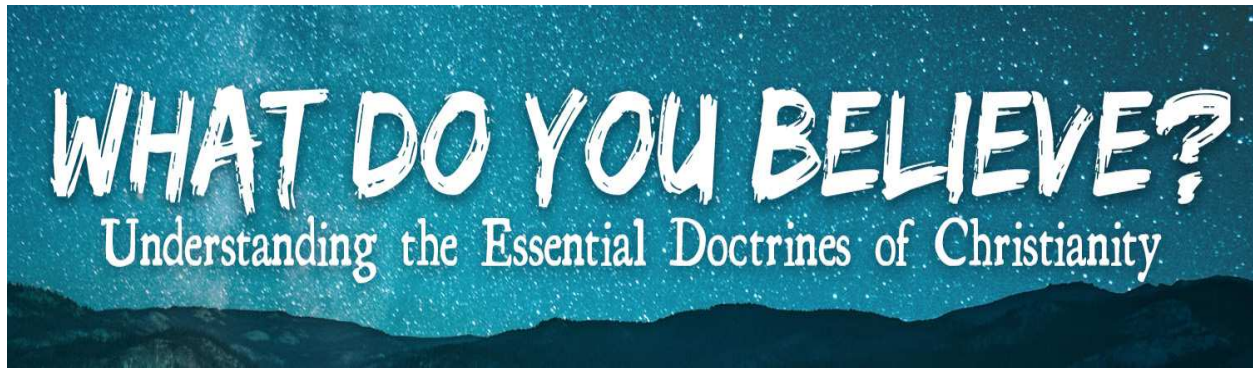




THE PURPOSE. This study seeks to answer the following questions:

- What Is My Authority?
- Who Is God?
- Who Are We?
- What Is Our Problem?
- Who Is Jesus?
- What Did Jesus Do?
- How Is One Saved?
- Who Is the Holy Spirit?
- What Is the Church?
- What Is the Significance of Baptism & Communion?
- What Role Do Angels Play?
- Where Are We Headed?

THE NEED. Statistics indicate that, in general, Americans are ignorant of what the Bible teaches. Pluralism has infected our culture. Pluralism is the view that every person has an equally valid perspective on what is true—truth is relative and cannot be known for certain. Christianity stands in stark contrast to pluralism. C.S. Lewis once commented:

*Christianity, if false, is of no importance, and if true, of infinite importance.
The only thing it cannot be is moderately important.*

THE FORMAT. Each weekly study consists of three primary sections:



Scripture Exploration. An introductory Bible story or passage will set the stage for the topic. An acronym will then serve as an outline, guiding you into the main points of what the Bible says about the topic.



Additional Resources. An excerpt from a Christian book or article will help clarify and/or further solidify the teaching of the Bible.



Changed Hearts. Personal evaluation, reflection, and practical exercises will help to apply the teaching of the Bible so that we can live for God and experience together the joy of relationship with Him.

THE BENEFITS. Let's be honest...studying doctrine doesn't sound very fun. Some would even say that it is a waste of time. So why spend time studying these doctrines?

- **Knowing truth pleases God.**

Be diligent to present yourself approved to God as a workman who does not need to be ashamed, accurately handling the word of truth. (2 Timothy 2:15)

- **Knowing truth frees us from the bondage of lies.**

So Jesus said to the Jews who had believed him, "If you abide in My word, you are truly My disciples, and you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free." (John 8:31-32)

- **Knowing truth brings personal transformation.**

And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, that you may prove what is that good and acceptable and perfect will of God. (Romans 12:2)

- **Knowing truth leads to spiritual health.**

Hold fast the pattern of sound words which you have heard from me, in faith and love which are in Christ Jesus. (2 Timothy 1:13)

- **Knowing truth brings peace, wisdom, joy, and discernment.**

*The law of the LORD is perfect, restoring the soul;
The testimony of the LORD is sure, making wise the simple.
The precepts of the LORD are right, rejoicing the heart;
The commandment of the LORD is pure, enlightening the eyes. (Psalm 19:7-8)*

Biblically, knowing truth implies more than having a collection of facts. It is not just cognitive. Rather it is embracing the truth and allowing it to penetrate every aspect of one's life. This process involves study, meditation, evaluation, interaction, and response (action).

THE PROCESS. The goal of this study is not only to explore the major doctrines of Christianity but also to help you remember them. The early church often taught new believers the basics of the Christian faith through the process of *catechism*. Catechism places an emphasis on the memorization of key doctrinal beliefs, typically through a question and answer format.

This study will follow a similar format but on a much more simplistic scale than ancient catechisms. The answers to each of the major questions addressed in this study will be in the form of an acronym to help you remember them. See *SEARCH summary sheet*. Consistent review will further aid in the memorization of the questions and their corresponding answers.

THE PRELIMINARIES. On the following page are some basic facts regarding the Bible that may be helpful to you as you begin this study:

- ***Bible References.*** Bible references are stated in the order of book, chapter, and verse. Thus “John 3:16” refers to the book of John, chapter three, verse sixteen.
- ***Bible Languages.*** The Bible was originally written in Hebrew (Old Testament), Aramaic (parts of Ezra and Daniel) and Koine (or Common) Greek (New Testament). Over the years, the Bible has been translated into thousands of languages from Hebrew and Greek manuscripts. Every translation is limited to some degree since word meanings are not always equivalent from language to language. Thus referring to a Hebrew or Greek dictionary (e.g., blueletterbible.org) can sometimes be helpful in understanding the Bible.
- ***English Translations.*** There are numerous English versions (translations) of the Bible. Some versions attempt to translate the Hebrew-Greek manuscripts of the Bible word-for-word (e.g., New King James, New American Standard). Other versions translate the Bible concept-for-concept (e.g., New International, New Living). A concept-for-concept translation is easier-to-read but sometimes flavors the meaning of a verse in a way that may not be totally accurate. Thus for Bible study purposes, it is best to use a word-for-word translation or at least to consult one before drawing too many conclusions from a Bible text.
- ***How did we get the books of the Bible?*** The authoritative nature of the 66 books of the Bible (39 in the Old Testament, 27 in the New Testament) was recognized by the people of God soon after the books were written. The Old Testament was compiled over several centuries with the books of Moses (Genesis-Deuteronomy) and the historical books collected and copied from generation to generation. The last prophetic book (Malachi) was written in 400 BC and shortly thereafter the 39 books of the Old Testament were recognized as God’s inspired Word.

The New Testament was officially compiled and recognized around the fourth century AD (after severe persecution of the church ended in the Roman Empire). Before this time, the early church read, copied, preserved, and almost universally recognized the 27 books of the New Testament as the Word of God. In fact, many early believers were willing to die for the truth of the Scriptures.

- ***What about the Apocrypha?*** The Apocrypha (“hidden”) refers to eleven books which were composed during the time between the Old and New Testaments (400-100 BC). Roman Catholics generally recognize them as part of the Old Testament Bible. However, the Jews do not recognize them as part of the Old Testament, Jesus or the apostles do not quote from them, and they were not given full canonical status until 1546 at the Council of Trent (called in response to the Protestant Reformation). Thus Protestants do not recognize the Apocrypha as part of the Bible but do see them as having historical value for understanding the intertestamental period (i.e., the time between the completion of the Old Testament and the start of the New).
- ***Internet Resources.*** There are many websites on the internet offering access to different Bible translations and search features. One site, biblegateway.com, is easy to use and features numerous Bible translations. Websites like bible.org and blueletterbible.org also have many excellent Bible study tools which can give you more information on the Bible passages you are studying.

SUGGESTIONS FOR WEEKLY STUDY. Each week's study should take approximately one to two hours to complete. You can complete the study in one sitting or divide up the study into five days. A five-day study would look something like the following:

- **Day One.** Reading the introduction and completing the first Bible study passage.
- **Day Two.** Completing the first half of the Scripture Exploration acronym.
- **Day Three.** Completing the second half of the Scripture Exploration acronym.
- **Day Four.** Reading the Additional Resources article.
- **Day Five.** Completing the Changed Hearts application.

Whatever game plan you use, make a commitment to complete the study each week...and commit to discuss what you learn with a friend, with family, and/or in a community group.

GOING DEEPER. This study is designed to be an introduction to basic theology. It is hoped that it would be beneficial both to the seeker as well as to the seasoned believer. For those desiring to go deeper in their study of theology, the following three books are recommended:

- Millard J. Erickson, *Introducing Christian Doctrine* (3rd Edition) (ICD)
- Wayne Grudem, *Bible Doctrine* (BD)
- Charles C. Ryrie, *A Survey of Bible Doctrine* (SBD)

What Is My Authority? (Bible). Read ICD (pp. 39-75), BD (pp. 33-63), or SBD (pp. 36-50)

Who Is God? (Theology). Read ICD (79-105), BD (67-103), or SBD (11-35)

Who Are We? (Anthropology). Read ICD (177-201), BD (187-209), or SBD (100-107)

What Is Our Problem? (Sin). Read ICD (203-233), BD (210-226), or SBD (107-114)

Who Is Jesus? (Christology). Read ICD (237-267), BD (229-247), or SBD (51-66)

What Did Jesus Do? (Atonement). Read ICD (269-292), BD (248-269), or SBD (115-131)

How Are We Saved? (Salvation). Read ICD (331-371), BD (273-325), or SBD (131-139)

Who Is the Holy Spirit? (Pneumatology). Read ICD (295-315), BD (104-123), or SBD (67-88)

What Is the Church? (Ecclesiology). Read ICD (391-409), BD (363-375), or SBD (140-148)

What About Baptism & Communion? Read ICD (411-424), BD (376-395), or SBD (148-158)

What About Angels? (Angelology). Read ICD (167-174), BD (168-183), or SBD (89-99)

Where Are We Headed? (Eschatology). Read ICD (441-467), BD (427-471) or SBD (159-184)

This study was written by Pastor Steve Foster, Community Bible Church, Baton Rouge, LA. You are welcome to reproduce any part of it for your own personal study. For any other use, please contact pastor@516church.org .

S.E.A.R.C

Scripture Exploration — Additional Resources — Changed Hearts



1. **What is my authority?** ☐
The Bible because it is REAL...
Revealed by God
Eternal
Accurate
Life-giving
2. **Who is God?** ☐
God is HOLY...
Holy
Omnipotent
Loving
Yahweh
3. **Who are we?** ☐
We are DUST...
Created in the **D**ivine Image
Created for **U**nity
Created with a **S**pirit
Created for a **T**ask
4. **What is our problem?** ☐
Sin which has a **C**OST...
Corruption of our nature
Opposition in our relationships
Separation from God
Trouble to our world
5. **Who is Jesus?** ☐
Jesus-Christ-God's Son-Savior.
6. **What did Jesus do?** ☐
Jesus came to **SAVE** us through His..
Sinless Life
Atoning Death
Victorious Resurrection
Expected Return
7. **How is a person saved?** ☐
Through the **ABC's** of the gospel...
Acknowledge one's sin
Believe in Jesus Christ
Choose Christ as Savior

8. **Who is the Holy Spirit?** ☐
He is the Spirit of **TRUTH**...
Trinity member
Revealer of truth
Usher to Christ
Transformer of hearts
Helper of believers
9. **What is the church?** ☐
The community Jesus came to **BUILD**...
Built upon Jesus
Unified in the Spirit
Invisible in nature
Loving God and one another
Declaring Christ to the world
10. **What is the meaning of baptism?** ☐
Baptism means to **DIP** and is
An act of **D**iscipleship
by **I**mmersion
as a **P**icture of salvation

What is the meaning of communion?
The **CUP** of communion...
Looks back to the **C**ross
Looks around at our **U**nity
Looks forward to the **P**romise
11. **What are angels?** ☐
Angels are **SPIRIT**...
Serving spirits
Powerful beings
Involved in our lives...*but some...*
Rebelled against God
Interfere with God's work
Triumphed over in Christ
12. **Where are we headed?** ☐
The **REST** of the story is the...
Rapture of the church
Emergence of Anti-Christ
Second Coming of Christ
Throne judgment of God

1

What Is My Authority?

au•thor•i•ty *an accepted source of expert information or advice; grounds for a course of action.*

At the root of our beliefs is the issue of authority. An authority provides two basic things: 1) information to supplement our knowledge and 2) validation for our actions.

We choose authorities every day of our lives. We have to. Our limited knowledge and experience compel us to seek out authorities in various situations of life. We do Google searches. We consult troubleshooting guides. We talk with financial advisors. We read newspapers. We visit doctors. We buy self-help books. We watch the news. We call our parents. We follow our “instincts.” All of these things verify, correct or supplement our limited knowledge and give us validation for our daily decisions.

We cannot survive without trusting or following some type of authority. Life without an authority would be equivalent to playing a game without any rules. The game would be pointless and chaotic. It would even cease to be a “game.” Each person would do their own thing in their own way for their own benefit. Yet even in this “authority-less” situation, a person has chosen an authority—their own opinion.

Often our choice of an authority is inconsequential. However, in the big questions of life, the choice of our authority is vital. *Who am I? Why am I here? Is there a God? If there is a God, who is He? Which religion is correct?* Look at the following statements and beside each write down what authority they are depending upon:

I know that Mormonism is true because I have felt a burning in my heart.

I go to church each week because that is what my family has always done.

I don't believe in God because science has disproved His existence.

I believe in the existence of purgatory because the Church teaches it.

I think God is whoever you want Him to be. After all, millions of people cannot be wrong.

The Westminster Shorter Catechism was written in 1647 and is considered by many to be a standard of Protestant belief. It states that the Bible, the sixty-six books of the Old and New Testaments, is to be our ultimate authority in faith and practice. The question is, “Is the Bible a worthy and reliable authority?” Let us examine what the Bible says about itself and examine other factors that make the Bible a worthy guide for life.

Westminster Shorter Catechism

Q.1. What is the chief end of man?

A. Man's chief end is to glorify God, and to enjoy him forever.

Q.2. What rule hath God given to direct us how we may glorify and enjoy him?

A. The Word of God, which is contained in the Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments, is the only rule to direct us how we may glorify and enjoy him.

THINK ABOUT:
What other authorities do people tend to depend upon?

What authorities do you tend to depend upon?

Scripture Exploration



Read Psalm 1. Pray and ask God to speak to you through His Word. Mark key words and phrases as you read. Write out any thoughts or observations next to the verses.

Background to the Psalms: The book of Psalms is the songbook of the ancient Hebrews. The word “psalm” means “a song sung to the accompaniment of stringed instruments.” Thus, the psalms were meant to be sung, to be ingrained in the mind, and to impact one’s emotions. As spiritual songs, the psalms were also meant to bring praise to God. Psalm 1 sets the tone for the whole book of Psalms and, in many ways, summarizes the basic message of the Bible—there are two paths in life but only one leads to eternal joy. It is unknown who wrote Psalm 1 or when it was written. Many believe that it was written either by David or his son Solomon.

Blessed—The Hebrew word could be translated, “Oh, how very happy is the man...”

THINK ABOUT:
What progression do you notice in these verses?

What would the world or TV ads say are the characteristics of the happy life?

Most people are bothered by those passages in Scripture which they cannot understand. The Scripture which troubles me most is the Scripture I do understand.

—Mark Twain

Blessed is the man
Who walks not in the counsel of the ungodly,
Nor stands in the path of sinners,
Nor sits in the seat of the scornful;
² But his delight is in the law of the LORD,
And in His law he meditates day and night.
³ He shall be like a tree
Planted by the rivers of water,
That brings forth its fruit in its season,
Whose leaf also shall not wither;
And whatever he does shall prosper.
⁴ The ungodly are not so,
But are like the chaff which the wind drives away.
⁵ Therefore the ungodly shall not stand in the judgment,
Nor sinners in the congregation of the righteous.
⁶ For the LORD knows the way of the righteous,
But the way of the ungodly shall perish.

What stands out to you after reading and meditating on this passage? Why?

Psalm 1:1-2 lists five characteristics of the “blessed man,” the person who enjoys lasting peace and happiness. What are these five characteristics?

1.

2.

3.

4.

5.

Psalm 1:3-4 paints a contrast between the “blessed” life and the life of the ungodly. Sketch out a picture of the two lives according to this psalm.

The Blessed Life (Psalm 1:3)	The Ungodly Life (Psalm 1:4)

What would you say is the main difference between these two pictures?

Psalm 1 teaches that eternal life and joy come through delighting and following God’s Word. But why should we trust what the Bible says? The Bible itself provides four primary reasons why it is a **REAL** authority and why its message can be trusted.

1. THE BIBLE IS REVEALED BY GOD.

The Bible claims to be the very Word of God. We can know a few things about God through observing creation and “listening to our conscience” but many things about God can only be known if He speaks to us. The Bible is God’s Word to us.

Look up 2 Timothy 3:16 in your Bible. Write out this verse:

The word “inspired” used in many Bible versions is a translation of a Greek word, *theopneustos*, which literally means “God-breathed.” What do you think “God-breathed” means? _____

How much of Scripture is said to be God-breathed? _____

How is the Bible useful in our lives? _____

Wait a second. How can we say the Bible is “God-breathed” when men wrote it? Read 2 Samuel 23:2 and 2 Peter 1:20-21 (in the margin to the right) to answer this question.

I believe the Bible is the best gift God has ever given to men. All the good from the Savior of the world is communicated to us through this Book.
—Abe Lincoln

General Revelation— general information about God that can be known by all.

Special Revelation— detailed information about God specifically given by Him.

Theologians speak of the **verbal, plenary inspiration** of the Bible. Each word (verbal) and every word (plenary) is breathed out by God.

The Spirit of the Lord spoke by me, and His word was on my tongue.
—King David
(2 Sam 23:2)

...No prophecy of Scripture is of any private interpretation, for prophecy never came by the will of man, but holy men of God spoke as they were moved by the Holy Spirit.
—2 Pet 1:20-21

I think a new world will arise out of the religious mists when we approach our Bible with the idea that it is not only a book which was once spoken, but a book which is now speaking.

—A.W. Tozer

The doctrine of **inerrancy** means that the Bible always tells the truth about whatever it talks about.

If there be any mistakes in the Bible there may well be a thousand. If there is one falsehood in that Book it did not come from the God of truth.

—John Wesley

For the word of God is living and active, sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing to the division of soul and of spirit, of joints and of marrow, and discerning the thoughts and intentions of the heart.

Hebrews 4:12

2. THE BIBLE IS ETERNAL.

The test of time is a great measure for choosing an authority. It makes no sense to rely upon that which will change or be gone tomorrow. The Bible claims to be eternal. The truth of its message never changes because it comes from a God Who never changes.

Read and meditate on 1 Peter 1:23-25a. Mark words which stand out to you.

For you have been born again, not of perishable seed, but of imperishable, through the living and enduring word of God. For, "All men are like grass, and all their glory is like the flowers of the field; the grass withers and the flowers fall, but the word of the Lord stands forever."
—1 Peter 1:23-25a (Isaiah 40:6-8)

What words are used to describe the word of God in this passage? _____

How is everything else in the world described? _____

3. THE BIBLE IS ACCURATE.

The Bible does not claim to *contain* truth. It claims to *be* truth. There is a big difference. To say that a drink *contains* fruit juice is one thing; to say that it *is* fruit juice is another. Jesus, in praying for His disciples, declared in John 17:17: *Sanctify them by the truth; your word is truth.* Jesus declared God's Word to be 100% truth.

Write out Psalm 119:160.

In Deuteronomy 18:21-22, God gives His standard when it comes to truth. A prophet of God was expected to be _____ accurate in his predictions.

☐ 99%

☐ 50%

☐ 100%

☐ In the ballpark

4. THE BIBLE IS LIFE-GIVING.

The Bible is not merely an ancient book. It pulsates with life (Hebrews 4:12). Through its pages, God still speaks to us. When we approach God's Word with humility, expectancy, and open ears, we find life—spiritual life, eternal life, abundant life.

Re-read 1 Peter 1:23-25a above. Through what means are we "born again"? _____

Jesus says in Matthew 4:4: *It is written: Man does not live on bread alone, but on every word that comes from the mouth of God.*

What do you think Jesus saying? Re-write Matthew 4:4 in your own words.

Psalms 1 says that a person who *delights* in God's Word and *meditates* on it day and night can be compared to a *tree planted by the rivers of water, that brings forth its fruit its season, whose leaf also shall not wither; and whatever he does shall prosper.*

Describe what the promise of being *planted by the rivers of water* would look like in your own life. _____

In Matthew 4, Jesus is being tempted by Satan in the wilderness. Jesus uses the Word of God as His defense.

Biblical **meditation** is not emptying one's mind but focusing on a truth of God and letting it soak into every corner of one's thinking.

We can trust the Bible because it is **REAL**—Revealed by God, Eternal, Accurate, Life-Giving.

Additional Resources



Read the following excerpt from Norman Geisler and William Nix's book, *From God to Us: How We Got Our Bible* (Chicago: Moody, 1974), pages 55-61.

THROUGH THE CENTURIES Christians have been called upon to give a reason or defense for their faith (1 Peter 3:15). Since the Scriptures lay at the very foundation of their faith in Christ, it has been incumbent upon Christian apologists [i.e., defenders] to provide evidence for the inspiration of the Bible. It is one thing to *claim* divine inspiration for the Bible and quite another to provide evidence to *confirm* that claim....

SUPPORT FOR THE BIBLICAL CLAIM FOR INSPIRATION

Defenders of the Christian faith have responded to this challenge in sundry ways. Claiming neither absolute finality nor complete skepticism, Christian apologists have given "a reason for the hope that is in them."

The following is a summary of evidence for the biblical doctrine of inspiration.

Internal Evidence

There are two lines of evidence to be considered on the inspiration of the Bible: the evidence flowing from within Scripture itself (called internal evidence) and that coming from outside of it (known as external evidence). There are several lines of internal evidence which have been presented.

The evidence of self-vindicating authority. Some have claimed that the Bible speaks, like a lion's roar, with its own convincing authority. As Jesus astonished the crowds, "for he taught them as one who had authority" (Mark 1:22), even so the "thus says the Lord" of Scripture speaks for itself. When the voice spoke to Job out of the whirlwind,

it was evident to him that it was the voice of God (Job 38). The words of Scripture need not be defended; they need only to be heeded to know they are the words of God. The most convincing way to demonstrate the authority of a lion is to let it loose. Likewise, the inspiration of the Bible does not need to be defended; rather, the teachings of the Bible need to be expounded. It is argued that God can speak most effectively for Himself. The Bible can vindicate its own authority once its voice is heard.

Evidence of the testimony of the Holy Spirit. Closely allied with the evidence of the self-vindicating authority of Scripture is the witness of the Holy Spirit. The Word of God is confirmed to the children of God by the Spirit of God. The inner witness of God in the heart of the believer as he reads the Bible is evidence of its divine origin. The Holy Spirit not only bears witness to the believer that he is a child of God (Romans 8:16) but that the Bible is the Word of God (2 Peter 1:20-21). The same Spirit who communicated the truth of God also confirms to the believer that the Bible is the Word of God. From the earliest centuries it has been the consensus of the Christian community in which the Spirit operates that the books of the Bible are the Word of God. God's Word is thus confirmed by God's Spirit.

Evidence from the transforming ability of the Bible. Another so-called internal evidence is the ability of the Bible to convert the unbeliever and to build up the believer in the faith. Hebrews says, "The word of God is alive and active, sharper than a two-edged sword..."(4:12). Untold thousands have experienced this power. Drug addicts have been cured by it; derelicts have been transformed; hate has been turned to love by reading it. Believers grow by studying it (1 Peter 2:2). The sorrowing are comforted, the sinners are rebuked, and the negligent are exhorted by the Scriptures. God's Word possesses the dynamic, transforming power

of God. God vindicates the Bible's authority by its evangelistic and edifying powers.

The evidence of the unity of the Bible. A more formal evidence of the Bible's inspiration is its unity. Comprised as it is of 66 books, written over a period of some 1500 years by nearly 40 authors in several languages containing hundreds of topics, it is more than accidental that the Bible possesses an amazing unity of theme—Jesus Christ. One problem (sin) and one solution (the Savior) unify its pages from Genesis to Revelation. Compared to a medical manual written amid such variety, the Bible shows marked evidence of divine unity. This is an especially valid point in view of the fact that no one person or group of men put the Bible together. Books were added as they were written by the prophets. They were then collected because they were considered inspired. It is only later reflection, both by the prophets themselves and later generations, which has discovered that the Bible is really one book whose "chapters" were written by men who had no explicit knowledge of the overall structure. Their role could be compared to that of different men writing chapters of a novel for which none of them have even an overall outline. Whatever unity the book has must come from beyond them.

External Evidences

The internal evidence of inspiration is mostly subjective in nature. It relates to what the believer sees or feels in his experience with the Bible. With the possible exception of the last mentioned evidence (the unity of the Bible), these internal evidences are available only on the inside of Christianity. The nonbeliever does not hear the voice of God, nor sense the witness of His Spirit, nor feel the edifying power of Scripture in his life. Unless he steps by faith to the inside, these evidences will have little if any convincing effect on his life. This is where the external evidence plays a crucial role. It serves as

signposts indicating where the "inside" really is. It is public witness to something very unusual, which serves to draw attention to the voice of God in Scripture.

The evidence from the historicity of the Bible. Much of the Bible is historical and as such is subject to verification. There are two main lines of support for biblical history: archaeological artifacts and specifically written documents. With respect to the first, no archaeological find has ever invalidated a biblical teaching. On the contrary, as Donald J. Wiseman wrote, "The geography of Bible lands and visible remains of antiquity were gradually recorded until today more than 25,000 sites within this region and dating to Old Testament times, in their broadest sense, have been located." In fact, much of the earlier criticism of the Bible has been decisively overturned by archaeological discoveries which have demonstrated the existence of writing in Moses' day, the history and chronology of the kings of Israel, and even the existence of the Hittites, a people once known only from the Bible.

The more widely publicized discovery of the Dead Sea Scrolls illustrates a point less well known; namely, that there are thousands of manuscripts for both Old and New Testaments, compared with a handful of many great secular classics. This makes the Bible the best documented book from the ancient world. While no historical find is a direct evidence of any spiritual claim in the Bible, such as the claim to be divinely inspired, yet the historicity of the Bible does provide indirect verification of the claim of inspiration. For confirmation of the Bible's accuracy in factual matters lends credibility to its claims when speaking on other subjects. Jesus said, "If I have told you earthly things and you do not believe, how can you believe if I tell you heavenly things?" (John 3:12).

Evidence from the testimony of Christ. In connection with the foregoing evidence for

the historicity of the biblical documents is the evidence of the testimony of Christ. Since the New Testament has been documented as historical, and since these same historical documents provide us with the teaching of Christ about the inspiration of the Bible, one needs only to assume the truthfulness of Christ in order to argue for the inspiration of the Bible. If Christ possesses any kind of authority or integrity as a religious teacher, then the Scriptures are inspired. For He taught that they were God's Word. In order to falsify this contention, one must reject the authority of Jesus to make pronouncements on the subject of inspiration. The evidence from Scripture conclusively reveals that Jesus held to the full divine authority of the Scriptures. Indications from the gospel record, with ample historical backing, show that Jesus was a man of integrity and truth. The argument, then, is this: if what Jesus taught is true, and Jesus taught that the Bible is inspired, then it follows that it is true that the Bible is inspired of God.

The evidence from prophecy. Another forceful external testimony to the inspiration of Scripture is the fact of fulfilled prophecy. According to Deuteronomy 18, a prophet was false if he made predictions which were never fulfilled. No unconditional prophecy of the Bible about events to the present day has gone unfulfilled. Hundreds of predictions, some of them given hundreds of years in advance, have been literally fulfilled. The time (Daniel 9), city (Micah 5:2) and nature (Isaiah 7:14) of Christ's birth were foretold in the Old Testament, as were dozens of other things about His life, death, and resurrection. Other prophecies, such as the education and communication explosion (Daniel 12:4), the repatriation of Israel, and the rebuilding of Palestine (Isaiah 61:4) are being fulfilled today. There are other books which claim divine inspiration, such as the Koran and parts of the Veda. But none of these books contain predictive prophecy. As a result,

fulfilled prophecy is a strong indication of the divine authority of the Bible.

The evidence from the influence of the Bible. No book has been more widely disseminated and has more broadly influenced the course of world events than has the Bible. The Bible has been translated into more languages, has been published in more copies, has influenced more thought, inspired more art, and motivated more discoveries than any other book. The Bible has been translated into over one thousand languages representing more than ninety percent of the world's population. It has been published in some billions of copies. There are no close seconds in the all-time best-seller list. The influence of the Bible and its teaching in the Western world is clear for all who study history. And the influential role of the West in the course of world events is equally clear. Civilization has been influenced more by the Judeo-Christian Scriptures than by any other book or combination of books in the world. Indeed, no great moral or religious work in the world exceeds the depth of morality in the principle of Christian love, and none has a more lofty spiritual concept than the biblical view of God. The Bible presents the highest ideals known to men which have molded civilization.

Evidence from the apparent indestructibility of the Bible. Despite its importance (or maybe because of it), the Bible has suffered more vicious attacks than would be expected to be made on such a book. But the Bible has withstood all its attackers. Diocletian [a Roman emperor] attempted to exterminate it (c. A.D. 303), and yet it is the most widely published book in the world today. Biblical critics once regarded much of it as mythological, but archaeology has established it as historical. Antagonists have attacked its teaching as primitive, but moralists urge that its teaching on love be applied to modern society. Skeptics have cast doubt on its authenticity, and yet more men

are convinced of its truth today than ever. Attacks continue to arise from science, psychology, and political movements, but the Bible remains undaunted. Like the wall four-feet high and four-feet wide, blowing at it seems to accomplish nothing. The Bible remains just as strong after the attack. Jesus said, "Heaven and earth will pass away, but my words will not pass away" (Mark 13:31).

Evidence from the integrity of the human authors. There are no good reasons to suppose that the authors of Scripture were not honest and sincere men. From everything that is known of their lives, and even their deaths for what they believed, they were utterly convinced that God had spoken to them. What shall we make of men—over five hundred of them (1 Corinthians 15:6)—who claim as evidence for the divine authority of their message that they saw the Jesus of Nazareth, crucified under Pontius Pilate, alive and well? What shall we make of the claim that they saw Him on about a half-dozen occasions over a period of a month and a half? That they talked with Him, ate with Him, saw His wounds, and handled Him, and even the most skeptical among them fell at His feet and cried, "My Lord and my God!" (John 20:28)? It stretches one's credulity to believe that they were all drugged or deluded, especially in view of the number and nature of the encounters and its lasting effect on them. But granting their basic integrity, we are confronted with an unusual phenomenon of men—hundreds of them—facing death with the claim that God had given them the authority to speak and write. When men of sanity and noted integrity claim divine inspiration and offer as evidence that they have communicated with the resurrected Christ, then men of good will who seek the truth must take notice. In brief, the honesty of the biblical writers vouches for the divine authority of their writings.

Other arguments have been offered for the Bible's inspiration, but the main weight of

the case here will rest on these. Do these arguments *prove* that the Bible is inspired? No, these are not proofs with rationally inescapable conclusions. Even an amateur philosopher can devise ways to avoid the logic of the arguments. And even if they did prove the inspiration of the Bible, it would not necessarily follow that they would *persuade* it to the satisfaction of all. Rather, they are evidences, testimonies, or witnesses. As witnesses they must be cross-examined and evaluated as a whole. Then, in the jury room of one's own soul a decision must be made—a decision which is based not on rationally inescapable proofs but on evidence which is "beyond reasonable doubt."

Perhaps all that need be added here is that if the Bible were on trial and we were part of a jury called upon for a verdict, based on a comprehensive examination of the claim and alleged credentials of the Bible to be inspired, we would be compelled to vote that it is "guilty of being inspired as charged." The reader too must decide. For those who tend to be indecisive, one is reminded of the words of Peter: "Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life" (John 6:68). In other words, if the Bible—with its clear-cut claim to be inspired, with its incomparable characteristics and multiple credentials—is not inspired, then to what else can we turn? It has the words of eternal life.

What evidences for the inspiration of the Bible stand out as the most convincing in your own mind? Why?

Changed Hearts



What is one truth from this lesson that has impacted your life? Why?

What is one question that you still have that you would like answered?

If the Bible is the authority of our life, how shall we respond? The apostle Peter gives the answer to this question in 1 Peter 2:1-3. After speaking of the power and eternality of God's Word (1:23-25), Peter states:

Therefore, rid yourselves of all malice and all deceit, hypocrisy, envy, and slander of every kind. Like newborn babies, crave pure spiritual milk, so that by it you may grow up in your salvation, now that you have tasted that the Lord is good.

How are we to desire God's Word? _____

Write down several words that describe how a baby desires milk. _____

What is the result of "drinking in" God's Word? _____

Why do you think God asks us to get rid of malice, deceit, hypocrisy, envy and slander while we are "drinking" God's Word? _____

Look back at the words you used to describe a baby's desire for milk. Using these words as a guide, how would you evaluate your own desire and intake of God's Word? _____

Psalm 119 is the longest psalm in the Bible. It is written as an acrostic poem in Hebrew. There are twenty-two sections in Psalm 119 corresponding to the twenty-two letters of the Hebrew alphabet. The psalmist begins each verse in a section with the same Hebrew letter. It would be similar to the following example in English:

*All your works praise You, O God.
Awesome are You in power and glory.
Approach the Lord with humility, all you people,
Always seek to follow His Word.*

Based on one of the initials of your name, select one of the sections of Psalm 119 to read and meditate on. Ask God to speak to you before you read.

☐ **A** 119:1-8 ☐ **B** 119:9-16 ☐ **C** 119:17-24 ☐ **D** 119:25-32 ☐ **E** 119:33-40 ☐ **F** 119:41-48
☐ **G** 119:49-56 ☐ **H** 119:57-64 ☐ **I** 119:65-72 ☐ **J** 119:73-80 ☐ **K** 119:81-88 ☐ **L** 119:89-96
☐ **M** 119:97-104 ☐ **N** 119:105-112 ☐ **O** 119:113-120 ☐ **P** 119:121-128 ☐ **QR** 119:129-136
☐ **S** 119:137-144 ☐ **T** 119:145-152 ☐ **UV** 119:153-160 ☐ **W** 119:161-168 ☐ **XYZ** 119:168-176

How has God spoken to you or encouraged you through these verses?

2

Who Is God?

god (gŏd) *a being of supernatural powers or attributes, believed in and worshiped by people.*

According to the Pew Research Center, 84% of the world's population identify with a religion and have some concept of God. Many of the world's "unaffiliated" also have belief in some kind of "higher power." The big question is, "Who (or what) is God?"

Read the following quotes from actual people regarding their belief in God. Beside each statement, write down a two to three-word summary of their view of God.

"God pardons everyone who seeks Him, so pretty much you can do what you want. He is very understanding. ...He is that bit of goodness inside us. I feel it."

"God has written out my fate. I am being punished for sins I must have committed in my last life. God is vengeful. He really punishes. There is no escape from the consequences of sin."

"I feel closer to God. I don't what or who He is, but I am almost sure He is there. I feel His presence...and I feel love. I feel wrapped, cocooned in love."

"God is the Director General. Having created the world, He has absolute predominance. Nothing, no one, can disobey Him. The universe has only one Master, to whom all human beings are slaves."

As you can see, people hold widely differing views of God. So which is correct? Can God be both a pushover and a slave master? Both "cocooning love" and punishing vengeance? How can we know? Is God's nature a matter of popular opinion?

The best way to get to know someone's character is to listen to their words and observe their actions. The same is true with God. The Bible is God's Word to us. It tells us who God is and what He has done.

Westminster Shorter Catechism

Q.4. What is God?

A. God is a Spirit, infinite, eternal, and unchangeable; in his being, wisdom, power, holiness, justice, goodness, and truth.

Q.5. Are there more Gods than one?

A. There is but one only, the living and true God.

How do you tend to see God? A loving Father? A stern Master? A strange Force?

Scripture Exploration



Many people would rather answer the question, "Is there a God?" before dealing with "Who is God?" However, the Bible operates from the assumption that God exists. The Bible says that the power and beauty of nature and our own inner conscience are active witnesses to the existence of God (Psalm 19:1-6; Romans 1:18-21). This explains why belief in some type of "God" is found in every culture in every corner of the world. Thus, for this study, we will concentrate on the character of God—who is He? What is He like?

Read Acts 17:16-34. Pray and ask God to speak to your heart before you begin.

Context of the Story: The apostle Paul was an early convert to Christianity. Before his conversion, Paul (known as Saul) was a Jewish religious leader who severely persecuted Christians. After his conversion, he began to travel around the Roman empire preaching about Jesus Christ. On his second missionary journey (AD 49-52), he made a brief stop in the ancient city of Athens, the center of Greek thought and philosophy.

Epicurean—a group of philosophers who believed that the pursuit of pleasure was the meaning of life.

Stoics—a group of philosophers who believed that life should be free of passion and lived rationally and ethically.

Areopagus—a council that met regularly in Athens to discuss religious and philosophical issues.

Repent—from a Greek word, *metanoia*, which means “a change of mind.” It is a turning from one way of thinking and living to another (and better) way.

THINK ABOUT:
When did you first come to some kind of awareness of the existence of God?

What prompted Paul to start speaking to the Athenians about God (17:16)?

Paul’s goal in speaking to the Athenians was to point them to the true God. The people had many false views of God (as evidenced by the rampant idolatry) so Paul starts with the basics. Paul’s speech could be called *Theology 101*.

Write down 5-7 things that you can learn about God from Paul’s speech.

Example: God created the world and everything in it (17:24).

Paul’s message to the Athenians paints the picture of a God Who is both powerful and personal, infinite and intimate, gracious and righteous. He is a God who can be known. In fact, He desires to be known. God has placed each of us in a certain place at a certain time so that we would seek Him (17:27).

The people who hear Paul’s message respond in one of three ways (17:32-34). What are the three types of responses to Paul’s message?

