but you are specifically called and gifted to accomplish His work in this world. Far too many of us as Christians fail to realize this. Instead, we think we are not good enough, talented enough, or holy enough to do anything for Christ. We think the problems of this world are someone else's problem or just too big for us—or sometimes even God—to deal with, and we just go through the motions of life: showing up to church, staying out of trouble in school, and trying to fit into the world around us as well as possible.

This passive approach to the Christian life causes serious problems. Studies show that less than 50% of Christians will ever share their faith. That means that less than 50% of Christians will ever go out and share the life-changing message of love that is the Gospel with a person who does not know Jesus. This has led to disastrous results for the spiritual state of your generation.

Several years ago, a study was done that found that only 4% of your generation would follow Christ? Whether you knew that or not, you will likely think, when you hear that low number, that this study must have been skewed, or at least that the writers are being a little overdramatic in order to draw attention to their work; however, more recently, another study was conducted, and they found that only 4% of this generation has a biblical world view. That study was not overreacting or even hypothetical; it has, in fact, become reality, because we as Christians are not rising up to be who God has called us to be.

With 96% of your generation not following Christ, you—and we as the church—have a big challenge facing us, but thankfully God has created us to be able to come up with, and implement, big solutions. This is why this study is called “Innovator”. Innovators don't just see problems, but instead see solutions. Innovators see things we do not even know we need or want yet, and come up with creative ways to meet those needs. Most importantly, innovators actually get up and do something about actually seeing those solutions come to fruition.

That is where you as a Christian can stand out. Christians all over the world, even many non-Christians, know that there is something not right with the world. The issue is that all people do is talk

and complain about it. You can actually do something about it, change the lives of your friends, and change the course of the world for generations to come.

Here's an example. Twenty years ago, two guys were playing a video game. One looked at the other and said, "Wouldn't it be great if when we had to quit playing, we could take the game with us and keep playing?" Fast forward a couple of decades later and you'll see the introduction of the Nintendo Switch. All those years ago, those guys saw a problem and came up with a solution but did nothing to actually take action and do anything about it. They clearly missed out on a huge opportunity!

Video games are trivial, and even if the Nintendo Switch was never invented, we would be completely fine. Imagine what happens, though, if you, like those guys did with their video game, follow the pattern of countless Christians before you? Meaning that you see the problem, maybe even come up with an idea to solve the problem, and do nothing about it.

You have probably heard this happen in sermons and around holiday dinners. A bunch of grown-ups griping about the world around them, and griping about young people, and at best thinking of solutions but not doing anything about it. Just because this is the norm for most Christian circles does not mean this has to be the Christian life you live.

You can bring about change.

You can be different.

You can be an innovator.

Throughout history, there are stories of human beings seeing problems and coming up with innovative solutions:

Johan Vaaler saw a stack of paper and said, "That needs to be clipped together."

Alexander Graham Bell saw that we needed new ways to communicate.

Gandhi saw that a nation needed to be freed and could do it through non-violent means.

Steve Jobs saw that the computer could be used by everyday people for creative purposes.

These are just a few of countless examples of innovators throughout history who changed the course of the world through seeing a problem, coming up with an innovative solution, and then working to see that solution come to fruition.

It is time for you to do the same thing but on a much grander scale and for a much greater purpose. Sure, you may come up within an invention, change the way we use technology, or start a political movement, but you can do it for the purpose of building God's Kingdom, which is the only thing worth devoting your time, talents and treasure too.

Hopefully, you can clearly see the problem—only 4% of your generation is choosing to follow Christ. God has created you to be part of the solution. What we need to figure out is exactly how will you fit into

God's story of redeeming and changing the world, what unique and innovative talents and ideas you will bring to the table, and what you will sacrifice to see the vision God gives you come to life. A vital first step in that process is understanding exactly who you are in case the world around you, and even those close to you, have convinced you of a lie about your identity and place in this world.

So...let's dive in.

## **1. YOU WERE CREATED BY GOD.**

**Read Psalm 139:14.**

You were fearfully and wonderfully made by the Creator of the Universe. The same God who took the time to make sure the earth perfectly tilted on its axis and the exact distance we need to be from the sun so that we do not freeze to death or burn alive, is the same God who designed you.

Let that sink in for a moment.

You are not an accident.

You are not a mistake.

You are not less-than or useless.

How does that make you feel?

How would these past few months have been different if you had not only known this but lived as if you believed it?

- A. Maybe you would have sinned less because you would have known that that you are valuable and that your life isn't meaningless.
- B. Maybe you would have lived every moment with purpose out of thankfulness for how much God loves you.

If you are going to be an innovator who changes your generation for Christ, you must believe that you are created by God.

## **2. YOU WERE DESIGNED IN HIS IMAGE.**

**Read Genesis 1:27.**

This is a hard concept to grasp. Look at it this way:

Think about the greatest thing in nature that you have ever seen. If you haven't been blessed to travel, what is the greatest piece of landscape photography you have seen on Instagram or YouTube?

