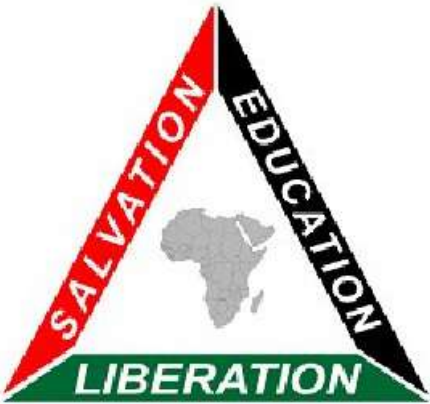


# Greater Calvary Bible Church



New Life Bible Study

## “Godly Family Values”

Compiled By  
++Dr. Sterling Lands II  
060120

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## **Introduction**

Why do some people make a big deal about church membership—is it all that important? Does it really make a difference whether I sign a piece of paper or not? Do I get some sort of added perk? Is godliness a requirement for Church membership?

Are You pursuing godliness? This is a great time to start reviewing your own commitment to pursuing godliness. What do you believe is the purpose of godliness? What expectations do you and your church have of their members? Have you been trying to meet godly expectations?

These are the kinds of questions I've heard (and sometimes asked) whenever the subject of godliness has come up. Why do we ask them? I suspect it's because most of us don't understand the purpose and value of godliness.

Members must discover (or re-discover) the privilege and joy found in godly living.

### **Preface**

This is a study of certain basic principles associated with pursuing godliness. It is designed as a starting point and to be ever green and ever expanding.

The format may be adapted to the particular study group.

Blessings, ++S Lands II

## Godliness

### Problem

What is godliness?

### Premise

God will not permit his people to sin and will advance those whose walk is blameless.

### Philosophy

People translate words differently according to their own understanding and perception. That is why it is so important to clearly define terminology when trying to get an idea across to others when teaching, or even in general conversation.

The subject of godliness is no exception. If you were to take a survey of people's perception of godliness, some of the terms you would most likely hear are "religious," "pious," "righteous," "spiritual," "holy," "pure" or "saintly." All of these definitions may be correct in whole or in part; that is, each can be a vital component of godliness. However, one has to delve deeper into the meaning of these terms in light of the context in which they are found in Scripture. We must understand the definitions of words found within the framework of God's attributes and character as revealed in His Word. True godliness, or holiness must be defined by Spirit and Truth.

Godliness is like a many-faceted diamond, wherein each "facet" is represented by a singular definition [of godliness]. Each facet reflects the purity and beauty of the whole. The facets are not the essence of the diamond, but they are necessary in order for the glory and beauty of the gem to shine forth in complete and total perfection.

Psalm 101:1-8 I will sing of your love and justice, LORD. I will praise you with songs. I will be careful to live a blameless life— when will you come to help me? I will lead a life of integrity in my own home. I will refuse to look at anything vile and vulgar. I hate all who deal crookedly; I will have nothing to do with them. I will reject perverse ideas and stay away from every evil. I will not tolerate people who slander their neighbors. I will not endure conceit and pride. I will search for faithful people to be my companions. Only those who are

above reproach will be allowed to serve me. I will not allow deceivers to serve in my house, and liars will not stay in my presence. My daily task will be to ferret out the wicked and free the city of the LORD from their grip.

## Principle

### 1. Godliness.

- a. Godliness is the reverent awareness of God's sovereignty over every aspect of life, and the attendant determination to honor him in all one's conduct.
- b. "Godliness" and "holiness" denote one reality (1 Tim 2:2 ; and 2 Peter 3:11).
- c. The Lord has set apart the godly for himself (Psalm 4:3 ).
- d. The godly are, and are to become, his holy people (Lev 11:44-45).
- e. Communion with God must be zealously cultivated (Psalm 32:6).
- f. To neglect God is to invite catastrophe (Job 8:13 ; Isa 10:6).
- g. It is especially tragic when persons appointed to be spiritual leaders abandon God's way (Jer 23:11).
- h. Ungodly behavior is by nature destructive ( Prov 11:9 ).
- i. It is disastrous when a nation loses the leavening influence of persons who know God (Psalm 12:1; Mic 7:2).
- j. It is therefore vital that God's people be obedient to the mandate of God (Genesis 1:28; Mal 2:15).

### 2. Religious.

- a. The definition of "religious" has, through the centuries, been more or less subject to the church culture of the time, because "religion" and "religious" has to do with outward ceremonial observance and worship.
- b. While "religious" is not an attribute of God, who is spirit, it can be a characteristic of a truly godly person. But, not all outwardly religious persons are necessarily godly. The world is full of "religious" people of every sort who are enemies of God in disposition, motivation, word, and deed. Such persons, unlike true servants of God, are easily identified, as were the Pharisees, by their pride, self-love and self-serving agendas,

lack of fruit and Christ-likeness, and more often than not, a religious spirit. A person can outwardly appear to be “religious,” but what comes out of his or her mouth will reveal the heart condition.

