

SPIRITUAL: BEINGS, L. G.

LifeGroup LEADERS Guide

INTRODUCTION

The Bible has a large cast list for reality, including Satan, demons and angels in addition to God and humanity. Does your view of the universe have room for these characters? And what is your role in this cosmic rebellion?

Nearly every book of the Bible deals with the subject of angels and/or demons. The biblical authors and role models of our faith lived in a world that was animated with spiritual life. The way we think often changes the way we act, in complex and nuanced ways. Although it's hard to describe, if we kick spiritual beings to the curb of our Christian faith this way of thinking and believing will impact our way of living and being a Christ follower.

For this reason you might find that the study this week is more cerebral and concept-driven. This is not because we want to put the Bible under the microscope and study it just because it's interesting. It's because the subject of spiritual beings is often misunderstood both in and outside of the church. Many myths and echoed traditions float around. Or, often, we hardly give a second thought to spiritual beings at all. This week we're trying to adjust our thinking and believing so that it is in line with what Scripture presents about the subject--and this will impact the way we live out our Christian faith.

DISCUSSION

1. This week start by reading through the introduction (above) all together. It provides some important insight on where we're going this week!
2. C. S. Lewis says, "*There are two equal and opposite errors into which [human] race can fall about devils [demons]... one is to disbelieve in their existence. The other is to believe, and to feel an excessive and unhealthy interest in them.*"¹ Discuss the quote. [Leaders, this is a warm up question. Don't spend too much time here--yet! We will be returning to

¹ C. S. Lewis, *The Screwtape Letters*.

this quote later in the study. This is just to get your group going on the subject]. If you are having difficulty getting conversation going consider using these quotes:

- a. Have you, or someone you've known, found themselves on one side or the other of this split?
 - b. Why do you think each side might be alluring or tempting?
 - c. What are the inherent dangers of either side?
 - d. Try to explain what might be the healthy 'middle ground.'
3. Watch the ['Elohim' video by The Bible Project](#). [3 mins]. Read Deuteronomy 10:17, Psalm 82:1, Psalm 136:2.
- a. Summarize what your group has learned through this video and the passages.
 - i. "Elohim" is a category word which is a title, just as "father/mother" or "teacher" or "leader."
 - ii. All spiritual beings -- angels, demons, Satan, cherubim -- fall under the banner of "Elohim."
 - iii. When the biblical authors and characters refer to God as "Elohim" they are using a relational title designation to refer to God. Think of calling your own mother, who has a proper name, "Mom."
 - b. Why does the Bible often refer to God as the "God of gods"?
 - i. God of 'gods' does not refer to other existing deities, but refers to God as the 'Elohim' over all other 'elohim' (other spiritual beings).
4. Read through the Bible's cast list for reality (Appendix A) as a group. As you do this:
- a. Look up as many of the passages as you desire or you think your group needs.
 - b. Try to describe what you already understand about each character.
 - c. Note the questions your group might have about each character.
 - i. Watch as many or as few of the other Bible Project-Spiritual Beings videos as you need to help answer questions/hang ups. Each of the videos are 4-6mins in length.
 - [The Divine Council](#)
 - [Angels and Cherubim](#)
 - [Angel of the Lord](#)
 - [The Satan and Demons](#)
 - [The New Humanity](#)
 - ii. After watching each video pause to see how the video helped answer questions, or did not.
 - d. Imagine a reality populated by all of these characters. Discuss the following two questions.
 - i. What is challenging about expanding your view of the universe to include these characters? [Consider noting the intellectual or spiritual challenges

your group mentions so that you might investigate or study further to come back to these questions with them in the future. Also, please let us know them, and how we can help you answer those questions].

- ii. How does this “cast list” impact the way your view your role in the universe? As a Christian?
5. In the introduction we said, “*The way we think often changes the way we act, in complex and nuanced ways.*” Read Hebrews 11:1-3.
 - a. What does it look like to walk by faith and not sight alone? What is the definition according to Hebrews?
 - b. How might the Hebrews passage aid us in our struggle to make sense of spiritual beings in the Bible?
 - c. How does having a broader view of eternity and spiritual beings change how we live, pray and act here and now?
 6. ***Next Level*** Spend some time discussing as a group how this “cast list” of reality populated with spiritual beings might change...
 - a. ...the way we see eternity. [Trying to understand these concepts reveals to us that everything in the Bible is ultimately a conceptualization; it is God speaking in human terms; spiritual beings makes us think outside of categories of time and space which is important for grasping our eternal life; the spiritual beings cement in our hearts the greatness and mystery of heaven].
 - b. ...the way we see reality. [We are a part of something far greater than ourselves; we are pointed to a much bigger, cosmic drama; we become less anthropocentric and more God-centric].
 - c. ...the way we see God. [The greatness of God as the first and forever among all spiritual beings comes into vision; the love and service and worship of the angels magnifies the worthiness of God; the power of God as Creator, who creates not just in the material realm, comes into full display].
 7. Read through Hebrews 1.
 - a. What does this passage teach us about the proper role of angels in relation to us, and to God?
 - i. Presently God is the greatest as the uncreated, the angels are superior, and to be human is to be a ‘little lower than the angels.’ Although, it’s very possible these roles will be reversed or change (between humans and angels) in the future (cf. 1 Cor. 6:3).
 - ii. Angels are not disconnected from the human realm but actively engaged in (ministering to) humanity (v.14).