What do you think makes the difference between those who reject the message of God and those who accept it?

Ask God to open your heart and mind to His truth as you continue through this study.

Every study of God will, by default, be incomplete. Psalm 145:3 says, “*Great is the LORD and most worthy of praise; his greatness no one can fathom.*” In a real sense God is incomprehensible. It will take us all of eternity to begin to grasp the depths of His wisdom, the heights of His power, and the breadth of His love.

Though God cannot be fully comprehended, He can be known. He reveals His nature to us so that we can enter into a true knowledge of Him. In Exodus 33, Moses asks to see God’s “glory” (the sum total of God’s attributes). God responds in Exodus 34:6-7.

Read Exodus 34:6-7. Mark key words or phrases that stand out to you.

Then the Lord passed by in front of him and proclaimed, “The LORD, the LORD God, compassionate and gracious, slow to anger, and abounding in lovingkindness and truth; who keeps lovingkindness for thousands, who forgives iniquity, transgression and sin; yet He will by no means leave the guilty unpunished, visiting the iniquity of fathers on the children and on the grandchildren to the third and fourth generations.”

There are four attributes of God that can be highlighted from Exodus 34.

1. GOD IS HOLY.

To be holy is to be set apart. In a general sense, God’s holiness means that He is different. He is unique—no other being is like Him. In a specific sense, God’s holiness means that He is set apart from sin—from moral uncleanness, from that which is opposed to His character. God is absolutely pure. God hates sin.

Because of God’s holiness, He cannot overlook sin. He must punish the guilty. And He has established a moral universe in which consequences for sin are so adverse that even a person’s children and grandchildren are affected by his/her sin.

In Isaiah 6, the prophet Isaiah sees God’s holiness. In verse 5, Isaiah responds to this vision by... ☐ Singing praise to God ☐ Acknowledging his sin ☐ Asking a request

2. GOD IS OMNIPOTENT.

The Hebrew word for “God” is *Elohim*, meaning “strong one; almighty one.” God, by nature, is all-powerful (omnipotent). He is able to accomplish all that He intends to do.

In Jeremiah 32:27, God asks a rhetorical question to the prophet Jeremiah: “*Behold, I am the LORD, the God of all flesh. Is there anything too hard for Me?*”

Write Jeremiah’s response given earlier in Jeremiah 32:17:

What comes into our minds when we think about God is the most important thing about us.

—A.W. Tozer

The description of God found in Exodus 34:6-7 is used again in part or in whole in Numbers 14:18; Nehemiah 9:17; Psalm 86:15, 103:8, 145:8; Joel 2:13; and Jonah 4:2.

God’s wrath is His utter intolerance of whatever degrades or destroys. He hates iniquity as a mother hates the disease that takes the life of her child.

—A.W. Tozer

Omnipotence does not mean God can do everything (e.g., make a rock too big for Him to pick up) but that He can do all that He desires to do.

What are some things that God cannot do?

*It is the love of
God that makes
Him the sworn
enemy of sin.*

—G. Campbell
Morgan

THINK ABOUT:
*What aspect of
God's love do
you appreciate
the most today?*

*The essence of
idolatry is the
entertainment of
thoughts about
God that are
unworthy of Him.*

—A.W. Tozer

In about the 3rd
century BC, the
Jews stopped
pronouncing the
name *Yahweh*
for fear of taking
it too lightly.
Instead they
substituted the
name *Adonai*
which means
“my Lord.” The
name *Jehovah* is
a late English
blending of the
consonants of
YHWH with the
Hebrew vowels
of *Adonai*.

3. GOD IS LOVE.

1 John 4:8 tells us that “God is love.” God, by nature, gives of Himself for our good. Many of the attributes mentioned in Exodus 34 are a reflection of God’s love.

- God is *merciful*. He does not give us what we deserve.
- God is *gracious*. He gives us what we do not deserve.
- God is *slow to anger*. He patiently endures with our shortcomings.
- God is *abounding in lovingkindness*. The Hebrew word for “lovingkindness” is *chesed* which points to a “steadfast, loyal, caring, active love.”
- God is *abounding in truth*. God’s love is true and faithful. It can be counted on.
- God *keeps mercy for thousands*. A “thousand” was the largest numerical unit in the Hebrew language. Thus God’s love is seen as extending to all people in all generations (Deuteronomy 7:9 says a “thousand generations”).

Read Psalm 62. King David exalts in God as his refuge, his rock, and his salvation.

What two attributes of God enable David to trust in Him wholeheartedly (62:11-12)?

☐ Power and love ☐ Grace and goodness ☐ Sovereignty and strength

Describe God if He were powerful but not loving: _____

Loving but not powerful: _____

4. GOD IS YAHWEH.

When the LORD is written in all capital letters in the Bible it is a translation of the Hebrew name (YHWH). The name literally means, “I AM” (Exodus 3:13-14).

There are at least three things implied in the name “I AM”:

- *God is immutable*. He does not change in character, essence, or purpose. He is consistent, unaffected by time (Psalm 102:26-27).
- *God is eternal*. He exists outside of time. God sees all of history at once. He is the Alpha and the Omega, the beginning and the end (Revelation 1:8).
- *God is self-existent*. He needs nothing to exist. He is and always will be God. He is the Uncaused Cause. Everything exists because He exists (Acts 17:28).

According to Malachi 3:6, why is it important that God does not change?

God is **HOLY**—Holy, Omnipotent, Love, and Yahweh. All of God’s attributes are in perfect balance. He is entirely holy, loving, and powerful at all times in all actions.

Additional Resources



Read the following excerpt from Pastor Tony Evan's book, *Our God Is Awesome* (Chicago: Moody Press, 1994), pages 73-81.

Last fall, we had a problem with our television picture. Both sets transmitted a lot of fuzz. I got it looked into, and the repairman told me we had a reception problem. Our antenna and wiring were just not doing the job. I almost had cardiac arrest when the repairman told me what it was going to cost for the rewiring we needed to get good reception. So every time I watch TV, the focus is not that clear. It's not sharp. It's somewhat distorted, and I'm sure you know how irritating that can be.

That's what may happen when you try to study God. If your antenna is not working right, you won't get a clear picture. He won't come in clear. He won't be sharp, not because something is wrong with Him, but because something has gone wrong with your receiver.

Since Adam's fall, our ability to pick up the "God channel" has been greatly disturbed. As a result, we stare into the picture of the "Holy Other," our great God, but somehow He just doesn't come into clear focus. Even after you are saved, tuning in to God can be quite difficult because He is unlike anyone you will ever come into relationship or contact with in all of your life.

Of all the things about God hard for us to focus on, one of the most difficult is His holiness. ...Holiness is one of those uncomfortable attributes because it reminds us how much unlike God we are. Let's start with a definition: *The holiness of God is His intrinsic and transcendent purity, the standard of righteousness to which the whole universe must conform.*

God does not conform to any standard created by others. He is the standard.

Therefore, He demands that His creation conform to His standard. Some atheists say there could not be a God, given the existence and prevalence of evil. Actually, the opposite is true. You can call evil "evil" only if there is a God against whose standard you can measure evil.

Bad wouldn't be bad unless you had a standard that made it bad. You can only call something evil because you have a standard—a good and holy God.

GOD'S CENTRAL ATTRIBUTE

Holiness is the centerpiece of God's attributes. Of all the things that God is, at the center of His being, He is holy. Exodus 15 shows a great picture of God's holiness as Moses and the "sons of Israel" sing about their deliverance from Pharaoh and his army

Majestic in Holiness

...Having recited Israel's great deliverance, Moses says, "Who is like Thee among the gods, O Lord? Who is like Thee, *majestic in holiness*, awesome in praises, working wonders?" (v. 11). Moses says that if you want to understand the majesty, the distinctiveness, the uniqueness of God, you have to understand it in concert with His holiness.

The Key to God's Nature

God's holiness unlocks the door to understanding and making sense out of everything else about Him. This attribute infiltrates all the other attributes. His love is holy love. His omniscience is holy omniscience. His omnipresence is holy omni-

presence. Everything has been infiltrated by this defining attribute of God called holiness.

God even calls Himself by that name. Throughout the Old and New Testaments He is called "The Holy One." When Mary was reciting her praise to God at the news that she would be the mother of the Savior, she said in Luke 1:49: "The Mighty One has done great things for me; and holy is His name."

God's holiness is central to understanding who and what He is. Nowhere in Scripture is God called "love, love, love"; "eternal, eternal, eternal"; or "truth, truth, truth." He is never emphatically called by any name except one: "Holy, Holy, Holy, is the Lord of hosts" (Isaiah 6:3). Whenever you see three words like this, you are reading an emphatic statement meaning that this is a centerpiece, this is key, this is something you don't want to miss. At the heart of who God is, is His holiness.

GOD'S HOLINESS SEPARATES HIM FROM CREATION

The prophet Isaiah writes:

For thus says the high and exalted One who lives forever, whose name is Holy, "I dwell on a high and holy place, and also with the contrite and lowly of spirit in order to revive the spirit of the lowly and to revive the heart of the contrite." (Isaiah 57:15)

God says He dwells on high in a holy place because He is the Holy One. The Hebrew word holy means "separate." It's the same root word from which we get the words *saint* and *sanctified*. All three of these carry the meaning "to be separate or distinct." Because God is separate and distinct from His creation we must humble ourselves before Him. Because He is so high in where He dwells and who He is we must bow low.

Perfect in Holiness

...The Bible makes clear in Romans 10:3 that people are ignorant of the holiness of God. They do not understand that "God is light, and in Him there is no darkness at all" (1 John 1:5). He is perfect in holiness. James 1:13-14 says that God cannot sin, He cannot even be tempted to sin, and He cannot tempt someone else to sin. The very idea of sin either in God or coming from God is inconceivable because of His purity.

We must understand this because we get really confused here. We grade sin by degrees. We say, "He's a bad sinner, a murderer, a rapist."

Then we climb the ladder a little bit and say, "Well, he's an OK sinner. He's not all that hot, but he's not like that bad sinner."

Then we climb up a little higher and come to the "good" sinner. He's a nice guy. He's not perfect, but he's cool.

Finally, we come to the "excellent" sinner. That's where most of us think we stand. We say, "Yeah, I'm not perfect, but Lord have mercy, I'm good!"

No Degrees of Sin

We make these measurements, but God recognizes no such measurement. He has no degrees of sin. Now don't misunderstand me. There are degrees of consequences. Every sin doesn't deserve the same penalty, but evil does not have degrees. The man on death row is no different in the sight of a holy God than the person who goes through all of his life and tells one lie. This is fundamental. God does not have a grading system for sin because He is totally, absolutely perfect in all of His ways. He knows no gradations of sin.

That ticks us off. We don't like a God who puts us on the same level as a criminal. We may not like it, but we'd better understand it. It's critical that we understand this in order to have a right view of God and a right view of ourselves.

If you were high above the earth and saw one man standing on a mountaintop and another standing in a valley, they would look to you as if they were standing side-by-side. You would be so high that the small matter of a mountain would be irrelevant. God is so high that while one person may be living better than the dregs of society, from God's separate, unique, high position, all stand on level ground. That's why the Bible says, "There is none righteous, not even one" (Romans 3:10). "All have sinned and fall short of the glory of God" (v. 23).

...All men need to be saved because everyone has the same problem. Someone might object, "But that's not fair."

Sure it is. Suppose you were sick, and as the doctor was getting ready to operate on you, he said, "All my scalpels are dirty. I've got one that I just picked up out of the mud. It's real dirty. I've got another one here that I cleaned, but I smeared some of the dirt on it. It's a little better, but it's still dirty. But I've got this one scalpel that's just got a little spot of dirt on it. So I think we can chance this operation on you with this scalpel that has only a little spot." But that little spot can be as bad as the thick dirt. Why? Because it only takes a few germs to contaminate your whole body. You want to make sure that the doctor's scalpel has been sterilized. You want absolute cleanliness when it comes to cutting you open. God is so holy, His scalpel so absolutely clean, that He is as offended by an evil thought as He is by murder. While there are differences in the consequences of sin, there is no difference in essence.

Encountering a Holy God

That's how holy God is, how totally unlike us. We have to do the adjusting. He's not going to change. When you come to understand the holiness of God, something has to happen. When the prophet Habakkuk ran into the holiness of God, he said, "My inward parts trembled...my lips quivered.

Decay enters my bones" (Habakkuk 3:16). He had a different view of himself.

When Job encountered the holiness of God, he cried out, "Behold, I am insignificant... I lay my hand on my mouth" (Job 40:4). "I repent in dust and ashes" (42:6). And Job was a good man. God said so (2:3).

When Isaiah beheld God's holiness, he could only say, "Woe is me!" (Isaiah 6:5). Here was a great prophet, but all he could say was "Woe is me!" Isaiah was announcing a curse on himself. He was saying, "Cursed am I." Then he said, "I am ruined," or undone. The word *ruined* means to unravel. Isaiah said, "I'm coming apart" because he saw God in all His awesome holiness.

...We do not take living the Christian life seriously enough because we don't know who God is. As I said earlier, kids sometimes forget who is the parent and who is the child. When they forget that, they will try anything. So every now and then parents have to remind their children who's who. We are like children at times. We forget who God is, so we try anything.

If we are going to be serious about walking with God, we have to understand who He is and who we are in light of Him. We must go low because He sits high. We must hallow His name. We must worship Him seriously. We must stop playing church, stop playing Christianity. Most people hurry to get to work on time because they don't want to upset the boss. But they come to church saying, "As long as I get there before the benediction, I'm on time."

When God sees us treating our bosses better than we treat Him, He says, "You don't know who I am. I am the Holy One."

GOD'S HOLINESS AND SIN

The holiness of God demands that He judge sin. This is repeated all through the Bible.... "Righteous art Thou, who art and who wast, O Holy One, because Thou didst judge these things." (Revelation 16:5)

Natural and Necessary

God judges man and creation because a holy God cannot skip over sin. He couldn't skip over it if He wanted to because of His holy nature. God's holiness means sin must be taken seriously and always will be judged.

...When we talk about the wrath or judgment of God, we do not mean mere emotional outbursts. We get mad because someone ticked us off. We get mad because we're having a bad day. God doesn't have bad days, and He doesn't just blow up. God's wrath is His natural and necessary reaction to anything and everything that is opposed to His holiness. It's natural to Him, and it's necessary because of who He is. So we are not talking about outbursts of rage. If God had outbursts, we'd all be dead.

...God's holiness is terrible. It's terrible in the Old Testament. It's terrible in the New Testament. The Bible says, "Our God is a consuming fire" (Hebrews 12:29). Not *was*, as in the Old Testament, but *is*. Our God is right now "a consuming fire." He cannot be trifled with.

We are dealing with a very holy Being who demands to be taken seriously and who stands distinct from anything that is impure. Think about it. For one sin, Adam was put out of the Garden. For one sin, Cain and his progeny were cursed. For one sin, Moses was kept out of the Promised Land. For one sin, Elijah's servant got leprosy. For one sin, Ananias and Sapphira were killed. That's "a consuming fire."

God must always have by nature a judgment for sin. ...I know that's hard to swallow because it is so unlike what we think God ought to be like. But that's making God in our image. God is holy by nature. The

tension comes when we wrestle with the reality that God judges sin while simultaneously loving the sinner. We have to keep that tension in perspective here.

God Loves the Sinner

God does not wipe us all out because while He despises and judges sin, He is intensely in love with the sinner. God wants to destroy the sin without destroying the sinner. Anyone who has ever had cancer understands this. You want to nail that cancer, but you want to be able to walk away. You want to put the radiation on the cancer and wipe it out, but you want to be set free.

So God's holiness is directed against sin, but He loves the sinner. The problem is He cannot overlook the sinner in judging the sin, because the sinner is the one doing it. The seriousness of this business of God and His holiness should shake us down to our socks. The Bible says that when God came down to the children of Israel, Mount Sinai shook. He had not even said anything yet. Just His holy presence made the mountain shake violently (Exodus 19:16-18).

Then God told Moses, "Go down, warn the people, lest they break through to the Lord to gaze, and many of them perish" (v. 21). God said, "If these folk hang around the foot of this mountain, they are going to be in trouble. If they even try to take a peek at Me, they shall surely die." That's our holy God.

When God moves, mountains shake. How come we are not shaking? If mountains shake when God moves, why don't we quiver at the thought of God? Why are we not reverential toward God? Why don't we hold Him in awe? Because we have forgotten who He is. We must take God seriously!

What is one thought that struck you from Tony Evans' article? Why?

Changed Hearts



What is one truth from this lesson that has impacted your life? Why?

What is one question that you still have that you would like answered?

The proper response to the revelation of God's character is worship. Jesus gives us the standard of worship in John 4:23-24. Take time to read and meditate on these verses.

The hour is coming, and now is, when the true worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and truth; for the Father is seeking such to worship Him. God is Spirit, and those who worship Him must worship in spirit and truth.

What stands out to you from this passage? Why? _____

To worship God is to love Him, to praise Him, to obey Him. Jesus says that we *must* worship God in two ways: in spirit and in truth.

- *To worship in spirit* is to worship with passion, desire, emotion. It is worship that flows from the heart, empowered by the Spirit of God, not just a worship that goes through the motion of outward rituals.
- *To worship in truth* is to worship with a correct knowledge of God and with integrity in one's life. It is worship that involves the mind and is free from sinful hypocrisy.

Worship in spirit without truth is false worship. Worship in truth without spirit is dead worship.

King David is described as a man "after God's own heart" (Acts 13:22). David was one who worshiped God with passion and emotion and with correct theology and integrity. He was a singer and a studier. His psalms are a reflection of this balance.

Read and mediate on Psalm 145. Write down any thoughts or observations next to these verses.

- ¹ I will extol you, my God and King,
and bless your name forever and ever.
- ² Every day I will bless you
and praise your name forever and ever.
- ³ Great is the LORD, and greatly to be praised,
and his greatness is unsearchable.
- ⁴ One generation shall commend your works to another,
and shall declare your mighty acts.
- ⁵ On the glorious splendor of your majesty,
and on your wondrous works, I will meditate.
- ⁶ They shall speak of the might of your awesome deeds,
and I will declare your greatness.
- ⁷ They shall pour forth the fame of your abundant goodness
and shall sing aloud of your righteousness.
- ⁸ The LORD is gracious and merciful,
slow to anger and abounding in steadfast love.
- ⁹ The LORD is good to all,
and his mercy is over all that he has made.
- ¹⁰ All your works shall give thanks to you, O LORD,
and all your saints shall bless you!
- ¹¹ They shall speak of the glory of your kingdom
and tell of your power,
- ¹² to make known to the children of man your mighty deeds,
and the glorious splendor of your kingdom.
- ¹³ Your kingdom is an everlasting kingdom,
and your dominion endures throughout all generations.
- The LORD is faithful in all his words
and kind in all his works.
- ¹⁴ The LORD upholds all who are falling
and raises up all who are bowed down.
- ¹⁵ The eyes of all look to you,
and you give them their food in due season.
- ¹⁶ You open your hand;
you satisfy the desire of every living thing.
- ¹⁷ The LORD is righteous in all his ways
and kind in all his works.
- ¹⁸ The LORD is near to all who call on him,
to all who call on him in truth.
- ¹⁹ He fulfills the desire of those who fear him;
he also hears their cry and saves them.
- ²⁰ The LORD preserves all who love him,
but all the wicked he will destroy.
- ²¹ My mouth will speak the praise of the LORD,
and let all flesh bless his holy name forever and ever!

3

Who Are We?

man (männ) *a member of the genus Homo, family Hominidae, order Primates, class Mammalia, characterized by erect posture and an opposable thumb, especially a member of the only extant species, Homo sapiens, distinguished by the ability to communicate by means of organized speech and to record information in a variety of symbolic systems.*

Who am I? This is the first of life's three big questions—who am I? (my identity), why am I here? (my purpose) and where am I going? (my direction)—and it stands as the foundation of the other two. Purpose and direction are built upon identity. Knowing who I am helps me to know what I should do.

So who are we? According to science, we are mammals who walk upright, use a thumb, and are able to communicate. According to society, we are dentists, secretaries, mechanics; Hispanics, Caucasians, African-Americans; Democrats, Republicans, Independents; citizens, consumers, tax exemptions. Such answers may give us some sense of identity but they do little to provide ultimate purpose and meaning to life.

In a series of issues, *Life* magazine asked the question, “What is the meaning of life?” Here are some of the actual answers that they received. Beside each answer, write a short summary of their view of themselves and of life.

“A good cigar, a martini, laughter, and a good-looking girl.”

“We’re here to die; just live and die. ...I do some fishing, take my girl out, pay taxes, do a little reading, then get ready to drop dead. ...You’re rich or you’re poor. You’re here, you’re gone. You’re like the wind. After you’re gone, other people will come.”

“We are here because one odd group of fish had a peculiar fin anatomy that could transform into legs for terrestrial creatures...because a small and tenuous species, arising in Africa a quarter of a million years ago, has managed so far, to survive by hook and by crook. We may yearn for a ‘higher’ answer—but none exists.”

“I find the question, ‘Why are we here?’ typically human. I’d suggest ‘Are we here?’ would be the more logical choice.”

In short, modern man is confused. We do not know who we are or what we are supposed to do. Are we cosmic accidents? If so, then life is essentially meaningless. We should “eat, drink, and be merry” before we die and cease to exist. Are we animals? Are we pre-programmed machines? Are we illusions who really do not exist? Or are we creations of God? The Bible teaches that we are made by an eternal God with an eternal plan in which we play an integral part.

Westminster Shorter Catechism

Q.1. What is the chief end of man?

A. Man’s chief end is to glorify God, and to enjoy him forever.

Q.10. How did God create man?

A. God created man, male and female, after his own image, in knowledge, righteousness, and holiness, with dominion over the creatures.

Modernism
views man as “self-assured and in control of his own destiny.”

Postmodernism
views man as having no central identity. “Since there is no essential *me* it follows that I can be whatever I construct myself to be.” —*Truth Is Stranger Than It Used to Be*

Scripture Exploration



In the beginning—the beginning of time. God is the Uncaused Cause who has existed from all eternity.

Let us make man in our image—the meaning of the plural verb and pronoun has been interpreted in three primary ways: 1) plural of majesty, emphasizing God's greatness; 2) God speaking to angels; or 3) an early indication of the Trinity.

The fact that there is little evidence of a plural verb being used in Hebrew as a plural of majesty and that man is never said to be created in the "image of angels" seems to point to the third option.

Genesis 1 and 2 are not different creation accounts. Rather Gen 1 is an overview while Gen 2 is a close-up. Gen 1 shows man as God's crowning work; Gen 2 shows him as the focal point of God's activity.

Read Genesis 1-2. Pray and ask God to speak to your heart before you begin. Since Genesis 1-2 is a familiar passage to many people, it may be helpful to read it in a new translation so that you do not skim over it and miss some of the details.

What thought or question first comes into your mind after reading Genesis 1-2?

Because of the modern creation-evolution debate, many scientific questions come up after reading Genesis 1-2. Answering all of these questions is impossible in one study. If you have specific questions regarding this issue, please read some of the following books: *Darwin's Doubt* by Stephen C. Meyer; *Darwin's Black Box* by Michael Behe; *Intelligent Design* by William Dembski; or *The Case for Faith* by Lee Strobel.

Fill in the following chart with a few observations and insights that you can make from your reading of Genesis 1-2.

The Relationship of God and Humanity	The Relationship of Man and Woman	The Relationship of Humanity and Nature
<i>Ex.- God created man in His own image.</i>	<i>Ex. – Both are equally made in the image of God.</i>	<i>Ex. – Humans are to exercise dominion over creation.</i>

What do you think it means to be created in God's image? _____

We are God's crowning creation. We are unique, specially designed and blessed by God. Our creation completes God's world so that He is able to pronounce everything, "Very good!" This study will help you understand our uniqueness in creation.

The dignity of human nature consists not so much in what man is, as in what God meant him to be, and in what God means him yet to become. Because of his future possibilities, the lowliest of mankind is sacred. ...To cherish contempt for others can have its root only in idolatry of self and rebellion against God.

—Augustus Strong

That the woman was made of a rib out of the side of Adam; not made out of his head to rule over him, nor out of his feet to be trampled upon by him, but out of his side to be equal to him, under his arm to be protected, and near his heart to be beloved.

—Matthew Henry

1. WE ARE CREATED IN THE DIVINE IMAGE.

Write out Genesis 1:27. _____

We are made in God's image. *What does this mean?* In a general sense, it means that we are, in some way, a representation, model, or picture of God's own being. We are God's snapshot on earth, designed to reflect His glory. Specifically, it is hard to define. Many people have equated the image of God in humanity to...

- Our ability to reason, to feel emotion, and to make decisions.
- Our ability to relate to God.
- Our ability to relate to each other in community.
- Our responsibility to rule the earth.

All of these are probably true. Being made in God's image, we have unique abilities, unique relationships, and unique responsibilities. And God has designed us in such a way that we can fulfill all of these things when we are in a right relationship to Him.

Look back at Genesis 2:15-25 and underline the actions of Adam (look for verbs). What kind of abilities does Adam show through these actions? _____

2. WE ARE CREATED FOR UNITY.

What is the one thing that God pronounces "not good" in His creation (2:18)? Why?

We are not only designed for a relationship with God but also for a relationship with one another. God creates "male and female" in His image. Both genders reflect the image of God. God creates Eve as Adam's *helper*—to help him accomplish the tasks that God has given him—and his companion—to share life and joy with him.

God institutes marriage in Genesis 2:24. What three actions (verbs) are associated with the marriage relationship? What does each action tell you about marriage?

Verb #1 _____

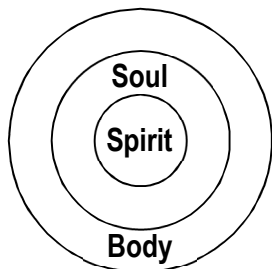
Verb #2 _____

Verb #3 _____

The commitment and unity of marriage is intended by God to form the foundation of human society and be the supreme model of all human relationships.

3. WE ARE CREATED WITH A SPIRIT.

Read Genesis 2:7. What two “ingredients” are involved in the creation of man?



We are more than just physical bodies. We are infused with the breath of God giving us life and spirit. No model of our nature is perfect but perhaps the most helpful sees us as being a combination of body, soul, and spirit. Though the terms “soul” and “spirit” are often used interchangeably in the Bible, the soul generally refers to one’s intellect, emotions and will while the spirit refers to that part of us which is able to relate to God.

Read the following verses and write down what you learn about our “spirit”?

Job 34:14-15 _____

Ecclesiastes 12:6-7 _____

Zechariah 12:1 _____

A helpful distinction between plants, animals and humanity is that plants have body only, animals have body and soul (at a basic level), and we have body, soul, and spirit. We are spiritual beings able to relate to God and draw upon His strength. This is the privilege and responsibility of being made in the image of God.

4. WE ARE CREATED FOR A TASK.

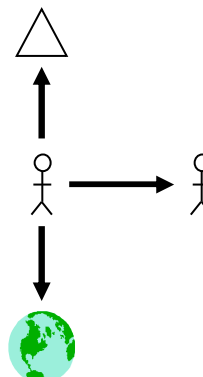
God created us for a purpose. According to Psalm 86:9, God’s ultimate purpose for all the nations is that they would...

☐ Establish worldwide peace ☐ Worship and glorify Him ☐ Subdue the earth

List some of the commands or responsibilities that God gives to man in Genesis 1-2.

God gives mankind responsibilities in three primary relationships:

- *In relationship to God*, man is to listen to God, trust Him, and obey His commands (1:28; 2:16-17).
- *In relationship to each other*, Adam & Eve are to work together to fulfill God’s mission. Marriage is also instituted as a means for companionship and procreation (1:28; 2:18, 24).
- *In relationship to the creation*, man is to rule over the earth, subdue it, and take care of it (1:28; 2:15).



Compositionally the human body is 72% water plus an assortment of other elements: carbon, nitrogen, calcium, iron, phosphorous, magnesium, etc.

Theologians debate whether man is **unitary** (unable to be separated), a **dichotomy** (material + immaterial) or a **trichotomy** (body, soul, spirit).

All nations whom You have made shall come and worship before You, O Lord, and shall glorify Your name.
—Psalm 86:9

THINK ABOUT:
What do you think it means to “glorify” God?

Man was responsibly subject to God; he was in fellowship with the neighbor as his equal; he was steward over the natural world; he was at peace with himself.
—Harry Boer

Thus, we were created to worship, to love, and to rule. And God gave mankind the resources to accomplish all three.

So who are we? Apart from God, we are simply **DUST**. But because of Him, we bear the **Divine** image, can enjoy **Unity** in relationships, possess a **Spirit** to commune with God, and have a noble **Task** to fulfill. True dignity, joy and purpose are found in knowing and serving God.

Additional Resources



Read the following excerpt from Greg Johnson's book, *The World According to God* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2002), pages 48-50, 53-57.

For centuries people have considered what it means to be human. Plato defined the human being as a "featherless biped." While accurate, Plato's definition seems lacking. There's more to being human than having no feathers and walking on two feet. How does God see us, his human creatures?

Bent Inward on Ourselves

People in the postindustrial West have been more concerned with their own significance in recent decades than perhaps ever before. Maybe we suffer from our own material prosperity. We aren't worrying about whether we'll have food today. We have more time to ponder ourselves than our grandparents' generation ever had. Introspection and the depression it often breeds are common problems today. We've become a people bent inward on ourselves.

Every day I see people obsessed with how they feel about themselves. It's good that they realize the sickness of their soul. But when I look at Americans, I see a people too self-absorbed. Some of us see the brokenness within our souls and wallow in it.

Others among us are just as self-absorbed but tend to anesthetize themselves. They dull the pain of existence through pleasure. Rather than meditating on the brokenness of life, they get drunk or high or party or download a sex partner off the Internet. Others choose a

cleaner-looking anesthesia. They keep themselves too busy to ever have time to sit still and think. Just look at how we spend our time—always doing, never just being.

Even something that's supposed to relax us, like television, keeps us busy. The commercials throw a different image at you every second. Rush. Rush. Rush. And we put one of these glass and plastic stress boxes in every room of the house!

Furthermore, Americans are grossly overscheduled. ...We're busy, self-absorbed and lonely. We lack the ability to get beyond our own circumstances.

We need a vantage point from which to get the big picture. We need to know God's perspective, the only one that really matters...

A Humble Starting Point: The Human as Creature

Having begun this meditation on God's world with the infinite God himself, I'm struck by how puny I am beside one who holds the galaxies in his hand. He is eternal (1 Tim 1:17); I am mortal (Gen 6:3). His understanding is infinite (Ps 147:5); mine finite (Job 38:1-39:30). God is self-sufficient (Acts 17:24-25); I am derived and dependent forever upon him (Heb 1:3). He has life in himself (Jn 5:26); I have life on loan (Acts 17:25). First and foremost, I am but a creature.

So why did God create us? It's not because God *needed* to create us. When we start processing the actions of a sovereign and self-sufficient God through a need psychology, we've crossed the line into something other than Christianity. God has no needs, no felt needs and no love deficits. *We were not created because the Almighty was lonely.*

So why did God make us? We were created as good creatures—even "very good" by God's designation (Gen 1:31). God made us for a purpose beyond ourselves. We aren't what this universe is all about. We're God's image, not God himself. Like everything else in God's world, we're but means to a greater end. Our purpose lies not in ourselves but in the display of God's glory....

What an End!

About A.D. 400 Aurelius Augustine, the greatest theological mind in the early church, clarified this point well. Everything, Augustine explained, is either an instrument or an end. Instruments have a purpose beyond themselves. A pencil is an instrument for writing; a painting an instrument to display beauty. Instruments are properly used for other ends. God alone is not an instrument, Augustine argued, but the end for which everything else exists.

What? Even human beings? Is a person just a means, something to be used?

Yes, though not by other people, only by God. To deny this puts yourself in the serpent's shoes. When the best theologians of the seventeenth century developed a teaching tool for children and new believers, this was their first point. The opening question of the *Westminster Shorter Catechism* asks, "What is the chief end of man?" That is, what's our purpose? Why are we here?

The answer? "Man's chief end is to glorify God, and to enjoy him forever." We exist to display God's character, to glorify him. A passion for God's glory is the

Christian's highest motivation and uppermost principle guiding his or her life. "So whether you eat or drink or whatever you do, do it all for the glory of God" (1 Cor 10:31). The English revivalist was known to have cried, "Let the name of Whitefield perish, so long as God is glorified!"

I'm convinced that understanding God's supremacy brings us not bondage but freedom. Only when meaning is sought beyond the limits of this world is significance found within it. Yes, we are means to an end. But what an end! To be valuable to the Almighty as a vehicle by which he is glorified—there is nothing greater.

The satisfaction for our souls, our very significance as creatures lie in God's glory. As a pencil longs to write and a shovel to dig, so our hearts long for God. We find joy in our purpose. Only as humble creatures before him do we find life. Ecclesiastes teaches that by itself everything on this earth is meaningless. Jesus wasn't joking when he said, "Whoever loses his life for my sake will find it" (Mt 10:39).

As the Westminster divines expressed, joy goes hand in hand with glorifying God. We were made to glorify God *and to enjoy him forever*—two sides of the same coin. They didn't ask about our chief *ends*, but *end*—one purpose with two facets. God is the source of our joy, and as we bring him glory, we enjoy him as the one for whom we were created.

A heart that's radically committed to bringing God glory is a heart full of joy in him. C. S. Lewis wasn't the first Christian "surprised by joy" after turning to God. In his *Confessions*, a book-length prayer to God, Augustine cried out to his Maker:

To praise you is the desire of man, a little piece of your creation. You stir man to take pleasure in praising you, because you have made us for yourself, and our heart is restless until it rests in you.

By finding our satisfaction in God we join the psalmist:

*My soul yearns, even faints,
for the courts of the LORD;
My heart and my flesh cry out
for the living God. (Psalm 84:2)*

We come to glorify God not in an abstract way but in a relationship. We were made to know God, a knowledge that Moses prayed for (Ex 33:13), that Jesus called eternal life (Jn 17:3), that will spread to the ends of the earth under Messiah's reign (Jer 31:34). Our significance, joy and relationship with God all derive from our high calling of bringing glory, honor and praise to God.

The Image of God: A High Self-Image

Christianity is far more humanistic than the humanism of the last century. To turn your back on God is not to find your humanity but to lose it. God has made us his image. God's image is the dividing line between human and animal. From the beginning the image of God makes us creatures of dignity, value and worth.

Then God said, "Let us make man in our image, in our likeness, and let them rule over the fish of the sea and the birds of the air, over the livestock, over all the earth, and over all the creatures that move along the ground." So God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them. (Gen 1:26-27)

What does this mean? To be an image of God—at the bare minimum—means to be *like God* in some respects, and to *represent* God. In what ways are we like God?

We see God creating humans with *knowledge and rationality*, surpassing that of the animals, reflecting in some measure the wisdom of God. God speaks to his human

creatures using language. He calls upon Adam to name or classify the animals—a task reflecting God's creative power. God could have named them himself, but he makes humanity co-creators—albeit in a small way. God's image images God's *creativity*. And Adam reflects God's *righteousness and holiness* at creation being declared very good, not yet knowing sin. And he is given a test the animals never received—a command not to eat from the tree in the middle of the Garden.

Dominion is also part of God's image. God commissions the first humans to exercise his rule on his behalf to "fill the earth and subdue it." He continues, emphasizing the kingly quality, "Rule over the fish of the sea and the birds of the air and over every living creature that moves on the ground" (Gen 1:28). Look at the forests and the beasts. You are God's representative to the other species.

In Psalm 8, the psalmist expresses wonder at the place of honor God gives us.

*What is man that You are mindful of him,
And the son of man that You visit him?
For You have made him a little lower
than the angels,
And You have crowned him
with glory and honor.
You have made him to have dominion
over the works of Your hands;
You have put all things under his feet.*

The human calling is no lowly endeavor. In making you his ambassador to creation God has placed upon your head a crown of glory. Dominion over nature is a vital facet of bearing God's image.

Being God's image also entails a corporate life—*community*. We see God's corporate nature immediately. "Let us make man in our image, in our likeness," he says (Gen 1:26). God created us "male and female" in the image of God (Gen 1:27). This doesn't mean we only recognize our full human potential in marriage, as some have

suggested. Jesus was "the very image of God" but remained unmarried, as did his apostle Paul. Still, God's communal nature as a Trinity is, in part, reflected in his image through our relational nature.

All humans form societies, families, friendships. Relationships are an essential part of our humanness. No wonder that when God saves people from sin, he never does so in an individualistic manner. Rather, he incorporates them into a church, a community of God. But even before sin God says, "It is not good for the man to be alone" (Gen 2:18). God's image—the sole factor that separates us from other animals—is what makes us like God. In this image we reflect God's knowledge, creativity, righteousness, dominion and community. We're invested with a high significance as God's representatives to the earth.

This divine image, though defiled by our sin, has not been removed. After the flood God instituted the death penalty for murder. Why? "For in the image of God has God made man" (Gen 9:6). To shed human blood is to kill God in effigy—a crime God considers worthy of the greatest punishment, to lose what is most valuable in creation—human life itself.

Such a penalty speaks not to a low view of humanity but an incredibly high one. It speaks to the sanctity of human life as the image of God. Thus, James can bemoan the way we attack God's image with our speech. "With the tongue we praise our Lord and Father, and with it we curse men, who have been made in God's likeness" (Jas 3:9).

As one who is like God, who represents God to the world, you have a dignity higher

than any other creature, a high and noble calling. Every one of us demonstrates God's knowledge, creativity, righteousness, dominion and community to some degree. Even the unborn baby, developmentally disabled child and comatose person bear God's image and are worthy of our reverence and protection as creatures of dignity before God. People's lives aren't precious because they're self-sufficient or have something to offer society, but because, as God's image, they are sacred.