- c. A person with a deceptive heart deceives no one but him or herself in the long run, regardless of how “good” or “religious” he or she appears to be, making his or her religion vain, or worthless (James 1:26, 27).
- d. James states that there is such a thing as “pure” religion that is “undefiled” before God. Pure and undefiled religion in God’s eyes is quiet servitude to those in great need, and living a consecrated life (separation from the world).
- e. Being religious is not an indication of godliness. A pagan can be “religious” about idols demon gods, and tribal customs. A truly godly person may be religious, but only in the strictest sense of the term, where his or her religion is indeed “pure” and “undefiled” by personal pride, agendas or carnality.

### 3. Pious.

- a. Sometimes the word “pious” is use to describe godliness.
- b. According to Webster, pious means marked by or showing reverence for deity and devotion to divine worship; sacred or devotional as distinct from the profane or secular; dutiful; virtuous.
- c. Webster refers to the word “devout” in conjunction to pious, and notes that pious applies to the faithful performance of religious duties and maintenance of outward religious attitudes, frequently with a connotation of hypocrisy.
- d. The underlying connotation of piety and devout, while giving the appearance of true religion outwardly, fails to uphold the lasting virtues of a pure and perfect heart.
- e. Piety, pious and devout are not true definitions or examples of godliness, although, as with “religious” a godly person may be devout or pious in disposition and attitude.

### 4. Righteous.

- a. The Hebrew definition for nearly all of the usages of righteous in the Old Testament is “make right (in a moral or forensic sense); cleanse, (be, do) just;” justice, justify, “(be, turn to)



- righteousness” and “lawful.”
- b. Those who lived before Christ and obeyed the law, and lived moral, upright lives, were considered righteous.
  - c. We look at the lives of those whom God considered righteous such as Abel, Enoch, Noah, Job, Abraham, and Daniel, to name a few who had right standing with God.
  - d. Righteous, or righteousness, is exemplified in the lives of Noah, Daniel and Job because of what they overcame in their generation. “Though these three men, Noah, Daniel, and Job, were in it, [the world] they should deliver but their own souls by their righteousness, saith the Lord God” Ezekiel 14:14.
    - i. Noah overcame the world.
    - ii. Daniel overcame the flesh.
    - iii. Job overcame the devil.
  - e. True righteousness is more than external compliance to certain religious traditions or practices. It is more than conforming for the sake of appearing righteous to others. It is more than reforming one’s behavior in order to survive societal rules and laws. It is more than performing good works as the sole basis of personal righteousness.
  - f. The New Testament definition of righteous, or righteousness, reveals that only through Christ can we be rendered or regarded as just or innocent.
  - g. Those who are in Christ are justified, or acquitted for Christ’s sake. Christ is our righteousness (Romans 1:4, 9, 10; 1 Corinthians 1:30; Philippians 3:9).
  - h. Righteousness is found only in Christ, and only as we are in Him by faith can we be deemed by God as righteous. A person cannot be considered righteous (or just) without faith; therefore, righteousness and faith go hand in hand (Hebrews 10:38; 11:6).
    - i. Faith and righteousness are essential components of godliness.
    - j. This faith is not in faith itself, or faith in anything other than God and His Word (Hebrews 11:1; Ephesians 2:8, 9).
5. Spiritual.
- a. Perhaps in years gone by, the word “spiritual” was

- automatically equated with biblical Christianity.
- b. Today we hear this word coming forth from the lips of a variety of people.
  - c. Taking advantage of prestigious and powerful positions as popular American idols, they have thrown up “spiritual” detour signs on the broad highway of “churchianity,” and thereby rerouting the unsuspecting onto blissfully ignorant roads that lead straight to hell.
  - d. Truth originates with God.
    - i. Jesus is the truth (John 14:6).
    - ii. God’s Word is truth (John 17:17).
    - iii. The Holy Spirit teaches us the truth (1 John 2:27).
    - iv. The Holy Spirit leads us into all truth (John 16:13).
    - v. The truly spiritual person has received the spirit of God (1 Corinthians 2:12-16).
  - e. The Apostle Paul describes why an individual can be considered godly or spiritual (Romans 8:13-16).
6. Holiness.
- a. For a person to be holy, he or she must be set apart from what is profane, or evil in God’s sight. Holiness is a state of being (1 Peter 1:15, 16).
  - b. According to Strong’s Concordance, the Greek definition of holy is sacred, pure, morally blameless, consecrated (set apart). God calls us to holiness.
  - c. This calling is not a call to be divine. Divinity can only be found in the Godhead. Man may think he is divine, or that he will in some future state become divine, but he is human, not divine.
  - d. Nearly every cult teaches that Jesus was not divine by nature, and many of them teach that man either is divine by nature or going to become divine. Such are doctrines of demons.
7. Purity.
- a. Pure simply means clean or clear.
  - b. Definitely a godly person will possess a clean heart, and a clear conscience because of the sanctifying work of Christ, and regenerating work of the Holy Spirit.
8. Saintly.
- a. The definition in Strong’s Concordance of saints is the same as