- iii. God is greater than the angels and they are not to be worshipped despite their power. God is God alone, the angels are created; God is uncreated (v.8-9, cf. Col. 2.18 and Rev. 22.8-9).
 - b. What do we learn about the nature of worship?
 - i. Worship is reserved for God, as Trinity, alone.
 - ii. Worship is not merely singing and bowing down in the heavenly sphere (although it certainly is/will be that!) but it is serving and ministering, just as the angels carry out God's will!
8. As we close tonight, let's return to the quote from earlier: "*There are two equal and opposite errors into which [human] race can fall about devils [demons]... one is to disbelieve in their existence. The other is to believe, and to feel an excessive and unhealthy interest in them.*"²
- a. How has the conversation tonight changed your understanding of spiritual beings?
 - b. Work together as a group to make a statement describing this "middle ground" to which you might refer back to in the future. [Leaders: Refer to Appendix B for assistance. This Appendix is only for you, and will not be sent out on the participant's guide. Use it to help direct and teach your group].

PRAYER

We should not pray *to* angels, but we can pray aware that we are living *like* angels when we pray. Angels are in communion with God. Prayer is a way of entering into our eternal relationship with God in the present. Spend some time together as a group. Take some prayer requests and consider these prayer prompts as well:

- Praise God for being the greatest, ultimate and uncreated Spirit being. The first and the last.
- Pray to be obedient as the angels, carrying out God's Kingdom will on earth as it is in heaven.
- Pray to walk and live by faith and not by sight.

² C. S. Lewis, *The Screwtape Letters*.

APPENDIX A -- THE BIBLE'S CAST LIST FOR REALITY

The City/Kingdom of God

1. **Yahweh** (the revealed name of God, the Ultimate Spirit of all and above all spiritual beings)
 - a. **Angel of the Lord?** (either a special messenger of God used in the Old Testament, or an early form of Jesus' incarnation on earth; cf. Genesis 16:7-12; Exodus 3:2)
 - b. **Jesus** (the second Person of the Trinity, still Yahweh)
 - c. **Holy Spirit** (the third Person of the Trinity, still Yahweh)
2. **Divine Council** (potentially angels, or another type of spiritual being, or just an illustration of angels ministering to God; cf. Psalm 82; Job 1)
3. **Angels & Cherubim/Seraphim** (Isaiah 6:2-7; Ezekiel 1:5-14)
4. **The New Humanity** (Revelation 7:9-17)
5. **Animals** (morally "neutral," not made in God's image but deeply important to God, they sing out the glory of God and will exist in God's eternal kingdom; cf. Psalm 148, Revelation 5:13).

The Adversaries & Accusers/The Failed Coup

6. **The Satan** (which means 'the Accuser' of humankind, quite possibly an original angel--or at least a spiritual being--who, through free will, rebelled against God out of pride; cf. Ezekiel 28:11-19; Revelation 12)³
7. **Demons** (Ephesians 6:10-12; 2 Peter 2:4-5)
8. **Rebel Humanity** (Revelation 20:15)

³ Calling "the Satan" or "the Accuser" simply "Satan" or "Lucifer" is actually a misnomer. Nowhere does the Accuser have a specific, revealed, proper name. To stay in line with Scriptural language Ryan prefers "the Enemy" or "the Accuser."

APPENDIX B -- EXAMPLE OF A BALANCED VIEW ON SPIRITUAL BEINGS

Disbelieving in Spiritual Beings	Healthy Balance	Excessive Interest in Spiritual Beings
<p>The Satan is not a literal being that exists</p>	<p>The Satan is associated with both the overall currents of evil in our world (Ezekiel 28:11-19), as well as portrayed as an actual personality (Matthew 4)</p>	<p>Assuming that the Satan is behind every ungodly choice, blame-shifting; looking for ‘Satanic’ individuals or organizations. Remember, human rebellion is just as much to blame!</p>
<p>Angels play no role in our lives on earth today, if they exist at all</p>	<p>Angels are “ministering spirits” that serve God’s people (Heb. 1.14); they do guard and protect God’s people at times (Psalm 91:11) but it is entirely unknown if they’re assigned to specific people; while angels appeared to God’s people throughout Scripture it is highly unlikely, although not impossible, we will receive such visitations now that we have the Bible completed as God’s message; in all probability if you encounter an angel you won’t know you have (Heb. 13.2)!</p>	<p>Dogmatic assertions that everyone has a guardian angel; claims to be visited by angels with messages; looking for angel sightings; worshipping angels; naming specific angels outside of Micahel and Gabriel (the only named angels in Scripture).</p>
<p>Demons no longer fit in our modern world where we have a better understanding of mental health and human agency</p>	<p>If you believe in Jesus as the Son of God, this necessitates a belief in demonic spirits (Matt. 8:28-34); demons are personalized, rebellious beings seeking to lead humans into their coup; most likely they are ‘fallen’ angels (cf. Rev 12); we have nothing to fear (1 John 4.4)!</p>	<p>Talking to demons, or naming specific demons, in ways that only Jesus and the Apostles seemed capable; believing in ghosts; associated all illness, mental health issues, and disease with the demonic; associating certain struggles and sins with demons</p>