Here is a further thought from C. S. Lewis in his sermon, *The Weight of Glory*.

It is a serious thing to live in a society of possible gods and goddesses, to remember that the dullest and most uninteresting person you talk to may one day be a creature which, if you saw it now, you would be strongly tempted to worship, or else a horror and a corruption such as you now meet, if at all, only in a nightmare. All day long we are, in some degree, helping each other to one or the other of these destinations. It is in the light of these overwhelming possibilities, it is with the awe and the circumspection proper to them, that we should conduct all our dealings with one another, all friendships, all loves, all play, all politics. There are no ordinary people. You have never talked to a mere mortal. Nations, cultures, arts, civilizations—these are mortal, and their life is to ours as the life of a gnat. But it is immortals whom we joke with, work with, marry, snub, and exploit—immortal horrors or everlasting splendors.

What is one thought or truth that stands out to you from this reading? Why?

Changed Hearts



What is one truth from this lesson that has impacted your life? Why?

What is one question that you still have that you would like answered?

Read and meditate on David's words in Psalm 139:13-18. Consider the wonders of the human body. Ask God to speak to your heart and to stir you to praise.

*For You have formed my inward parts;
You have covered me in my mother's womb.
I will praise You, for I am fearfully and wonderfully made;
Marvelous are Your works,
And that my soul knows very well.
My frame was not hidden from You,
When I was made in secret,
And skillfully wrought in the lowest parts of the earth.
Your eyes saw my substance, being yet unformed.
And in Your book they all were written,
The days fashioned for me,
When as yet there were none of them.*

*How precious also are Your thoughts to me, O God!
How great is the sum of them!
If I should count them, they would be more in number than the sand;
When I awake, I am still with You.*

On the back of this sheet or on another sheet of paper, write this portion of Psalm 139 in your own words. Personalize it. Illustrate it. Make it be your own hymn of praise to God for the wonders of His creation of you.

After finishing your paraphrase of Psalm 139:13-18, spend time in prayer and praise to God.

Also consider the words of James: *With it [the tongue] we bless our God and Father, and with it we curse men, who have been made in the likeness of God. Out of the same mouth proceed blessing and cursing. My brethren, these things ought not to be so (2:9-10).* Confess to God any critical spirit that abides in your heart and ask Him for new eyes to see others as He sees them.

4

What Is Our Problem?

sin (sĭn) *transgression of a religious or moral law; estrangement from God as a result of breaking God's law; an offense, violation, fault, or error.*

We all know that something is wrong with our world. Thirty minutes of a news program on any day of the week is enough to take us on a whirlwind tour of conflict, deceit, lying, corruption, theft, violence, brutality, murder, terrorism, war and more. Why do all these things happen? Everyone seems to want the same things—peace, prosperity, happiness—so why can't people work together to achieve them? What's wrong with the world? What's wrong with *you and me*?

The first step in problem-solving is to define the problem. If you attack the wrong problem, you will inevitably come up with the wrong solution. Think through some recent political campaigns, news specials, or even TV ads that you have watched. What “solutions” were offered to make our world or our lives better? What does the solution tell you is a big problem that people think needs to be eliminated or fixed?

SOLUTION OFFERED	PROBLEM TO BE FIXED
<i>Ex. - Whiter, brighter teeth</i>	<i>Bad teeth which make our lives less enjoyable</i>

The Bible states emphatically that our problem (and the world's) is *sin*—failure to conform to God's moral law. Sin is not “politically correct” in our culture. In fact, the only place it is acceptable to use the word “sin” in today's world is on the dessert menu—Chocolate Sin Cake, Peanut Butter Temptation, Chocolate Decadence, etc.

Consequently, sin is also misunderstood. A *People* magazine survey once focused on the issue of sin. Some of its findings?

- Murder, rape, incest and child abuse were ranked as the worst sins.
- Parking in a handicapped zone and cutting in line were considered worse sins than pornography, lying, gossip, profanity, premarital sex, and lust.
- The hardest of the Ten Commandments to keep is “Thou shalt not take the name of the Lord thy God in vain.” The easiest two to keep are “Thou shalt not murder” and “Thou shalt have no other Gods before me.”
- The average person thinks he or she sins 4.64 times per month.

So what does the Bible teach about the subject of sin? How serious of a problem is it? The answer to these questions is vital. How a person views sin is a reflection of how they view God, themselves, and salvation. If the problem is not understood, the proper solution will not be found.

Westminster Shorter Catechism

Q.14. What is sin?

A. Sin is any want of conformity unto, or transgression of, the law of God.

Q.15. What was the sin whereby our first parents fell from the estate wherein they were created?

A. The sin whereby our first parents fell from the estate wherein they were created, was their eating the forbidden fruit.

Q.17. Into what estate did the fall bring mankind?

A. The fall brought mankind into an estate of sin and misery.

Can you name the Ten Commandments?

Which one do you believe is the hardest to keep?

Scripture Exploration



Serpent—

Revelation 12:9 identifies the serpent as Satan. Satan either took on the form of a serpent or spoke through this creature.

...And he ate—

The NT places the primary fault of sin on Adam (cf. Romans 5:12-14). Why? Adam was to be the leader of the early couple and he was not deceived like Eve but sinned in open defiance (1 Tim. 2:14).

Genesis 3:15 is considered the first prophecy of a coming Deliverer who would be born of the “seed” of the woman.

Your desire will be for your husband—The force of this word in Hebrew implies a desire to rule over the husband who will, in turn, subjugate the wife.

The Lord God made tunics of skin—An animal was killed to cover the sinful shame of Adam and Eve.

Read Genesis 3. Pray and ask God to speak to your heart before you begin. (If you did not read Genesis 1-2 from last week’s lesson, then read these chapters as well.)

What thought or question first comes into your mind after reading Genesis 3?

In a later study we will address the “serpent” and the doctrine of Satan and angels. But for now consider how the serpent leads Eve to disobey God. Thinking through what the serpent says, how does he portray God? _____

Because of the serpent’s prompting, Eve looks at the forbidden tree in a new way. What three things does she notice about the tree that entice her to eat its fruit (3:6)?

1. *The tree was* _____
2. *The tree was* _____
3. *The tree was* _____

What does this verse tell you about sin? _____

Sin affects man’s relationship to God, each other, and the world in which they live. List the effects of sin that you can see in Genesis 3 in the following relationships.

The Relationship of God and Humanity	The Relationship of Man and Woman	The Relationship of Humanity and Nature

Genesis 3 is often entitled “The Fall of Man.” As humans, we were created for the perfection and beauty of Eden but, through the disobedience of Adam and Eve, we inherited a world corrupted by sin.

Theologians use the term **total depravity** to describe the condition of mankind after the fall.

Total depravity does not mean that we are as bad as we could be or that we cannot do “good” in the eyes of others. It does mean that every part of our being is affected by sin and that we are incapable of pleasing God in our own strength (see Isaiah 64:6).

There are ways in which men can be destroyed short of murder. We can destroy a man’s reputation, we can shake somebody else’s confidence in him by whispering criticism or by deliberate fault-finding. ...Killing does not mean destroying life physically, it means still more trying to destroy the spirit and the soul, destroying the person in any shape or form.

—D. Martyn Lloyd Jones

1. SIN BRINGS CORRUPTION TO OUR NATURE.

We are made in God’s image. We have a dignity and a design that separates us from the rest of God’s creation. When Adam and Eve sinned, they did not lose God’s image. God still speaks of us as being made in His image after the Fall (see Genesis 9:6; James 3:9). However, the abilities which God gave us to worship and serve Him—thinking logically, expressing love, making decisions—have been corrupted.

Look up the following verses. Write down what you can learn about the effects of sin on the various aspects of our nature:

Jeremiah 17:9. *Our hearts:* _____

Ephesians 4:17-19. *Our minds:* _____

Romans 7:18-20. *Our wills:* _____

According to Romans 3:23, how many people have sinned? _____

Because of Adam and Eve’s disobedience, the totality of their natures were infected with sin. Since all human beings are descended from Adam and Eve, all human beings inherited their corrupt nature (cf. Romans 5:12). Thus not only do we sin, but we are also born with a sin nature—a “bent” toward sin, a natural inclination toward attitudes and actions contrary to God’s will and ways. We are natural born sinners.

2. SIN CREATES OPPOSITION IN OUR RELATIONSHIPS.

Sin not only distorts our nature; it also destroys our relationships.

Look back over Genesis 2-3 and complete the following before-and-after chart for Adam and Eve’s relationship:

BEFORE SIN (Gen. 2)	AFTER SIN (Gen. 3)
<i>Eve created to help Adam.</i>	
<i>Adam praises Eve.</i>	
<i>Adam and Eve have complete intimacy without shame.</i>	

The ultimate example of the opposition created by sin is displayed in Genesis 4 when Cain, the firstborn son of Adam and Eve, kills his brother, Abel, in jealous anger.

We sin against one another whenever we fail to obey God’s moral standard for human relationships. This standard is expressed by Jesus in Matthew 7:12.

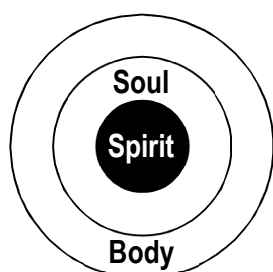
Write Matthew 7:12 _____

3. SIN BRINGS SEPARATION FROM GOD.

Read Genesis 2:16-17. What did God say would happen if Adam and Eve ate of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil? _____

When does God say that this consequence would take place? _____

Did this happen? ☐ Yes ☐ No



Something changed in Adam and Eve the moment they disregarded the command of God and ate the forbidden fruit. Here is where the tripartite model of man discussed in the previous lesson is helpful. *What died when Adam and Eve sinned?* Their bodies did not die. The process of death began but their bodies did not die “the day” they ate (Genesis 2:17). Their souls—meaning their intellect, emotions, and will—also did not die that day. Adam and Eve could still think, feel, and make decisions

after they sinned though, because of sin, these abilities were corrupted. No, on the day they ate, Adam and Eve’s spirits died. They became separated from God.

Read Ephesians 2:1-3. Mark words or phrases that describe our human condition.

And you were dead in your trespasses and sins, in which you formerly walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, of the spirit that is now working in the sons of disobedience. Among them we too all formerly lived in the lusts of our flesh, indulging the desires of the flesh and of the mind, and were by nature children of wrath, even as the rest.

Summarize our condition. _____

Our chief problem is that we are spiritually dead. We are like a radio unplugged from its power source with only a weak, diminishing battery keeping us physically alive.

4. SIN BRINGS TROUBLE TO OUR WORLD.

List the consequences of Adam’s disobedience to God according to Genesis 3:17-19.

When sin entered God’s world, what came with it (see Romans 5:12)? _____

Pain, suffering, disease, natural disasters, death are all companions of sin. They are invaders in God’s world. They are a cancer in His creation (see Romans 8:19-22).

Every human being who comes into the world is born physically alive but spiritually dead, separated from God.
—Neil Anderson

Behold, I was brought forth in iniquity, and in sin my mother conceived me.
—Psalm 51:5

What do you think it means to be “born again”?

Adam’s sin affected all of humanity because he was our representative and we are all descended from him.

THINK ABOUT: Knowing the potential results of sin, why did God give Adam the choice to obey Him or not?

What is our problem? Sin—failure to obey God’s will and ways. Sin brings Corruption, Opposition, Separation, and Trouble. There is always a **COST** to sin. The OT sacrificial system was a vivid reminder that every sin deserves punishment. A holy God cannot overlook sin.

The wages of sin is death. (Romans 6:23a)

Sin brings spiritual death. It separates us from God. Sin also leads to physical death. To die physically and spiritually is to be eternally separated from God—from His life and from His love. It is what the Bible calls hell.

Additional Resources



Read the following excerpts from Cornelius Plantinga, Jr.’s book, *Not the Way It’s Supposed to Be* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1995), pages 7-13, 16-17, 194-197.

In the film *Grand Canyon*, an immigration attorney breaks out of a traffic jam and attempts to bypass it. His route takes him along streets that seem progressively darker and more deserted. Then the predictable...nightmare: his expensive car stalls on one of those alarming streets whose teenage guardians favor expensive guns and sneakers. The attorney does manage to phone for a tow truck, but before it arrives, five young street toughs surround his disabled car and threaten him with considerable bodily harm. Then, just in time, the tow truck shows up and its driver—an earnest, genial man—begins to hook up to the disabled car. The toughs protest: the truck driver is interrupting their meal. So the driver takes the leader of the group aside and attempts a five-sentence introduction to metaphysics: “Man,” he says, “the world ain’t supposed to work like this. Maybe you don’t know that, but this ain’t the way it’s supposed to be. I’m supposed to be able to do my job without askin’ you if I can. And that dude is supposed to be able to wait with his car without you rippin’ him off. Everything’s supposed to be different than what it is here.”

NOT THE WAY IT’S SUPPOSED TO BE

The tow truck driver is an heir of St. Augustine, and his summary of the human

predicament belongs in every book of theology. For central in the classic Christian understanding of the world is a concept of the way things are supposed to be. They ought to be as designed and intended by God, both in creation and in graceful restoration of creation. They are supposed to include peace that adorns and completes justice, mutual respect, and deliberate and widespread attention to the public good.

Of course, things are not that way at all. Human wrongdoing, or the threat of it, mars every adult’s workday, every child’s school day, every vacationer’s holiday. A moment’s reflection yields a whole catalogue of wrongdoing, some of it so familiar we scarcely think of it any longer as wrong: a person hangs up a pay telephone receiver and then, before exiting the booth, rips from the telephone book the page he had consulted and pockets it. At school, a third grader in a class of twenty-five distributes fifteen party invitations in a manner calculated to let the omitted classmates clearly see their exclusion. ...Two old flames meet again for the first time since graduation and begin to muse with nostalgia and boozy self-pity over what might have been. Though each feels happily married to someone else, somehow the evening climaxes for the two grads in a room at the Marriott.

Perhaps we think most often of sin as a spoiler of creation: people adulterate a marriage or befoul a stream or use their excellent minds to devise an ingenious tax fraud. But resistance to redemption counts as sin, too, and often displays a special perversity.

Shalom

...As the great writing prophets of the Bible knew, sin has a thousand faces. The prophets knew how many ways human life can go wrong because they knew how many ways human life can go right. (You need the concept of a wall on plumb to tell when one is off.) These prophets kept dreaming of a time when God would put things right again (e.g., Isaiah 2:2-4; 11:1-9; 32:14-20; 42:1-12; 60; 65:17-25; Joel 2:24-29; 3:17-18).

They dreamed of a new age in which human crookedness would be straightened out, rough places made plain. The foolish would be made wise, and the wise, humble. They dreamed of a time when the deserts would flower, the mountains would run with wine, weeping would cease, and people could go to sleep without weapons on their laps. People would work in peace and work to fruitful effect. Lambs could lie down with lions. All nature would be fruitful, benign, and filled with wonder upon wonder; all humans would be knit together in brotherhood and sisterhood; and all nature and all humans would look to God, walk with God, lean toward God, and delight in God. Shouts of joy and recognition would well up from valleys and seas, from women in streets and from men on ships.

The webbing together of God, humans, and all creation in justice, fulfillment, and delight is what the Hebrew prophets call *shalom*. We call it peace, but it means far more than mere peace of mind or a cease-fire between enemies. In the Bible, *shalom* means *universal flourishing, wholeness, and delight*—a rich state of affairs in which natural needs are satisfied and natural gifts

fruitfully employed, a state of affairs that inspires joyful wonder as its Creator and Savior opens doors and welcomes the creatures in whom he delights. *Shalom*, in other words, is the way things ought to be.

“The way things ought to be” in its Christian understanding includes the internal relations of a very large number of entities — the Holy Trinity, the physical world in all its fullness, the human race, ...families, married couples, groups of friends, individual human beings. In a shalomic state each entity would have its own integrity or structured wholeness, and each would also possess many edifying relations to other entities. “The way things ought to be” would also include in individual persons a whole range of intelligent responses to other creatures (and even to their relationships with still other creatures) — a spread of appropriate thoughts, desires, emotions, words, deeds, and dispositions.

...It would include, for instance, strong marriages and secure children. Nations and races in this brave new world would treasure differences in other nations and races as attractive, important, complementary.

...Government officials would still take office (somebody has to decide which streets are cleaned on Tuesday and which on Wednesday), but to nobody's surprise they would tell the truth and freely praise the virtues of other public officials. Public telephone books would be left intact. Highway overpasses would be free of graffiti. Tow truck drivers and erring motorists would be serene on inner-city streets.

Business associates would rejoice in one another's promotions. Middling Harvard students would respect the Phi Beta Kappas from the University of Southern North Dakota at Hoople and would seek to learn from them. Intercontinental ballistic missile silos would be converted into training tanks for scuba divers. All around the world, people would stimulate and encourage one another's virtues. Newspapers would be filled with

well-written accounts of acts of great moral beauty, and, at the end of the day, people on their porches would read these and savor them and call to each other about them.

Above all, in the visions of Christians and other theists, God would preside in the unspeakable beauty for which human beings long and in the mystery of holiness that draws human worship like a magnet. In turn, each human being would reflect and color the light of God's presence out of the inimitable resources of his or her own character and essence. Human communities would present their ethnic and regional specialties to other communities in the name of God, in glad recognition that God, too, is a radiant and hospitable community, of three persons. In their own accents, communities would express praise, courtesies, and deferences that, when massed together, would keep building like waves of a passion that is never spent.

Sin: A Definition

In biblical thinking, we can understand neither shalom nor sin apart from reference to God. Sin is a religious concept, not just a moral one. For example, when we are thinking religiously, we view a shopkeeper's defrauding of a customer not merely as an instance of lawlessness but also of faithlessness, and we think of the fraud as faithless not only to the customer but also to God. Criminal and moral misadventures qualify as sin because they offend and betray God. Sin is not only the breaking of law but also the breaking of covenant with one's savior. Sin is the smearing of a relationship, the grieving of one's divine parent and benefactor, a betrayal of the partner to whom one is joined by a holy bond.

Hence in the most famous of the penitential psalms, traditionally ascribed to David after his adultery with Bathsheba, the author views his sin primarily, perhaps exclusively, as a sin against God:

*Have mercy on me, O God,
according to your unfailing love;
according to your great compassion.
Blot out my transgressions.
Wash away all my iniquity
and cleanse me from my sin.
For I know my transgressions,
and my sin is always before me.
Against you, you only, have I sinned
and done what is evil in your sight. (51:1-4)*

All sin has first and finally a Godward force. Let us say that a sin is any act — any thought, desire, emotion, word, or deed — or its particular absence, that displeases God and deserves blame. Let us add that the disposition to commit sins also displeases God and deserves blame, and let us therefore use the word *sin* to refer to such instances of both act and disposition. Sin is a culpable and personal affront to a personal God.

But once we possess the concept of shalom, we are in position to enlarge and specify this understanding of sin. God is, after all, not arbitrarily offended. God hates sin not just because it violates his law but, more substantively, because it violates shalom, because it breaks peace, because it interferes with the way things are supposed to be. (Indeed, that is why God has laws against a good deal of sin.) God is for shalom and *therefore* against sin. ...In short, sin is culpable shalom-breaking.

..."Culpable disturbance of shalom" suggests that sin is unoriginal, that it disrupts something good and harmonious, that (like a housebreaker) it is an intruder, and that those who sin deserve reproach. To get our bearings, we need to see first that sin is one form of evil...and that evil, in turn, is the disruption or disturbance of what God has designed.

This design naturally includes not only the proper relation of people to people and of people to nature and of nature to God but also the proper relation of people to God. Human beings ought to love and obey God as

children properly love and obey their parents. Human beings ought to be in awe of God at least as much as, say, a first-year violin student is in awe of Itzhak Periman. They ought to marvel at God's greatness and praise God's goodness. Failure to do these things—let alone indulgence in outright scorn of God is sin because it runs counter to the way things are supposed to go. Godlessness is *anti-shalom*. Godlessness spoils the proper relation between human beings and their maker and savior.

Sin offends God not only because it bereaves or assaults God directly, as in impiety or blasphemy, but also because it bereaves and assaults what God has made. Sexism and racism, for example, show contempt both for various human persons and also for the mind of God. God savors and wants not only humankind but also human *kinds*. In the cramped precincts of their little worlds, sexists and racists disdain such differences in kind.

In sum, shalom is God's design for creation and redemption; sin is blamable human vandalism of these great realities and therefore an affront to their architect and builder.

Of course such ideas annoy certain people. The concept of a design to which all of us must conform ourselves, whether we like it or not, appears absurd or even offensive to many. People who believe in naturalistic evolution, for example, think that human concepts, values, desires, and religious beliefs are, like human life itself, metaphysically untethered to any transcendent purpose. Our lives and values are rather the product of such blind mechanisms as random genetic mutation and natural selection. In the view of such naturalist believers, there isn't any "way it's supposed to be" or anyone like God to sponsor and affirm this state of affairs. Thus, there isn't anything like a *violation* of the way it's supposed to be or anything like an affront to God — and

hence there isn't anything that fits the definition of sin. In particular, the concept of sin makes no sense if human life, taken as a whole, is purposeless — only "the outcome of accidental collocations of atoms," as Bertrand Russell once put it — for, at its core, human sin is a violation of our human *end*, which is to build shalom and thus to glorify and enjoy God forever.

The Flight from Shalom

...We evade responsibility [for our sin] in lots of ways.... Several of these...amount to mental shifts by which we evade the knowledge of our responsibility and failure to meet it. Other evasions—conforming, cocooning, going limp, leaving town, amusing ourselves to death—involve a more straightforward dereliction of duty to our neighbor. Of course, these two kinds of evasions usually appear together...because they are linked: the same laziness and cowardice that keep us from doing our duty also keep us from knowing it and from facing the fact that we have shirked it.

...The sinner who abandons his children or who goes on permanent safari within his own psyche or who shuffles back to bed instead of going outside to help someone being stabbed in the street has turned his back not only on his neighbor but also on God, and even, in some way, on himself.

...How so? Our neighbor is God's child just as we are: to sell a neighbor short is therefore to sell God short and to fail a brother or sister. We ourselves are God's children: to fail God and our brothers and sisters is to shrink our own role in the great drama of redemption and to cut some of the lines that attach us to its center.

...But here lies our main evasion, the one we have all practiced a thousand times: like the Israelites indicted by Jeremiah, we "forget God" (Jer. 2:32; 13:25; 18:15). For weeks at a time we go through the motions, never seriously attending to God, never

focusing on God, never—with all the weight of mind and heart—turning ourselves over to God. The thought that by such negligence we keep on wounding the only being who loves us with a perfect and expensive love, the thought that we are deeply entangled not only in our sin but also in the bloody remedy for it—these thoughts become bearable and then routine. At last we put them away and sink into functional godlessness. When we are in that state, God does not seem very real to us. So we do not pray. The less we pray, the less real God seems to us. And the less real God seems to us, the duller our sense of responsibility becomes, and thus the duller our sense of ignoring God becomes.

It's important to emphasize that the loss is ours. The loss is God's, but it is also ours. It's not just that we owe God our respects and fail to pay them. Despite certain modern assumptions, life with God isn't mainly a matter of knuckling under to our superior—the image modernity so much detests. We do have to trust and obey God, we do have to express our devotion to God, but not merely because God is stronger than we are, and

surely not because God wants to bully us into submission. We must trust and obey because these responses are *fitting*. After all, we know something of God's goodness and greatness. We know that we have been made and rescued by God. We know that we have been *graced* by God—forgiven, accepted, renewed as slowly and arduously as addicts. Indeed, only inside the cradle of grace can we even see the true depth and stubbornness of our sin.

...I said that shalom is God's design for creation and re-creation and that sin is a blamable vandalism of shalom. ...Let's expand the image: by the sins of attack we vandalize shalom; by the sins of flight we abandon it. When we flee responsibility, we turn our backs on God's presence and blessing...and we begin the slow process of converting ourselves into derelicts. We "hate the light and do not come to the light" (John 3:20). Instead, we gather all we have and make our way toward a far country, toward the outer darkness, toward a place of self-deprivation, a place of our own making.

What is one thought or truth that stands out to you in this article? Why?

How does the author define sin?

Changed Hearts



What is one truth from this lesson that has impacted your life? Why?

What is one question that you still have that you would like answered?

Read and mediate on Proverbs 28:13. Repeat it enough times that you can memorize it.

*He who covers his sins will not prosper,
But whoever confesses and forsakes them will have mercy.*

What does Proverbs 28:13 say are the two responses to sin? What are the results of each?

Response #1 _____ Result _____

Response #2 _____ Result _____

To confess sin is to bring it out into the open before God. It is to agree with God that sin is sin and to stop rationalizing or making excuses for it.

What action is to go with confessing our sin? _____

Why is this essential? _____

The picture that Proverbs 28:13 paints is of a child holding a forbidden object behind his back and facing his parents. At that moment, he has three choices:

1. He can continue to deny that he has the object.
2. He can acknowledge that he has the object but refuse to give it up.
3. He can pull the object out from behind his back, acknowledge his wrongdoing, and open up his hands so that his parents can take the object from him.

God promises mercy to the one who—in humility—turns to Him for forgiveness of sin.

What do you have hidden behind your back? What are you clutching on to?

Pray David's prayer in Psalm 139:23-24 and then spend a few moments in silence before God. Allow His light to penetrate your heart and expose any dark corners that might be there.

*Search me, O God, and know my heart;
Test me and know my anxious thoughts.
See if there is any offensive way in me,
And lead me in the way everlasting.*

What does God bring to your mind? Are you willing to face it? Admit it? Forsake it?

Confession is like taking out the garbage—you need to do it regularly or your life will begin to smell. It's also important to remember that once the garbage is removed from your house, you shouldn't go to the dump and stare at it. Hold on to God's promise: *If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness* (1 John 1:9).

5

Who Is Jesus?

Jesus (jē'zəs) *the founder of Christianity, regarded by Christians as the son of God and Messiah*

The most important question that anyone will answer is “Who is Jesus?” Indeed, the question cannot be ignored. No one else has impacted history like Jesus. Whenever we state what year it is, we express the importance of Jesus’ birth. Jesus is the dividing line of history (B.C. = Before Christ; A.D. = Latin, *anno Domini*, the year of our Lord).

Christianity is also the largest religion of the world today with 2.3 billion adherents (32% of the world’s population). And the second largest religion—Islam with 1.8 billion adherents (24%)—recognizes Jesus as a major prophet.

Even *Time Magazine* in its December 6, 1999 edition had to admit:

It would require much exotic calculation, however, to deny that the single most powerful figure—not merely in these two millennia but in all history—has been Jesus of Nazareth.... It’s an astonishing conclusion in light of the fact that Jesus was a man who lived a short life in a rural backwater of the Roman Empire, who died in agony as a convicted criminal, and who may never have intended so much as a small portion of the effects worked in his name.

So who is this man who lived in relative obscurity, died as a criminal, and changed the world? Our answer may determine our eternal destiny.

There are many current perceptions of Jesus. Many picture him as a great prophet or moral teacher. Others recognize him as the “Son of God” but have no concept of what that means. Again, the Bible must be our guide in understanding the identity of Jesus. Otherwise, we are left to the subjective opinions of man.

The four gospel accounts are historical accounts of the life of Jesus. Matthew and John were disciples of Jesus. Mark was a close associate of the disciple Peter and wrote what he learned from him. And Luke, a doctor, did careful research in his gospel account.

Many have undertaken to draw up an account of the things that have been fulfilled among us, just as they were handed down to us by those who from the first were eyewitnesses and servants of the word. With this in mind, since I myself have carefully investigated everything from the beginning, I too decided to write an orderly account for you, most excellent Theophilus, so that you may know the certainty of the things you have been taught. (Luke 1:1-4)

Circle or underline key words in Luke 1:1-4 that describe his research and writing. Why did Luke write his gospel account? _____

So can the biblical accounts of Jesus be trusted? This question was addressed in our first lesson on the Bible. The Bible is the best-attested ancient historical document that we possess. If we doubt it, then we must doubt all that we know of ancient history.

Westminster Shorter Catechism

Q.21. Who is the Redeemer of God’s elect?

A. The only Redeemer of God’s elect is the Lord Jesus Christ, who, being the eternal Son of God, became man, and so was, and continues to be, God and man in two distinct natures, and one person, forever.

Q.22 How did Christ, being the Son of God, become man?

A. Christ, the Son of God, became man, by taking to himself a true body, and a reasonable soul, being conceived by the power of the Holy Spirit, in the womb of the virgin Mary, and born of her, yet without sin.

Theophilus means “lover of God.” He appears to be someone of high distinction who followed Jesus.

Scripture Exploration



In the

beginning—an allusion to Gen 1:1, “in the very beginning of time.”

The Word—

Greek, *logos*. In Gen 1, God speaks and the world is created. In Greek philosophy, the *logos* represented universal reason and order. Thus, the Word is the power and reason that creates and sustains the universe.

The Word

became flesh—the Christmas story in four words. God became man.

Only begotten

(1:14, 18)—this phrase, also used in John 3:16, is best translated as “one of a kind.” It emphasizes uniqueness of relationship not physical birth (cf. Heb 11:17).

Pharisees—

an influential political and religious party in Judaism. They were strict and zealous adherents to the OT law.

Read John 1. Pray and ask God to speak to your heart before you begin.

The Author: John was a disciple of Jesus Christ. He was an eyewitness to all that Jesus said and did. He later states in 1 John 1:1: *That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked at and our hands have touched—this we proclaim.* John personally interacted with Jesus. He knew Him and believed in Him. And John wrote his account so that we could know Him and believe in Him as well.

What thought or question first comes into your mind after reading John 1?

Right from the start, John wants us to know who Jesus is. Jesus is more than an obscure man who lived in the “backwater of the Roman Empire.” Scan back over John 1 and write down the titles or attributes ascribed to Jesus in the verses below.

Vs.	TITLE AND/OR ATTRIBUTE OF JESUS
1:1-2	<i>The Word with God from eternity.</i>
1:3	
1:4	
1:9	
1:14	
1:18	
1:29	
1:34	
1:45	
1:49	
1:51	

Which title or attribute of Jesus particularly catches your attention? Why? _____

Based solely on what you have read in John 1, what would you say about Jesus? Who was He? How would you describe Him in ten words or less? _____

Tradition states that the early Christians used the *ichthus* as a secret code. In a time of severe persecution when Christians were often betrayed to the Roman authorities, a Christian would find out if another person was a Christian by drawing half of an *ichthus*. If the other person drew the other half then they knew they were both Christians.

The virgin birth is necessary so that Christ would be born without sin. The sin of Adam was not passed on to Christ because He was conceived by the Holy Spirit. The Roman Catholic doctrine of the Immaculate Conception—that Mary was conceived without sin—is nowhere found in Scripture nor is it necessary for Christ to be sinless.

Christ was not half a God and half a man; he was perfectly God and perfectly man.
—James Stalker

There is much that could be said about the identity of Jesus from the Scriptures. The whole Old Testament prophesies about Him (see Luke 24:44-45). The Gospels focus on Him. And the rest of the New Testament glorifies Him. Thus, just as in the study of God, every study on Jesus will be incomplete.

The early church developed an acronym to remember the character of Jesus. The Greek letters Iota-Chi-Theta-Upsilon-Sigma (ΙΧΘΥΣ)—Greek word “fish” (*ichthus*)—are the first letters of Jesus-Christ-God’s Son-Savior.



1. JESUS IS “JESUS OF NAZARETH.”

Jesus was a historical individual. Besides the gospel accounts, there are “thirty-nine ancient sources that corroborate more than one hundred facts concerning Jesus” (Strobel, *The Case for Christ*). Jesus was a real, historical, flesh-and-blood man.

Read Matthew 1:18-25. This is Matthew’s account of the birth of Jesus.

What was unique about Jesus’ conception? _____

Why was Mary’s child to be named “Jesus”? _____

What prophecy did Jesus’ birth fulfill? _____

Jesus was not only born as a man but he also experienced life as a man. Look up the following verses. How does each passage show Jesus’ humanity?

Luke 2:52 _____

John 4:6 _____

John 11:32-35 _____

John 19:28-30 _____

2. JESUS IS THE CHRIST.

The term “Christ” is a title. It is the Greek word for the Hebrew, “Messiah.” Both words mean “the anointed one.” In the OT, anointing someone with oil indicated that they were set apart by God for special service and endowed with His power.

Look up 1 Kings 19:15-16, Exodus 40:13, and 1 Samuel 16:13 and put a check beside the roles below in which someone was anointed.

- | | | | |
|----------------------------------|--------------------------------|------------------------------------|-----------------------------------|
| ☐ Prophet | ☐ Judge | ☐ Craftsman | ☐ Priest |
| ☐ Scribe | ☐ King | ☐ Soldier | ☐ Pharisee |

What happens after David is anointed in 1 Samuel 16:13? _____

As “the Anointed One,” Jesus is the ultimate fulfillment of all three offices. The Jewish nation was looking for the Messiah—the Anointed One—the One who would be *the* Prophet, *the* Priest, and *the* King. Read the following Old Testament prophecies and write down one thing they tell you about the coming Anointed One.

Deut. 18:18-19 _____

Isaiah 53:10-12 _____

Isaiah 9:6-7 _____

Thus when Jesus is called the “Christ” it is a statement that He is the One who speaks God’s Word to us (the truth); He is the One who will make the ultimate sacrifice for our sins (the way); and He is the One who will rule for all eternity (the Lord).

3. JESUS IS GOD’S SON.

The term “Son of God” is often misunderstood. Islamic and Mormon doctrines both interpret this phrase literally, seeing it as a statement that Jesus is the literal offspring of God. (Islam rejects this doctrine as heresy while Mormonism accepts it).

Jesus is not God’s offspring. In Hebrew, the term “son of” was frequently used descriptively since a son modeled his father in appearance, action, and occupation. Thus, to be called the “son of encouragement” (Barnabas, Acts 4:36) was a way of saying, “You are so encouraging that your father must be encouragement itself.”

Read John 5:18. How did the Jews understand Jesus’ claim that God was His Father?

What was their response to this claim? _____

Read Jesus’ response in John 5:19-23. Complete the following statements of Jesus:

Whatever the Father does, _____

As the Father gives life, _____

Just as all should honor the Father, _____

What is the implication of these statements of Jesus? _____

Jesus made direct claims to be equal with God. Look up the following verses and, beside each one, write down what Jesus says or does that indicates that He is more than just a man—He is the Son of God, God in human flesh.

John 8:53-59 _____

John 10:30-31 _____

Mark 2:5-7 _____

Jesus ultimately shows His power by rising from the dead. When the disciple Thomas sees the resurrected Jesus, he proclaims, “My Lord and My God!” (John 20:28).

THINK ABOUT:
What do the names given to the Messiah in Isaiah 9:6-7 indicate about Him? Which name strikes you the most?

Based on this understanding of the term “son of” what do you think the title “Son of Man” means?

The Chalcedonian Definition of AD 451 provides the orthodox understanding of Christ’s nature: *We...all with one consent, teach men to confess one and the same Son, our Lord Jesus Christ, the same perfect in Godhead and also perfect in manhood; truly God and truly man...*

4. JESUS IS THE SAVIOR.

The name “Jesus” (Hebrew, *Yeshua* or Joshua) means “Jehovah saves.” What does Jesus say is the mission of His life (Luke 19:10)? _____

In the Old Testament, God alone is proclaimed as the Savior. He is the Deliverer—the One with the power to rescue people from sin and death. ...*There is no other God besides Me, a just God and a Savior, there is none besides Me* (Isaiah 45:21b). The New Testament teaches that Jesus Christ, God’s Son, is our Savior. He is God in the flesh sent to rescue us from sin and death.

Turn to the book of Titus in the New Testament and answer this question: *Who is our Savior?*

Titus 1:3 _____ Titus 1:4 _____ Titus 2:10 _____
Titus 2:13 _____ Titus 3:4 _____ Titus 3:6 _____

ΙΧΘΥΣ (*ichthus*) Jesus Christ, God’s Son, Savior. Remember what it means the next time you see a fish on the back of a car ☺.

Additional Resources



Read the following article by C.S. Lewis in the book, *God in the Dock* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Eerdmans, 1970), pages 156-160. C.S. Lewis (1898-1963) was the chair of Medieval and Renaissance English Literature at Cambridge University, England.

WHAT ARE WE TO MAKE OF JESUS CHRIST? This is a question which has, in a sense, a frantically comic side. For the real question is not what are we to make of Christ, but what is He to make of us? The picture of a fly sitting deciding what it is going to make of an elephant has comic elements about it. But perhaps the questioner meant what are we to make of Him in the sense of "How are we to solve the historical problem set us by the recorded sayings and acts of this Man?" This problem is to reconcile two things. On the one hand you have got the almost generally admitted depth and sanity of His moral teaching, which is not very seriously questioned, even by those who are opposed to Christianity. In fact, I find when I am arguing with very anti-God people that they rather make a point of saying, "I am entirely in favor of the moral teaching of Christianity"—and there seems to be a general

agreement that in the teaching of this Man and of His immediate followers, moral truth is exhibited at its purest and best. It is not sloppy idealism, it is full of wisdom and shrewdness. The whole thing is realistic, fresh to the highest degree, the product of a sane mind. That is one phenomenon.