- holy.
- b. Whenever one reads of the saints in Scripture (from Deuteronomy through Revelation), it is referring to all of the holy people of God.
  - c. A saint is anyone who belongs to God through faith in Jesus Christ the Lord, who has consecrated his or her life to the Lord, and one who walks in faith, righteousness and obedience.
9. Hatred for evil.
- a. A godly, holy or perfect person despises sin (Psalm 101: 3, 4).
  - b. The entire world, both secular and religious, is being systematically brainwashed by the New Age antichrist system of "positivism" and "political correctness."
  - c. All that is holy, true and righteous according to God's Word is being mocked, undermined, redefined and sacrificed to the pagan idols of humanistic self exaltation as people buy into the old satanic lie that they are divine, or gods.
  - d. Godliness is a holy, pure, consecrated life of righteousness that is lived by faith and obedience through the power of the indwelling Spirit of God which brings forth fruit for the glory of God.
  - e. Godly persons have no hidden agendas that involve self-gratification, or love for that which God hates.
  - f. A truly godly person will say with the Psalmist, "I hate every false way" (Psalm 119:204).
  - g. We are either living a carnal life of self-gratification in this world, where we are seeking for vain glory, or we are drawing ever closer to God, seeking and pursuing the spiritual life that endures forever.
10. Godliness depends on knowing God's revealed truth.
- a. Paul speaks of "the knowledge of the truth that leads to godliness" ( Titus 1:1 ), and of "godly sorrow that leads to salvation" ( 2 Cor 7:10 ).
  - b. Peter declares that God's "divine power has given us everything we need for life and godliness through our knowledge of him" ( 2 Peter 1:3 ).
  - c. God imparts knowledge of himself by revealing his Son.
11. The godly person is committed to obeying God in the world: "We

know that God does not listen to sinners. He listens to the godly man who does his will" ( John 9:31 ). The shape of obedience is clarified by the terms to which "godliness" is joined. "But you, man of God, pursue righteousness, godliness, faith, love, endurance and gentleness" ( 1 Tim 6:11 ). "Make every effort to add to your faith goodness; and to goodness, knowledge; and to knowledge, self-control; and to self-control, perseverance; and to perseverance, godliness; and to godliness, brotherly kindness; and to brotherly kindness, love" ( 2 Peter 1:5-7 ) — qualities which, in turn, deepen one's "knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ" ( 1:8 ). Christ, moreover, furnishes power for the godly life: "Why do you stare at us as if by our own power or godliness we had made this man walk?" asks Peter (Acts 3:12 ). Without divine power, godliness becomes an empty form ( 2 Tim 3:5 ).

12. Godliness in both respects (knowledge of God and holiness of life) is jeopardized by the propagation of falsehood: "If anyone teaches false doctrines and does not agree to the sound instruction of our Lord Jesus Christ and to godly teaching, he is conceited and understands nothing. He has an unhealthy interest in controversies and quarrels about words that result in envy, strife, malicious talk, evil suspicions, and constant friction between men of corrupt mind, who have been robbed of the truth and who think that godliness is a means to financial gain" ( 1 Tim 6:3-5 ). Accordingly, "the wrath of God is being revealed from heaven against all the godlessness and wickedness of men who suppress the truth by their wickedness" ( Rom 1:18 ).
13. Godliness is costly: "everyone who wants to live a godly life in Christ Jesus will be persecuted" ( 2 Tim 3:12 ). Hope of eternal life enables them to endure. "The Lord knows how to rescue godly men from trials and to hold the unrighteous for the day of judgment" ( 2 Peter 2:9 ; 3:11-12 ). "Train yourself to be godly. For physical training is of some value, but godliness has value for all things, holding promise for both the present life and the life to come" ( 1 Tim 4:7-8 ). Grace teaches us "to say No' to ungodliness and worldly passions, and to live self-controlled, upright and godly lives in this present age, while we wait for the blessed hope the glorious appearing of our great God and Savior, Jesus Christ" ( Titus 2:12-13 ). Seeing this life in light of the next encourages "godliness with contentment" ( 1 Tim 6:6-7 ).

## Practice

1. How long do you think some of the mega churches would last if sin, hell, true repentance, self-denial, the Lordship of Christ, obedience, righteousness, separation from the world, the judgment to come, and godliness were preached from the pulpits?
2. What does your life say about you today?
3. In what settings do you feel pressure from others to behave a certain way?
4. What are some lessons you have learned from watching godly family members or acquaintances?
5. What attitude did David have toward the wicked?
6. What strategy did David have to lead a godly life?
7. What does it mean to lead a blameless life?
8. What steps can we take to strengthen our commitment to God?
9. Who has helped you mature in your Christian walk?
10. What attitudes should we have toward unbelievers?
11. How do you think your choice of friends affects the way you live?
12. How can we prevent ourselves from being negatively influenced by unbelievers?
13. How can we ensure that the influence of friends plays a positive role in our lives?
14. What changes does psalm 101, challenge you to make in the company you keep?
15. What steps could you take to strengthen your relationships with the people who have a godly influence on your life?

## Judgment And Mercy NLBS 4/1

### Problem

How does judgement and mercy work for us?

### Premise

To reject Christ leads to the most horrible condition a person can know.

### Philosophy

Undisciplined human nature is like an animal who seeks to satisfy every basic urge with neither thought nor care for consequences. Sin is yielding to our corrupt, depraved, self centered desires. Sin leads us to make our desires the highest authority in life and to despise and reject all other authorities, including God. Sin will be judged.

Jesus' sinless life and death on the cross are where judgment and mercy meet.

"God has not destined us for wrath, but to obtain salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ" (1 Thess 5:9).

Believers need not fear death or the final judgment. Jesus came and died as our Savior, assuring us of eternal salvation.