As incredible and powerful as those images are, those parts of God's creation were not created in God's image—you and I were. This means that not only are we special to God, but also that we were created with a special role and place in God's story. Not only did God love you enough to create you—and create you uniquely—He created you in His image.

### **3. YOU WERE CREATED FOR A PURPOSE.**

**Read Jeremiah 29:11.**

God could have just said, “You were created, and the creation around you is awesome, and that is enough.” But He did not; He also created us with a purpose that is unique to us and that is always best for us. Notice that it does not say that His purpose is easy, but that it is best. This means that every day we get to wake up to a new challenge that we get to find and live out each day. This means that every season and every moment are not wasted.

This means that you should never say that you're bored, because every moment can have a purpose, whether that moment is for resting as God modeled for us, for growing Spiritually, or for accomplishing great works for His Kingdom.

### **4. YOU CAN SEE THE WORLD THE WAY GOD SEES IT.**

**Read Matthew 22:34-40.**

The religious leaders did not like Jesus because people kept following Him, and because He kept pointing out to them that they were wrong. In this one of many efforts to discredit Jesus, they thought they could trick Him into misspeaking about the commandments—they asked Him which of the commandments was the greatest. As always, Jesus stayed cool and calm and delivered a perfect answer.

To summarize, Jesus teaches us that everything ever written and ever taught—all of life, in fact—boils down to loving God and loving people. It doesn't get much simpler, and at the same time more powerful, than that. Here are a few things that will help to explain what it means to see the world the way God sees it.

#### **A. CHRISTIANITY ISN'T JUST ABOUT STAYING OUT OF TROUBLE.**

A lot of people think that Christianity is just about staying out of trouble, obeying the rules, and waiting for Heaven. Basically, they think that life is all about loving God. After all, Jesus said, “If you love me you will obey my commandments,” and He is God. The problem with this is that there is that “little” commandment about loving your neighbor. This means that living the Christian life also means we have to get out into the world around us, fulfill our purpose and be a part of changing people's lives for Christ, so if you have ever thought Christianity was boring, maybe you are not actually living the Christian life; maybe you are just going to church, staying out of trouble and going through the motions of life.

## **B. THERE IS USUALLY A THIRD WAY—GOD’S WAY—TO SEE THINGS.**

Christians usually fall into one of two camps. The first camp is the one mentioned in the previous point. They think the most important thing is avoiding sin, and as long as you are doing that, you are doing well and God is pleased. The other group of people thinks, “Who cares if I am partying, having sex every once-in-a-while outside of marriage, or cursing as long as I am doing good deeds?” They think life is all about loving your neighbor and that doing this masks the other stuff. But as usual, we as humans get it wrong. There is actually another way. Instead of thinking either/or, there is a both/and option: loving God AND loving your neighbor. James 1:27 tells us that pure and undefiled religion is loving widows and orphans AND keeping yourself unstained by the world. What does all this have to do with you being an innovator and changing your generation for Christ? You are going to have to see things differently. The world around you will look for simple solutions to big problems or think they are too big to solve, or often times they will want to meet a physical need without dealing with the larger spiritual need, or vice versa. But you must remember that there is usually a third way the world is not seeing, and while that way is often harder, it is the way that honors God and truly changes someone’s life.

## **C. YOUR INNOVATIVE PURPOSE IN GOD’S KINGDOM WILL BOIL DOWN TO LOVING GOD AND LOVING PEOPLE.**

It might be hard for you to figure out exactly what God wants you to do to reach your teams, your school, and your generation for Christ. One thing that can help is to remember that Jesus said it all will boil down to loving God and loving people. So as you try to figure out how to use your time, talents and treasure to reach your generation for Christ, know that what God wants you to do is follow His commandments in the Bible (loving God) and change people’s lives for the Gospel (truly loving people).

“What is the Gospel?”, you may ask.