The other phenomenon is the quite appalling nature of this Man’s theological remarks. You all know what I mean, and I want rather to stress the point that the appalling claim which this Man seems to be making is not merely made at one moment of His career. There is, of course, the one moment which led to His execution. The moment at which the High Priest said to Him, “Who are you?” “I am the Anointed, the Son of the uncreated God, and you shall see Me appearing at the end of all history as the judge of the Universe.” But that claim, in fact, does not rest on this one dramatic moment. When

you look into His conversation you will find this sort of claim running through the whole thing. For instance, He went about saying to people, "I forgive your sins." Now it is quite natural for a man to forgive something you do to *him*. Thus if somebody cheats *me* out of £5 it is quite possible and reasonable for me to say, "Well, I forgive him, we will say no more about it." What on earth would you say if somebody had done *you* out of £5 and I said, "That is all right, I forgive him"? Then there is a curious thing which seems to slip out almost by accident. On one occasion this Man is sitting looking down on Jerusalem from the hill above it and suddenly in comes an extraordinary remark—"I keep on sending you prophets and wise men" [Mt 23:34]. Nobody comments on it. And yet, quite suddenly, almost incidentally, He is claiming to be the power that all through the centuries is sending wise men and leaders into the world. Here is another curious remark: in almost every religion there are unpleasant observances like fasting. This Man suddenly remarks one day, "No one need fast while I am here." Who is this Man who remarks that His mere presence suspends all normal rules? Who is the person who can suddenly tell the School they can have a half-holiday? Sometimes the statements put forward the assumption that He, the Speaker, is completely without sin or fault. This is always the attitude. "You, to whom I am talking, are all sinners," and He never remotely suggests that this same reproach can be brought against Him. He says again, "I am begotten of the One God, before Abraham was, I am," and remember what the words "I am" were in Hebrew. They were the name of God, which must not be spoken by any human being, the name which it was death to utter.

Well, that is the other side. On the one side clear, definite moral teaching. On the other, claims which, if not true, are those of a megalomaniac, compared with whom Hitler was the most sane and humble of men. There

is no half-way house and there is no parallel in other religions. If you had gone to Buddha and asked him "Are you the son of Bramah?" he would have said, "My son, you are still in the vale of illusion." If you had gone to Socrates and asked, "Are you Zeus?" he would have laughed at you. If you had gone to Mohammed and asked, "Are you Allah?" he would first have rent his clothes and then cut your head off. If you had asked Confucius, "Are you Heaven?", I think he would have probably replied, "Remarks which are not in accordance with nature are in bad taste." The idea of a great moral teacher saying what Christ said is out of the question. In my opinion, the only person who can say that sort of thing is either God or a complete lunatic suffering from that form of delusion which undermines the whole mind of man. If you think you are a poached egg, you may be sane, but if you think you are God, there is no chance for you. We may note in passing that He was never regarded as a mere moral teacher. He did not produce that effect on any of the people who actually met Him. He produced mainly three effects—Hatred—Terror—Adoration. There was no trace of people expressing mild approval.

What are we to do about reconciling the two contradictory phenomena? One attempt consists in saying that the Man did not really say these things, but that His followers exaggerated the story, and so the legend grew up that He had said them. This is difficult because His followers were all Jews; that is, they belonged to that Nation which of all others was convinced that there was only one God—that there could not possibly be another. It is very odd that this horrible invention about a religious leader should grow up among the one people in the whole earth least likely to make such a mistake. On the contrary we get the impression that none of His immediate followers or even of the New Testament writers embraced the doctrine at all easily.

Another point is that on that view you would have to regard the accounts of the Man as being *legends*. Now, as a literary historian, I am perfectly convinced that whatever the Gospels are they are not legends. I have read a great deal of legend and I am quite clear that they are not the same sort of thing. They are not artistic enough to be legends. From an imaginative point of view they are clumsy, they don't work up to things properly. Most of the life of Jesus is totally unknown to us, as is the life of anyone else who lived at that time, and no people building up a legend would allow that to be so. Apart from bits of the Platonic dialogues, there are no conversations that I know of in ancient literature like the Fourth Gospel. There is nothing, even in modern literature, until about a hundred years ago when the realistic novel came into existence. In the story of the woman taken in adultery we are told Christ bent down and scribbled in the dust with His finger. Nothing comes of this. No one has ever based any doctrine on it. And the art of *inventing* little irrelevant details to make an imaginary scene more convincing is a purely modern art. Surely the only explanation of this passage is that the thing really happened. The author put it in simply because he had *seen* it.

Then we come to the strangest story of all, the story of the Resurrection. It is very necessary to get the story clear. I heard a man say, "The importance of the Resurrection is that it gives evidence of survival, evidence that the human personality survives death." On that view what happened to Christ would be what had always happened to all men, the difference being that in Christ's case we were privileged to see it happening. This is certainly not what the earliest Christian writers thought. Something perfectly new in the history of the Universe had happened. Christ had defeated death. The door which had always been locked had for the very first time been forced open. This is something quite distinct from mere ghost-survival. I

don't mean that they disbelieved in ghost-survival. On the contrary, they believed in it so firmly that, on more than one occasion, Christ had had to assure them that He was *not* a ghost. The point is that while believing in survival they yet regarded the Resurrection as something totally different and new. The Resurrection narratives are not a picture of survival after death; they record how a totally new mode of being has arisen in the Universe. Something new had appeared in the Universe: as new as the first coming of organic life. This Man, after death, does not get divided into ghost and "corpse." A new mode of being has arisen. That is the story. What are we going to make of it?

The question is whether any hypothesis covers the facts so well as the Christian hypothesis. That hypothesis is that God has come down into the created universe, down to manhood—and come up again, pulling it up with Him. The alternative hypothesis is not legend, nor exaggeration, nor the apparitions of a ghost. It is either lunacy or lies. Unless one can take the second alternative (and I can't) one turns to the Christian theory.

What are we to make of Christ? There is no question of what we can make of Him, it is entirely a question of what He intends to make of us. You must accept or reject Him.

The things He says are very different from what any other teacher has said. Others say, "This is the truth about the Universe. This is the way you ought to go," but He says, "*I am the Truth, and the Way, and the Life.*" He says, "No man can reach absolute reality, except through Me. Try to retain your own life and you will be inevitably ruined. Give yourself away and you will be saved. Come to Me everyone who is carrying a heavy load, I will set that right. Your sins, all of them, are wiped out, I can do that. I am Re-birth, I am Life. Eat Me, drink Me, I am your Food. And finally, do not be afraid, I have overcome the whole Universe." That is the issue.

Changed Hearts



What is one truth from this lesson that has impacted your life? Why?

What is one question that you still have that you would like answered?

Just as we respond in worship to who God is, we should respond in worship to who Jesus is. He is God in the flesh, the Anointed One, the Savior, the Lord.

Therefore, God also has highly exalted Him and given Him the name which is above every name, that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of those in heaven, and of those on earth, and of those under the earth, and that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father. (Philippians 2:9-11)

JESUS IS LORD! Every person will acknowledge this fact either in this life (in adoration) or at the end of the age (in judgment). Have you confessed Jesus as Lord? Have you bowed before Him?

In the gospel of John, Jesus makes seven “I am” statements. In each of these statements He makes an analogy so that we can better understand who He is and what He came to do.

Depending on what day of the week it is when you are doing this study, select one of the “I am” statements of Jesus. Pray and ask God to speak to your heart and then read the passage.

- | | | |
|--|---|--|
| ☐ Monday-John 6:35 | ☐ Tuesday-John 8:12 | ☐ Wednesday-John 10:9 |
| ☐ Thursday-John 10:11, 14 | ☐ Friday-John 11:25-26 | ☐ Saturday-John 14:6 |
| ☐ Sunday-John 15:5 | | |

Write out Jesus “I am” statement in the passage that you read:

I am _____

What can you learn about Jesus from this analogy? _____

How should this truth affect your life this week? _____

6

What Did Jesus Do?

atonement (ə-tōn'mənt) [*at one, in agreement*] *the redemptive life and death of Christ; the reconciliation of God and man thus brought about by Christ.*

The life, death and resurrection of Jesus still evoke modern interest and debate. In 2000, Peter Jennings hosted a two-hour primetime special on *The Search for Jesus*. The show's conclusion? Well, it never really reached one but four out of the seven scholars interviewed were part of the Jesus Seminar—a group of forty liberal scholars who deny Jesus' divinity, miracles, resurrection, and almost all of His words in the NT. The very title of the program—*The Search for Jesus*—implies that the “real Jesus” has been lost and that we simply cannot trust the gospel accounts and Christian doctrine.

That same year, CBS ran a four-hour miniseries entitled *Jesus*. Here was their promo:

HIS BIRTH CHANGED THE WAY TIME IS MEASURED.

"I am with you until the end of the world."

HIS LIFE CHANGED THE DESTINY OF BILLIONS.

"Rise up and walk!"

HIS DEATH CHANGED THE COURSE OF HISTORY.

"That's why I was born. To die."

THIS MAY, CBS PRESENTS THE FIRST GREAT MINISERIES OF THE NEW MILLENNIUM.

"I have to give everything."

JESUS.

TV promotions are not the best place to learn theology but there is something so incredibly amazing about Jesus that even Hollywood can't overstate it. How else do you explain how an itinerant preacher in an obscure part of the Roman Empire could change history? Or how a man who never conquered a piece of land in his short life-time could conquer the hearts of millions of people throughout the world? Or how a man crucified as a criminal could be considered the greatest moral teacher of all time?

So what does the “Jesus” in the CBS miniseries see as his purpose in living and dying?

"I am in the hearts of men. I will die for the everlasting kindness of the human heart, created by the Father, so that men will make His image shine once again, and those who will want to will find in me the strength to love until the end."

How would you evaluate this statement? Is it true? Untrue? Somewhat true?

As noted above, Hollywood is not the best place to learn theology. Scripture is. So what does the Bible say about Jesus' life, death, and resurrection?

Westminster Shorter Catechism

Q.27. Wherein did Christ's humiliation consist?

A. Christ's humiliation consisted in his being born, and that in a low condition, made under the law, undergoing the miseries of this life, the wrath of God, and the cursed death of the cross; in being buried, and continuing under the power of death for a time.

Q.28. Wherein consists Christ's exaltation?

A. Christ's exaltation consists in his rising again from the dead on the third day, in ascending up into heaven, in sitting at the right hand of God the Father, and in coming to judge the world at the last day.

Scripture Exploration



My Servant—there are four main “servant songs” in Isaiah (42:1-4, 49:1-6, 50:4-9, 52:13-53:12). Some Jewish interpreters see the “servant” as a reference to the nation of Israel but the focus clearly appears to be on an individual. The NT identifies the Servant as Jesus Christ (cf. Matt. 12:17-20; Acts 8:32-35).

Sprinkle many nations—picture of a priest sprinkling the blood of a sacrifice to purify from sin.

Root out of dry ground—he would have a lowly beginning.

THINK ABOUT: *Why do you think Jesus is described as a “man of sorrows”?*

He shall prolong His days—after the Servant is “cut off from the land of the living” (53:8) he shall enjoy life again (prophecy of the resurrection!).

Read Isaiah 52:13-53:12. Pray and ask God to speak to your heart before you begin.

The Context: Isaiah (~760-690 BC) was a prophet to the southern nation of Judah. He preached during difficult times as the northern nation of Israel was destroyed by Assyria (722 BC) and Judah was sliding into idolatry. His prophecies warn of God’s judgment and look forward to the time when Messiah will come and deliver the nation. Isaiah 52:13-53:12 is one of the most significant and detailed OT prophecies of the life and ministry of the coming Messiah.

What thought or question first comes into your mind after reading this passage?

Isaiah 52:13-53:12 is like a giant arrow pointing to Jesus. The prophecy is arranged in five sections of three verses each. Each section tells us about some aspect of the Messiah’s life, ministry, and purpose. Jesus clearly fits the picture.

Read back over these five sections and fill in the following chart. Write down two or three observations from each section. What do you learn about the Messiah? Who is He? What does He do? What happens to Him? How does He respond?

Vs.	OBSERVATIONS ON THE MESSIAH
52: 13-15	
53: 1-3	
53: 4-6	
53: 7-9	
53: 10-12	

In ten words or less, based on this prophecy, what would you say was the purpose of Jesus’ life and ministry? Why did Jesus come? _____

Atonement—Hebrew, *kippur*, (as in *Yom Kippur*, Day of Atonement) meaning “to cover, to wipe clean”

...The soul who
sins shall die.
—Ezekiel 18:4

THINK ABOUT:
Could Jesus have
been killed as a
baby by Herod
and still have
made us right
before God
through His
sacrifice?

The burnt
offering averted
God’s wrath, the
sin offering
cleansed from
sin, the grain
offering was an
act of dedi-
cation and the
peace offering
was an act of
celebration.

We have four
major problems
because of sin:
we deserve to
die, are under
God’s wrath, are
separated from
God, and are in
bondage to sin.
Jesus’ death
solved all four
problems. He
died in our place,
bore God’s
wrath, recon-
ciled us to God,
and freed us
from sin.

Isaiah’s prophecy tells us the purpose of Jesus’ life and ministry. Jesus came to be our Savior, our Deliverer from sin. He is the *Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world* (John 1:29). There are four important aspects of Jesus’ role as our Savior.

1. THE SINLESS LIFE OF JESUS.

In the Old Testament, God set up a sacrificial system to atone for the sins of His people. Sin brings death (cf. Romans 6:23) but God allowed the consequence of death to be passed onto an animal. The animal died as a substitute for the sinner.

Read Leviticus 1:1-4. Leviticus is an instruction manual for OT sacrifices.

What type of animal was sacrificed (1:3)? _____

What was the result of the sacrifice (1:4)? _____

What was the significance of having the offerer place his hands on the head of the animal right before it was killed? _____

Whatever has a defect you shall not offer, for it shall not be acceptable on your behalf (Leviticus 22:20). Why do you think that this was so important in God’s eyes?

How does the apostle Peter describe Jesus in 1 Peter 1:19? _____

Jesus lived a perfect life. Hebrews 4:15 says that Jesus was *tempted in all points as we are, yet He was* _____. Jesus was the Lamb without blemish.

2. THE ATONING DEATH OF JESUS.

Write Isaiah 53:6 _____

“Iniquity” refers to sin. It especially emphasizes the guilt and punishment associated with sin. Whose iniquities did Jesus bear? _____

Where did this bearing of sin take place (1 Peter 2:24)? _____

When Jesus cried out on the cross, *My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?* (Matthew 27:46), He was at that time bearing the sin of all mankind—past, present and future. It is an incredible thought. It is an incredible display of love.

Is Christ’s death a sufficient sacrifice for sin or do we need something else? How does Hebrews 10:11-14 answer this question? _____

Read 2 Corinthians 5:21. This verse is a short summary of all that took place on the cross of Jesus Christ. Meditate on each word and phrase in this verse and then write down three observations that you can make about Jesus' life and death from it.

*For God made Him who knew no sin to be sin for us,
That we might become the righteousness of God in Him.*

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____

3. THE VICTORIOUS RESURRECTION OF JESUS.

The resurrection of Jesus is at the heart of Christian belief. In fact, the early church exploded in numbers as the disciples of Jesus *preached in Jesus the resurrection from the dead* (Acts 4:2; cf. 3:13-15; 4:33; 10:34-43; 17:2-3). The disciples were witnesses to the fact that Jesus physically rose from the dead. They were even willing to die for this belief (which most of them did, being executed by the Roman authorities).

Read 1 Corinthians 15:1-19. The apostle Paul explains the message of the gospel which was delivered, preached, received, believed, and held fast to by all believers.

What are the essential elements of the gospel, “according to the Scriptures”?

15:3 _____

15:4 _____

Paul believed that the reality of the resurrection was essential to Christian belief. Write down five things that Paul says would be true *if Jesus Christ did not rise from the dead*.

15:14 _____

15:15 _____

15:17 _____

15:18 _____

15:19 _____

Why is the bodily resurrection of Jesus so important? The resurrection of Jesus validates all that Jesus said and did. It validates that He indeed is the Son of God (Romans 1:4). It validates that He indeed paid for our sin on the cross (Romans 4:25). It validates that He alone has power over sin, death, and Satan—the three biggest enemies of humanity (1 Corinthians 15:26-27). And it validates our faith! The fact that Jesus Christ rose from the dead assures us that our faith in Him is real, that Jesus truly is the Way, the Truth, and the Life, and that death is not the end of the story.

The doctrine of **double imputation** teaches that two things happen at salvation: our sins are imputed to Christ (i.e., placed on His account) and His righteousness is imputed to us.

The Bible teaches that we will have the same type of glorified body as Jesus did after the resurrection (1 Cor 15:20-23). Thus we can learn a lot about our life in heaven through Jesus' resurrection body:

1. We will be able to recognize one another (John 21:12).

2. We will have a physical body that can be touched (Luke 24:39).

3. We will continue to eat and drink (Acts 10:41).

4. We will seemingly be able to move very quickly from one place to another (Luke 24:31; John 20:19).

4. THE EXPECTED RETURN OF JESUS.

The Jewish nation was looking for a Messiah who would be a Prophet, a Priest, and *a King*.

Read over Isaiah 11:1-9. This passage is a prophecy of what the world will be like when Messiah comes to reign. In this passage, the Messiah is called the “Root of Jesse” (11:10). Jesse was King David’s father. David was the greatest king in Israel’s history and the OT prophets predicted that the coming Messiah would be the “Son of David.” He would be like David, reigning over Israel, conquering Israel’s enemies, and bringing peace to the earth (Isaiah 9:7).

According to Isaiah 11, what things will happen when Messiah rules? (Check all that apply)

- ☐ The wicked will be slain ☐ Lions will eat grass ☐ Kids will play with snakes
☐ Justice will prevail ☐ No one shall hurt anyone ☐ The whole earth will know God

You can see why the Jewish nation looked forward to the Messiah’s coming reign. But before He could reign, sin had to be dealt with, humanity had to be redeemed. Thus Jesus came the first time as the Lamb of God. He is coming again as the Lion of Judah, the King who will reign.

Read Acts 1:6-11. After Jesus’ resurrection, the disciples were wondering when Jesus would begin to reign on earth. They knew the OT prophecies about Messiah ruling on David’s throne.

When does Jesus say He will return to reign? _____

What are Jesus’ followers to do until He comes back? _____

Jesus is our Savior, our Deliverer from sin and from death. Jesus is able to **SAVE** us because of His Sinless Life, Atoning Death, Victorious Resurrection, and Expected Return.

Additional Resources



Read the following two excerpts from Josh McDowell’s book *More Than a Carpenter* (Wheaton, IL: Tyndale House Publishers, 1977), pages 111-116 and pages 89-99.

Recently at the University of Texas a graduate student approached me and asked, “Why is Jesus the only way to a relationship with God?” I had shown that Jesus claimed to be the only way to God, that the testimony of the Scriptures and the apostles was reliable, and that there was sufficient evidence to warrant faith in Jesus as Savior and Lord. Yet he had the question, “Why Jesus? Isn’t there some other way to a relationship with God? What about Buddha? Mohammed? Can’t an

individual simply live a good life? If God is such a loving God, then wouldn’t he accept all people just the way they are?”

A businessman said to me, “Evidently you have proven that Jesus Christ is the Son of God. Aren’t there other ways also to a relationship with God apart from Jesus?”

The above comments are indicative of many people’s questions today about why one has to trust Jesus as Savior and Lord in order to have a relationship with God and

experience the forgiveness of sin. I answered the student by saying that many people don't understand the nature of God. Usually the question is "How can a loving God allow a sinful individual to go to hell?" I would ask, "How can a holy, just, righteous God allow a sinful individual into his presence?" A misunderstanding of the basic nature and character of God has been the cause of so many theological and ethical problems. Most people understand God to be a loving God and they don't go any further. The problem is that God is not only a God of love. He is also a righteous, just, and holy God.

We basically know God through his attributes. An attribute is not a part of God. I used to think that if I took all the attributes of God—holiness, love, justice, righteousness—and added them up, the sum total would equal God. Well, that's not true. An attribute isn't something that is a part of God but something that is true of God. When we say God is love, we don't mean that a part of God is love, but that love is something that is true of God. When God loves he is simply being himself.

Here is a problem that developed as a result of humanity entering into sin. God in eternity past decided to create man and woman. ...The Bible indicates he created man and woman in order to share his love and glory with them. But when Adam and Eve rebelled and went their own individual ways, sin entered the human race. At that point individuals became sinful or separated from God. This is the "predicament" that God found himself in. He created men and women to share his glory with them, yet they spurned his counsel and command and chose to sin. And so he approached them with his love to save them. But because he is not only a loving God, but a holy, just, righteous God, his very nature would destroy any sinful individual. The Bible says, *For the wages of sin is death*. So, you might say, God had a problem.

Within the Godhead—God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit—a

decision was made. Jesus, God the Son, would take upon himself human flesh. He would become the God-man. This is described in John 1 where it says that the Word became flesh and tabernacled or dwelt among us. And also in Philippians 2 where it says that Christ Jesus emptied himself and took on the form of a man.

Jesus was the God-man. He was just as much man as if he had never been God and just as much God as if he had never been man. By his own choice he lived a sinless life, wholly obeying the Father. The biblical declaration that "the wages of sin is death" did not apply to him. Because he was not only finite man but infinite God, he had the infinite capacity to take upon himself the sins of the world. When he went to the cross 2000 years ago, a holy, just, righteous God poured out his wrath upon his Son. And when Jesus said, "It is finished," the just, righteous nature of God was satisfied. You could say that at that point God was "set free" to deal with humanity in love without having to destroy a sinful individual, because through Jesus' death on the cross, God's righteous nature was satisfied.

Often I ask people the question, "For whom did Jesus die?" and usually they reply, "For me" or "For the world." And I'll say, "Yes, that's right, but for whom else did Jesus die?" and usually they'll say, "Why, I don't know." I reply, "For God the Father." You see, Christ not only died for us but he also died for the Father. This is described in Romans 3 where it talks about propitiation. Propitiation basically means satisfaction of a requirement. And when Jesus died on the cross, he not only died for us but he died to meet the holy and just requirements of the basic nature of God.

An incident that took place several years ago in California illuminates what Jesus did on the cross in order to solve the problem God had in dealing with the sin of humanity. A young woman was picked up for speeding.

She was ticketed and taken before the judge. The judge read off the citation and said, "Guilty or not guilty?" The woman replied, "Guilty." The judge brought down the gavel and fined her \$100 or ten days. Then an amazing thing took place. The judge stood up, took off his robe, walked down around in front, took out his billfold, and paid the fine. What's the explanation of this? The judge was her father. He loved his daughter, yet he was a just judge. His daughter had broken the law and he couldn't simply say to her, "Because I love you so much, I forgive you. You may leave." If he had done that, he wouldn't have been a righteous judge. He wouldn't have upheld the law. But he loved his daughter so much that he was willing to take off his judicial robe and come down in front and represent her as her father and pay the fine.

This illustration pictures to some extent what God did for us through Jesus Christ. We sinned. The Bible says, "The wages of sin is death." No matter how much he loved us, God had to bring down the gavel and say *death*, because he is a righteous and just God. And yet, being a loving God, he loved us so much that he was willing to come down off the throne in the form of the man Christ Jesus and pay the price for us, which was Christ's death on the cross.

At this point many people ask the question, "Why couldn't God just forgive?" An executive of a large corporation said, "My employees often do something, break something, and I just forgive them." Then he added, "Are you trying to tell me I can do something that God can't do?" People fail to realize that wherever there is forgiveness there's a payment. For example, let's say my daughter breaks a lamp in my home. I'm a loving and forgiving father, so I put her on my lap, and I hug her and I say, "Don't cry, honey. Daddy loves you and forgives you." Now usually the person I tell that story to says, "Well, that's what God ought to do." Then I ask the question, "Who pays for the

lamp?" The fact is, I do. There's always a price in forgiveness. Let's say somebody insults you in front of others and later you graciously say, "I forgive you." Who bears the price of the insult? You do.

This is what God has done. God has said, "I forgive you." But he was willing to pay the price himself through the cross.

A student at the University of Uruguay said to me, "Professor McDowell, why can't you refute Christianity?" I answered, "For a very simple reason. I'm unable to explain away an event in history—the resurrection of Jesus Christ."

After more than 700 hours of studying this subject and thoroughly investigating its foundation, I came to the conclusion that the resurrection of Jesus Christ is either one of the most wicked, vicious, heartless hoaxes ever foisted upon people, or it is the most important fact of history.

The resurrection issue takes the question "Is Christianity valid?" out of the realm of philosophy and makes it a question of history. Does Christianity have a historically acceptable basis? Is sufficient evidence available to warrant belief in the resurrection?

Some facts relevant to the resurrection are these: Jesus of Nazareth, a Jewish prophet who claimed to be the Christ prophesied in the Scriptures, was arrested, judged a political criminal, and crucified. Three days after his death and burial, some women who went to his tomb found the body gone. His disciples claimed that God raised him from the dead and that he had appeared to them various times before ascending into heaven.

From this foundation, Christianity spread throughout the Roman Empire and has continued to exert great influence down through the centuries.

Did the resurrection actually happen?

THE EMPTY TOMB

...The followers of Jesus said he had risen from the dead. They reported that he appeared to them during a period of forty days, showing himself to them by many “convincing proofs” [Acts 1:3]. Paul the apostle said that Jesus appeared to more than 500 of his followers at one time, the majority of whom were still alive and could confirm what Paul wrote [1 Cor. 15:6].

A. M. Ramsey writes: “I believe in the Resurrection, partly because a series of facts are unaccountable without it.” The empty tomb was “too notorious to be denied.” Paul Althaus states that the resurrection “could not have been maintained in Jerusalem for a single day, for a single hour, if the emptiness of the tomb had not been established as a fact for all concerned.”

...How can we explain the empty tomb? Can it be accounted for by a natural cause? Based on overwhelming historical evidence, Christians believe that Jesus was bodily resurrected in time and space by the supernatural power of God. The difficulties of belief may be great, but the problems inherent in unbelief present even greater difficulties.

...The theories advanced to explain the resurrection from natural causes are weak; they actually help to build confidence in the truth of the resurrection.

THE WRONG TOMB?

A theory propounded by Kirsopp Lake assumes that the women who reported the body missing had mistakenly gone to the wrong tomb. If so, then the disciples who went to check up on the women's statement must also have gone to the wrong tomb. We can be certain, however, that the Jewish authorities, who had asked for that Roman guard to be stationed at the tomb to prevent the body from being stolen, wouldn't have been mistaken about the location. Nor would the Roman guards, for they were there.

If a wrong tomb were involved, the Jewish authorities would have lost no time in producing the body from the proper tomb, thus effectively quenching for all time any rumor of a resurrection.

Another attempt at explanation claims that the appearances of Jesus after the resurrection were either illusions or hallucinations. Unsupported by the psychological principles governing the appearances of hallucinations, this theory also does not coincide with the historical situation or with the mental state of the apostles.

So, where was the actual body, and why wasn't it produced?

SWOON THEORY

Popularized several centuries ago and often quoted today, the swoon theory says that Jesus didn't really die; he merely fainted from exhaustion and loss of blood. Everyone thought him dead, but later he was resuscitated and the disciples thought it to be a resurrection.

The skeptic David Friedrich Strauss—himself no believer in the resurrection—gave the deathblow to any thought that Jesus revived from a swoon: “It is impossible that a being who had stolen half-dead out of the sepulchre, who crept about weak and ill, wanting medical treatment, who required bandaging, strengthening and indulgence, and who still at last yielded to sufferings, could have given to the disciples the impression that he was a Conqueror over death and the grave, the Prince of Life, an impression which lay at the bottom of their future ministry....”

THE BODY STOLEN?

Another theory maintains that the body was stolen by the disciples while the guard slept. The depression and cowardice of the disciples provide a hard-hitting argument against their suddenly becoming so brave and daring as to face a detachment of soldiers at

the tomb and steal the body. They were in no mood to attempt anything like that.

...Commenting on the proposition that the disciples stole Christ's body, [J.N.D. Anderson] says: "This would run totally contrary to all we know of them: their ethical teaching, the quality of their lives, their steadfastness in suffering and persecution. Nor would it begin to explain their dramatic transformation from dejected and dispirited escapist into witnesses whom no opposition could muzzle."

The theory that the Jewish or Roman authorities moved Christ's body is no more reasonable an explanation for the empty tomb than theft by the disciples. If the authorities had the body in their possession or knew where it was, why, when the disciples were preaching the resurrection in Jerusalem, didn't they explain that they had taken it?

If they had, why didn't they explain exactly where the body lay? Why didn't they recover the corpse, put it on a cart, and wheel it through the center of Jerusalem? Such an action would certainly have destroyed Christianity.

EVIDENCE FOR THE RESURRECTION

...Dr. Simon Greenleaf was one of the greatest legal minds we have had in this country. He was the famous Royall Professor of Law at Harvard University.... While professor of law at Harvard, Greenleaf wrote a volume in which he examined the legal value of the apostles' testimony to the resurrection of Christ. He observed that it was impossible that the apostles "could have persisted in affirming the truths they had narrated, had not Jesus actually risen from the dead, and had they not known this fact as certainly as they knew any other fact." Greenleaf concluded that the resurrection of Christ was one of the best supported events in history, according to the laws of legal evidence administered in courts of justice.

Another lawyer, Frank Morison, set out to refute the evidence for the resurrection. He thought that the life of Jesus was one of the most beautiful lives ever lived, but when it came to the resurrection he thought someone had come along and tacked a myth onto the story of Jesus. He planned to write an account of the last few days of Jesus. He would of course disregard the resurrection. He figured that a rational approach to Jesus would completely discount his resurrection. However, upon approaching the facts with his legal background and training, he had to change his mind. He eventually wrote a best-seller, *Who Moved the Stone?* The first chapter was titled, "The Book That Refused to Be Written," and the rest of the chapters deal decisively with the evidence for Christ's resurrection.

George Eldon Ladd concludes: "The only rational explanation for these historical facts is that God raised Jesus in bodily form." A believer in Jesus Christ today can have complete confidence as did the first Christians, that his faith is based, not on myth or legend, but on the solid fact of the risen Christ and the empty tomb.

Most important of all, the individual believer can experience the power of the risen Christ in his life today. First of all, he can know that his sins are forgiven. Second, he can be assured of eternal life and his own resurrection from the grave. Third, he can be released from a meaningless and empty life and be transformed into a new creature in Jesus Christ.

What is your evaluation and decision? What do you think of the empty tomb? After examining the evidence from a judicial perspective, Lord Darling, former Chief Justice of England, concluded that "there exists such overwhelming evidence, positive and negative, factual and circumstantial, that no intelligent jury in the world could fail to bring in a verdict that the resurrection story is true."

Changed Hearts



What is one truth from this lesson that has impacted your life? Why?

What is one question that you still have that you would like answered?

There are two appropriate responses to the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ—worship and witness.

WORSHIP. Read Revelation 5 out loud or go to bible.com and listen to it read (use the NIV). This passage is a remarkable glimpse into the heavenly throne room. There is much symbolism in the language but the message is clear—Jesus is the only one able to deliver mankind, to open the scroll that tells the story of man’s redemption from sin and man’s restoration to his former glory as God’s representative on earth. Pray and ask God to speak to your heart before you read. Ask Him also to open the eyes of your heart so that you can picture this scene vividly in your mind.

What strikes you after reading or hearing Revelation 5? How has God spoken to your heart?

WITNESS. Acts 1:8 reminds us that the reason there is a delay between Christ’s resurrection and His return to rule as King of the earth is to give people a chance to hear the gospel. Those who have believed and been transformed by the death and resurrection of Jesus are to be Christ’s witnesses throughout the earth. To be a witness is simply to tell what you know.

Who are three to five people that you know that need to embrace Jesus Christ as their Savior?

Pray for them now. Ask God to open their hearts and to open a door of opportunity for you to speak to one of them about some of the truths that you have learned in this week’s lesson.

7

How Is One Saved?

salvation (sāl-vā-shən) 1) *preservation or deliverance from danger, evil, or difficulty;*
2) *deliverance from the power or penalty of sin.*

Belief in God has wavered and declined over the past few decades in America, but, surprisingly, belief in the afterlife has actually increased (Twenge, 2014). Regardless of one's religious affiliation or practice, people generally still believe in some kind of heaven...and many still believe in some kind of hell.

One thing we all know is that death is a reality. And judgment after death is also a reality. *...It is appointed for men to die once, but after this the judgment* (Hebrews 9:27)

So how do we pass God's judgment? What meets His standard? How can we be assured of heaven after we die? What's more, how do we experience the blessings of being in God's family while here on earth? Here is where people are divided.

- 48% believe that "if a person is generally good, or does enough good things for others during their lives, they will earn a place in heaven." 44% disagree. 8% are unsure. (Barna, 2011)

Though people are divided on how eternal destinies are decided, they generally feel pretty good about their chances of passing God's judgment.

- 89% of people believe in heaven. 85% believe they have a good or excellent chance of going there. (ABC News Poll, 2005)

Jesus was not so optimistic. In Matthew 7:13-14, Jesus said:

Enter by the narrow gate; for wide is the gate and broad is the way that leads to destruction, and there are many who go in by it. Because narrow is the gate and difficult is the way which leads to life, and there are few who find it.

Read Matthew 7:22-23. Jesus said that many will be surprised on judgment day.

What type of activities are no guarantee that a person will inherit eternal life?

- | | |
|--|--|
| ☐ Prophesying (preaching) about Jesus | ☐ Casting out demons |
| ☐ Performing miracles | ☐ Knowing about Jesus |

What does this tell you about how a person does not gain eternal life?

God does not want us to be in the dark about salvation. He desires *all men to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth* (1 Timothy 2:4). His Word shows us the way to life—abundant life on earth, eternal life in heaven.

Westminster Shorter Catechism

Q.33. What is justification?

A. ...An act of God's free grace, wherein he pardons all our sins, and accepts us as righteous in His sight, only for the righteousness of Christ imputed to us, and received by faith alone.

Q.86 What is faith in Jesus Christ?

A. ...A saving grace, whereby we receive and rest upon him alone for salvation, as he is offered to us in the gospel.

Many will say to me on that day, 'Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in your name and in your name drive out demons and in your name perform many miracles?' Then I will tell them plainly, 'I never knew you. Away from me, you evildoers!'

—Matt. 7:22-23

Scripture Exploration



Leprosy—a disease which attacks the nervous system and leads to progressive loss of feeling, skin ulcerations, and gangrene. It is an illustration of the progressive and destructive nature of sin.

What role does the Israelite girl play in the story? How is she a contrast to the king of Israel?

Talent—about 75 pounds. **Shekel**—about half an ounce.

Jordan—a river in Israel which is much muddier than the Abana (Barada) and Pharpar Rivers which flow in the mountains of Lebanon.

Seven times—symbolic for completeness.

Naaman's request for a piece of earth from Israel reflects his belief that the God of Israel is the one true God thus he wants to worship Him while standing on Israeli "turf."

Read 2 Kings 5:1-19. This Old Testament story is a good illustration of God's way of salvation and man's struggle in accepting it. Pray and ask God to speak to your heart before you begin.

The Context of the Story: The story takes place near the end of Jehoram's reign (852-841 BC) over the northern tribes of Israel. Jehoram was the son of King Ahab and Jezebel and, though he did evil in God's eyes, he was not as bad as his parents (2 Kgs 3:1-3). To the north of Israel was the nation of Aram (modern-day Syria). Ben Hadad II was king of the nation and he attacked Israel on numerous occasions (1 Kgs 20). Elisha was a prophet in Israel. Elisha was the successor to the prophet Elijah (1 Kgs 19:19).

Who is Naaman? _____

What is Naaman's problem? _____

When Naaman finally arrives at Elisha's house, Elisha sends a messenger to offer a solution to him. The solution is simple: *Go, wash yourself seven times in the Jordan.*

Why do you think Elisha sent a messenger to tell Naaman the solution? _____

What two reasons does Naaman give for rejecting Elisha's solution?

1. _____

2. _____

Using your insight into human nature, what do you think lies behind Naaman's great anger and rejection of Elisha's solution? _____

Naaman's servants finally talk some sense into him and he follows Elisha's solution. What is the result? _____

Why do you think Elisha refuses any monetary gift from Naaman? _____

What evidence is there that Naaman experienced more than a physical healing in this story? _____

Naaman's story illustrates our struggle with God's solution to sin. We would rather do things "our way" than simply follow God's Word. Naaman finally submitted and obeyed and found the healing he so desperately needed.

Just like Naaman's instantaneous healing, the moment of salvation in a person's life is instantaneous. One moment the person is infected with the destructive ravages and guilt of sin; the next moment he is washed clean, forgiven, restored.

The act of salvation is totally up to God. Yet we are responsible to believe and respond to what He has told us about salvation. Consider the steps that Naaman had to take to discover the healing of God:

- **He had to realize that he had a problem.** He could not deny his leprosy.
- **He had to know that there was a solution.** And he had to go to the right person to find it. Only God could deliver him from an incurable disease.
- **He had to make a choice to act upon that which he heard.** The leprosy was not cured until he responded to what Elisha, God's prophet, said.

A similar process is followed in finding God's cure for sin and the penalty of death—eternal separation from God—which we face because of our sin.

1. WE MUST ACKNOWLEDGE THAT WE HAVE A PROBLEM—SIN.

The message of forgiveness in Jesus Christ is called the *gospel*. The word *gospel* means “good news.” However, to appreciate the good news, you have to know the bad news. To proclaim to someone—“Good news! There is a cure for your disease!”—is pointless if the person does not believe he has a disease.

The Bible says that all of us are suffering from the disease of sin. God is a holy God, totally pure, free from sin. His standard is perfection (Matt. 5:48). We have all fallen short of God's perfect standard and transgressed His commands (Romans 3:23).

For the wages of sin is death... (Romans 6:23).

Your iniquities have separated you from your God... (Isaiah 59:2).

Truly, truly, I say to you, everyone who commits sin is the slave of sin (John 8:34).

The disease of sin is deadly. It separates us from a holy and righteous God. The disease of sin is also beyond our control. We cannot cure ourselves. Isaiah 64:6 says that *all our righteous acts [good works] are like filthy rags*. We cannot do enough “good things” to merit God's salvation. Our deeds condemn us; they do not save us.