### Principle

1. The Judgment
  - a. The Apostle Paul writes about those who are practicing evil deeds which is only serving to store up more wrath against the Day of Judgment (Rom 2:5), so there will be a day when God "will render to each one according to his works: to those who by patience in well-doing seek for glory and honor and immortality, he will give eternal life; but for those who are self-seeking and do not obey the truth, but obey unrighteousness, there will be wrath and fury" (Rom 2:6-8).
  - b. For those who have been brought to repentance and faith in Christ, they can rejoice because it is "Jesus who delivers us from the wrath to come" (1 Thess 1:10).
  - c. This means that "God has not destined us for wrath, but to obtain salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ" (1 Thess 15:9).

- d. Notice that God has not appointed us who trust in Christ to His wrath; a wrath that will come upon all who reject the truth that Jesus is Lord and Savior and they are sinners in need of saving.
  - e. It is only those who are self-seeking and not seeking after Jesus Christ and His righteousness (Matt 6:33) that will receive what they have sown in this life.
  - f. The judgment of God will only be stopped by the work of Christ on the cross, but you must humble yourself and confess your sins before God and put your trust in Christ.
  - g. That is the point when the wrath of God will “pass over” you, but as the Scriptures teach, “for those who are self-seeking and do not obey the truth, but obey unrighteousness, there will be wrath and fury” (Rom 2:6-8).
  - h. Jesus spoke more often and more graphically about hell than anyone else in the Bible. He used the story of Sodom’s destruction to warn about the final judgment when He returns (Luke 17:29-32).
  - i. The entire Bible, from Genesis to Revelation, reveals a God who will bring judgment on sinners, but who shows mercy to those who repent of their sins and trust in Him.
2. The apostle Peter wrote his second letter to help churches stand against some false teachers who were infiltrating their ranks (2 Peter 2:1-22).
- a. Peter predicts that false teachers will infiltrate the church, introducing "destructive heresies."
  - b. What is more, many will actually follow them. But sacred history shows that God punishes the wicked and rescues the godly.
  - c. Bold and arrogant, these "creatures of instinct" revel in materialistic pleasures with absolutely no insight into the spiritual.
  - d. Their appeal is to "the lustful desires of sinful human nature."
  - e. The "freedom" they promise is a depravity that enslaves men to a corruption that we escape through Jesus Christ.
  - f. Beware of those who promise pleasure rather than self-sacrifice.
  - g. These teachers not only promoted false doctrine, but also

ungodly living. He alludes to them when he says that they indulged the flesh in its corrupt desires and despised authority, including the authority of the Master who bought them.

- h. They exploited people in the church with sensuality and greed.
  - i. At the root of their false teaching was a denial of the second coming of Jesus Christ in power and glory to judge the world (3:3-13). They even encouraged people toward sexual “freedom” (2:19), assuring them that a loving God would never judge anyone.
  - j. Peter wants us to know that although God’s judgment may be delayed, it is absolutely certain.
  - k. He uses three historical examples of judgment and two examples of God’s rescuing the righteous from judgment both to warn and to encourage.
    - i. The warning is, God will righteously judge all the ungodly. None will escape.
    - ii. The encouragement is, God will rescue the godly from judgment.
  - l. Therefore, we should have the courage to stand firm in following God in an ungodly world.
  - m. Since God judges all the ungodly and mercifully saves the godly, we should stand firm in following Him and resist all false teaching.
  - n. 2 Peter 2:1-22, is one long “if-then” sentence. The “if” part could be rendered “since,” because there is no doubt in view. Peter builds this part of the sentence toward the final conclusion in verse 9. The skeleton idea is, “Since God did not spare the angels when they sinned; and since He did not spare the ancient world in the flood, but preserved Noah; and since He did not spare Sodom and Gomorrah, but rescued Lot; then the Lord knows how to rescue the godly and to keep the ungodly under punishment for the day of judgment.” The examples of judgment are Peter’s warning not to follow the false teachers. The examples of rescue are his encouragement to follow the Lord, even when many around us live as if there will be no judgment.
3. God righteously judges all the ungodly.



- a. Peter is arguing that history gives us vivid examples to warn us that God will judge the wicked. We should think about these examples and apply them to our lives.

4.

SS 3/22

God's judgment of the fallen angels shows that he judges the ungodly.

- a. "For if God did not spare angels when they sinned, but cast them into hell and committed them to pits of darkness, reserved for judgment..." (2:4). God created the angels as righteous spirit beings, but Satan, a leader among them, rebelled and many others (now called "demons") joined his rebellion. We are not certain about when and how this happened, although it had to happen before Satan tempted Eve. Many understand Isaiah 14:12-14 to refer to the fall of Satan, who desired to make himself like God. Also, many interpret Ezekiel 28:11-19 to describe Satan's original perfection and subsequent fall due to pride.
- b. Many reputable scholars understand our text to refer to a cryptic incident in Genesis 6:1-4, when the "sons of God" (interpreted as demons) took wives among "the daughters of men," resulting in a dominant race called the "Nephilim." This interpretation of Genesis 6 was prevalent among the first century Jews, and is explained in more detail in the 1st century B.C. Book of Enoch. In favor of this interpretation here (and in Jude 7) are that the story was common in Jewish literature; the three examples (angels, flood, and the destruction of Sodom) all come out of Genesis; and the incident in Genesis 6, which led up to the flood, would explain why some demons are now confined to "pits of darkness" (Edwin Blum, *The Expositor's Bible Commentary*, ed. by Frank Gaebelin [Zondervan], 12:278).
- c. A variation of that interpretation is that the demons themselves did not actually cohabit with women, but rather they possessed powerful men who cohabited with these women (John MacArthur, *The MacArthur New Testament Commentary*, 2 Peter & Jude [Moody Publishers], pp. 86, 164-165; he is somewhat ambiguous as to which of these two views he believes).