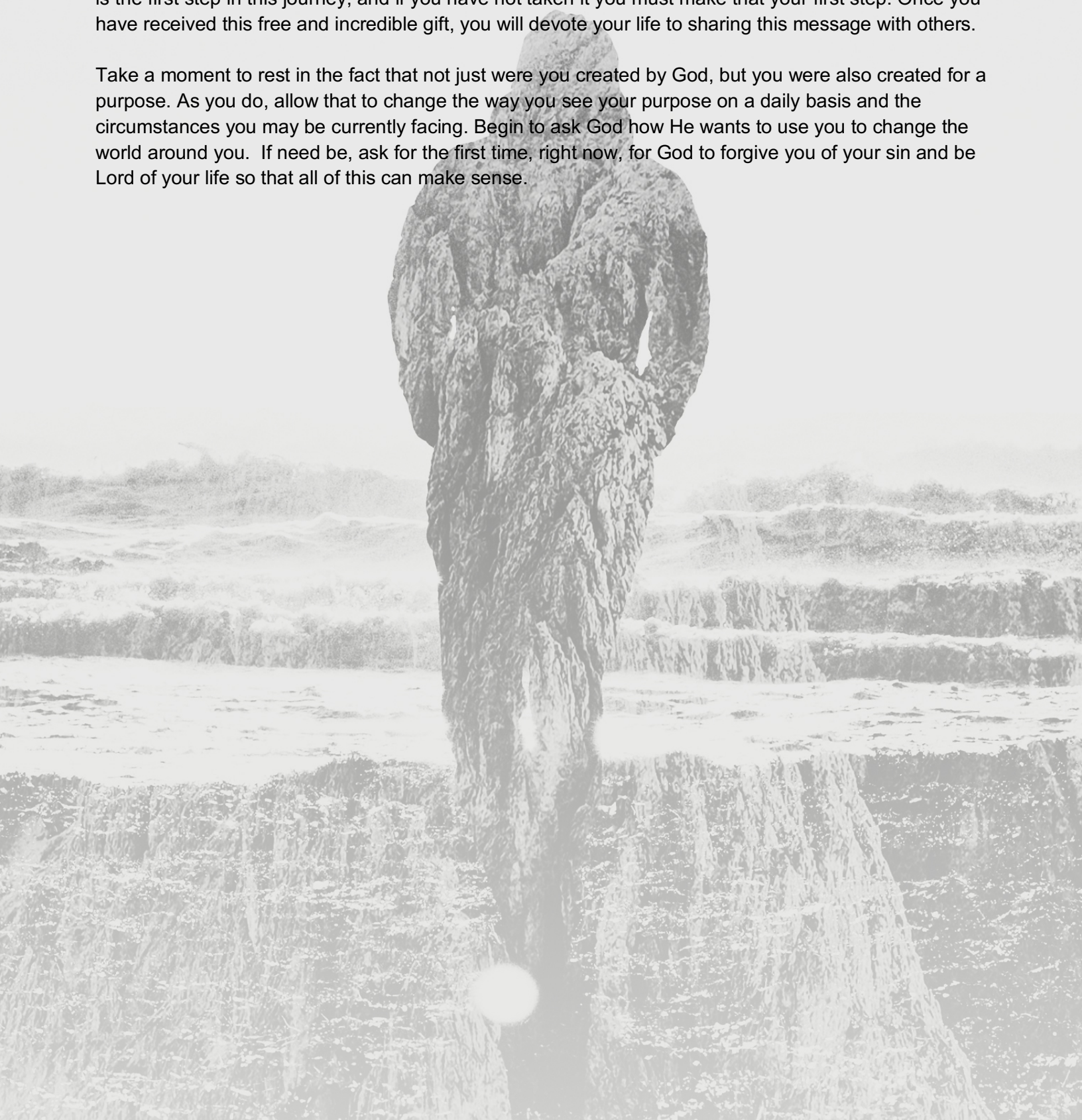
Have you ever lied? Stolen something? Wanted something someone else had? Disobeyed your parents? If you answered yes to any of these, it means you have broken God’s law. We call that sin. And guess what? All of us would have to answer yes to these questions because we all have sinned. The Bible tells us this in Romans 3:23, but it is also something we all can just admit. We are not perfect. In Romans 6:23, we see what the Bible teaches about the consequences of our sin. Romans 6:23 says the wages of sin is death. This means that because of our sin we deserve death, because God who is perfect must punish sin. God is loving, but He is also just. Imagine that someone committed a crime against your family. If that person stood before a good judge, what would that judge do? Punish them. It is the same way with God; he is a perfect and righteous judge and must punish sin.

When does this happen? While there are earthly consequences for sin, one day we will stand before God and give an account for our lives, and God will ask us why He should allow us into His kingdom, Heaven. What will you tell Him? You might say He should allow you into Heaven because you were a good person or did nice things, but here is the problem: our sin separates us from God, and that separation is like the Grand Canyon. Nothing we can do on our own can get us to God, and if we try to do it on our own, the path leads to death. But here is the cool thing, and we find it right in Romans 6:23:

The gift of God is eternal life. God loved us so much that He sent His only Son to die for us. Jesus lived a perfect life, meaning He never sinned, and then He took on our sin and died in our place and rose from the dead. All of this so that we can be forgiven, be part of God's family, have eternal life, and do incredible works for God in the world around us. The incredible thing is, we know that since Jesus rose from the dead, not even death can stop us if we live for Him.

All you have to do is believe this and ask God to forgive you of your sins and be Lord of your life. That is the first step in this journey, and if you have not taken it you must make that your first step. Once you have received this free and incredible gift, you will devote your life to sharing this message with others.

Take a moment to rest in the fact that not just were you created by God, but you were also created for a purpose. As you do, allow that to change the way you see your purpose on a daily basis and the circumstances you may be currently facing. Begin to ask God how He wants to use you to change the world around you. If need be, ask for the first time, right now, for God to forgive you of your sin and be Lord of your life so that all of this can make sense.



# LESSON 1

## DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. What impact does the fact that you are created by God have on you?
2. What impact would it have on your friends if they heard that message?
3. What do you think your purpose might be right now in this season of life?
4. What does it mean to you to see the world the way God sees it?
5. What are some ways you can love your neighbor in your community?

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