Read 1 John 1:8-10. In your own words, complete the following statements:

1. *If we say that we have no sin,* _____.
2. *If we confess our sins,* _____.
3. *If we say that we have not sinned,* _____.

I tell you the truth, whoever hears my word and believes him who sent me has eternal life and will not be condemned; he has crossed over from death to life. —Jesus (John 5:24)

The recognition of sin is the beginning of salvation.
—Martin Luther

The Greek word for **sin** (*hamartia*) means “to miss the mark.” We all miss the mark of God's perfect standard.

The Greek word for **confess** is *homologeō* which literally means “to speak (*logeō*) the same thing (*homo*).” In essence, confession is agreeing with God that sin is sin. It is to stop rationalizing or excusing our sin and to say, “Yes, Lord, I know I have sinned.”

THINK ABOUT
Why do you think most people believe their good works will save them?

What does Ephesians 2:9 say would happen if people were saved based on their good works?

Regeneration is an act of the Holy Spirit in which He imparts spiritual life to us. Our dead spirits are made alive. We are “born again.”

Faith has two hands; with one it pulls off its own righteousness and throws it away and with the other it puts on Christ's.
—Will Gurnall

2. WE MUST BELIEVE IN THE RIGHT SOLUTION—JESUS CHRIST.

Acknowledging that you have a disease is one thing, finding the right cure is another. Most people will readily admit that they are not perfect. They may even acknowledge that they have “sinned.” But they are convinced that they can obtain salvation, be “cleansed” of sin, and earn God’s approval through good intentions or good works.

But when the kindness and love of God our Savior appeared, He saved us, not because of righteous things we had done, but because of His mercy. He saved us through the washing of rebirth and renewal by the Holy Spirit, whom He poured out on us generously through Jesus Christ our Savior.
—Titus 3:4-6

Who saves us? _____

What motivates God to save us? _____

What does not save us? _____

What happens when we are saved? _____

According to Acts 4:10-12, where can salvation be found? (Check all that apply)

☐ Jesus Christ ☐ Mohammed ☐ Angelic beings ☐ Buddha

Jesus Christ said, *I am the way, the truth, and the life.* _____ *comes to the Father except through Me* (John 14:6). This is a bold statement that eliminates any other alternative to salvation.

Jesus is the only One who can save us because He is the only One with the power to save us (He is God in the flesh), the only One in the position to save us (He is the one Mediator between God and man, 1 Timothy 2:5), and the only One who could bear the penalty of our sin (He is the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world).

Write out Romans 5:8. Personalize it by writing I/me instead of we/us.

3. WE MUST CHOOSE TO RECEIVE THE GIFT OF SALVATION.

The disease is acknowledged. The cure is found. Now the medicine must be received.

Look up the following verses and write down the action we must take to be saved:

John 1:12 _____

Acts 16:31 _____

Romans 10:13 _____

Ephesians 2:8-9 says, *For by grace you have been saved through faith, and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God, not of works, lest anyone should boast.* What is faith? Many people picture faith as hoping in something that is far-fetched or at best uncertain. However, faith is an act of the will. It is looking at the reliability of God's Word, believing the facts about Jesus' death and resurrection, and choosing to place one's trust in Jesus for salvation.

Faith can be summed up in the actions mentioned on the previous page:

- **Faith is *believing on Jesus Christ* (Acts 16:31).** It is not just mental knowledge of God and Jesus which, according to James 2:19, even the demons have. Rather faith is relying on Jesus, putting one's entire hope for salvation on Him not on anything else.
- **Faith is *receiving Jesus* (John 1:12).** It is recognizing salvation as a *free gift* (Ephesians 2:8) and opening up one's heart to receive it.
- **Faith is *calling upon the name of the Lord* (Romans 10:13).** It is recognizing Jesus Christ as the only way of salvation and calling on Him to save you.

The **ABC's** of the gospel are **A**cknowledge, **B**elieve, **C**hoose. These three faith responses involve all of our being—our emotions (recognition and sorrow for sin), our intellect (belief in who Jesus is and what He did), and our will (choosing to trust Jesus alone for salvation). Through faith alone, God saves us from sin, adopts us into His family, and gives us eternal life!

Additional Resources



Read the following excerpt from John R. W. Stott's book, *Basic Christianity* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans Publishing, 1971), pages 121-129.

That a decision is necessary in order to become a Christian is an idea quite foreign to many people. Some imagine that they are already Christians because they were born in a Christian country. "After all," they say, "we are neither Jews, nor Mohammedans, nor Buddhists; so presumably we are Christians!" Others suppose that, having had a Christian upbringing, and having been taught to accept the Christian creed and Christian standards of behavior, nothing further is required of them. But whatever his parentage and upbringing, every responsible adult is obliged to make up his own mind for or against Christ. We cannot remain neutral. Nor can we drift into Christianity. Nor can anybody else settle the matter for us. We must decide for ourselves.

...We may concede that the evidence for the deity of Jesus is compelling, even conclusive, and that he was in fact the Son of God; we may believe that he came and died to be the Savior of the world; we may also admit that we are sinners and need such a Savior. But none of these things makes us Christians, nor do all of them together. To believe certain facts about the person and work of Christ is a necessary preliminary, but true faith will translate such mental belief into a decisive act of trust.

...I used to think that because Jesus had died on the cross, by some kind of rather mechanical transaction the whole world had been put right with God. I remember how puzzled, even indignant, I was when it was

first suggested to me that I needed to appreciate Christ and his salvation for myself. I thank God that later he opened my eyes to see that I must do more than acknowledge I needed *a* Savior, more even than acknowledge that Jesus Christ was *the* Savior I needed; it was necessary to accept him as *my* Savior. Certainly the personal pronoun is prominent in the Bible:

*The Lord is **my** shepherd, I shall not want.*

*The Lord is **my** light and **my** salvation.*

*O God, thou art **my** God.*

The surpassing worth of knowing

*Christ Jesus **my** Lord.*

One verse in the Bible, which has helped many seekers (including myself) to understand the step of faith we have to take, contains the words of Christ himself. He says: *Behold, I stand at the door and knock; if any one hears my voice and opens the door, I will come in to him and eat with him, and he with me* (Revelation 3:20).

This verse was illustrated by Holman Hunt in his well-known picture *The Light of the World*, painted in 1853. The original hangs in the chapel of Keble College, Oxford, and its replica (the artist's own work 40 years later) in St Paul's Cathedral. Although the pre-Raphaelites are out of fashion today, this picture's symbolism remains instructive. John Ruskin, in a letter to *The Times* in May 1854, described it in these words:

...On the left-hand side of the picture is seen this door of the human soul. It is fast barred; its bars and nails are rusty; it is knitted and bound to its stanchions by creeping tendrils of ivy, showing that it has never been opened. A bat hovers about it; its threshold is overgrown with brambles, nettles and fruitless corn.... Christ approaches it in the night-time....He is wearing a royal robe and a crown of thorns, holding a lantern in his

left hand (as the light of the world) and knocking on the door with his right."

The context of the verse is illuminating. It comes at the end of a letter addressed by Christ through John to the church of Laodicea, situated in what is now Turkey. Laodicea was a prosperous city, renowned for its manufacture of clothing, its medical school where the famous Phrygian eye powder was made, and its wealthy banks.

Material prosperity had brought in its wake a spirit of complacency which had even contaminated the Christian church. Attached to it were professing Christians who proved to be Christian in name only. They were tolerably respectable, but nothing more. Their religious interest was shallow and casual. Like the water from the hot springs of Hierapolis which was piped to Laodicea by conduits (the remains of which can still be seen), they were (Jesus said) neither cold nor hot, but lukewarm, and therefore distasteful to him. Their spiritual tepidity is explained in terms of self-delusion: *You say, "I am rich, I have prospered, and I need nothing"; not knowing that you are wretched, pitiable, poor, blind, and naked* (Revelation 3:17).

What a description of proud and prosperous Laodicea! They were blind and naked beggars—naked despite their clothing factory, blind despite their Phrygian eye-salve, and beggars despite their banks.

We today are no different. Perhaps we say, as they did, "I need nothing." It would be hard to find any words more spiritually dangerous. It is our self-contained independence which, more than anything else, keeps us from committing ourselves to Christ. Of course we need him! Without him we are morally naked (with no clothing to fit us for God's presence), blind to spiritual truth, and beggars, having nothing with which to buy God's favor. But Christ can clothe us with his righteousness, touch our eyes into sight and

enrich us with spiritual wealth. Apart from him, and until we open the door to admit him, we are blind and naked beggars.

Behold, I stand at the door and knock, he says. He is no figment of the imagination, no fictitious character from a religious novel. This is the man of Nazareth, whose claims, character and resurrection warrant the conclusion that he is the Son of God. He is also the crucified Savior. The hand that knocks is scarred. The feet which stand on the threshold still bear the print of nails.

And he is the risen Christ. John has already described him in the first chapter of Revelation, as he saw him in a highly symbolic vision. His eyes were like flaming fire and his feet like burnished brass. His voice thundered like the breakers on the rocks and his face was radiant like the sun shining in full strength. No wonder John fell at his feet. It is hard to understand how a person of such majesty could ever deign to visit poor, blind and naked beggars like ourselves.

Yet Jesus Christ says he is standing knocking at the door of our lives, waiting. Notice that he is standing at the door, not pushing it; speaking to us, not shouting. This is the more remarkable when we reflect that the house is his in any case. He is the architect; he designed it. He is the builder; he made it. He is the landlord; he bought it with his life-blood. So it is his by right of plan, construction and purchase. We are only tenants in a house which does not belong to us. He could put his shoulder to the door; he prefers to put his hand to the knocker. He could command us to open to him; instead, he merely invites us to do so. He will not force an entry into anybody's life. He says (verse 18) *I counsel you....* He could issue orders; he is content to give advice. Such are his condescension and humility, and the freedom he has given us.

But why does Jesus Christ want to come in? We know the answer already. He wants to

be both our Savior and our Lord. He died to be our Savior. If we receive him, he will be able to apply to us personally all the benefits of his death. Once inside the house, he will renovate, redecorate and refurnish it. That is, he will cleanse and forgive us; our past will be blotted out. He promises too to eat with us and allow us to eat with him. The phrase describes the joy of his companionship. He not only gives himself to us but asks us to give ourselves to him. We have been strangers; now we are friends. There has been a closed door between us; now we are seated at the same table.

Jesus Christ will also enter as our Lord and Master. The house of our lives will come under his management, and there is no sense in opening the door unless we are willing for this. As he steps across the threshold, we must hand him our whole bunch of keys, granting him free access into every room. A fourth year Canadian student once wrote to me: "Instead of giving Christ a whole set of different keys to the many rooms of the house... I have given him a pass key to the whole lot!"

...Do you hesitate? Do you say it is unreasonable to submit to Christ in the dark? Surely it is not. It is much more reasonable than marriage. In marriage a man and a woman commit themselves to each other without condition. They do not know what the future holds for them. But they love each other, and they trust each other. ...If humans can thus trust humans, can we not trust God's Son? It is more reasonable to commit oneself to the divine Christ than to the finest and noblest of human beings. He will never betray or abuse our confidence.

...So what must we do? To begin with, we must hear his voice. It is tragically possible to turn a deaf ear to Christ and drown the insistent whisper of his appeal. Sometimes we hear his voice through the prickings of the conscience, sometimes through the

gropings of the mind. Or it may be a moral defeat, or the seeming emptiness and meaninglessness of our existence, or an inexplicable spiritual hunger, or sickness, bereavement, pain or fear, by which we become aware that Christ is outside the door and speaking to us. Or his call can come to us through a friend, a preacher or a book. Whenever we hear, we must listen. *He who has ears to hear*, Jesus says, *let him hear*. Next, we must open the door. Having heard his voice, we must open to his knock. To open the door to Jesus Christ is a pictorial way of describing an act of faith in him as our Savior, an act of submission to him as our Lord.

It is a definite act. ...The door does not happen to swing open by chance. Nor is it already ajar. It is closed, and needs to be opened. Moreover, Christ will not open the door himself. There is neither handle nor latch on the door in Holman Hunt's picture. It is said that he omitted them deliberately, to show that the handle was on the inside. Christ knocks; but we must open.

It is an individual act. True, the message was sent to a church, the nominal, lukewarm church of Laodicea. But the challenge is addressed to individuals within it: *If anyone hears my voice and opens the door, I will come in to him*. Every man must make his own decision and take this step himself. Nobody else can do it for you. Christian parents and teachers, ministers and friends can point the way, but your hand and only yours can draw back the bolts and turn the handle.

It is a unique act. You can take this step only once. When Christ has entered, he will bolt and bar the door on the inside. Sin may drive him into the cellar or the attic, but he will never altogether abandon the house he has entered. *I will never fail you nor forsake you*, he says. This is not to say that you emerge from this experience with the fully

grown wings of an angel! Nor that you will become perfect in the twinkling of an eye. You can become a Christian in a moment, but not a mature Christian. Christ can enter, cleanse and forgive you in a matter of seconds, but it will take much longer for your character to be transformed and molded to his will. It takes only a few minutes for a bride and bridegroom to be married, but in the rough-and-tumble of their home it may take many years for two strong wills to be dovetailed into one. So when we receive Christ, a moment of commitment will lead to a lifetime of adjustment.

It is a deliberate act. You do not have to wait for a supernatural light to flash upon you from heaven, or for an emotional experience to overtake you. No. Christ came into the world and died for your sins. He has now come and stood outside the front door of the house of your life, and he is knocking. The next move is yours. His hand is already on the knocker; your hand must now feel for the latch.

It is an urgent act. Do not wait longer than you must. Time is passing. The future is uncertain. You may never have a better opportunity than this. *Do not boast about tomorrow, for you do not know what a day may bring forth* (Proverbs 27:1). *The Holy Spirit says, "Today, when you hear his voice, do not harden your hearts..."* (Hebrews 3:7-8) Do not put it off until you have tried to make yourself better or worthier of Christ's entry; or until you have solved all your problems. If you believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God and that he died to be your Savior, that is enough. The rest will follow in due time....

It is an indispensable act. Of course there is much more to the Christian life than this. ...There is getting into the fellowship of the church, discovering and doing God's will, growing in grace and understanding, and seeking to serve God and man; but this step

is the beginning, and nothing else will do instead. You can believe in Christ intellectually and admire him; you can say your prayers to him through the keyhole (I did for many years); you can push coins at him under the door to keep him quiet; you can be moral, decent, upright and good; you can be religious; you can have been baptized and confirmed; you can be deeply versed in the philosophy of religion; you can be a theological student and even an ordained minister—and still not have opened the door to Christ, There is no substitute for this.

...Are you a Christian? A real and committed Christian? Your answer depends on another question—not whether you go to church or not, believe the creed or not, or lead a decent life or not (important as all these are in their place), but rather this: which side of the door is Jesus Christ? Is he inside or outside? That is the crucial issue.

Perhaps you are ready to open the door to Christ. If you are not sure whether you have ever done so, my advice to you would be to make sure, even if (as someone has put it) you will be going over in ink what you have already written in pencil.

I suggest that you get away and alone to pray. Confess your sins to God.... Thank Jesus Christ that he died for your sake and in your place. Then open the door and ask him to come in as your personal Savior and Lord.

You might find it a help to echo this prayer in your heart:

Lord Jesus Christ, I acknowledge that I have gone my own way. I have sinned in thought, word and deed. I am sorry for my sins. I turn from them in repentance.

I believe that you died for me, bearing my sins in your own body. I thank you for your great love. Now I open the door.

Come in, Lord Jesus. Come in as my Savior, and cleanse me. Come in as my Lord, and take control of me. And I will serve as you give me strength. Amen.

If you have prayed this prayer and meant it, humbly thank Christ that he has come in. For he said he would. He has given his word: *If any one hears my voice and opens the door, I will come in to him...* Disregard your feelings; trust his promise; and thank him that he has kept his word!

What is one thought from Stott's article that impacted you? Why?

Changed Hearts



What is one truth from this lesson that has impacted your life? Why?

What is one question that you still have that you would like answered?

Have you trusted Jesus Christ as your personal Savior? ☐ Yes ☐ No ☐ Unsure

If not, what is holding you back from trusting in Him? _____

If you are unsure, read John 4:24 and consider the words of Jesus.

Truly, truly, I say to you, he who hears My word, and believes Him who sent Me, has eternal life, and does not come into judgment, but has passed out of death into life.

If you have heard God's Word and responded in faith, then what does Jesus say is true about you?

If you have put your trust in Jesus Christ, then spend some time reflecting on and rejoicing in the beauty and security of your salvation in Him. **Read Ephesians 1:3-14.** Mark all the things that are true about you "in Christ." Say these verses out loud, substituting your name for "we" and "us."

³ *Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places in Christ, ⁴ just as He chose us in Him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before Him in love, ⁵ having predestined us to adoption as sons by Jesus Christ to Himself, according to the good pleasure of His will, ⁶ to the praise of the glory of His grace, by which He made us accepted in the Beloved.*

⁷ *In Him we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of His grace ⁸ which He made to abound toward us in all wisdom and prudence, ⁹ having made known to us the mystery of His will, according to His good pleasure which He purposed in Himself, ¹⁰ that in the dispensation of the fullness of the times He might gather together in one all things in Christ, both which are in heaven and which are on earth—in Him. ¹¹ In Him also we have obtained an inheritance, being predestined according to the purpose of Him who works all things according to the counsel of His will, ¹² that we who first trusted in Christ should be to the praise of His glory.*

¹³ *In Him you also trusted, after you heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation; in whom also, having believed, you were sealed with the Holy Spirit of promise, ¹⁴ who is the guarantee of our inheritance until the redemption of the purchased possession, to the praise of His glory.*

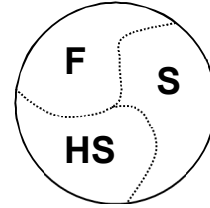
Which truth encourages your heart the most today? Why? _____

8

Who Is the Holy Spirit?

spirit (spīr'it) [Lat. *spiritus*, breath] 1) *the vital principle or animating force traditionally believed to be within living beings* 3) **Spirit**. *The Holy Ghost.*

Orthodox Christian doctrine teaches that God exists as a trinity—Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. Or perhaps a better term is tri-unity. God the Father, God the Son (Jesus) and God the Spirit are each distinct persons yet they are one God in essence. Such a concept is difficult to understand ($1+1+1=1$) but is taught in the Scriptures.



Of the three members of the trinity, the most mysterious and difficult to grasp is the Holy Spirit. Not only do we have less biblical information on the Spirit as compared to the Father and the Son, but we also have less of a concept of what a “spirit” is as compared to a “father” and a “son.” The King James Version’s designation of the Spirit as the “Holy Ghost” hasn’t made things easier. Most people envision ghosts as eerie white sheets floating in the air and as figments of one’s imagination.

Perhaps that is why in a recent Barna survey (2009), 40% of people denied the existence of the Holy Spirit and even 58% of self-described Christians agreed that the Holy Spirit is merely “a symbol of God’s presence and power and not a living entity.”

What thoughts or pictures come into your mind when you think about the Holy Spirit?

Who is the Holy Spirit and what role does He play in our lives? We must turn to the Bible to answer this question.

Westminster Shorter Catechism

Q.5. Are there more Gods than one?

A. There is but one only, the living and true God.

Q.6 How many persons are there in the Godhead?

A. There are three persons in the Godhead: the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit; and these three are one God, the same in substance, equal in power and glory.

Scripture Exploration



The ministry and work of the Holy Spirit are woven throughout the Scriptures yet there are very few biblical passages that give a detailed explanation of His character and nature. In John 3:8, Jesus compares the ministry of the Holy Spirit to the “wind”—we see its effects but *cannot tell where it comes from and where it goes*. One theologian defined the behind-the-scene’s work of the Holy Spirit as the “shyness of the Spirit.”

[It is] not the shyness of timidity but the shyness of deference, the shyness of a concentrated attention on another; it is not the shyness (which we often experience) of self-centeredness, but the shyness of an other-centeredness. It is, in short, the shyness of love.

—Dale Bruner

Read John 14:1-16:15. In this section of Scripture, Jesus gives us the most information regarding the nature and work of the Holy Spirit. Pray and ask God to speak to your heart and open your eyes as you read this passage.

Another Helper—“another” is the Greek word *allos* which means “another of the same kind.” The Holy Spirit is of the same essence as Jesus.

Helper—Greek, *parakletos* which literally means “one called along-side.” It has the idea of advising, comforting, encouraging, helping, and carrying someone.

He dwells with you and will be in you—In the OT the Holy Spirit was “with” God’s people and empowered them but in the NT the Holy Spirit will dwell “within” God’s people on a permanent basis. This unique role began at Pentecost (see Acts 2).

Convict—Greek, *elencho*, “to confront someone with the truth.” The Holy Spirit confronts the world (i.e., all people) with their sin in light of God’s righteousness and His coming judgment.

The Context of the Story: John 14-16 takes place during the Last Supper. Jesus is with His disciples celebrating the Passover (13:1). Judas Iscariot has just left the room to go and betray Jesus (13:26-30). Jesus has told the disciples that He is about to depart from the earth (death) (13:31-36). In response to the disciples’ sadness and confusion, Jesus teaches them about many things—who He is, why He must leave, how they are to live, and who is the Holy Spirit.

There is a lot that we can learn about Jesus and the Christian life from John 14-16, but for the purposes of this study we are going to focus on the sections that specifically deal with the nature and ministry of the Holy Spirit.

After reading through John 14-16, fill in the following chart by reviewing the sections in John 14-16 which address the Holy Spirit.

John 14:16-18, 25-26	John 15:26	John 16:7-15
<i>Titles given to the Spirit:</i>	<i>Titles given to the Spirit:</i>	<i>Titles given to the Spirit:</i>
<i>The Giver of the Spirit:</i>	<i>The Sender of the Spirit:</i>	<i>When does the Spirit come?</i>
<i>The Recipients of the Spirit:</i>	<i>The Recipients of the Spirit:</i>	<i>The Spirit’s Ministry in relation to the World:</i> <i>The Spirit’s Ministry in relation to Believers:</i> <i>The Spirit’s Ministry in relation to Jesus:</i>
<i>The Ministry of the Spirit (what the Spirit does when He comes)</i>	<i>The Ministry of the Spirit:</i>	

Based on what you read in John 14-16, how would you summarize the relationship of the Holy Spirit to...

God the Father _____

God the Son (Jesus) _____

Believers (Christians) _____

Unbelievers (World) _____

God's Word is truth (John 17:17). Jesus is *the way, the truth, and the life* (John 14:6). God is true and cannot lie (Titus 1:2). And the Holy Spirit is the Spirit of truth (John 14:17). There are at least five things we should know about the Spirit of **TRUTH**:

1. THE HOLY SPIRIT IS A MEMBER OF THE TRINITY.

The Holy Spirit is not an "it" or a "force," nor is He merely the "energy" of God. The Holy Spirit is a person. He bears the marks of personality (intellect, emotions, will).

What do you learn about the personality of the Holy Spirit from the following verses?

Romans 8:27 _____

Ephesians 4:30 _____

1 Corinthians 12:11 _____

The Scriptures present the Holy Spirit as a distinct person. The Scriptures also present Him as being equal to God the Father and God the Son. All believers are to be baptized *in the name* (singular) *of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit* (Matt. 28:19).

2 Corinthians 13:14 was a Christian benediction repeated in the early church.

Write out this verse: _____

Other indications of the Spirit's deity include His omnipresence (Psalm 139:7), His omniscience (1 Corinthians 2:11-12), His omnipotence (Job 33:4), His eternality (Hebrews 9:14), and His equivalence to the truth (1 John 5:6). To be filled with the Holy Spirit is to be filled with the very nature of God (1 Corinthians 3:16, 6:19).

2. THE HOLY SPIRIT IS THE REVEALER OF TRUTH.

The Holy Spirit *moved* the authors of Scripture to write God's Word (2 Peter 1:21).

Read 1 Corinthians 2:9-14 and see if you can complete the following statements:

No one knows the thoughts of God except _____

We have received the Spirit of God so that _____

The natural man (i.e., one without the Spirit) does not accept the teachings of the Spirit but sees them as _____ *and he cannot* _____ *them.*

The Holy Spirit is the One who teaches and guides people into God's truth (John 14:26; 16:13). Thus, without the Spirit, we cannot understand and apply spiritual truth. We will be deceived and follow our own imagination.

Spell this out in capital letters:
THE HOLY SPIRIT IS A PERSON. He is not enthusiasm...courage...energy. He is not the personification of all good qualities, like Jack Frost is the personification of cold weather. Actually, the Holy Spirit is not the personification of anything.... He has individuality. He is one being and not another. He has will and intelligence. He has hearing. He has knowledge and sympathy and ability to love and see and think. He can hear, speak, desire, grieve and rejoice. He is a Person.

—A.W. Tozer

THINK ABOUT:
Can a person know anything true about God apart from the work of the Holy Spirit?

THINK ABOUT:
In Matthew 12:31, Jesus says that every sin and blasphemy will be forgiven men, but the blasphemy against the Spirit will not be forgiven men.

What do you think it means to blaspheme the Spirit?

Sanhedrin—
Jewish judicial court made up of 71 members, based on Moses and 70 elders (Num. 11:16).

Every time we say, "I believe in the Holy Spirit," we mean that we believe that there is a living God able and willing to enter human personality and change it. —J.B. Phillips

Sealed with the Holy Spirit—In NT culture, a seal was a mark of ownership.

Romans 8 teaches that as we "groan" over our difficulties, the Holy Spirit "groans" within us, praying to the Father on our behalf.

3. THE HOLY SPIRIT IS THE USHER TO JESUS CHRIST.

The role of the Holy Spirit is to point and lead people to Christ. He is sent to *testify* of Jesus and to *glorify* Jesus (John 15:26; 16:14). The Holy Spirit is like a spotlight that shines brightly on an object so that all in the darkness can see it.

How does the Holy Spirit lead a person to Christ? His first work is to convict the world of sin. The Spirit works in the heart of every person to expose their sin, to show them that they are guilty before a righteous God (John 16:8-11). His second work is to shine the light on Jesus so that a person can know where salvation can be found.

Read Acts 7:51-53. These verses are the last words of Stephen during his trial before the Jewish Sanhedrin. Stephen is an early witness for Jesus Christ and the Sanhedrin is eager to stop him. Stephen summarizes the history of Israel (7:2-50) and exposes their #1 problem. What is it? _____

The Holy Spirit is the only One who can lead a person to Christ. Thus to resist the Holy Spirit (i.e., to blaspheme Him) is to deny Christ and to refuse God's salvation.

4. THE HOLY SPIRIT IS THE TRANSFORMER OF HEARTS.

Write out John 3:5 _____

If we respond to the Spirit's conviction (repentance) and hear the Spirit's voice as He testifies of Christ (faith), then the Spirit transforms our hearts. We are "born again."

Look up the following verses. Write down what the Holy Spirit does at the moment of our salvation when we trust Jesus Christ as our personal Savior and Lord:

1 Corinthians 12:13 _____

Titus 3:4-5 _____

Ephesians 1:13-14 _____

5. THE HOLY SPIRIT IS THE HELPER OF BELIEVERS.

The Holy Spirit is our Helper (Greek, *parakletos*)—He comes to our side and helps us through the difficulties and challenges of life. He is our Comforter (KJV) and Counselor (NIV). He dwells within us and will never leave us (John 14:16-17).

Look up the following verses. Write down how the Holy Spirit helps us as we live the Christian life:

Acts 1:8 _____

Romans 8:26-27 _____

Galatians 5:22-23 _____

The Holy Spirit also empowers us with a spiritual gift so that we can serve the church of Jesus Christ (1 Corinthians 12:7). It is the Spirit of God which enables us to teach, lead, serve, encourage, and give with effectiveness and joy.

Read John 7:37-39. How does Jesus describe the ministry of the Holy Spirit in our hearts?

What do you think this means? _____

The Spirit of **TRUTH**—Trinity, Revealer, Usher, Transformer, Helper—opens our eyes, changes our hearts, empowers us to serve, and fills us with supernatural joy and peace.

Additional Resources



Read the following excerpt from Charles R. Swindoll's book, *Flying Closer to the Flame* (Dallas, TX: Word Publishing, 1993), pages 71-89.

Have you ever sensed the need for an acute awareness of the Spirit of God? I have, as I'm sure you have. For most of us those times come wrapped in various packages:

- We face some awful trial from which we cannot escape.
- A physician tells us he is concerned about the x-rays.
- The telephone rings in the middle of the night, leaving us reeling over news of some tragedy.
- We need to know God's will in an important matter, which could lead to life-changing results.
- We are the target of an attack that becomes complicated and ugly.

On such occasions worry kicks in, our stomach churns, our head spins. We get the jitters. We feel the beginning stages of panic. We need help...and not the kind someone else can provide.

We need God. We need Him to step in, calm our fears, and take charge. More than all that, we need the confidence that He is there at that very moment. It's not that we expect an audible voice from heaven or a moving picture vision of the future in Technicolor. Not that. What we need most is that inner reassurance that He is there, that He cares, that He is in full control.

CHRISTIANITY 101

...To enter the Christian life, a person must begin at the right place: conversion. That means we must be rightly related to the Lord Jesus Christ. No matter what our background may be, regardless of name, sex, status, language, color, or culture, everyone begins the Christian life the same way: by coming to Christ in faith, accepting His sacrifice on the cross as sufficient payment for sin.

...The witness is this that God has given us eternal life, and this life is in His Son. He who has the Son has the life; he who does not have the Son of God does not have the life. (1 John 5:11-12)

Then, to live the Christian life, a person must continue under the control of the right power—the power of the Holy Spirit. To enter these new dimensions of the spiritual life, we must be rightly related to the Holy Spirit.

...What fuel is to a car, the Holy Spirit is to the believer. He energizes us to stay the course. He motivates us in spite of the obstacles. He keeps us going when the road gets rough. It is the Spirit who comforts us in our distress, who calms us in times of calamity, who becomes our companion in loneliness and grief, who spurs our intuition into action, who fills our minds with discernment when we are uneasy about a certain decision. In short, He is our spiritual fuel. When we attempt to operate without Him or to use some substitute fuel, all systems grind to a halt.

A NECESSARY REMINDER

...Let me remind you that as a Christian, you have the Holy Spirit. You don't need to pray for Him to come into your life; He's already there. He came to reside within you when you were converted, even though you may not have known it. Remember how Paul put it....

Or do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit who is in you, whom you have from God (1 Cor. 6:19).

A little later on in the same letter, we are told that we have been “baptized” by the Spirit into the universal body of Christ.

...Every child of God has been “identified” with and made a part of the body. Never question that again! Romans 8:9 says the same thing in different words:

But if anyone does not have the Spirit of Christ, he does not belong to Him.

Establish this dual truth once and for all: If you are a Christian, you have the Spirit living within you at all times; if you are not a Christian, you do not have the Spirit.

The wonderful part of all this is that by having the Spirit, you and I have all the “fuel” we need. Since He indwells us, He is there, ready to energize us and empower us at any time.

...Even though every believer has the Holy Spirit, it is possible to operate our lives apart from His control. But when that happens—which it does with many Christians every day—what is missed is nothing short of tragic. When we operate under His control, the potential for peace and joy, calm and comfort, guidance and insight, confidence and courage know no bounds. That is not an exaggeration; it is fact. This is why an understanding of the filling of the Spirit is absolutely crucial.

HOW ARE WE FILLED WITH THE SPIRIT?

...To return to my analogy, our tank is full. We need no more fuel, nor should we attempt to use a substitute fuel. We, as believers, have all the fuel that is needed for all the power, insight, comfort, guidance, courage, and dynamic we will ever need. The question is, How do we get the fuel flowing so we can operate our lives as God intended? Or, to use the scriptural terms, How are we filled with the Spirit? Is there a certain technique?

Let's examine the primary biblical reference on the filling of the Holy Spirit...

And do not get drunk with wine, for that is dissipation, but be filled with the Spirit. (Ephesians 5:18)

Interestingly, in the Scriptures we are never commanded to “Be baptized in the Spirit!” or “Be indwelt by the Spirit!” or “Be gifted!” or “Be sealed!” But here in a context of various commands, we are clearly commanded to “Be filled with the Spirit!” Therefore, it is something we are to obey. In fact, there are two commands. The first is

negative: “do not get drunk with wine”; and the second is *positive*: “but be filled with the Spirit.”

I have heard it taught that these two ought to be combined in some way. For example, some say that the fullness of the Spirit is like spiritual inebriation...like a “divine intoxication.” It's as if the believer is virtually out of control under the influence of the Spirit. When “drunk with wine,” a person is physically filled with alcohol; when “drunk in the Spirit,” one is spiritually allied with Him.

I question this interpretation, given the context. This verse is not comparing the two; it is offering them as contrasts to one another. This is emphasized by Paul's adding that drunkenness is *dissipation*, which means debauchery, excess, existing hopelessly out of control. But the Spirit-filled Christian is never “out of control.” On the contrary, you may recall that among the list of the fruit of the Spirit is *self-control* (Galatians 5:23). Rather than likening these two, I suggest it is better to contrast them.

...Since the climax of Paul's argument is reached in his command regarding the filling of the Spirit, let's probe deeper.

I am indebted to Dr. [John R. W.] Stott for four very helpful observations regarding this crucial verse of Scripture:

First, ***the command is in the imperative mood***: “You BE FILLED with the Spirit!” This is no casual, polite, calm suggestion, but a firm, straightforward command. We have no more freedom to ignore this duty than we do to overlook the ethical commands that surround it, such as “work hard,” “speak the truth,” “be kind,” “forgive.” You see, “be led with the Spirit” is like all those other commands. So, Christian, let me admonish you to obey God's strong command. The imperative mood demands obedience!

Second, ***the verb “be filled” is in the plural form***. The apostle Paul is not directing this to one special group of people or one super-spiritual saint in the church or, for that

matter, to the church in general. He is saying to all of us—individually and collectively—that we, as a universal body of Christians, must be filled with the Spirit of God.

Third, ***it is in the passive voice***. Did you notice that? “Be filled” is the command, not “Fill yourself up with the Spirit.” Or, as The New English Bible renders it: “Let the Holy Spirit fill you.” But don't make too much of that. Just as a person gets drunk by drinking alcohol, so an individual is filled with the Spirit by involving himself or herself in the process that leads to it.

For example, I cannot be filled with the Spirit while I have known and unconfessed sin present within me. I cannot be filled with the Spirit while at the same time conducting my life in the energy of the flesh. I cannot be filled with the Spirit while I am walking against God's will and depending upon myself. I need to be sure that I have taken care of the sins that have emerged in my life, that I have not ignored the wrong that I have done before God and to others. I need to walk in dependence on the Lord on a daily basis. Jesus emphasizes the same thought in John 15, where He commands us to abide in the vine. Why? Because *apart from Me you can do nothing* (15:5). And when Jesus says nothing, He means nothing.

Many a morning I begin my day by sitting on the side of the bed and saying:

This is Your day, Lord. I want to be at Your disposal. I have no idea what these next twenty-four hours will contain. But before I begin, before I sip my first cup of coffee, and even before I get dressed, I want You to know that from this moment on throughout this day, I'm Yours, Lord. Help me to be a branch that abides in the vine, to lean on You, to draw strength from You, and to have You fill my mind and my thoughts. Take control of my senses so that I am literally filled with Your presence and power and dynamic. I want to be Your tool, Your vessel today. I can't make it happen. Without You I can accomplish nothing. And so I'm saying, Lord, fill me with Your Spirit today.

...Fourth, *the command to "be filled" is in the present tense*. It is a continuous appropriation, not some great high-and-mighty, once-in-a-lifetime moment where you experience the fullness of the Spirit and from then on you are on an all-time high that never wanes. Instead, we are regularly to pray, "Fill me, Lord, for this moment...fill me in this hour...fill me as I'm facing this challenge."

It's like we are saying, Lord, I want to be filled. I want to be used. I want to be available. I deliberately and consciously make myself dependent upon You.

The Spirit's filling is like walking. When we are little, every tiny step is a conscious effort and a magnificent achievement. Soon, we learn to link two or three steps together before we fall. And then before you know it, by the time we've reached four or five, we're walking and not even thinking about it. Walking has simply become a part of life.

Over time, as we experience His filling, it becomes a constant part of our consciousness and our life. But we begin deliberately, slowly, and carefully. As the sun tips its hat in the early morning, we say to the Lord: "Lord this is Your day. As these hours unfold, I want to walk with You, allowing Your Spirit full control. Since I belong to You and no day is a waste, help me live it under Your empowering authority."

WHAT HAPPENS WHEN WE ARE FILLED WITH THE SPIRIT?

...Now we're ready for the next crucial question: What happens when I am filled with the Spirit? In Ephesians 5, after the command to "be filled with the Spirit," we are told of four results in the Christian's life.

...Be filled with the Spirit, speaking to one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody with your heart to the Lord; always giving thanks for all things in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ to God, even the Father; and be subject to one another in the fear of Christ. (Eph. 5:18-21)

First, *His filling affects our speaking*. To begin with, we are "speaking to one another." This is a vital part of what is called Christian fellowship. ...When we are filled with the Spirit, we begin to relate to others in the family of God. We want to hear what they have to say. We want to learn from one another. And we also want to contribute to each other's welfare. If we see our brothers and sisters in a dangerous or perilous situation, we want to warn them.

Second, *His filling leads us to melodious hearts*. ...Life takes on a special lilt. Joy comes again. ...The Spirit's filling opens our hearts and moves us into an enthusiastic overflow of worship.

One of the characteristics of Spirit-filled believers is that they don't wait until Sunday to worship. They have a daily worship occurring in their lives. We may be singers. We may not be singers (or at least we don't sing in public!). But all of us can have an inner melody that bubbles up spontaneously out of our lives. And I have observed that when I am walking in the Spirit there is usually a song on the tip of my tongue because there is a melody flowing through my heart. There is, even in a broader sense, a desire to live in harmony with my brothers and sisters.