- d. The second view is some what plausible, the first view is supported only by unbiblical Jewish myths. How (physiologically) could demons, who are non-human spirit-beings, procreate children? While demons (and angels) sometimes take on male human bodies, there is no biblical evidence that they can produce offspring (Matt. 22:30). What kind of genetic makeup would those children have? Would they have human souls? What about their children? It seems to me that the demons mating with humans view creates far more problems than it solves.
- e. The view that the “sons of God” refers to the line of Seth (Gen. 5) that intermarried with godless women, leading to the degrading sinfulness of the human race that led to the flood is preferred.
- f. This means that 2 Peter 2:4 refers to the general fall of the angels and that God relegated some of the fallen angels to confinement in pits of darkness, being held for their final judgment when they will be cast into the lake of fire. The Greek word here translated “hell” is a verb that means, “cast into Tartarus.” It’s the only time it occurs in the Bible. It was a word from Greek mythology with which Peter’s readers would have been familiar. It referred to a place lower than Hades, where the especially wicked were consigned. Peter is not approving of Greek mythology, but rather is saying, “God judged these fallen angels by confining them in a really awful place until the final day of judgment.”
- g. We must not lose sight of Peter’s point, that God is powerful enough to judge the angels that sinned. The Bible shows that these spirit-beings are powerful creatures that once dwelled in the very presence of God. Yet they sinned and God judged them. So we should be on guard against sinning, because God will judge all who sin against Him and do not repent.

5.

SS 3/29

God’s judgment of the world through the flood shows that he judges the ungodly.

- a. Verse 5: “...and did not spare the ancient world, but preserved Noah, a preacher of righteousness, with seven others, when He brought a flood upon the world of the ungodly; ...” We’ll look

at the preservation of Noah and his family in a moment. But for now, Peter's point is that God brought the flood on the world of the ungodly. The flood destroyed all people and every living creature, except for those on the ark. That story is in the Bible to warn us that a day of judgment on the whole world is coming, when none of the ungodly will escape. Peter refers to the flood again (3:6, 10), where he makes the comparison that just as the ancient world was destroyed by water, even so the present world will be destroyed by fire.

- b. Often with the flood we get hung up on the geologic issues or questions of how Noah could get all those animals on the ark and we miss the main point, namely, that the flood was a horrific judgment on the entire earth. Everyone and everything that were not on the ark perished! The Bible uses the flood story as a warning to everyone since that time that a far worse future judgment is coming, when all the ungodly who are not "on board" Jesus Christ will perish eternally.
6. God's judgment of Sodom and Gomorrah shows that he judges the ungodly.
- a. Verse 6: "...and if He condemned the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah to destruction by reducing them to ashes, having made them an example to those who would live ungodly lives thereafter; ..." This refers to the story in Genesis 19, when God rained fire and brimstone on the cities that were located near the southern end of the Dead Sea. Prior to God's judgment, the area was a fertile plain (Gen. 13:10), but afterward it was an uninhabitable wasteland.
  - b. Genesis 19 shows how corrupt Sodom was. The men wanted to homosexually rape the two angels that came to Sodom to rescue Lot and his family. Even when the angels struck them blind, they didn't repent. Lot's future sons-in-law thought that he was joking when he warned them to flee the impending judgment. Ezekiel (16:49) also informs us that the people of Sodom were arrogant and had abundant food and ease, but they did not help the poor. Peter states that God made the people of Sodom "an example to those who would live ungodly lives thereafter." In other words, the judgment on Sodom and

Gomorrah was not a one-time oddity. It is in Scripture as a warning of the judgment to come.

- c. Peter adds something that the parallel in Jude (5-7) omits, namely, God's preservation of Noah and Lot. Peter includes these stories to show that God not only will judge the wicked. Also, God mercifully saves the godly.
  - d. The godly do not earn salvation by their godliness. Salvation is always by grace through faith apart from any good works. But those who are truly saved live in obedience to God. Their godliness results from their salvation and culminates in their eternal deliverance from God's judgment. These stories of temporal judgment and rescue picture final, eternal judgment and deliverance. They show that God will punish the wicked, but spare the righteous.
  - e. When God sends temporal judgments, many godly people suffer along with the wicked.
  - f. When the recent earthquake devastated Haiti, God's people in Haiti suffered along with the ungodly. Little children suffered along with hardened sinners. The same can be said of tsunamis, hurricanes, wars, and famines. God uses these temporal judgments to warn those who still live that eternal judgment is ahead (Luke 13:1-5). God's rescue of Noah and Lot from those temporal judgments is to give hope that if you will repent, He will rescue you from eternal judgment. But not all of the godly are exempt from temporal judgments (Luke 21:16-19).
7. God did not provide salvation for the fallen angels to teach us that he does not owe salvation to anyone.
- a. God provided deliverance for Noah and his family and for Lot and his two daughters, but there was no deliverance for the angels that sinned. They perished with no possibility of salvation.
  - b. There are some that rail against the biblical doctrine of God's sovereign election by saying that if He is able to save everyone but chooses only to save some, then He is immoral or unloving! That is not only blasphemous; also, it completely

misunderstands the enormity of human sin and guilt. God does not owe salvation to any creature that has sinned against Him, including the fallen angels. In many ways, angels are more glorious and powerful beings than man is. But they sinned and God was perfectly just to judge them without providing any means of salvation. And, He is not unjust if He chooses some people for eternal life and passes over others, leaving them under judgment for their many sins to display His wrath and justice (Rom. 9:11-23).

- c. But the good news for sinful people is that the stories of Noah and Lot show us that God has provided salvation for sinners. Unlike the fallen angels, there is hope for all who will trust in Jesus Christ, turn from their sins, and obey Him.

8.

4/5

God saved Noah through the flood as an example of how He mercifully saves the godly.

- a. God “preserved Noah, a preacher of righteousness, with seven others, when He brought a flood upon the world of the ungodly” (2:5). This is the only place where we are told that Noah was a preacher of righteousness, but it is not surprising. He spent at least 100 years building an ark on dry land, while everyone around him must have thought that he was crazy. Tour guides probably organized trips to see this lunatic building this gigantic boat, miles from any body of water. The people at that time were notoriously corrupt and violent (Gen. 6:11-12). Noah’s actions in building the ark and probably his words warned them to repent of their sins before it was too late.
- b. The Genesis account tells us (6:9) that “Noah was a righteous man, blameless in his time; Noah walked with God.” But he did not merit God’s salvation by his righteousness. The verse just prior tells us (Gen. 6:8), “Noah found favor [grace] in the eyes of the Lord.” Noah was a sinner, as we learn in the aftermath of the flood, when he got drunk and lay exposed in his tent (Gen. 9:21). But the overall pattern of his life was that he obeyed God, even when it was very hard to do. His story teaches us that if we will trust the salvation that God has provided in Jesus Christ and turn from our sin, we will be spared from the judgment to come.

9. God rescued Lot from the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah as an example of how He mercifully saves the godly.
- a. Verses 7-8: "...and if He rescued righteous Lot, oppressed by the sensual conduct of unprincipled men (for by what he saw and heard that righteous man, while living among them, felt his righteous soul tormented day after day by their lawless deeds), ..." We can't miss Peter's point, in that he repeats three times that Lot was righteous, contrasting him with the sensual conduct and lawless deeds of the unprincipled men of Sodom. Their wickedness paralleled the conduct of the sensual, lawless false teachers.
  - b. But how can Peter call Lot "righteous"? The story in Genesis seems to picture him as anything but righteous. When the Sodomites want to rape his two angelic guests, Lot instead offers them his two virgin daughters to rape! He only reluctantly leaves Sodom when the angels grab his hand and lead him away. He later allows his two daughters to get him drunk so that they can commit incest in order to get pregnant by him. This doesn't fit the biblical picture of a righteous man!
  - c. We cannot resolve this in a totally satisfactory manner, but several considerations may help. We must assume that like Abraham, who believed God and "He reckoned it to him as righteousness" (Gen. 15:6), Lot also had been declared righteous before God by faith. But in the context of 2 Peter, he is not referring to imputed righteousness, but to righteous behavior. There is a hint of an answer in Genesis 18, when Abraham gets God to agree that if there are ten righteous people found in Sodom, He will not destroy it. Abraham must have known that Lot was righteous enough not to have joined the Sodomites in their godless, sensual behavior.
  - d. Also, although we can't understand Lot's offering his daughters to be raped, he did so in an attempt to protect his house guests. Hospitality to strangers was an important virtue in that culture. Lot risked his own safety to protect his guests, although in a reprehensible way. And, (Peter received it by divine inspiration, because you cannot deduce it from the Genesis account), Lot was oppressed and tormented by the

ungodly conduct that he saw and heard around him in Sodom. This point should convict us: To what extent are we tormented by the wickedness of our culture (Ezek. 9:4)? Do we enjoy watching movies that flaunt immorality, profanity, and violence? Do we laugh at the filthy jokes of godless TV sitcoms? If so, we are not as righteous as Lot was! Also, Lot obeyed God by not looking back toward Sodom, in contrast to his wife who was turned into a pillar of salt.

- e. We should stand firm in following God and resist all false teaching.
  - f. In Ezekiel 14:14, God extols the righteousness of three men: Noah, Daniel, and Job. If Noah is one of the most righteous men in the Bible, Lot must barely be in the camp by the skin of his teeth. Perhaps these two are put together in 2 Peter to show us how we should stand firm against the godless culture around us. Noah did a commendable job; Lot is an example of the weakest of the saints. But God was gracious to both men and their families.
  - g. Verses 9-10 are the conclusion to verses 4-8: “then the Lord knows how to rescue the godly from temptation [or, trials], and to keep the unrighteous under punishment for the day of judgment, and especially those who indulge the flesh in its corrupt desires and despise authority.” The godly are not immune to temptations or to the test of living in an ungodly culture. They need God to rescue them from it. And He knows how to do it! If He has saved you from sin by His grace, He will preserve you unto heaven by His grace. So Peter wants to encourage us to have the courage, like Noah (who did it well) and Lot (who barely passed the course), to stand firm against the tide of godlessness around us. He wants us to resist all teaching that downplays holy living. As we do, even if we suffer for it, we can have the joy of looking forward to the coming of Jesus Christ and our eternal reward with Him.
10. God will surely judge all that have sinned against Him.
- a. God has provided forgiveness of sins and eternal life for all who will believe in Jesus. All who do not believe in Jesus will perish.
  - b. Jesus didn't come and die on the cross just to give us warm,