Third, *His filling makes us thankful people*. One of the tell-tale signs of the Spirit-filled life is gratitude. Show me a grumbler, and I'll show you a person who has distanced herself or himself from the Spirit of God. When we are filled with the Spirit, there is an overwhelming sense of thankfulness. We are not hard to please. We are happy to have whatever God provides. We're not spoiled or "choosy."

Fourth, *His filling leads us to submit to each other*. ...When we are filled with the Spirit, we become more submissive to those in our lives. If we are in leadership, a servant-hearted style replaces a demanding, dogmatic style. A God-directed humility emerges. If

we are married, our Spirit-filled heart prompts us to want to serve our mates, not control them. Difficult though it may be for some dominant male types to accept, in marriage there is to be a mutual submission to one another, a teachability, an openness. Not only for the wife toward her husband, but for the husband toward his wife.

A PRACTICAL RESPONSE TO HOW WE LIVE

...Let me conclude by reminding you once again that we do not need to plead for God's presence. We have it. We don't need to spend our days wondering why some people have an edge on the power. We have it too. We don't need to toss and turn through sleepless nights, struggling over our inability to claim the same super-dynamic power that some televangelist seems to have and we don't. Let me repeat, as a Christian you have the Spirit of God.

But even though this is true, several probing questions are in order:

Are you engaging the gears? Are you keeping short accounts on those things that break fellowship with God? Are you walking in conscious dependence on the Lord? Are you saying to Him at the beginning of—and frequently throughout—the day, “Lord, my life is Yours”?

I want to close with three important reminders...regarding the Spirit-filled life.

First, ***abnormal experiences are not necessary to Christian maturity.***

Some groups in the evangelical community place a great deal of emphasis on phenomenal, exceptional manifestations of the Spirit. Others find themselves uncomfortable with this type of expression; they may even feel that it can't be defended from the Scriptures. Let me encourage you, whatever your frame of reference, to be gracious, be tolerant.

...When I was fresh out of seminary, I felt it necessary to correct all the things that I didn't agree with. I felt it necessary to be the

self-appointed crusader and to address all those expressions of the faith that did not coincide with my convictions. But over the years I have found that that is a great way to waste a lot of energy. God did not call me to clean up the entire world (which, being interpreted, means to straighten others out so they would get in step with my convictions). I have learned over the years to be a lot more tolerant and a little wise.

Second, ***the fullness of the Spirit is for all of us, as believers, to enjoy, but how it works its way out in each person's life is another matter.***

So for those who place a great deal of emphasis on the supernatural, remember: Rejoice in the comfort He has brought you in your walk, but don't try to force your experience upon everyone else. Don't feel you must be a zealous proselyte for your convictions, and don't stereotype all Christian experiences. ...You will find a great deal more satisfaction in your walk with the Lord if you will simply accept that as your own personal experience. But please don't look down your nose as though you have something that others don't have which makes you especially spiritual.

...Third, ***let us seek to enjoy our vast common ground, rather than establish and defend our own theological turf.***

There are more things that draw us together than there are things that separate us. We should be enjoying the vast common ground of our faith rather than defending some particular area of theological or experiential persuasion. Relax. You take care of your responsibilities before the Lord and let your brothers and sisters take care of theirs. Let's allow God to be God and understand that we are all in His family.

May our “enormous common ground” be the foundation that supports us, rather than a battlefield that separates. The secret for making that happen? The filling of the Spirit: nothing more, nothing less, nothing else.

What is one thought or truth that stands out to you from this reading? Why?

Changed Hearts



What is one truth from this lesson that has impacted your life? Why?

What is one question that you still have that you would like answered?

Have you ever asked for the filling of the Spirit? Pastor Swindoll suggests a prayer to pray at the beginning of each day (page 8-7). Tomorrow morning (or this morning if you are starting the day with this study)...

- Pray and ask the Holy Spirit to open the eyes of your heart to God's Word.
- Read the chapter in the book of Proverbs that corresponds with the day's date (e.g., if today is March **20**, read Proverbs chapter 20).
- Write down one thought that struck your heart as you read God's Word.

- Pray and ask God to help you live out His Word and to fill you with His Spirit. Use the prayer on page 8-7 as a guide but pray from your heart in your own words.
- At the end of the day write down one thing that God taught you through the day.

9

What Is the Church?

church (chûrch) [from Greek, *kuriakos*, of the Lord] *1) the company of all Christians considered as a mystic spiritual body.*

What is the church? And is it really necessary? Many people in today's world claim to be spiritual. Recent surveys indicate that approximately 90% of people in America believe in God. However only about 32% attend services on a regular basis. For many people, church attendance and membership are "optional" parts of knowing God.

How would you evaluate the following statement? Agree? Disagree? Why?

I'm a Christian but the church is dead—and boring. I can get my needs met through Christian TV, radio, and books and have more meaningful worship times walking through the woods on a Sunday morning. I really do not need the church.

When you hear the word "church" what pictures come to your mind?

Dietrich Bonhoeffer, a German pastor killed for his opposition to the Nazi regime, once stated that the word *church* for most Christians "has the sound of something infinitely commonplace, more or less indifferent and superfluous, that does not make their heart beat faster; something with which a sense of boredom is often associated."

This is not how God views the church! If the value of something is determined by how much someone is willing to pay for it, then how valuable is the church to God?

Keep watch over yourselves and all the flock of which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers. Be shepherds of the church of God, which He bought with His own blood.

—Acts 20:28

What is the Christ-church relationship compared to in Ephesians 5:22-33?

☐ Master-Slave ☐ Shepherd-Sheep ☐ Father-Son ☐ Husband-Wife

What does this tell you about how Christ views the church?

The church is infinitely valuable and precious in God's eyes. Thus, as God's children, we should also appreciate the beauty and design of the church of Jesus Christ.

Westminster Confession of Faith

25:1. The catholic or universal Church, which is invisible, consists of the whole number of the elect, that have been, are, or shall be gathered into one, under Christ the Head thereof; and is the spouse, the body, the fullness of Him that fills all in all.

25:2. The visible Church, which is also catholic or universal under the Gospel..., consists of all those throughout the world that profess the true religion; and of their children: and is the kingdom of the Lord Jesus Christ, the house and family of God...

Scripture Exploration



Began to speak in other tongues—

Greek, *glossa*, is the term for “languages.” The apostles were supernaturally enabled to communicate the gospel in the native language of all those present.

Repent and be baptized—Some believe that Acts 2:38 teaches that water baptism is necessary for salvation.

However, the rest of the NT makes it clear that faith alone is all that is necessary for salvation (3:19, 10:43, 16:31; Eph. 2:8-9, etc.).

In Greek, the preposition “for” can also be translated as “because of.” Thus the verse could read as follows:

Repent, and you will receive the gift of the Spirit, and be baptized because your sins are forgiven.

[The meaning of baptism will be discussed in the next lesson.]

Read Acts 2. Pray before you begin. Ask God to open your eyes to His truth.

The Context of the Story: Acts 2 takes place on the day of Pentecost (2:1). “Pentecost” literally means “fiftieth” and it refers to the Jewish Feast of Weeks which occurred fifty days after the Sabbath (Saturday) of Passover week. Thus Jesus died on the Passover (Friday) and rose again on Sunday (Feast of Firstfruits). He appeared to the disciples for forty days then ascended into heaven (1:3). Approximately a week and a half later, the disciples were gathered together still waiting for the promise of the Holy Spirit (1:4-5).

What thought or question first comes into your mind after reading this passage?

What miracle occurred on the Day of Pentecost? _____

What do you think was the purpose of this miracle? _____

The Day of Pentecost marks the beginning of the church. The Holy Spirit came upon the disciples of Christ in a new and unique way. Whereas before the Spirit was *with* them, now the Spirit was *within* them (John 14:16-17). This is what Jesus had promised (John 16:7; Acts 1:4-5) and what the OT had prophesied about (Ezekiel 36:26-27; Joel 2:28-32). After the Spirit came upon the disciples, they were able to boldly proclaim the message of Jesus Christ in the language of all those gathered.

What did Peter say would be the two results of repenting and identifying with Jesus Christ (2:38)? _____

For whom is this promise valid (2:39)? _____

How many people believed Peter’s message (2:41)? _____

The first church was organized on Pentecost. What four things did the members of the early church devote themselves to (2:42)? _____

How would you describe the relationships within the early church? _____

What was the result of their unified devotion to God and to one another (2:47)? _____

In Matthew 16:18, Jesus promised: *On this rock I will build my church and the gates of Hades shall not prevail against it.* Jesus Christ loves the church. He died for the church. He promised to build the church. He invested the church with a power greater than the forces of hell. So what exactly is this entity which Christ promised to **BUILD**?

1. THE CHURCH IS BBUILT ON JESUS CHRIST.

The church is built on Jesus Christ. He is the rock. He is the foundation. He is the one whom Peter pointed to in his sermon on the Day of Pentecost. *For no one can lay any foundation other than the one already laid, which is Jesus Christ* (1 Corinthians 3:11).

Read Ephesians 2:19-22. Because of the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ, God has begun to build a new type of building in the world.

What type of building is God building (2:21)? _____

Who is the cornerstone of this building (2:20)? _____

Who inhabits this building (2:22)? _____

In the OT, the temple was a physical building in which God's presence was manifest. In the NT, the temple is a spiritual building made up of everyone who places their faith in Christ. What advantages do you see to a spiritual temple as opposed to a physical temple?

How should we live in light of the fact that we are God's temple (1 Corin. 6:19-20)?

2. THE CHURCH IS UNIFIED IN THE HOLY SPIRIT.

Read 1 Corinthians 12:12-14. In this passage, the church is compared to the human body. Just as our physical body is one entity made up of a myriad of parts, so Christ's church is one body made up of a multitude of different people. Every part in the body has a function. Every part is important. And unity is essential.

What is the common bond that unites all believers to the body of Christ (12:13)?

Just as every cell in the human body contains the DNA code for the whole body, so each believer in the church possesses the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit is the primary bond which ties all believers to Christ and to one another.

Read Ephesians 4:1-6. What are the seven "ones" that all believers have in common?

How are we to live in light of our unity with one another (4:1-3)? _____

THINK ABOUT:
Each word in the phrase "I will build My church" is important. What does each word tell you?

The Greek word translated "church" is **ekklesia** which literally means "called out ones." It reflects the fact that believers are "called out" of the world to live holy lives for Christ. The term **saint** (one set apart) is tied to this concept.

The **corner-stone** of a building was the first and most important stone laid. It was the standard against which all the distances and angles of the structure were measured.

THINK ABOUT:
What other lessons can you learn about the church from the analogy to the human body?

One baptism refers to the baptism of the Spirit (1 Cor. 12:12-13) of which water baptism is a symbol.

The term **catholic** means “universal.” The Roman *Catholic* church believes that it is the universal church. In other words, only those joined to its visible organization are part of the true church. However the NT does not teach that mere membership in some kind of organization makes one a true Christian.

There are many things which a person can do alone, but being a Christian is not one of them. As the Christian life is, above all things, a state of union with Christ, and of union of his followers with one another, love of the brethren is inseparable from love of God.
—Wm. T. Ham

THINK ABOUT:
When have you experienced the love and support of fellow believers in the past?

Why do you think unity in the church is such a powerful witness to the world?

3. THE CHURCH IS INVISIBLE IN NATURE, VISIBLE IN FORM.

The word “church” in the NT can have one of two meanings: 1) it can refer to the universal church—all true believers everywhere and in all times—or 2) it can refer to a local assembly of professing believers at a particular location and at a particular time.

1 Corinthians 16:19 refers to: ☐ the universal church or ☐ the local church
Ephesians 5:25-27 refers to: ☐ the universal church or ☐ the local church

Since we cannot see a person’s heart, it is impossible for us to discern 100% who is a believer and who is not (cf. Matt. 13:24-30). As Paul states in 2 Timothy 2:19: *The Lord knows those who are His*. Thus unbelievers may be members in a local church and believers may be outside of it. However, the local church is to strive to be a faithful representation of the universal church and true believers should desire to be a part of a local church. In Acts 2, those who were saved were “added” to the local church (2:41).

4. THE CHURCH IS TO LOVE GOD AND ONE ANOTHER.

The church is to be the one place where love is expressed and experienced. Jesus said that the two greatest commandments are to love God and to love your neighbor (Mark 12:28-31). These two commands are to be at the center of the life of the church.

Read Hebrews 10:22-25. In light of the salvation that we have in Christ, the author of Hebrews calls all the members of the church to three actions (“let us”). What are they?

Let us _____ (22).

Let us _____ (23).

Let us _____ (24).

What does the author warn against in verse 25? What should believers not do?

Why do you think meeting together is so important? _____

What would the apostle John say to someone who says, “I love God but don’t want to be with other Christians.” **See 1 John 4:20-21.** _____

Believers in Christ are a family. As brothers and sisters, God commands us to love one another (John 13:34-35), encourage one another (Hebrews 3:13), serve one another (1 Peter 4:10), forgive one another (Colossians 3:13), accept one another (Romans 15:7), bear one another’s burdens (Galatians 6:2), comfort one another (1 Thessalonians 4:18), be devoted to one another (Romans 12:10) and pray for one another (James 5:16).

What happens when the church lives like this? See John 13:35.

5. THE CHURCH IS TO DECLARE CHRIST TO THE WORLD.

Write out Acts 1:8 _____

The Great Commission calls us to *make disciples of all nations* (Matt 28:19-20). This happens as we allow the Holy Spirit to fill and empower our lives. The Holy Spirit's role is to *testify* of Christ (John 15:26) thus to be filled with the Spirit is to be motivated to tell others about Jesus.

What happened when the early church was filled with the Spirit (Acts 4:31)? _____

Jesus Christ promised to **BUILD** His church. What is His church? It is the assembly of people **Built** upon Him, **Unified** in the Spirit, **Invisible** in nature yet visible in form, **Loving** God and one another and **Declaring** His gospel to the rest of the world.

Additional Resources



Read the following excerpt from *The Communion of Saints: Living in Fellowship with the People of God* (Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R Publishing, 2001), pages 41-55.

You are no longer foreigners and aliens, but fellow citizens with God's people and members of God's household (Eph. 2:19).

Membership has its privileges. Even zoo membership has privileges, as trivial as they may seem. Members of the Philadelphia Zoo, for example, receive benefits that are not offered to the general public. They are invited to special events and lectures. They receive discounts on merchandise. They can visit the zoo during special evening hours. Best of all, once they become members they are welcome at the zoo as often as they go, without having to pay daily admission. Zoo membership is also optional. One does not have to be a zoo member to see the big cats or visit the reptile house. The whole zoo is open to the public. However, in the long run, it is more costly to visit the zoo without becoming a member.

Although the church is hardly a zoo (although one sometimes wonders), many of the same things can be said of church membership. There is a sense in which being enrolled as an official member of a local church is optional. The basis for the communion of the saints is union with Christ by faith, not a listing in the church directory. However, failure to become a church member can be costly. This is because failure to become a church member or to take one's church membership seriously hinders the communion of the saints.

What the Church Is

...Who or what is the church—specifically, the visible church? Answering this question will help explain why church membership is essential to the communion of the saints.

The visible church is both smaller and larger than the communion of the saints. It is smaller because it does not include past or future saints but only those who presently are members of the church. However, it is larger because it includes unbelievers as well as believers. The communion of saints consists of true believers, all true believers, and only true believers. But the visible church is made up of all who say that they are Christians.

The Westminster Confession of Faith defines the church as follows: “The visible church, which is also catholic or universal under the gospel, consists of all those throughout the world that profess the true religion, together with their children; and is the kingdom of the Lord Jesus Christ, the house and family of God...” (25.2). Several aspects of this definition have special relevance for church membership. The first is its identification of church members as those who “profess the true religion.” This means that members have given a public testimony of faith in Jesus Christ. They have declared to the church that they are trusting in Christ alone for salvation, which is sometimes called making a “credible profession of faith.” A credible profession includes a verbal testimony and a life that generally confirms the genuineness of that testimony (1 Corinthians 1:2) and thus enables the church to make its corporate endorsement of an individual’s salvation.

Pastors and elders of the church try to make sure that professions of faith are not merely credible but also true. Yet because of sin, especially secret sin, there are always some church members who are not truly saved. Some who profess Christ with their lips do not trust him in their hearts. Jesus warned his disciples that there will always be tares among the wheat and bad fish among the fresh catch (Matthew 13:24-30, 47-50). To use a contemporary metaphor, there is always junk mail mixed in with the personal correspondence. Or as Martin Luther liked to

say, there will always be “mouse-droppings amongst the peppercorns.”

The Confession of Faith defines the visible church as “the house and family of God.” This is in keeping with Paul’s description of Christians as “members of God’s household” (Ephesians 2:19), “those who belong to the family of believers” (Galatians 6:10). To call the church a house or a family reminds us that the children of believers are also members of the church.

What the Church Does

...But what does the church do? The Confession of Faith offers a short job description: “Unto this catholic visible church Christ hath given the ministry, oracles, and ordinances of God, for the gathering and perfecting of the saints in this life, to the end of the world; and doth by his own presence and Spirit, according to his promise, make them effectual thereunto.”

The main task of the church is to gather and perfect the saints. This is the mandate given to the church by Jesus Christ, known as the Great Commission. Jesus said, “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” (Matt. 28:19-20). Every true Christian church has the same mission statement: to proclaim the gospel message of salvation from sin through the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ (1 Corinthians 15:1-4). The church is to take this message into all the world—making, baptizing and teaching followers for Christ. Evangelism, discipleship, and Bible teaching are thus essential activities of the local church.

How the Church Is Organized

...The church is more than a loose association of people who share common interests. It is rather a family or household,

and like all households, it has an organized structure. The head of this household is Jesus Christ. When Jesus gave the church its mandate, he began with these words: “All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me” (Matthew 28:18). The church fulfills its mission under the authority of Jesus Christ, who is the sole and supreme Lord of the church.

One of the prerogatives of a leader is to delegate his authority, as Christ has done in the church: “The Lord Jesus, as King and Head of his church, hath therein appointed a government, in the hand of church officers” (Confession of Faith, 30.1). ...The spiritual authority of the church resides in a body of elders. In his farewell address to the Ephesians, Paul referred to the church’s leaders as “elders,” “overseers” (or “bishops”), and “shepherds” (Acts 20:17, 28). The Bible uses these terms interchangeably to refer to the spiritual leaders of God’s household. The biblical qualifications for elders are listed in 1 Timothy 3:1-7. They include integrity, fidelity, respectability, hospitality, peaceability, and charity. Men who meet these qualifications are ordained to govern (1 Tim. 5:17), to teach (2 Timothy 4:2), to shepherd (1 Peter 5:1-5), and to discern the Lord’s will for the church (Acts 15).

The church’s other office is deacon. Like the elders, the deacons are to be respectable, sincere, temperate, generous, and faithful (1 Timothy 3:8-13). The office of deacon is not an office of rule, however, but of service. Deacons are ministers of God’s mercy inside and outside the church. They are servants; to employ the biblical term for deaconing (*diakonos*) in its most literal sense, they “wait on tables” (Acts 6:2). It is the high privilege of deacons to imitate the sacrificial ministry of Jesus Christ, who did “not come to be served, but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many” (Mark 10:45).

Active Members

Now that we have determined what the church is, what it does, and how it is organized, we are able to learn what church members are to do. First, if the church consists of sinners who “profess the true religion,” then its members are to believe the gospel of Christ and to live by it. We are to confess our sinfulness in God’s sight, to believe that Jesus Christ died on the cross to atone for our sins, to fulfill the demands of the gospel by pursuing holiness in all our relationships, and to teach these gospel truths to others, especially our children.

Second, if the church is “the house and family of God,” then we are called to join the household, to love our elder brother, Jesus Christ (Hebrews 2:11-12), and to embrace all God’s children as our brothers and sisters, showering them with all the love that family members deserve.

Third, if the church’s mandate is to “gather and perfect the saints,” then we are to pray for the lost, witness to our neighbors, and invite unsaved friends to church or to Bible study. We are to support the evangelistic ministries of the church with our time and money, and as new believers are brought into the church, to nurture them in the Christian faith. At the same time, we are to seek the sanctification of our souls through the means God has given. ...We must listen to our pastor’s preaching and at the same time pray for his ministry and provide everything that his family needs (1 Timothy 5:17-18). We must read, study, meditate, obey, and pray through the Bible. We must also teach the Bible to others as we have opportunity. And we must observe baptism and participate regularly and reverently in the Lord’s Supper.

Fourth, if the church has a divinely ordained structure, then we must conform to that structure. We are to elect church officers prayerfully and receive their counsel cheerfully. According to our gifts and God’s call

we may serve as officers. Regardless, we must remain spiritually accountable to our elders, submitting to their discipline in the Lord. We must gently restore others who have been caught in sin (Gal. 6:1). We must treat the church and its officers with love and respect. Churches do make mistakes. Church officers sometimes misinterpret the Bible, misdirect ministries, and mishandle discipline. Nevertheless, the church and its officers deserve our love, humility, and respect: “Obey your leaders and submit to their authority. They keep watch over you as men who must give an account. Obey them so that their work will be a joy, not a burden, for that would be of no advantage to you” (Heb. 13:17). The church is the only earthly institution ever founded by Jesus Christ (Matt. 16:18). Its government has been established by God, through Christ, under the rule of his Word, for the redemption of the world. Therefore, we must never undervalue the dignity and authority of the church.

When new members join Tenth Presbyterian Church in Philadelphia, they receive a booklet that offers a helpful summary of their responsibilities as active church members. New communicants are instructed:

- To share faithfully in the *worship* of the church. “Let us not give up meeting together, as some are in the habit of doing, but let us encourage one another—and all the more as you see the Day approaching” (Hebrews 10:25).
- To share faithfully in the *service* of the church. “It was he [Christ] who gave some to be apostles, some to be prophets, some to be evangelists, and some to be pastors and teachers, to prepare God’s people for works of service, so that the body of Christ may be built up” (Ephesians 4:11-12).
- To *give* of your substance as the Lord may prosper you. “On the first day of every week, each one of you should set aside a sum of money in keeping with his income, saving it up” (1 Corinthians 16:2).
- To give their whole heart to the service of Christ and his *kingdom* throughout the world,

living lives “worthy of God, who calls you into his kingdom and glory” (1 Thessalonians 2:12).

Christians who make and keep these commitments honor God by strengthening the communion of saints.

Membership Has Its Privileges

One church bulletin included the following notice: “The Outreach Committee has enlisted 25 visitors to make calls on people who are not afflicted with any church.” Belonging to a church may sometimes seem like an affliction rather than an affiliation. When it does, it is tempting to ask whether there are any benefits to church membership. In *Members One of Another*, Eric Lane urges us to resist this temptation:

What difference will church membership make to me? is the question often in the mind (and sometimes on the lips). But it is the wrong question. The purpose of church membership is in relation to the church, not the individual. There are certain aspects of the church which are meaningless without membership. At the same time church membership is certainly of spiritual help to the believer in the living of the Christian life..., but this personal profit is a by-product and not the main end.

If the church is established by God, ruled by Christ, and governed by the Word of his Spirit, then how can anyone refuse to join it? For Christians so to refuse is to fail to meet one of their fundamental obligations as followers of Christ.

Christians who resist the idea of formal membership sometimes question whether the Bible says that they officially have to join the church. However, it is clear from the New Testament that the first Christians believed in church membership and kept careful track of their members. Already at Pentecost, new converts were described as being “added to their number” (Acts 2:41, 47; 5:14). The appointment of the first deacons was in response to the danger that some members who were on the rolls of the Jerusalem church

were being overlooked (Acts 6). Timothy's church at Ephesus maintained a list of the widows under its care (1 Tim. 5:9), which is not surprising, given that the apostle Paul had addressed them as "members of God's household" (Eph. 2:19). When there was a case of grievous sin at Corinth, Paul instructed the church to "put out of [their] fellowship the man who did this" (1 Cor. 5:2). He assumed that the elders could distinguish between those who were inside and those who were outside the church, a differentiation that requires fellowship on some sort of formal basis. Similarly, the apostle John was able to discriminate between those who "belonged to us" and "did not really belong to us" (1 John 2:19). ...If elders must "give an account" (Heb. 13:17), they must know for whom they are accountable. To put this another way, shepherds must know who their sheep are.

...R. B. Kuiper...summarized much that we have been saying in this chapter:

It is clear that in the days of the apostles it was universal practice to receive believers into the visible church.

He who believes in Christ is united with Christ. Faith binds him to Christ. He is a member of Christ's body, the invisible church. But the visible church is but the outward manifestation of that body. Every member of the invisible church should as a matter of course be a member of the visible church. Extremely significant in this connection is Acts 2:47—"And the Lord added to the church daily such as should be saved." Not only does the Lord Christ require of those who are saved that they unite with the church; He Himself joins them to the church. And the reference is unmistakably to the *visible* church.

Does it follow that he who is outside the visible church is necessarily outside Christ? Certainly not. It is possible that a true believer because of some unusual circumstance may fail to unite with the church. ...But such instances are exceptional. The Scriptural rule is that, while membership in the church is not a prerequisite of salvation, it is a necessary consequence of salvation.

Some Christians become actively involved in a local church without ever becoming members. It is good to become involved, but involvement without formal membership is like living together without getting married. To some people this seems like a good way to test the waters. They argue, "How can we know for sure if we are right for one another unless we live together for a little while? If things don't work out, then we can split up without a divorce." In addition to violating God's will for courtship and marriage, that approach is a well-known recipe for separation. Two people who only live together want the benefits of marriage without its safeguards. As a result, they lack the one thing that is crucial to a successful marriage (or to genuine sexual intimacy, for that matter)—an unbreakable commitment to a mutual, inviolable covenant before God.

The same might be said of regular attenders who never join the church. They lack an unbreakable commitment to the church and its ministry. Nonmembers, however active they may be in the life of the church, ...reserve the right to pick and choose their doctrine, lifestyle, and ministry. In effect they become their own elders, denying the authority of the church to carry out its mandate of gathering and perfecting the saints. To put this in theological terms, they separate union with Christ, the head of the church, from union with his body. As a result, they confuse themselves and others—outside as well as inside the church—about what it means to be a Christian. This is a costly mistake to make because membership has its privileges. Martyn Lloyd-Jones went so far as to describe church membership as "the biggest honor which can come a man's way in this world." There is no union with Christ apart from the communion of the saints. Nor can the saints have true communion without belonging to one another by belonging to Christ in his church. The communion of the saints is for members only.

Changed Hearts



What is one truth from this lesson that has impacted your life? Why?

What is one question that you still have that you would like answered?

Are you a member of a local church? ☐ Yes ☐ No

Membership seems optional to many believers (and some churches do not even have an official membership role). However, committing oneself to a local church is an important step in Christian growth since it places a person in a position of accountability to church leadership and to others. God never intended for there to be “Lone Ranger Christians.”

If you are a member of a local church, what are some of the benefits that you have experienced with being a committed part of a local body of believers? _____

If you are still looking for a local church, find one that believes and teaches the Bible, strives to love one another, and is committed to reaching the world with the good news of Jesus Christ.

Are you using your spiritual gift(s) in the local church? ☐ Yes ☐ No

1 Peter 4:10 states, *Each one should use whatever gift he has received to serve others....* Just as each part of the physical body has a function, each person in the spiritual body of the church has been gifted with a particular gift (or gifts) to use for the glory of Christ and the benefit of others.

To start you on your journey of discovering your gift(s), answer the following questions:

- If you could do anything in the local church, what would you thoroughly enjoy doing?

- In what ministries have you served in the past where you saw some tangible results?

- What do you see as one of the greatest needs in the local church where you now attend?

Circle 1-2 of the following gifts which seem to best reflect your answers above:

Helps Shepherding Craftmanship Evangelism Missions Teaching Mercy
Prayer Administration Leadership Encouragement Giving Counseling Hospitality

This may reflect your spiritual giftedness. The best way to find out is to start serving!

10 What About Baptism and Communion?

baptism (băp'tiz'əm) the religious rite of sprinkling water onto a person's forehead or of immersion in water, symbolizing purification and admission to the Christian Church.

communion (kə-myōn'yən) [From Latin, *communis*, common] the service of Christian worship at which bread and wine are consecrated and shared.

One of the things that almost all Christian churches share in common is the practice of baptism and communion. Thus it would seem that baptism and communion would be a great source of unity among Christians. However, in actuality, they are often the source of great division since Christians understand and practice them differently.

See if you can match the following views of baptism and communion with the Christian denominations that hold them.

BAPTISM

- | | |
|------------------------|--|
| _____ Roman Catholics | A. A person must trust in Christ <u>and</u> be immersed in water in order to have eternal life. |
| _____ Presbyterians | B. Infants are sprinkled as a sign of becoming part of the covenant community of the church. |
| _____ Church of Christ | C. People who trust Christ are immersed in water as an outward symbol of the inward change in their hearts. |
| _____ Baptists | D. Infants are sprinkled so as to remove "original sin" received from Adam. An unbaptized infant that dies is excluded from the blessings of heaven. |

COMMUNION

- | | |
|-----------------------|--|
| _____ Roman Catholics | A. The bread and wine <i>are</i> the physical body and blood of Christ. Communion is a re-sacrifice of Christ. |
| _____ Lutherans | B. The bread and wine <i>contain spiritually</i> the body and blood of Christ. Christ's presence is manifest in a unique way to those who partake of the elements. |
| _____ Presbyterians | C. The bread and wine are <i>infused physically</i> with the body and blood of Christ. In receiving the elements, one partakes of Christ and obtains spiritual benefits. |
| _____ Baptists | D. The bread and wine <i>represent</i> the body and blood of Christ. The benefit of partaking in communion is totally dependent on the faith of the participant. |

As with the other issues we have studied, the question is not—*what does a particular denomination teach about baptism or communion?* The real question is—*what does the Bible teach about baptism and communion?* Of course, there is disagreement over the interpretation of some verses. However, taking the words of Scripture simply and comprehensively, we can discover clear teachings on baptism and communion.

Westminster Confession of Faith

Q. 92. What is a sacrament?

A. A sacrament is a holy ordinance instituted by Christ; wherein, by sensible signs, Christ, and the benefits of the new covenant, are represented, sealed, and applied to believers.

Q. 93. What are the sacraments of the New Testament?

A. The sacraments of the New Testament are, baptism, and the Lord's Supper.

NOTE: Most differences over the ordinances are minor doctrinal issues unless they affect one's view of salvation.

Answers:
Baptism: D, B, A, C
Communion: A, C, B, D

Scripture Exploration



Since Catholics often use *sacrament* to refer to an act which conveys spiritual merit to a person regardless of their faith then the term *ordinance* is usually preferred by Protestants.

Baptism echoes back to OT purification rites. Priests washed in water before performing sacrifices and people would bathe themselves after being unclean (Ex. 30:17-21; Lev. 13-14).

A Jewish sect called the Essenes, a radical group of ascetics who lived in the desert, also practiced daily immersions as an act of cleansing. John may have been influenced by them.

Baptism with fire—In the context, fire refers to a purifying judgment. Jesus' death is seen as a baptism of fire (Luke 12:49-50) in which He endured God's wrath for us.

Baptism and communion are the two primary *ordinances* of the church. An *ordinance* is a rite which Christ commanded for the church to practice. Sometimes they are called *sacraments*, meaning that which is sacred.

THE ORDINANCE OF BAPTISM

Read Matthew 3. Pray before you begin. Ask God to open your eyes to His truth.

The Context: Matthew 3 takes place around 29 AD. John the Baptist (~age 30), the son of Zacharias and Elizabeth (a relative of Mary), emerged from the wilderness preaching a message of repentance, preparing the way for the coming of the Messiah (cf. Luke 1:13-17). His preaching created a stir and an excitement among the Jewish people since the Messiah was prophesied to bring a kingdom of peace and righteousness to earth.

Matthew 3 is the first mention of the word “baptism” in the Bible. The Old Testament mentions the idea of water purification (cf. Lev. 8:6; Ezekiel 36:25) but baptism in the New Testament is seen as a unique act with special significance.

What was John's message (3:2)? _____

To “repent” means to “change one's mind; to turn” It has the idea of turning *from* sin and turning *to* God. Messiah's coming called for people to “get right” with God since He would bring righteousness and judge wickedness in the world. John “baptized” people, submerging them in the Jordan River, as a symbolic act of their repentance.

What did people do as they were baptized (3:6)? _____

The Pharisees and the Sadducees (the religious and political leaders of the Jews) also came out to be baptized but John refused to baptize them. Why? _____

I baptize you with _____ unto repentance but when the Messiah comes He will baptize you with _____ and _____ (3:11).

Jesus also came to John to be baptized and John tried to prevent Him. Why? _____

Jesus' baptism was certainly unique. Since Jesus never sinned His baptism was not *unto repentance* but rather *to fulfill all righteousness* (3:15). In other words, Jesus was baptized because it was part of God's plan. What happened after Jesus was baptized? _____

1. BAPTISM IS AN ACT OF DISCIPLESHIP.

John's baptism was a call to repentance. It required a step of faith. It is easy to claim that one "believes in his/her heart." However, real belief is demonstrated when one steps out and acts upon one's faith (cf. James 2:17).

Go, therefore, and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe everything I have commanded you. And remember, I am with you always, to the end of the age.

—Matthew 28:19-20

This is the Great Commission—Christ's command to His church. The main imperative is ***make disciples***. What three actions are to accompany the making of disciples?

1. _____ 2. _____ 3. _____

Look up the following verses and write down when a person was baptized. In other words, what action immediately preceded their baptism?

Acts 2:41 _____

Acts 8:12 _____

Acts 16:30-34 _____

Acts 18:8 _____

After a person recognizes their sin and places their trust in Jesus Christ, the next step of discipleship is baptism. The early church had no concept of an unbaptized believer. Baptism was the evidence that a person had truly trusted Christ as Savior and Lord.

Based on what you read in Acts, should infants be baptized? ☐ Yes ☐ No

Why or why not? _____

2. BAPTISM IS BY IMMERSION.

The Greek verb, *baptizo*, means "to plunge, dip, immerse." This is the normal meaning of this Greek word both inside and outside of the Bible. In the ancient Greek world, *baptizo* was used to describe ships that had sunk, animals that had drowned, or pieces of cloth that had been immersed in dye. Metaphorically, it was also used of being "overwhelmed" with something.

In what ways do the following verses indicate that baptism was by immersion?

Matthew 3:16 _____

John 3:23 _____

Acts 8:35-39 _____

THINK ABOUT:
Why do you think the outward act of baptism is such a vital confirmation of one's inner faith?

Infant baptism became predominant in the 5th century when baptism was viewed as the way to cleanse "original sin"—the guilt and sin of Adam passed down to us at birth. High infant mortality rates led people to baptize their children as early as possible.

The translators of the King James Version (1611) chose not to translate *baptizo* into English since, as members of the Church of England, they sprinkled infants and did not want to create controversy. Instead they transliterated the word into English, creating a new word, *baptize*.

John's baptism may have been derived from Jewish proselyte baptism. When a Gentile wanted to convert to Judaism, he would be circumcised, instructed in the law, and then dip himself into a pool of water to symbolize the washing away of his Gentile-ness and becoming a Jew. —*Baker Encyclopedia of the Bible*, 258

THINK ABOUT:
If a married person were to refuse to wear a ring as a visible sign of his vows, what could it indicate?

What could a professing believer refusing to be baptized indicate?

New covenant in My blood—The death of Christ on the cross initiated the new covenant promised in the OT (Jeremiah 31:31-34) in which God would forgive sins and write His law on the hearts of His people.

3. BAPTISM IS A PICTURE OF SALVATION.

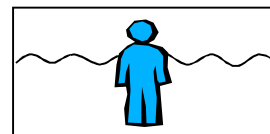
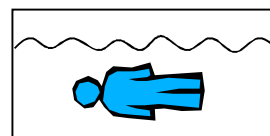
Baptism is intended to be a picture of a greater reality. John the Baptist indicated that his baptism *by water* was only a pointer to a greater baptism *by the Holy Spirit* (Matthew 3:11; 1 Cor. 12:13). So what does baptism picture? What does it symbolize?

- **Purification.** As people were baptized by John, they confessed their sins. Being submerged in water vividly pictured being washed from one's sins (cf. Acts 22:16).
- **Identification.** John's baptism pointed people to Jesus, the coming Messiah. Being immersed in water was a symbol of being immersed into a new way of life. The people in John's day apparently saw baptism as identification with the coming Messiah. [Conversely, Jesus' baptism was His identification with us.]

Read Romans 6:3-5. In this passage, the apostle Paul reveals the symbolic meaning behind the act of baptism.

When we are immersed under the water, we identify with Christ's _____.

When we are raised up from the water, we identify with Christ's _____.



Thus baptism is a picture of our union with Jesus Christ. We are *immersed* into Him. He surrounds us, indwells us, changes us. He also joins us to others who are also in union with Him (other believers). Together we make up the “body of Christ.”

It must be noted that baptism itself does not save. The Bible is clear that salvation is by faith alone (Acts 16:30-31; Rom. 10:9-13; Eph. 2:8-9). Baptism is a symbol of an inner reality. It is like a wedding ring. Wearing a wedding ring does not make one married, it only acts as a visible sign of the commitment that one has already made.

THE ORDINANCE OF COMMUNION

Read 1 Corinthians 11:17-34. Pray and ask God to speak to your heart as you read.

The Context: 1 Corinthians is a letter from the apostle Paul to the church at Corinth. Corinth was an extremely sinful city and the church at Corinth apparently struggled to remain pure. The church suffered from pride, divisions, and immorality. They were even guilty of abusing the Lord's Supper. Paul writes to correct their problems and call them back to the true purpose of this ordinance.

What were some of the problems in the Corinthian church that led Paul to rebuke their practice of the Lord's Supper (11:17-22)? _____

What does the bread represent (11:23-24)? _____

What does the cup represent (11:25)? _____

What do we *proclaim* when we celebrate communion (11:26)? _____

What should a person do before partaking of communion (11:28)? _____

What does Paul warn will happen if one partakes in an *unworthy manner* (11:29-30)? _____

Based on the context of 1 Corinthians 11:17-34, how would you describe partaking of the Lord's Supper in an *unworthy manner*? What would this look like?

1. COMMUNION LOOKS BACKWARD—THE CCROSS OF CHRIST.

Jesus told His disciples to partake of communion *in remembrance of Me*. Communion is a visible symbol of what Jesus did for us on the cross. The broken bread reminds us of His broken body. The pouring of the wine reminds us of the pouring out of His blood.

Remembering what Jesus did on the cross should be a serious occasion. But it is not to be like a funeral dirge. **When the early church met together to *break bread* (probably a reference to the Lord's Supper) what was their attitude (Acts 2:46-47)?**

2. COMMUNION LOOKS AROUND US—THE UNITY OF BELIEVERS.

In Jewish culture to eat together is an indication of close fellowship.

Look up the following verses and fill in the blanks:

- Psalm 41:9. *Even my own familiar friend in whom I trusted, _____, has lifted up his heel against me [i.e., acted as a traitor].* ”
- Matthew 9:11. *When the Pharisees saw it, they said to Jesus' disciples, "Why does your Teacher _____ with tax collectors and sinners?"*
- Revelation 3:20. *Behold, I stand at the door and knock. If anyone hears My voice and opens the door, I will come in to him and _____ and he with me.*

The Lord's Supper was instituted around the Passover meal. During the Passover, the Jews ate together, remembered together and rejoiced together in God's deliverance of the nation from Egypt (Exodus 12:1-28). The same type of **communion** (sharing in common) surrounds the Lord's Supper. We partake together, remembering and rejoicing together in our deliverance from sin through the death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus Christ. Disunity among believers destroys the beauty of the Lord's Supper.

Unworthy manner refers to our attitude not our position. None of us are *worthy*. The issue is partaking *unworthily*, demeaning the Lord's Supper with our flippancy or bitter attitude toward others.

Break bread appears to be a reference to the Lord's Supper. Acts 20:7 says, *On the first day of the week we came together to break bread.* The early church celebrated the Lord's Supper regularly and usually around a meal (Jude 12).

How has partaking of the Lord's Supper benefited you spiritually?

In what ways have you celebrated it that have been particularly meaningful?

The **Passover** was celebrated with others (Ex. 12:4), required the sacrifice of a spotless lamb (12:5), and the blood of the lamb had to be applied for God's judgment to be averted (12:13).

3. COMMUNION LOOKS FORWARD—THE PROMISE OF CHRIST’S RETURN.

Paul says that in partaking of the Lord’s Supper we *proclaim the Lord’s death **until He comes*** (1Corinthians 11:26). On the night in which Jesus instituted the Lord’s Supper, He made a promise to His disciples. **What was Jesus’ promise to His disciples (Matthew 26:29)?**

One of the sweet promises of heaven is that we will eat together with Christ. We will share intimate fellowship with Him. The Lord’s Supper is to fill us with anticipation for this day.

Baptism and communion are the two ordinances of the church. Baptism is the initiatory ordinance as it symbolizes our entrance into the body of Christ. To baptize is to **DIP**—an act of **D**iscipleship by **I**mmersion as a **P**icture of our salvation. Communion is the continuing ordinance of the church as the partaking of the **CUP** reminds us of the **C**ross, our **U**nity, and the **P**romise of communion with Christ (and each other) in heaven.

Additional Resources



Read the following two excerpts from Millard Erickson’s *Christian Theology* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House, 1985). The first excerpt from pages 1097-1104 deals with the meaning of baptism and addresses the question, “Is baptism essential for salvation?” The second excerpt from pages 1115-1127 explains the various viewpoints regarding the Lord’s Supper.

Is baptism a means of regeneration, an essential of salvation? A number of texts seem to support such a position. On closer examination, however, the persuasiveness of this position becomes less telling. In Mark 16:16 we read, *He who believes and is baptized will be saved*; note, however, that the second half of the verse does not mention baptism at all: *but he who does not believe will be condemned*. It is simply absence of belief, not of baptism, which is correlated with condemnation.

...Another verse cited in support of the concept of baptismal regeneration, the idea that baptism is a means of saving grace, is John 3:4: *Unless one is born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of God*. But there is no clear indication that baptism is in view here. We must ask what being *born*

of water would have meant to Nicodemus... [Leon Morris] comments on the suggestion that Jesus is referring to Christian baptism:

The weak point [in this view] is that Nicodemus could not possibly have perceived an allusion to a yet non-existent sacrament. It is difficult to think that Jesus would have spoken in a way that His meaning could not possibly be grasped. His purpose was not to mystify but to enlighten. In any case the whole thrust of the passage is to put the emphasis on the activity of the Spirit, not on any rite of the church.

...A third passage which needs to be taken into account is 1 Peter 3:21: *Baptism, which corresponds to this, now saves you, not as a removal of dirt from the body but as an appeal to God for a clear conscience, through the resurrection of Jesus Christ*. Note that this verse is actually a denial that the rite of baptism has any effect in itself. It

saves only in that it is *an appeal to God*, an act of faith acknowledging dependence upon him. The real basis of our salvation is Christ's resurrection.

Then there are the passages in the Book of Acts where repentance and baptism are linked together. Probably the most crucial is Peter's response on Pentecost to the question, *Brethren, what shall we do?* (Acts 2:37). He replied, *Repent and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins; and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit* (v. 38). The emphasis in the remainder of the narrative, however, is that three thousand received his word—then they were baptized. In Peter's next recorded sermon (3:17-26), the emphasis is upon repentance, conversion, and acceptance of Christ; there is no mention of baptism. ...Chapter four centers upon the cruciality of belief in Jesus; once again there is no mention of baptism (vv. 8-12). And when the Philippian jailor asked, *What must I do to be saved?* (Acts 16:30), Paul answered simply, *Believe in the Lord Jesus, and you will be saved, you and your household* (v. 31). He did not mention baptism. ...Thus, unlike repentance and conversion, baptism is not indispensable to salvation. It seems, rather, that baptism may be an expression or a consequence of conversion.

...Moreover, certain specific difficulties attach to the concept of baptismal regeneration. When all the implications are spelled out, this concept contradicts the principle of salvation by grace, which is so clearly taught in the New Testament. The insistence that baptism is necessary for salvation is something parallel to the insistence of the Judaizers that circumcision was necessary for salvation, a contention which Paul vigorously rejected in Galatians 5:1-12. Further, with the exception of the Great Commission, Jesus did not include the topic of baptism in his preaching and teaching about the kingdom. Indeed, the thief

on the cross was not, and could not have been, baptized. Yet he was assured by Jesus, *Today you will be with me in Paradise*.

What of the view that baptism is a continuation or a supplanting of the Old Testament rite of circumcision as a mark of one's entrance into the covenant? It is significant here that the New Testament tends to depreciate the external act of circumcision. It argues that circumcision is to be replaced, not by another external act (e.g., baptism), but by an internal act of the heart. ...*He is a Jew who is one inwardly, and real circumcision is a matter of the heart, spiritual and not literal. His praise is not from men but from God* (Romans 2:29). Paul is asserting not merely that circumcision has passed, but that the whole framework of which circumcision was a part has been replaced.

...What, then, is the meaning of baptism? To answer this question, we note, first, that there is a strong connection between baptism and our being united with Christ in his death and resurrection (Romans 6:1-11). ...We note, second, that the Book of Acts often ties belief and baptism together. Baptism ordinarily follows upon or virtually coincides with belief. ...Baptism is itself, then, an act of faith and commitment. While faith is possible without baptism (i.e., salvation does not depend upon one's being baptized), baptism is a natural accompaniment and the completion of faith. ...Baptism is a public indication of one's commitment to Christ.

...Baptism is a powerful form of proclamation. It is a setting forth of the truth of what Christ has done; it is a "word in water" testifying to the believer's participation in the death and resurrection of Christ (Romans 6:3-5). It is a symbol rather than merely a sign, for it is a graphic picture of the truth it conveys. There is no inherent connection between a sign and what it represents. It is only by convention, for example, that green traffic lights tell us to go rather than to stop.

By contrast, the sign at a railroad crossing is more than a sign; it is also a symbol, for it is a rough picture of what it is intended to indicate, the crossing of a road and a railroad track. Baptism is a symbol, not a mere sign, for it actually pictures the believer's death and resurrection with Christ. ...[Because] baptism is truly a symbol, and not merely an arbitrary sign, we are not free to change the mode [of immersion].

...We turn next to the question of the proper subjects of baptism. The issue here is whether to hold to infant baptism or believers' baptism. ...One of the most significant considerations is the lack of any positive New Testament indication that infants were baptized. An impressive admission was made in *Baptism and Confirmation Today*, a report of the Joint Committees on Baptism, Confirmation, and Holy Communion of the Church of England:

It is clear that the recipients of Baptism were normally adults and not infants; and it must be admitted that there is no conclusive evidence in the NT for the Baptism of infants. All we can say is that it is possible that the "households" said to have been baptized *may* have included children (Acts 16:15, 33; 1 Cor 1:16). But at any rate it is clear that the *doctrine* of Baptism in the NT is stated in relation to the Baptism of adults, as was also the case (with two or three exceptions) in the writers of the first three centuries.... In every recorded case of Baptism in the NT, the Gospel has been heard and accepted, and the condition of faith has been consciously fulfilled prior to the reception of the Sacrament.

A large number of New Testament scholars now concede this point.

...We note that the case for baptism of infants rests upon either the view that baptism is a means of saving grace or the view that baptism, like Old Testament circumcision, is a sign and seal of entrance into the covenant. Since both of these views were found to be inadequate, we must conclude that infant baptism is untenable. The meaning of baptism requires us to hold to the position of believers' baptism, as does the fact that the

NT nowhere offers a clear case of an individual being baptized before exercising faith.

Roman Catholic View of the Lord's Supper

The official Roman Catholic view on the Lord's Supper was spelled out at the Council of Trent (1545-1563). While many Catholics have now abandoned some of the features of this view, it is still the basis of the faith of large numbers. Let us note its major tenets.

Transubstantiation is the doctrine that as the administering priest consecrates the elements, an actual metaphysical change takes place. The substance of the bread and wine—what they actually are—is changed into Christ's flesh and blood respectively. Note that what is changed is the substance, not the accidents. Thus the bread retains the shape, texture, and taste of bread. A chemical analysis would tell us that it is still bread. But what it essentially is has been changed. The whole of Christ is fully present within each of the particles of the host. All who participate in the Lord's Supper, or the Holy Eucharist as it is termed, literally take the physical body and blood of Christ into themselves.

...A second major tenet of the Catholic view is that the Lord's Supper involves a sacrificial act. In the mass a real sacrifice is again offered by Christ in behalf of the worshipers. It is a sacrifice in the same sense as the crucifixion. It is to be understood as a propitiatory sacrifice satisfying the demands of God.

...A third tenet of the Catholic view is sacerdotalism, the idea that a properly ordained priest must be present to consecrate the host. Without such a priest to officiate, the elements remain merely bread and wine. ...In the traditional administration of the sacrament, the cup was withheld from the laity, being taken only by the clergy. The major reason was the danger that the blood might be spilt.

The Lutheran View of the Lord's Supper

The Lutheran view differs from the Roman Catholic view at many but not all points. [Martin] Luther did not reject *in toto* the traditional view. ...What Luther denied was the Catholic doctrine of transubstantiation. The molecules are not changed into flesh and blood; they remain bread and wine. But the body and blood of Christ are present "in, with, and under" the bread and wine. ...Thinking in terms of one substance interpenetrating another, he used as an analogy an iron bar which is heated in fire. The substance of the iron does not cease to exist when the substance of fire interpenetrates it, heating it to a high temperature.

Luther rejected...the idea that the mass is a sacrifice. Since Christ died and atoned for sin once and for all, and since the believer is justified by faith on the basis of that one-time sacrifice, there is no need for repeated sacrifices.

Luther also rejected sacerdotalism. The presence of Christ's body and blood is not a result of the priest's actions. It is instead a consequence of the power of Jesus Christ.

The Reformed View of the Lord's Supper

...The Reformed view holds that Christ is present in the Lord's Supper, but not physically or bodily. Rather, his presence in the sacrament is spiritual or dynamic. Using the sun as an illustration, [John] Calvin asserted that Christ is present influentially. The sun remains in the heavens, yet its warmth and light are present on earth. So the radiance of the Spirit conveys to us the communion of Christ's flesh and blood. According to Romans 8:9-11, it is by the Spirit and only by the Spirit that Christ dwells in us. The notion that we actually eat Christ's body and drink his blood is absurd. Rather, true communicants are spiritually nourished by partaking of the bread and the wine. The Holy Spirit brings them into closer connection with the person of Christ.

The Baptist View of the Lord's Supper

...The Lord's Supper is essentially a commemoration of Christ's death. ...Jesus is spiritually present everywhere. His presence in the elements is no more intense than his presence elsewhere.

The value of the sacrament, according to this view, lies simply in receiving by faith the benefits of Christ's death. The Lord's Supper is but one of the ways in which we can receive these benefits by faith, for the effect of the Lord's Supper is no different in nature from, say, that of a sermon. Both are types of proclamation. The Lord's Supper differs from sermons only in that it involves a visible means of proclamation. In both cases...there is the absolute essential of faith if there is to be any benefit.

Resolving the Issues

...If we take *This is my body* and *This is my blood* literally an absurdity results. If Jesus meant that the bread and wine were at that moment in the upper room actually his body and his blood, he was asserting that his flesh and blood were in two places simultaneously, since his corporeal form was right there besides the elements. To believe that Jesus was in two places at once is something of a denial of the incarnation, which limited his physical human nature to one location.

...As Jesus spoke the words inaugurating the sacrament of the Lord's Supper, he focused attention on the relationship between individual believers and their Lord. It is noteworthy that on many of the other occasions when he addressed this topic, he used metaphors to characterize himself: *I am the way, the truth, and the life; I am the vine, you are the branches; I am the good shepherd; I am the bread of life*. At the Last Supper he used similar metaphors. ...In keeping with figurative language, we might render Jesus' statements, *This represents [or signifies] my body* and *This represents [or signifies] my blood*.

...But what of the idea that Christ is spiritually present? This view arose from two historical sources. One was the desire of certain theologians to retain something of the traditional belief in the presence of Christ even as they sought to change it. ...Instead of totally rejecting tradition and constructing a completely new understanding, they chose to modify the old belief. The other source of the view that Christ is spiritually present was a disposition toward mysticism. Some believers, having felt a profound experience or encounter with Christ as they observed the Lord's Supper, concluded that Christ must have been spiritually present. The doctrine served as an explanation of the experience.

...It is important to remember that Jesus promised to be with his disciples everywhere and through all time (Matt 28:20; John 14:23; 15:4-7). So he is everywhere present, and yet he has also promised to be with us especially

when we gather as believers (Matt 18:20). The Lord's Supper, as an act of worship, is therefore a particularly fruitful opportunity for meeting with him.

...How, then, should we regard the Lord's Supper? We should look forward to the Lord's Supper as a time of relationship and communion with Christ. We should come to each observance of it with the confidence that we will therein meet with him, for he has promised to meet with us. We should think of the sacrament not so much in terms of Christ's presence as in terms of his promise and the potential for a closer relationship with him. ...The Spirit is capable of making him real in our experience and has promised to do so. The Lord's Supper, then, is a time when we are drawn close to Christ, and thus come to know him better and love him more.

Changed Hearts



What is one truth from this lesson that has impacted your life? Why?

What is one question that you still have that you would like answered?

Have you been baptized as a believer in Jesus Christ? ☐ Yes ☐ No

Baptism is a vital act of discipleship and a public testimony of one's faith in Christ. To refuse to obey Christ and publicly identify with him is an indication of spiritual immaturity or the absence of true faith. If you are interested in baptism, talk to your local church pastor about it.

What if you were baptized as an infant? "If you were baptized as a child, it was no doubt the intent of your parents that you would one day be a follower of Christ. Your baptism as an adult can be viewed as the fulfillment of your parents' wishes. It in no way repudiates the baptism you received as a child (*Participating Membership Manual*, Willow Creek Community Church).

Are you in fellowship with God and with other believers at this moment? ☐ Yes ☐ No

If you are harboring sin or bitterness in your heart, use this opportunity to confess it to the Lord. You may even need to approach another believer for reconciliation. This is the proper attitude to have at all times, not just before celebrating the Lord's Supper.

11

What Role Do Angels Play?

angel (ān'jəl) [Latin, *angelus*, messenger] *an immortal spiritual being attendant upon God.*

When you hear the term “angel” what comes into your mind?

Angels are popular in today’s culture. Walk into almost any Hallmark store and you will find “angel” calendars featuring cute babies with wings and “angel” figurines with halos of flowers pasted on their heads. The TV show, *Touched by an Angel*, once attracted millions of viewers. Many people still long for an angel like Monica (played by Roma Downey on the show) to glow in their presence, declare in a soothing Irish accent—“I’m an angel sent by God,” and bring some divine comfort and insight into the events of their lives.

However, the “angels” of popular culture and the angels of Scripture are often quite different. **Which of the following statements about angels are true and which are false based on the teaching of Scripture?** (Try to answer before looking up verses.)

True or False. *Angels are pleasant little “cherubs” with wings (Matthew 28:2).*

True or False. *Angels never marry and never die (Luke 20:34-36).*

True or False. *We may meet up with an angel unknowingly (Hebrews 13:2).*

True or False. *Angels usually appear as women (Luke 24:4).*

True or False. *Every time a bell rings an angel gets his wings (Jimmy Stewart).*

So what are angels? What do they look like? And what role do they play in our lives? Scripture provides us with answers to these questions.

We believe that God created an innumerable company of sinless, spiritual beings, known as angels; that one, *Lucifer*—highest in rank—sinned through pride, thereby becoming Satan; that a great company of the angels followed him in his moral fall. ...We believe that a great company of angels kept their holy estate and are before the throne of God, from whence they are sent forth as ministering spirits...

—Dallas
Theological
Seminary

Scripture Exploration



Read 2 Kings 6:8-23. Pray and ask God to open the eyes of your heart before you begin.

The Context of the Story: This story probably takes place ~850 BC during Jehoram’s reign [also spelled Joram] over the northern tribes of Israel (852-841 BC). During this time, there were constant skirmishes and raids between the nation of Israel and the nation of Aram (modern-day Syria) to the north. Ben Hadad II was the king of the Arameans. Elisha was a prophet in Israel. Elisha was the successor to the prophet Elijah (1 Kings 19:19).

What stands out to you in this story? Why?

Man of God—the term is used to describe Elisha who served the Lord completely.

THINK ABOUT
Do you think Elisha saw these things all along or did he just know by faith that they were there?

Blindness—Hebrew, *sanverim*, is used only one other time in the OT (Gen 19:11). Its root meaning is “to be dazzled” and it refers to a distortion of sight leading to bewilderment.

The apostle Paul’s primary prayer for the Ephesians in 1:15-18 is that the *eyes of their heart* might be enlightened to know all the spiritual realities that are true for them in Christ.

The term **host** (Hebrew, *tsaba*) is a military term indicating an army organized for war. The description of God as the **Lord of hosts** indicates His power over the angelic armies.

Why was the King of Aram (Syria) intent on capturing Elisha? _____

The king of Aram sends an army into Israel to capture Elisha. The small town of Dothan (about 13 miles north of Israel’s capital city, Samaria) is surrounded during the night and the servant of Elisha wakes up in the morning to the sight of horses, chariots, and soldiers outside the window. The servant speaks to Elisha in a panic—*Oh no, Elisha! What are we going to do?!*

How does Elisha respond to this crisis? What keeps him from panicking? _____

Elisha prays that God would open the servant’s eyes. What does the servant see when God opens his eyes? _____

If you were the servant, what would you be thinking after your eyes were opened? How would your view of the “crisis” change? _____

In contrast to Elisha’s servant, God “blinds” the eyes of the Syrian soldiers and they are led by Elisha right into the capital city of Samaria where the king of Israel has the opportunity to kill them. Elisha, however, instructs the king not to kill them. Rather what does Elisha instruct the king to do? _____

This event sparks a temporary truce between Israel and Aram (6:23) until Aram comes down some time later and sieges Samaria (6:24). Or perhaps the idea behind 6:23 is that this particular band of soldiers no longer takes part in invading Israel.

Based on this story, what do you think it means to have your eyes opened? _____

Pray and ask God to open your eyes to His truth as you continue this study.

PRELIMINARY OBSERVATIONS

The term *angel* (Hebrew, *malak*; Greek, *angelos*) means “messenger.” The Bible also uses other terms in reference to angels. They are called “sons of God” (Job 1:6), “holy ones” (Psalm 89:5-7), “watchers” (Daniel 4:13), “mighty ones” (Psalm 29:1), “principalities and powers” (Colossians 1:16) and “the heavenly hosts” (Luke 2:13).

There also appears to be two classifications of angels. Some are called *cherubim* (singular, *cherub*) who seem to serve God in specific tasks while others are called *seraphim* (singular, *seraph*) who serve God in praise (mentioned only in Isaiah 6:2-3).

Angels are created beings (Psalm 148:2,5). Their creation apparently preceded Genesis 1 since they are described as singing when God created the earth (Job 38:4-7). The number of angels created by God is innumerable (Hebrews 12:22). Angels are also described as spirits (Hebrews 1:14) meaning that they do not possess physical bodies. Using the term **SPIRIT** we can learn a lot about the role of angels.

1. ANGELS ARE SERVING SPIRITS.

Read Psalm 103:20-21. These verses call for the angels to praise God (cf. 148:2).

What terms are used to describe angels in these verses? _____

What do angels do according to these verses? What is their role in relation to God? _____

Throughout the Bible angels are seen carrying out God's will. They deliver God's messages to people (Luke 1:11-19). They help execute God's judgments (Revelation 16:1). They surround the throne and sing praises to God (Revelation 5:11-12).

Angels also have a special serving role in relationship to mankind. According to Hebrews 1:14 who are angels sent forth to minister to specifically?

☐ Unbelievers ☐ Believers ☐ Pastors ☐ World leaders

2. ANGELS ARE POWERFUL BEINGS.

To put it plainly—angels are not wimps. They are the furthest thing away from the delightful, cute “angels” that decorate greeting card stores. They are described as God's army (i.e., hosts) and they possess a power far above humanity (cf. 2 Peter 2:11).

Look up the following verses and write down the reaction that a person has when their eyes are opened and they are able to see an angel in all its glory:

Luke 2:9 _____

Matthew 28:1-4 _____

As members of God's army, angels appear to be organized in ranks. Michael (meaning *Who is like God?*) is described as the *archangel* and is the leader of the angelic forces (Daniel 10:13; Jude 9; Revelation 12:7-8). The book of Daniel also seems to imply that angels are assigned to certain nations (cf. 10:13). However, Scripture provides us with little information on angelic organization so it is not wise to speculate beyond this.

3. ANGELS ARE INVOLVED IN OUR LIVES.

Write Psalm 91:11 _____

Since angels are spirits it is probably invalid to classify them as either “male” or “female” since gender is a reflection of God's creation of mankind “in His image” and tied to physical attributes. However, in Scripture, when angels do take on bodily form (an ability they apparently have), they appear as men.

THINK ABOUT:
Have you ever stopped to consider that there are angels right now appointed to help you? How would knowing this change your perspective during the day?

Though angels are powerful beings sent to serve us, they should not be worshiped nor be the focus of all our thinking (cf. Col. 2:18; Rev. 19:10).

Galatians 1:8 also warns us about accepting the message of an angel over the authority of the revealed Word of God (cf. 1 Kings 13:18).

There is some evidence in the Bible that we each have a **guardian angel** (Matt. 18:10; Acts 12:15) but it is not conclusive. It is certain that angels watch over us. But as one theologian put it: *To use an athletic analogy, the angels may be playing zone rather than man-on-man defense.*
—W. Grudem

Isaiah 14 is specifically addressed to the king of Babylon. However, Babylon is often symbolic of the kingdom opposed to God (cf. Rev. 17:5) so part of the judgment is against the spiritual king of Babylon—Satan. (Ezekiel 28:11-19 may also refer to Satan.)

The term **Devil** is from a Greek word, *diabollos*, meaning “one who accuses, slanders, or maligns.” Satan constantly speaks lies and attacks God and His people.

Based on this, what does it mean to act like the devil?

God’s angels are commissioned to watch over believers. They protect us from unseen danger (Psalm 91:12). They help deliver us from difficulty (Daniel 6:22; Acts 12:7-11). They minister to us when we are weak (1 Kings 19:4-6; Matthew 4:11). They may even be the ones who carry us to heaven when we die (Luke 16:22).

Angels not only watch over us; they also watch us. Paul described the adventures of his life as a *spectacle* to the angels (1 Cor. 4:9). He even encourages women to show respect toward their husbands in church *because of the angels* who are apparently observing the conduct of believers with great interest (1 Cor. 11:10; cf. 1 Peter 1:10-12).

According to Luke 15:10, what fills angels with incredible joy and excitement?

4. BUT.... SOME ANGELS REBELLED AGAINST GOD.

Not all angels are good and concerned for our welfare. When angels were created, they, like us, were given the free will to decide whether to obey God or not (cf. 2 Peter 2:4). Though we do not know all the details, many of the angels decided to rebel against God. The leader of this angelic rebellion was **Satan** (Hebrew, *adversary*).

Read Isaiah 14:12-15. These verses describe Satan’s rebellion and God’s judgment.

How is Satan described (14:12)? _____

Complete the five statements that Satan made in his heart:

- *I will* _____ (13a).
- *I will* _____ (13b).
- *I will* _____ (13c).
- *I will* _____ (14a).
- *I will* _____ (14b).

Based on these statements, what do you think led to Satan’s downfall? How would you describe his sin? _____

Satan’s rebellion brought sin into the universe. His rebellion led many angels into sin (possibly a third, Rev. 12:3-4) and eventually infected the entire human race (Gen. 3).

5. SATAN AND HIS DEMONS INTERFERE WITH GOD’S PLAN.

As the Adversary, Satan works against God’s plan. Since he is a creature, he has limited power and cannot be in all places at all places. Thus he enlists his demons to help him in his work against God and His people.

What are some of the weapons Satan uses against God and mankind?

John 8:43-44 _____

2 Corinthians 4:3-4 _____
1 John 2:14b-16 _____

Satan, as Lucifer (son of the morning), is able to transform himself into *an angel of light* to deceive us into believing that which sounds good but is not true (2 Cor. 11:14). Against a holy, true, and loving God, he uses the weapons of sin, deception, and lust.

6. SATAN AND HIS DEMONS HAVE BEEN TRIUMPHED OVER IN CHRIST.

And having disarmed the powers and authorities, He [Christ] made a public spectacle of them, triumphing over them by the cross. (Colossians 2:15)

Christ's death and resurrection have disarmed Satan and his demons. Their power has been broken. They are snakes without venom—able to strike but unable to win.

Read Hebrews 2:14-15. What two things did Jesus accomplish through His death?

2:14 _____

2:15 _____

Jesus Christ came *to destroy the works of the devil* (1 John 3:8). Because of Christ, we have nothing to fear. Satan is a defeated foe. He has no power over us. However, he still works day and night to get us off track, to tempt us into sin, or to deceive us with lies.

Read 1 Peter 5:8-9. How should we live in light of Satan's desire to attack us?

The angelic world is an unseen reality all around us. Angels are **S**erving spirits and **P**owerful beings who are **I**nvolvement in our lives. There are also fallen angels (demons) who **R**ebelled against God and **I**nterfere with His work but we do not have to fear them because Jesus Christ has **T**riumphed over them at the cross.

THINK ABOUT:
Eph. 4:26-27 says anger in our hearts can open a door for Satan. Why do you think this is so?

Satan is a creature with limited power. He is not equal with God nor is he able to be in more than one place at a time. Hence we are not usually attacked by Satan directly but indirectly through demons or the world system.

There are two equal and opposite errors into which our race can fall about the devils. One is to disbelieve their existence. The other is to believe, and feel an excessive, unhealthy interest in them.
—C.S. Lewis

Additional Resources



Read the following excerpt from Neil Anderson's book *The Bondage Breaker* (Eugene, OR: Harvest House, 1993), pages 77-86.

Some Christians are a little paranoid about evil powers, suspecting that demons lurk around every corner just waiting to possess them. That's an unfounded fear. Our relationship to demonic powers in the spiritual realm is a lot like our relationship to germs in the physical realm. We know that

germs are all around us: in the air, in the water, in our food, in other people, even in us. But do you live in constant fear of catching some disease? No—unless you're a hypochondriac! You know enough about wellness to eat the right foods, get enough rest, and keep yourself and your possessions clean. If

you happen to catch a cold, you simply deal with it and go on with your life.

It's the same in the spiritual realm. Demons are like little invisible germs looking for someone to infect. We are never told in Scripture to be afraid of them. You just need to be aware of their reality and commit yourself to live a righteous life in spite of them. Should you come under attack, deal with it and go on with life. Remember: The only thing big about a demon is its mouth. Demons are habitual liars. In Jesus Christ the Truth, you are equipped with all the authority and protection you need to deal with anything they throw at you.

The Christian's Magna Carta of protection is Ephesians 6:10-18. The first thing you should see in this passage about receiving God's protection is that our role is not passive. God requires us to be active participants in the spiritual defense that He has provided for us. Notice how often we are commanded to take an active role:

*Finally, **be strong** in the Lord and in the strength of His might. **Put on** the full armor of God, that you may **be able to stand firm** against the schemes of the devil. For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the powers, against the world forces of this darkness, against the spiritual forces of wickedness in the heavenly places. Therefore, **take up** the full armor of God, that you may **be able to resist** in the evil day, and having done everything, to **stand firm** (vs. 10-13).*

You may be wondering, "If my position in Christ is secure and my protection is found in Him, why do I have to get actively involved? Can't I just rest in Him and let Him protect me?" That's like a soldier saying, "Our country is a major military power. We have the most advanced tanks, planes, missiles, and ships in the world. Why should I bother with wearing a helmet, standing guard, or learning how to shoot a gun? It's

much more comfortable to stay in camp while the tanks and planes fight the war." When the enemy troops infiltrate, guess who will be one of the first soldiers to get picked off!

God, our "commanding officer," has provided everything we need to secure victory over the evil forces of darkness. But He says, "I've prepared a winning strategy and designed effective weapons. But if you don't do your part by staying on active duty, you're likely to become a casualty." In her classic book *War on the Saints*, Jessie Penn-Lewis stated: "The chief condition for the working of evil spirits in a human being, apart from sin, is passivity, in exact opposition to the condition which God requires from His children for His working in them." You can't expect God to protect you from demonic influences if you don't take an active part in His prepared strategy.

DRESSED FOR SUCCESS

A primary element in our protection is the armor that God has provided for us and instructed us to put on. Paul wrote:

Stand firm therefore, having girded your loins with truth, and having put on the breastplate of righteousness, and having shod your feet with the preparation of the gospel of peace; in addition to all, taking up the shield of faith with which you will be able to extinguish all the flaming missiles of the evil one. And take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God (Ephesians 6:14-17).

When we put on the armor of God we are really putting on Christ (Romans 13:12-14). And when we put on Christ we take ourselves out of the realm of the flesh, where we are vulnerable to attack, and we place ourselves within the dominion of Christ, where the evil one cannot touch us. Satan has nothing in Christ (John 14:30), and to the extent that we put on Christ, the evil one cannot touch us (1John 5:18). He can only touch that which is

on his own level. That's why we are commanded, *Make no provision for the flesh* (Romans 13:14), meaning "Don't live on Satan's level."

Armor You Have Already Put On

It would appear from the verb tenses in Ephesians 6:14-15 that three of the pieces of armor—belt, breastplate, and shoes—are already on you: *having girded...*, *having put on...*, *having shod...* These pieces of armor represent the elements of your protection made possible when you receive Jesus Christ and in which you are commanded to stand firm. The Greek tense of *having* signifies that the action it refers to was completed before we were commanded to stand firm. That's the logical way a soldier would prepare for action: He would put on his belt, breastplate, and shoes before attempting to stand firm. Likewise, we are to put on the full armor of God after having already put on Christ.

The belt of truth. Jesus said, *I am the truth* (John 14:6). And because Christ is in you, the truth is in you. However, continuing to choose truth is not always easy. Since Satan's primary weapon is the lie, your belt of truth (which holds the other pieces of body armor in place) is continually being attacked. If he can disable you in the area of truth, you become an easy target for his other attacks.

You stand firm in the truth by relating everything you do to the truth of God's Word. If a thought comes to mind which is not in harmony with God's truth, dismiss it. If an opportunity comes along to say or do something which compromises or conflicts with truth, avoid it. Adopt a simple rule of behavior: If it's the truth, I'm in; if it's not the truth, count me out.

When you learn to live in the truth on a daily basis, you will grow to love the truth because you have nothing to hide. You never have to cover up to God or anyone else; everything you do is in the light. Furthermore, when you live in the truth you dislodge

the lies of Satan, the father of lies (John 8:44). Remember that if Satan can deceive you into believing a lie, he can control your life in that area. Jesus prayed, *I do not ask Thee to take them out of the world, but to keep them from the evil one.* How? *Sanctify them in the truth; Thy Word is truth* (17:15, 17). You will only dislodge Satan's lies in the light of God's revelation, and not by human rationalization.

The breastplate of righteousness. When you put on Christ at salvation you are justified before our holy God. It's not *your* righteousness but Christ's (1 Corinthians 1:30; Philippians 3:8,9). So when Satan aims an arrow at you by saying, "You're not good enough to be a Christian," you can respond with Paul, *Who will bring a charge against God's elect? God is the one who justifies* (Romans 8:33). Your righteousness in Christ is your protection against Satan's accusations about your worth to a holy God.

Even though we rejoice in our position of righteousness in Christ, we are well aware of our deeds of unrighteousness when we think, say, or do something apart from God. We are saints who occasionally sin. Standing firm in our righteousness involves understanding and applying the principle of confession.

God's remedy for sin is stated in 1 John 1:9: *If we confess our sins, He is faithful and righteous to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.* Confession is different from saying "I'm sorry" or asking forgiveness. To confess (*homologeō*) means to acknowledge or to agree. Suppose a father catches his son throwing a rock at a car. Dad says, "You threw a rock at a car, and that was wrong." If the boy responds, "I'm sorry, Dad," has he confessed? Not really. He may also say, "Please forgive me, Dad," but has he actually confessed yet? No. He hasn't confessed until he agrees with his dad, "I threw a rock at a car; I was wrong."

When you sin you may feel sorry, but feeling sorry or even telling God you're sorry isn't confession. You confess your sin when

you say what God says about it: “I entertained a lustful thought, and that’s a sin”; “I treated my spouse unkindly this morning, and that was wrong”; “pride motivated me to seek that board position, and pride doesn’t belong in my life.”

Satan will make confession as difficult for you as he can. He will try to convince you that it’s too late for confession, that God has already erased your name out of the book of life. That’s another one of his big lies. You’re in Christ; you’re already forgiven. You are the righteousness of God in Christ (2 Cor. 5:21), and He will never leave you. Your relationship with God and your eternal destiny are not at stake when you sin, but your daily victory is. Your confession of sin clears the way for the fruitful expression of righteousness in your daily life. We should be like Paul, who said, *I also do my best to maintain always a blameless conscience both before God and before men* (Acts 24:16).

The shoes of peace. When you receive Christ you are united with the Prince of Peace. You have positional peace with God right now (Romans 5:1), but the peace of Christ must also rule in your heart, and that is possible only when you let the Word of Christ richly dwell in you (Colossians 3:15-16).

The shoes of peace become protection against the divisive schemes of the devil when you act as a peacemaker among believers (Romans 14:19). Peacemakers bring people together by promoting fellowship and reconciliation. ...Preserve the unity of the Spirit by taking the initiative to be the peacemaker in your relationships (Matt. 5:9; Eph. 4:3). We have the promise that *the God of peace will soon crush Satan under your feet* (Romans 16:20).

The Rest of the Wardrobe

Paul mentions three more pieces of armor that we must take up to protect ourselves from Satan’s attack: the shield of faith, the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the

Spirit, which is the Word of God. The first three are established by our position in Christ; the last three help us continue to win the battle.

The shield of faith. Contrary to popular perception, there is nothing mystical about faith. Biblical faith is simply what you believe about God and His Word. The more you know about God and His Word, the more faith you will have. The less you know, the smaller your shield will be and the easier it will be for one of Satan’s fiery darts to reach its target. If you want your shield of faith to grow large and protective, your knowledge of God and His Word must increase (Romans 10:17).

These flaming missiles from Satan are nothing more than smoldering lies, burning accusations, and fiery temptations bombarding our minds. When a deceptive thought, accusation, or temptation enters your mind, meet it head-on with what you know to be true.... How did Jesus deflect the missiles of Satan’s temptation? By shielding Himself with statements from the Word of God. Every time you memorize a Bible verse, listen to a sermon, or participate in a Bible study, you increase your knowledge of God and enlarge your shield of faith.

The helmet of salvation. Should your shield of faith be a little leaky and your daily victory elusive, be confident that the helmet of salvation guarantees your eternal victory. In the metaphor of armor, the helmet also secures coverage for the most critical part of your anatomy: your mind, where spiritual battles are either won or lost. As you struggle with the world, the flesh, and the devil on a daily basis, stand firm knowing that your salvation does not come and go with your success or failure in spiritual battle; your salvation is your eternal possession. You are a child of God, and nothing can separate you from the love of Christ (Romans 8:35).