fuzzy feelings about God's love. He offered Himself to pay the penalty for sin that we deserved to rescue us from the wrath to come (1 Thess. 1:10). The angels who sinned, the world under the flood, and the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah are there to warn us that God will surely judge all that have sinned against Him. The preservation of Noah and the rescue of Lot give us the hope that if we trust in Christ and turn from our sins, God will mercifully spare us from the judgment to come. Believe in Jesus Christ and you will not perish, but have eternal life!

#### 11. Mercy.

- a. The thief on the cross trusted in Jesus very late in his life.
- b. He never had a chance to go to attend synagogue, do any good deeds, or have anything to offer to God.
- c. Even so, Jesus promised him that, that he would be with Him in Paradise (Luke 23:43). In all honesty, all of us are the thief on the cross. We might have trusted in Christ years ago, but we were all just as in need of God's mercy as the thief was.
- d. The Apostle Paul levels the playing field in that we're all cut off from God and fallen infinitely short of His glory (Rom 3:23).
- e. The foot of the cross is level ground where every single person stands at the same level.
- f. God makes no distinction between us (Acts 15:7-9) because of Christ, but also makes no distinction between those who naturally sin less and those who naturally (or desire to) sin more.
- g. We've all earned the wages of death, but thank God through our Lord Jesus Christ, that He also offers eternal life (Rom 6:23), so it takes only one sin to condemn us, but only One to set us free (John 8:36).

#### 12. Sacrifice.

- a. The Apostle Paul writes in Romans 5:6-8 that "while we were still weak, at the right time Christ died for the ungodly. For one will scarcely die for a righteous person— (like the Thief on the Cross) though perhaps for a good person one would dare even to die (like Abraham or Moses)— but God shows his love for us in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us."
- b. What greater mercy is there than to have a Holy God (Jesus)



- die for wicked sinners?
- c. Jesus told the disciples, “Greater love has no one than this, that someone lay down his life for his friends” (John 15:13).
  - d. Even as those who crucified Him watched, He prayed, “Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do” (Luke 23:43).
  - e. Jesus taught us, “Love your enemies, do good to those who hate you, bless those who curse you, pray for those who abuse you” (Luke 6:27-28). He also testified, “I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep” (John 10:11).
  - f. It is abundantly clear from Scripture that “God so loved the world, that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life” (John 3:16).
  - g. That’s where God’s judgment on sin landed; Jesus Christ, but that’s also where God’s mercy was revealed, “For even the Son of Man came not to be served but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for man” (Mark 10:45).
  - h. No one took it from Him...He willingly laid it down (John 10:18).
13. Compassion.
- a. Jude writes about witnessing in two different ways. We should “have mercy on those who doubt” (Jude 1:22), and many do doubt.
  - b. Some doubt that God could possibly save them. They think they’ve done too much, and can’t come as they are. They often wait until they can clean their lives up, but that will never happen until they come to Christ.
  - c. It’s not trying to get holy and then come to Jesus, but it’s coming to Jesus and being accounted as holy before God (2 Cor 5:21).
  - d. Then Jude tells us to “save others by snatching them out of the fire; to others show mercy with fear, hating even the garment stained by the flesh” (Jude 1:23).
  - e. Listen to the caring compassion that Jesus has. It says, “When he saw the crowds, he had compassion for them, because they were harassed and helpless, like sheep without a shepherd” (Matt 9:36).
  - f. Do we have such a heart for the lost?

- g. Are we willing to leave the 99 and seek the one that is lost?
- h. If not us, then who? Paul may have put it best by telling us to “be imitators of God, as beloved children. And walk in love, as Christ loved us and gave himself up for us, a fragrant offering and sacrifice to God” (Eph 5:1-2).
- i. This life gives us opportunity to show the world who Jesus’ disciples are (John 13:34-35).
- j. Learn to love your haters. Your haters can help you more than they can hurt you.
- k. We don’t retaliate or “get even,” but rather, as Jesus said, “Love your enemies, do good to those who hate you, bless those who curse you, pray for those who abuse you” (Luke 6:27-28).

#### 14. Love.

- a. People may have many definitions of love, but the Bible tells us what love really is, and it is a verb...it is what you do, and for us who believe, it is what Jesus did.
- b. Love is not a greeting card, a love letter, or a big kiss. Those are byproducts of love, but they are not love in themselves. Love is displayed in action. Jesus lived a sinless life, gave His life as a sacrifice for us to receive eternal life, then offered the free gift of eternal life (Eph 2:8-9).
- c. And even though we were dead in our sins (Eph 2:1-7), being ungodly, wicked enemies of God, Jesus died for us (Rom 5:6-10)!
- d. Believers have grasped where the judgment of God stopped and the mercy of God started, and it was at the cross.
- e. There is no greater love possible than for Jesus Himself to die for unworthy sinners.
- f. Here’s why grace is such an amazing thing. He did not give us what we deserved (His wrath); He gave us what we needed (His mercy).