People experiencing spiritual conflict tend to question their salvation or doubt their

identity in Christ. Satan may disrupt your daily victory, but he can do nothing to disrupt your position in Christ. However, if he can get you to believe that you are not in Christ, you will live as though you are not in Christ, even though you are secure in Him.

The Christian warrior wears the helmet of salvation in the sense that he is the receiver and possessor of deliverance, clothed and armed in the victory of his Head, Jesus Christ. Satan is the ruler of this world, and the whole world is in his power (John 12:31; 1 John 5:19). Therefore, we are still in his territory as long as we are present in our physical bodies. But since we are joined to the Lord Jesus Christ, the devil has no legitimate claim on us, for Christ has *delivered us from the domain of darkness, and transferred us to the kingdom of His beloved Son* (Colossians 1:13). The helmet of our position in Christ assures us of ultimate victory over Satan.

The sword of the Spirit. The Word of God is the only offensive weapon mentioned in the list of armor. Since Paul used *rhema* instead of *logos* for "word" in Eph. 6:17, I believe Paul is referring to the spoken Word of God. ...We are to defend ourselves against the evil one by speaking aloud God's truth.

Why is it so important to speak God's Word in addition to believing it and thinking it? Because Satan is a created being, and he doesn't perfectly know what you're thinking. By observing you he can pretty well tell what you are thinking, just as any student of human behavior can. But he doesn't know what you're going to do before you do it. ...He will know whether you buy his lie by how you behave.

In this book I am attempting to influence your mind through the words in this book. But I can't read your thoughts. Similarly, Satan can try to influence you by planting thoughts in your head, but he can't read your thoughts. If you're going to resist Satan, you must do so outwardly so he can understand you and be put to flight.

The two most common misconceptions about Satan are that he can read your mind and that he knows the future. Every occultic practice claims to know the mind (or influence it) or predict the future. But only God knows the thoughts and intents of your mind, and only He knows the future. Never ascribe the divine attributes of God to Satan.

You can communicate with God in your mind and spirit because He knows the thoughts and intents of your heart (Hebrews 4:12). Your unspoken communion with God is your private sanctuary; Satan cannot eavesdrop on you. But by the same token, if you only tell Satan to leave with your thoughts, he won't leave because he can't hear you. *You must defeat Satan by speaking out.* The good news is that most attacks occur at night or when you are alone, so resisting Satan aloud seldom results in you having to explain to other people a vocal command instructing Satan to leave. However, there may be times when you will need to take a public stand against the enemy, which may include confessing with your mouth that Jesus is Lord (Romans 10:9).

Fear has never been a major issue in my life, but one night I woke up absolutely terrified for no apparent reason. It was a fear that made my skin crawl. ...Without lifting my head from the pillow, I applied the two-step remedy suggested by James: *Submit therefore to God. Resist the devil and he will flee from you* (4:7). In the sanctuary of my heart, out of Satan's earshot, I submitted to God by praying, "Lord, I acknowledge Your sovereign grace over my life right now. You are my God." Then I resisted Satan with one spoken word—Jesus—and the fear was instantly and totally gone. I went back to sleep in peace.

...Physical strength has nothing to do with success in spiritual warfare (2 Corinthians 10:4); it is the Lord's strength which sends evil spirits running for cover. The power is in the spoken Word.

Changed Hearts



What is one truth from this lesson that has impacted your life? Why?

What is one question that you still have that you would like answered?

Read Revelation 12:7-12. These verses describe a war in heaven. This may echo back to Satan's original rebellion or be a glimpse into a future conflict. Before reading, stop right now and say a short prayer to God asking Him to speak to your heart and open your eyes to His truth.

What are the different designations given to Satan (12:9)? _____

What two activities occupy most of Satan's time (12:9-10)? _____

List the three ways in which believers are able to defeat Satan and his demons (12:11).

1. By _____
2. By _____
3. By _____

Have you trusted in Jesus Christ as your personal Savior? ☐ Yes ☐ No

If so, then lift up a prayer to God thanking Him that in Christ you are forgiven, you are freed from condemnation, and you possess power to resist the evil one.

Are you regularly speaking God's Word in prayer and praise? ☐ Yes ☐ No

Speaking God's truth defeats the father of lies. That is why it is imperative to fill your mind with God's Word, to meditate on it, and to memorize it.

Do you at times struggle with fear in your life, specifically fear of death? ☐ Yes ☐ No

Fear is a major weapon of Satan. Since he is devoid of power to destroy you, he works at intimidating you. He is "all bark and no bite" so to speak. Faith in God helps us to defeat fear.

Write out 2 Timothy 1:7. Say it out loud several times until you have it memorized.

12

Where Are We Headed?

prophecy (prŏf'ī-sē) 1) a prediction 2) the inspired utterance of a prophet, held to be a declaration of divine will.

As humans, we have a keen interest in the future. Why? It is uncertain. It is out of our control. And it affects us! Perhaps the angst we feel over the uncertainty of the future explains why we are so eager to listen to predictions. Weather forecasts. Stock futures. Sports predictions. Psychic readings. Political polling. Horoscopes. Tabloid prophecy. All of these things testify to our hunger for information about future events.

Unfortunately, most of our predictions do not pan out. On a small scale, how many people pick the correct Super Bowl teams before the football season starts? On a larger scale, who can predict what our world will really be like in 25 years?

In the mid-1970's several top psychics were asked to predict what life would be like in the year 2000. Here are some of their predictions:

- Gas masks will be necessary in major cities. There will be sterilization of all families with two children to curb global population. —Kabrina Kinkade
- There will be underground living, mostly in domes. No individual rights, no free schools. People will be controlled by thought and forms of telepathy. We will have contact with UFO's and travel back and forth from Saturn and Mars. —Tenny Hale
- UFO's will give us knowledge to harness the sun's energy thereby saving the world's energy crisis. They will also give us "sun pills" to nourish ourselves. —Jeanne Dixon

The Bible also makes predictions about the future. But unlike psychics, it holds forth a standard of 100% accuracy (cf. Deut. 18:22). We can be more certain of God's Word than of the rising of the sun in the morning. Jesus said, *I tell you the truth, until heaven and earth disappear, not the smallest letter, not the least stroke of a pen, will by any means disappear from the Law until everything is accomplished* (Matthew 5:18).

Match the prophecies in the Old Testament with their fulfillment in Jesus Christ.

- | | |
|----------------------|---|
| _____ Psalm 22:16-18 | A. Messiah would be rejected and killed for mankind's sins and then He would live again and be exalted. |
| _____ Isaiah 7:14 | B. Messiah would be crucified and His garments would be divided in front of Him. |
| _____ Isaiah 53:7-12 | C. Messiah would be born in the small town of Bethlehem. |
| _____ Micah 5:2 | D. Messiah would be born of a young virgin girl. |

There are approximately 1000 prophecies in the Bible—not only relating to the Messiah but also to specific nations and world events. Roughly half of them have already been literally fulfilled. Because of the accuracy and authenticity of Scripture, we can be certain that the rest will also be fulfilled.

Let us take a brief tour of what the Scripture says will happen in the future.

Westminster Confession of Faith

Of the State of Man after Death. The bodies of men, after death, return to dust...but their souls (which neither die nor sleep), having an immortal subsistence, immediately return to God who gave them. The souls of the righteous, being then made perfect in holiness, are received into the highest heavens, where they behold the face of God in light and glory, waiting for the full redemption of their bodies; and the souls of the wicked are cast into hell, where they remain in torments and utter darkness, reserved to the judgment of the great day. Besides these two places for souls separated from their bodies, the Scripture acknowledges none.

Scripture Exploration



Sir Edward Denny, a 19th century Bible teacher, called Daniel 9 “**the backbone of prophecy.**”

The four major world empires in history are Babylon (605-539 BC), Medo-Persia (539-331 BC), Greece (331-63 BC) and Rome (63 BC – AD 476). Daniel 2 & 7 predict each of these empires along with a fifth yet to come.

The prophecy of Jeremiah that Daniel reads is Jer. 29:10-11 (or 25:11-12) which says Israel will serve in Babylon for 70 years.

Week—Hebrew, word, *sabuim*, meaning “unit of seven.” Thus literally there are *seventy units of seven* determined for God’s people. The context indicates that years are in view. And prophecy seems to use *lunar years* which are 360 days (cf. Rev. 11:2-3).

Read Daniel 9:1-27. Pray and ask God to speak to your heart before you begin.

The Context of the Story: This story takes place in 538 BC. In 605 BC, the nation of Judah was taken into captivity by the nation of Babylon (modern-day Iraq). Daniel was taken captive at this time. Since he was a young boy with promise, the king of Babylon brought him into his court and trained him as a Babylonian. Daniel remained faithful to the Lord while rising in prominence in the Babylonian government. In 539 BC, Babylon was defeated by the Medo-Persian empire. Daniel served in the Persian government as well but he longed for the day when his people would return to the land of Palestine. His prayer in Daniel 9:1-19 reflects this deep desire.

Daniel is reading God’s Word to the prophet Jeremiah when he is prompted to pray for his nation (v. 2). His prayer in 9:3-19 is one of the most powerful prayers in Scripture. It is a prayer of humility and passion. What actions (verbs) are associated with Daniel’s prayer (9:3-4, 20)? _____

What happens while Daniel is praying (9:21-23)? _____

The prophecy revealed to Daniel in 9:24-27 is one of the most remarkable in all of Scripture. There are different interpretations of the details of the prophecy but, overall, it is a fascinating glimpse into the accuracy of biblical prophecy.

How much time does the prophecy deal with (9:24a)? _____

Who is the prophecy for (9:24b)? _____

What six things will be accomplished by the completion of the prophecy (9:24c)?

1. _____ 4. _____
2. _____ 5. _____
3. _____ 6. _____

Verse 25 talks about the first 69 weeks (7 + 62). Interpreting a *week* as a set of seven lunar years (360 days), this speaks of a time frame of 483 years or 173,880 days.

What event marks the start of this 483 years? _____

What event marks the end of this 483 years? _____

If you start the prophetic clock with the historical decree of the Persian ruler, Artaxerxes, to rebuild Jerusalem (444 BC; cf. Nehemiah 2:1-8) and end it 173,880 days later you end up in the year AD 33 which some theologians believe is the exact time that Jesus rode into Jerusalem and was hailed as the Messiah (Matthew 21:1-11). Amazingly, the time of the Messiah was predicted over 500 years in advance!

What will happen to the Messiah when He presents himself to Israel (9:26)? _____

After Israel rejects the Messiah (Jesus), the prophecy says that the *people of the prince who is to come* will destroy the city (Jerusalem) and the sanctuary (temple). In AD 70, the Roman general Titus destroyed Jerusalem and the temple and the Jews were scattered among the nations of the earth. Hence *the prince who is to come* is not the Messiah but another prince. Many theologians believe this prince is the Anti-Christ who will gain leadership over a revived Roman empire (i.e., a union of countries encompassing the area of the old Roman empire, mainly Europe and the Middle East).

What two things will this “false prince” do (9:27)? _____

The last week, the 70th week, is a period of seven years. It is a time when God will once again be working through the nation of Israel. Evidently the prophetic clock stops at 69 weeks when the Messiah comes. Before the 70th week begins, the Messiah is cut off, Jerusalem is destroyed, and there is an unspecified amount of time until a future prince signs a seven-year treaty with Israel. A treaty he will break after three and a half years.

Before continuing this study, consider some of the amazing aspects of this prophecy:

- It predicts that a command would be given to rebuild Jerusalem.
- It predicts the exact time frame in which the Messiah would come.
- It predicts that the Messiah would be killed.
- It predicts that Jerusalem and the temple will be rebuilt and then destroyed again.
- It predicts a future re-gathering of the nation of Israel since a future prince will confirm a treaty with them.

All of these things were unknown future events in 538 BC. And to date all have come to pass. The last one—a re-gathering of Israel as a nation—did not occur until 1948.

PRELIMINARY ISSUES

There are three major approaches to biblical prophecy. The dividing line between the three views is primarily over 1) how to interpret the OT prophecies concerning a future kingdom on earth ruled by Messiah from Jerusalem (e.g., Isaiah 2:1-4; Micah 4:1-8) and 2) the NT reference to the 1000-year reign of Jesus Christ (millennium) mentioned in Revelation 20:1-6. The following chart summarizes the three major views:

	Meaning	OT Prophecies	Book of Revelation
A-Millennialism	No millennium. It is merely symbolic.	Fulfilled spiritually by Christ and the church.	Symbolic of conflict between good and evil.
Post-Millennialism	Christ will return <i>after</i> the millennium.	Fulfilled “literally” by Christ and the church.	Symbolic of church’s triumph over evil.
Pre-Millennialism	Christ will return <i>before</i> the millennium.	Fulfilled literally by Christ and Israel.	Literal prophecy of future events.

Cut off—
Hebrew, *karat*, meaning “to cut off, destroy, punish with death.”

Some interpret the *prince who is to come* as the Messiah but this seems odd in the context where the Messiah has already come and has been “cut off.”

Jesus mentions the **abomination of desolation** (apparently the Anti-Christ’s demand for worship in the Jewish temple) as the start of the great tribulation (cf. Matt. 24:15).

Israel as a nation ceased to exist in AD 70. It came back together in 1948. God says that in the last days that Jerusalem will be a “very heavy stone for all peoples” (Zech. 12:3). Do you see this happening in today’s world?

Post-millennialism was popular before World War I when people thought the world was getting better and better.

The early church (AD 100-300) held to **pre-millennialism**. A-millennialism became the dominant view after AD 300 when the church became the official religion of the Roman empire.

Among pre-millennialists there are three views on the timing of the rapture. Some believe it will come before the tribulation; others at the midpoint; and others believe it will come at the end right before Christ comes back to earth.

Mystery— Something hidden which has now been revealed. The doctrine of the *rapture* was an unknown truth that Paul revealed.

Throughout history people have tried to identify the Anti-Christ. Don't! God says he will be revealed at the proper time.

There are many aspects of biblical prophecy that are hard to understand. But, if one takes the pre-millennial approach, Daniel's prophecy gives us an outline for future events. As Paul Harvey would say, here is the **REST** of the story.

1. THE RAPTURE OF THE CHURCH.

Daniel predicts a future seven-year period in which God will work through the Jewish people. Since the church is a distinct entity from Israel, many believe that the church will be "snatched away" (Latin, *rapere*, hence rapture) before this seven-year period begins.

Read 1 Thessalonians 4:13-18. The believers at Thessalonica were waiting for Christ to come back to establish His kingdom on earth. While they were waiting some of their friends and family died. This caused them to grow concerned that those who had died would miss out on this future kingdom. Paul writes to correct this misunderstanding.

There are four distinct events mentioned in 4:16-17. Complete the sentences below briefly describing each event that will take place at the rapture.

1. *The Lord Himself* _____.
2. *The dead in Christ* _____.
3. *We who are alive* _____.
4. *And thus we* _____.

In other words, the Bible teaches that, at some point in the future, believers living on earth will be instantly transported to heaven and the bodies of believers who have died will be resurrected and reunited with their spirits which abide in heaven. Wild thought, huh? And difficult to grasp. Paul tries to explain it further in 1 Corinthians 15:35-58.

Read 1 Corinthians 15:51-58. What does Paul say is a *mystery* (15:51)? _____

How fast will this transformation take place (15:52)? _____

What will be defeated when this transformation takes place (15:54)? _____

How should we live in light of this truth (15:58)? _____

One day we will have *glorified bodies*—bodies like the resurrected body of Jesus Christ. Bodies unaffected by disease, age, and death. Bodies untainted by the ravages of sin.

2. THE EMERGENCE OF THE ANTI-CHRIST.

The seven-year time period that Daniel predicts begins with a treaty signed between Israel and the *prince who is to come*. This prince appears to be a false prince. The NT identifies him as the Anti-Christ. He will promise peace to Israel and to the world but will fail to deliver. Instead, he will eventually exalt himself and demand worship.

Read 2 Thessalonians 2:3-10. This passage describes the coming Anti-Christ.

What are the different titles used to describe this coming leader (2:3, 8)? _____

What will he do (2:4)? _____

How will he deceive people (2:9)? _____

Revelation 4-18 deals with this seven-year time period in great detail. However, the symbolic language of the book of Revelation makes much of it difficult to understand. What appears to be certain is that a seven-year treaty with Israel will be broken at the mid-point (3 ½ years) and severe persecution of the Jewish nation will ensue. Natural disasters will also occur on the earth. Jesus described the time as follows: *There will be a great tribulation such as has not been since the beginning of the world until this time, no, nor ever shall be* (Matt. 24:21). Hence this time is often called the Tribulation.

3. THE SECOND COMING OF CHRIST.

Read Revelation 19:11-16. These verses describe the second coming of Christ. This occurs at the end of the seven-year tribulation. The nations have gathered together to make war near the city of Megiddo (Revelation 16:12-16). In the midst of the war, Jesus Christ descends from heaven.

What titles are given to Jesus in this passage? _____

What two things does Jesus come to do (19:11)? _____

Jesus came the first time as the **Lamb of God** to demonstrate God's love and to die for man's sins. He comes the second time as the **Lion of Judah** to demonstrate God's justice and to judge those who have continually rejected His offer of grace. Once the wicked are removed, Jesus fulfills OT prophecy by ruling the earth on David's throne in Jerusalem for 1000 years (e.g., Isaiah 11; Micah 4; Amos 9; Zech. 12-14; Rev. 20:6).

Read Isaiah 2:1-4. What thoughts or phrases strike you as you read this prophecy?

For the first time since the Garden of Eden there will be peace on earth. The animal kingdom will be tamed (Isaiah 11:6-8). Believers will rule with Christ in resurrected bodies (Rev. 20:6). And those who survived the Tribulation and were faithful to Christ will live extended lives and repopulate the earth (Isaiah 65:20-25).

4. THE GREAT WHITE THRONE JUDGMENT OF GOD.

Read Revelation 20:11-15. This passage records what will happen after the 1000-year reign of Christ ends and Satan and his angels are condemned forever (cf. 20:7-10).

The dead (without Christ) are judged according to _____ (20:13).

During the tribulation 144,000 Jews will be "sealed" (protected) and will spread the gospel throughout the earth. Thus many will come to faith during this time and most will be martyred for their faith (cf. Revelation 7).

In 2 Samuel 7 God promised that a son of David would rule forever. Isaiah 9:6-7 repeats this promise. Jesus is proclaimed as the Son of David who will rule forever (cf. Romans 1:3).

The OT prophets did not see two comings of Christ. They thought Messiah would come, forgive sin, and begin to reign all at once. They did not realize that to forgive sin, the Messiah would have to die as the Lamb of God.

Believers will also be judged before Christ, not to determine salvation (which is secure in Christ) but to determine rewards (cf. 1 Cor. 3:12-15; 4:5; 2 Cor. 5:10).

No one is saved at the Great White Throne Judgment. All are condemned. God's standard is perfection and no one meets this standard. Salvation is only found in Christ. Those who reject Christ and refuse to accept His free gift of salvation are judged according to their works. This implies that there will be degrees of punishment in hell. However, Scripture does not reveal how hell will be *more tolerable* for some than for others (cf. Matthew 11:22, 24; Luke 12:47-48).

This is the **REST** of the story. Unfortunately, some of it is not pleasant. Sometimes we would like to believe that *everyone lives happily ever after*. But this ignores the seriousness of sin. Sin is a cancer that is destroying God's universe. It is a cancer that is destroying us. The only cure for sin is found in Jesus Christ. If a person chooses not to receive the cure, then their sin will ultimately condemn them before a righteous, holy God. Sin must be removed in order for the universe to be restored to its original state. This restoration is described in Revelation 21-22.

Read Revelation 21:3-5. What things will no longer exist when sin is removed from the world?

It is the **REST** of the story that leads to the **REST**oration of all things!

Additional Resources



In the midst of the mystery of prophetic events, it is easy to forget the true beauty of it all. Read the following excerpt from Max Lucado's book, *The Applause of Heaven* (Dallas, TX; Word, 1995), pages 148-157, and let it remind you of the joy that awaits God's children.

I'M ALMOST HOME. After five days, four hotel beds, eleven restaurants, and twenty-two cups of coffee, I'm almost home. After eight airplane seats, five airports, two delays, one book, and five hundred thirteen packages of peanuts, I'm almost home.

The plane resonates under me. A baby cries behind me. Businessmen converse around me. Cool air blows from a hole above me. But all that matters is what is before me—home.

Home. It was my first thought when I awoke this morning. It was my first thought when I stepped down from the last podium. It was my first thought when I said good-bye to my last host at the last airport.

There's no door like the one to your own house. There's no better place to put your feet than under your own table. There's no coffee like coffee out of your own mug. There's no

meal like the one at your own table. And there's no embrace like the one from your own family.

Home. The longest part of going home is the last part—the plane's taxiing to the terminal from the runway. I'm the fellow the flight attendant always has to tell to sit down. I'm the guy with one hand on my briefcase and the other on my seat belt. I have learned that there is a critical split second in which I can bolt down the aisle into the first-class section before the tributaries of people begin emptying into the main aisle.

I don't do that on every flight. Only when I'm going home.

There is a leap of the heart as I exit the plane. I almost get nervous as I walk up the ramp. I step past people. I grip my satchel. My stomach tightens. My palms sweat. I walk into the lobby like an actor walking onto

a stage. The curtain is lifted, and the audience stands in a half-moon. Most of the people see that I'm not the one they want and look past me.

But from the side I hear the familiar shriek of two little girls. "Daddy!" I turn and see them—faces scrubbed, standing on chairs, bouncing up and down in joy as the man in their life walks toward them. Jenna stops bouncing just long enough to clap. She applauds! I don't know who told her to do that, but you can bet I'm not going to tell her to stop.

Behind them I see a third face—little Sara, only a few months old. Deeply asleep, she furrows her brow slightly in reaction to the squealing.

And then I see a fourth face—my wife's face. Somehow, she has found time to comb her hair, put on a new dress, put on that extra sparkle. Somehow, though wrung out and done in, she will make me feel that my week is the only week worth talking about.

Faces of home.

That is what makes the promise at the end of the Beatitudes so compelling: *Rejoice and be glad, because great is your reward in heaven.*

What is our reward? Home.



The Book of Revelation could be entitled the Book of Homecoming, for in it we are given a picture of our heavenly home.

John's descriptions of the future steal your breath. His depiction of the final battle is graphic. Good clashes with evil. The sacred encounters the sinful. The pages howl with the shrieks of dragons and smolder with the coals of fiery pits. But in the midst of the battlefield there is a rose. John describes it in chapter 22:

Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth, for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away, and there was no longer any sea. I saw the Holy City, the new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride beautifully dressed for her husband. And I heard a loud voice

from the throne saying, "Now the dwelling of God is with men, and he will live with them. They will be his people, and God himself will be with them and be their God. He will wipe every tear from their eyes. There will be no more death or mourning or crying or pain, for the old order of things has passed away. He who was seated on the throne said, "I am making everything new!" (Revelation 22:1-5)

John is old when he writes these words. His body is weary. The journey has taken its toll. His friends are gone. Peter is dead. Paul has been martyred. Andrew, James, Nathaniel... they are fuzzy figures from an early era.

As he hears the voice from the throne, I wonder, does he remember the day he heard it on the mountain? For it is the same John and the same Jesus. The same feet that followed Jesus up the mount so long ago now stand to follow him again. The same eyes that watched the Nazarene teach on the summit watch for him again. The same ears that heard Jesus first describe sacred delight listen to it revealed again.

In this final mountaintop encounter, God pulls back the curtain and allows the warrior to peek into the homeland. When given the task of writing down what he sees, John chooses the most beautiful comparison earth has to offer. The Holy City; John says, is like *a bride beautifully dressed for her husband.*

What is more beautiful than a bride? One of the side benefits of being a minister is that I get an early glimpse of the bride as she stands at the top of the aisle. And I have to say that I have never seen an ugly bride. I've seen some grooms that could use an alteration or two, but never a bride. Maybe it is the aura of whiteness that clings to her as dew clings to a rose. Or perhaps it is the diamonds that glisten in her eyes. Or maybe it's the blush of love that pinks her cheeks or the bouquet of promises she carries. Whatever it is, there is the feeling that when you see a bride you are seeing the purest beauty the world can boast.

A bride. A commitment robed in elegance. "I'll be with you forever."

Tomorrow bringing hope to today. Promised purity faithfully delivered.

When you read that our heavenly home is similar to a bride, tell me, doesn't it make you want to go home?

The world I woke up to this morning couldn't be described as a bride beautifully dressed for her husband, could yours?

Part of the world to which I awoke was grieving. A teenager took his life in the predawn darkness. No note. No explanation. Just a dumbstruck mother and a bewildered father who will forever be hounded by questions they cannot answer

Part of the world to which I awoke was disillusioned. Another national leader has been accused of dishonesty. He blinked back tears and swallowed anger on network news. A generation ago, we would have given him the benefit of the doubt. Not now.

A part of the world to which I awoke this morning was devastated. A three-year-old's throat was cut open by her own father. A pre-med student was butchered and sacrificed by Satan worshipers. A husband of thirty years ran off with another man. (No, not a woman, a man.)

When you look at this world, stained by innocent blood and smudged with selfishness, doesn't it make you want to go home?

Me, too.

The old saint tells us that when we get home, God himself will wipe away our tears.

When I was a young man, I had plenty of people to wipe away my tears. I had two big sisters who put me under their wings. I had a dozen or so aunts and uncles. I had a mother who worked nights as a nurse and days as a mother exercising both professions with tenderness. I even had a brother three years my elder who felt sorry for me occasionally.

But when I think about someone wiping away my tears, I think about Dad. His hands were callused and tough, his fingers short and stubby. And when my father wiped away a tear, he seemed to wipe it away forever. There was something in his touch that took

away more than the drop of hurt from my cheek. It also took away my fear.

John says that someday God will wipe away your tears. The same hands that stretched the heavens will touch your cheeks. The same hands that formed the mountains will caress your face. The same hands that curled in agony as the Roman spike cut through will someday cup your face and brush away your tears. Forever.

When you think of a world where there will be no reason to cry, ever, doesn't it make you want to go home?

There will be no more death... John declares. Can you imagine it? A world with no hearses or morgues or cemeteries or tombstones? Can you imagine a world with no spades of dirt thrown on caskets? No names chiseled into marble? No funerals? No black dresses? No black wreaths?

If one of the joys of the ministry is a bride descending the church aisle, one of the griefs is a body encased in a shiny box in front of the pulpit. It's never easy to say good-bye. It's never easy to walk away. The hardest task in this world is to place a final kiss on cold lips that cannot kiss in return. The hardest thing in this world is to say good-bye.

In the next world, John says, "good-bye" will never be spoken. Tell me, doesn't that make you want to go home?

The most hopeful words of that passage from Revelation are those of God's resolve: *I am making everything new.*

It's hard to see things grow old. The town in which I grew up is growing old. I was there recently. Some of the buildings are boarded up. Some of the houses are torn down. Some of my teachers are retired; some are buried. The old movie house where I took my dates has "For Sale" on the marquee, long since outdated by the newer theaters that give you eight choices. The only visitors to the drive-in theater are tumbleweeds and rodents. Memories of first dates and senior proms are weather-worn by the endless rain of years. High school sweethearts are divorced. A

cheerleader died of an aneurysm. Our fastest halfback is buried only a few plots from my own father.

I wish I could make it all new again. I wish I could blow the dust off the streets. I wish I could walk through the familiar neighborhood, and wave at the familiar faces, and pet the familiar dogs, and hit one more home run in the Little League park. I wish I could walk down Main Street and call out the merchants that have retired and open the doors that have been boarded up. I wish I could make everything new...but I can't.

My mother still lives in the same house. You couldn't pay her to move. The house that seemed so big when I was a boy now feels tiny. On the wall are pictures of Mom in her youth—her hair autumn-brown, her face irresistibly beautiful. I see her now still healthy, still vivacious, but with wrinkles, graying hair, slower step. Would that I could wave the wand and make everything new again. Would that I could put her once again in the strong embrace of the high-plains cowboy she loved and buried. Would that I could stretch out the wrinkles and take off the bifocals and restore the spring to her step. Would that I could make everything new...but I can't.

I can't. But God can. *He restores my soul*, wrote the shepherd (Psalm 23:3). He doesn't reform; he restores. He doesn't camouflage the old; he restores the new. The Master Builder will pull out the original plan and restore it. He will restore the vigor. He will restore the energy. He will restore the hope. He will restore the soul.

When you see how this world grows stooped and weary and then read of a home where everything is made new, tell me, doesn't that make you want to go home?

What would you give in exchange for a home like that? Would you really rather have a few possessions on earth than eternal possessions in heaven? Would you really choose a life of slavery to passion over a life of freedom? Would you honestly give up all of your heavenly mansions for a second-rate sleazy motel on earth?

Great, Jesus said, *is your reward in heaven*. He must have smiled when he said that line. His eyes must have danced, and his hand must have pointed skyward. For he should know. It was his idea. It was his home.



I'll be home soon. My plane is nearing San Antonio. I can feel the nose of the jet dipping downward. I can see the flight attendants getting ready. Denalyn is somewhere in the parking lot, parking the car and hustling the girls toward the terminal.

I'll be home soon. The plane will land. I'll walk down that ramp and hear my name and see their faces. I'll be home soon.

You'll be home soon, too. You may not have noticed it, but you are closer to home than ever before. Each moment is a step taken. Each breath is a page turned. Each day is a mile marked, a mountain climbed. You are closer to home than you've ever been.

Before you know it, your appointed arrival time will come; you'll descend the ramp and enter the City.

You'll see faces that are waiting for you. You'll hear your name spoken by those who love you. And, maybe, just maybe—in the back, behind the crowds the One who would rather die than live without you will remove his pierced hands from his heavenly robe and...applaud.

What thought or truth stands out to you from Lucado's article? Why?

Changed Hearts



What is one truth from this lesson that has impacted your life? Why?

What is one question that you still have that you would like answered?

I CAN ONLY IMAGINE

I can only imagine
What it will be like
When I walk
By Your side

I can only imagine
What my eyes will see
When Your face
Is before me
I can only imagine

CHORUS:

Surrounded by Your glory,
what will my heart feel?
Will I dance for You, Jesus,
or in awe of you be still?
Will I stand in Your presence
or to my knees will I fall?
Will I sing hallelujah?
Will I be able to speak at all?
I can only imagine

I can only imagine
When that day comes
And I find myself
Standing in the Son

I can only imagine
When all I will do
Is forever
Forever worship You
I can only imagine

(c)1999 Simpleville Music(ASCAP)
Words and Music by Bart Millard

God does not reveal events of the future simply to satiate our curiosity. The goal of biblical prophecy should not be the ability to draw future events on a chart. It is easy to get so caught up in conjecture over the fulfillment of prophecy that we forget what really matters. Why does God give us a glimpse of future events? What is biblical prophecy supposed to motivate us to do?

There are at least three responses we should have to prophecy:

Purity. *Beloved, now we are children of God; and it has not yet been revealed what we shall be, but we know that when He [Christ] is revealed, we shall be like Him, for we shall see Him as He is. And everyone who has this hope in Him purifies himself, just as He is pure* (1 John 3:2-3). Our destiny is to be transformed into Christ's image. Thus in our lives now we should be motivated to sin less and obey more. How is your relationship with God right now? Ask God to search your heart and give you the strength to deny sin and follow Him.

Perseverance. Write out 1 Corinthians 15:58. _____

Because we know the end of the story we can persevere through difficult times. God will work everything (the good and the bad) together for our good (Romans 8:28). If you are going through a difficult time, thank God for the hope that you have in Christ.

Praise. Jesus Christ calls us His bride. We are loved. We are cherished. We are beautiful in His eyes. As someone has said, "God cannot love us more and will not love us less." Spend a few moments in silent prayer reflecting on God's great love for you.

PRETEST/POSTTEST

Circle only one answer per question.

- 1. The Bible...**
 - a. Points to truth found in Jesus Christ.
 - b. Contains truth in the stories of God's people.
 - c. Is truth revealed by God to humanity.
 - d. Becomes truth when the Holy Spirit works in people's hearts.
- 2. The name "Yahweh" means...**
 - a. God Almighty.
 - b. I am.
 - c. Lord of hosts.
 - d. Holy one.
- 3. Humans are primarily distinct from animals in that we are...**
 - a. Created in God's image.
 - b. Able to communicate.
 - c. Given a soul.
 - d. Endowed with rationality.
- 4. Separation from God is caused by...**
 - a. Lack of prayer
 - b. Mortality
 - c. Sin
 - d. Atheism
- 5. The title "Christ" indicates that Jesus is...**
 - a. The anointed prophet, priest and king.
 - b. The christened or baptized one.
 - c. The son of a virgin.
 - d. Of the priestly family of Christ (Jewish in origin).
- 6. Why did Jesus Christ die on the cross?**
 - a. To show the world an everlasting example of love.
 - b. To be a martyr for freedom and a hope to the oppressed.
 - c. To demonstrate the sinfulness and hatred of mankind.
 - d. To bear the sins of humanity as a substitute sacrifice.
- 7. How does a person gain entrance into heaven?**
 - a. Doing what is right and good.
 - b. Acknowledgement of sin and trust in Jesus.
 - c. Having a belief in God.
 - d. Belief, confirmation, and baptism.
- 8. Who/what is the Holy Spirit?**
 - a. An invisible force
 - b. The creative energy of God
 - c. The spirit within man and creation
 - d. A member of the trinity
- 9. The universal church of Jesus Christ is...**
 - a. A cult
 - b. Invisible
 - c. Filled with true and false Christians
 - d. The Roman Catholic Church
- 10. What are the two primary ordinances (sacraments) of the church?**
 - a. Foot washing and caring for the sick.
 - b. Mass and confirmation.
 - c. Confession and prayer.
 - d. Baptism and communion.
- 11. How would you describe the major role of angels?**
 - a. They are serving spirits, serving God and man.
 - b. They carry out God's judgments.
 - c. They are the choir of heaven.
 - d. They oppose and battle the forces of evil.
- 12. The Christian's authority for faith and practice is...**
 - a. The Holy Spirit.
 - b. The church.
 - c. The life of Jesus.
 - d. The Bible.

13. The centerpiece of God's attributes is His...

- a. Love
- b. Omnipotence
- c. Holiness
- d. Immutability

14. Death and suffering exist in the world because of...

- a. Satan and his evil forces.
- b. The disobedience of Adam and Eve.
- c. Imperfections in nature and mankind.
- d. God's abandonment of creation.

15. Jesus lived a life without...

- a. Sin
- b. Pain
- c. Temptation
- d. Anger

16. The faith of Christianity is futile and false if...

- a. There is no love in the way Christians live.
- b. There is evidence that the Bible is not complete.
- c. There is no bodily resurrection of Jesus Christ.
- d. There is no work of the Holy Spirit in our hearts.

17. The great commandment is to...

- a. Love God and love your neighbor as yourself.
- b. Go into all the world and preach the gospel.
- c. Believe in Jesus and teach His ways.
- d. Give to the poor and show mercy to widows and orphans.

18. What leads or ushers us to Jesus Christ?

- a. Our faith
- b. Our hope
- c. Our love
- d. The Holy Spirit

19. What does the word "baptize" mean?

- a. Bless
- b. Immerse
- c. Disciple
- d. Pour out

20. What is the foundation of the church?

- a. The apostle Peter
- b. The love of the saints
- c. Jesus Christ
- d. The gifts of the Holy Spirit

21. What are demons?

- a. Angels that rebelled against God.
- b. Spirit beings created by Satan.
- c. Spirits of deceased individuals separated from God.
- d. Imaginary beings plaguing the mentally ill.

22. What do we proclaim every time we partake of communion?

- a. The birth of Jesus Christ.
- b. The life of Jesus Christ.
- c. The death of Jesus Christ.
- d. The resurrection of Jesus Christ.

23. Which description below best describes Jesus?

- a. God in human flesh
- b. An inspired, moral teacher
- c. A great religious leader
- d. A godlike man

Put in the correct chronological order the following future events according to the dispensational, premillennial view of biblical prophecy. (Put 1, 2, 3, or 4 by each event)

- _____ Emergence of the Anti-Christ
- _____ Great White Throne Judgment
- _____ Second Coming of Christ
- _____ Rapture of the Church

PRE-STUDY EVALUATION

Circle the number that best describes your own response to the following statements.

I believe that studying Christian doctrine is vital to my spiritual health.

1 2 3 4 5
Strongly Disagree Strongly Agree

I enjoy learning about the doctrines of the Christian faith.

1 2 3 4 5
Strongly Disagree Strongly Agree

I think Christians in general worry too much about theology.

1 2 3 4 5
Strongly Disagree Strongly Agree

I feel my present knowledge of the major doctrines of the Christian faith is:

1 2 3 4 5
Very Weak Very Strong

At this time in my life I would rate my daily reading of the Bible as:

1 2 3 4 5
Very Weak Very Strong

My present confidence in the Bible as the perfect Word of God is:

1 2 3 4 5
Very Weak Very Strong

At this time in my life I would rate my daily times of talking with God (prayer) as:

1 2 3 4 5
Very Weak Very Strong

At this time in my life I would say that my relationship with other Christians is:

1 2 3 4 5
Very Weak Very Strong

At this time in my life my desire to share my faith with non-Christians is:

1 2 3 4 5
Very Weak Very Strong

I feel that my relationship with God is currently:

1 2 3 4 5
Very Weak Very Strong

POST-STUDY EVALUATION

After completion of the study, take time to re-take the Pretest/Posttest and see if you are better able to answer the questions. Also re-take the Pre-Study Evaluation to see if there has been any growth in your appreciation of Christian doctrine and your own spiritual life. Finally, take time to evaluate this study.

What did you most appreciate or enjoy about this study? Why?

What suggestion(s) do you have for improving this study?

Look back through the twelve lessons of this study. Which lesson was the most helpful for you? Why?

In what specific way has this study helped you grow in your spiritual life?