#### Practice

1. How would you respond to a professing Christian who said, “I believe in a God of love, not of judgment”?
2. How would you respond to a professing Christian who said, “If God

- only chooses to save some, then He is not fair”?
3. Discuss: Can God-fearing Christians watch TV sitcoms or go to movies depicting sex and violence and remain unstained?
  4. What is the penalty for ungodliness?
  5. How do we excuse our unwillingness to trust and obey God?
  6. What is the relationship between godliness and judgement.
  7. What is the relationship between justice and mercy?

## Wake Up!

### Problem

If the foundations of society are overthrown, what can the righteous do?

### Premise

God is the refuge of the righteous.

### Philosophy

David's position is the only right position for the Christ-centered family. I trust in the Lord for protection. So why do you say to me, "Fly like a bird to the mountains for safety! The wicked are stringing their bows and fitting their arrows on the bowstrings. They shoot under the cover of darkness at those whose hearts are right. Yes the secular the foundations of law and order have collapsed. What can the righteous do?" You must remember that the Lord is in his holy Temple; the Lord still rules from heaven. He watches everyone closely, examining every person on earth. The Lord examines both the righteous and the wicked. He hates those who love violence. He will rain down blazing coals and burning sulfur on the wicked, punishing them with scorching winds. For the righteous Lord loves justice. The virtuous will see his face (Psalm 11:1-7).

When advised to flee from danger, David affirms God's righteousness and His sure judgment of the wicked.

The phrase "In His holy temple" is not associated with worship. It is from His "holy temple" that God dispenses judgment As long as God exists and as long as God judges, our foundation cannot be shaken or destroyed.

Moral foundations are timeless. God is; God observes, and God examines. God hates the wicked. God will rain judgment on the wicked and the upright will see His face.

### Principle

1. Asleep at the wheel.
  - a. Sir John Bagot Glubb [1897-1986] was a British army officer, scholar and author of 21 books. His book *The Fate of Empires and Search for Survival* formed the inspiration for popular

syndicated columnist Cal Thomas' America's Expiration Date: The Fall of Empires, Superpowers ... and the Future of the United States.

([www.amazon.com/Americas-Expiration-Date-Empires-Superpowers/dp/0310357535](http://www.amazon.com/Americas-Expiration-Date-Empires-Superpowers/dp/0310357535)).

- b. Glubb led and disciplined Jordan's Arab Legion from 1939 to 1956, developing it into one of the strongest armies in the Middle East, known as the Jordan Royal Army.
- c. "Sir John Glubb," writes Cal Thomas, "was surprised to learn that the average age of a nation or empire's greatness is 250 years. 'The average has not varied for 3,000 years.' Let that sink in. Over the past 3,000 years, every great nation or empire lost its way in an average of a mere 250 years. I will do the math for you. On July 4, 2026, the United States of America will be 250 years old."
- d. "What makes us think," Thomas wonders, "we will be protected from the fate of other great nations, which often collapsed under the weight of financial debt, moral rot, and military over-extension?"
- e. Regarding the millstone of moral rot as dragging down a nation into disintegration, we can regard our own country as a bleak example. Founded in the words of the Mayflower Compact for "the glory of God and advancement of the Christian faith," ours is a nation that experienced a miraculous meteoric rise by positioning the Bible as the focal point to judge society and to produce a righteous culture. This same nation has now gone off the deep end by celebrating immorality in the culture, by social engineering and instilling X-rated values in America's youth through government-run education, and by flaunting socialism as revolutionary elevation.
- f. In understanding that the upper tributaries of culture direct downstream politics, we may once again paraphrase Mark Steyn: If public education is secularly radicalized; if the four horsemen of Apple, Amazon, Facebook & Google manipulate social media and impose censorship on those holding conservative and biblical worldview, thereby setting in motion systemic violations of law, and subsequently anarchy; if Bill

Maher, Howard Stern, and Ellen DeGeneres are society's guiding lights illuminating customary beliefs, social forms, and material traits in America's adolescents; if the latest du jour celebrity sex tape is America's infatuation, then having an 'R' behind a name isn't going to make much difference.

- g. For God's perspective we turn to Deuteronomy 30:1: "And it shall be that when all these things come upon you, the blessing and the curse that I have set before you, then you shall return to your senses among all the nations to which the Lord your God banished you."

## 2. Wake up!

- a. In his commentary on the Book of Deuteronomy, Peter C. Craigie puts it thus: "At some point, when disobedience brought on the curse of the covenant and the people were dispersed among foreign nations, there would come a turning point.
- b. The turning point would be followed by certain steps; the process would influence the preaching of the prophets in subsequent generations.
  - i. Sound doctrine would cause the people to remember that the circumstances in which they found themselves were not the result of 'fate,' but an inevitable consequence of disobeying the covenant with the Lord, which resulted in the curse of the Lord.
  - ii. Once they knew the reason for the consequences that they suffered, the course of action would become clear.
  - iii. In repentance, they must return to the Lord of the Covenant, individually and as families.
- c. Having allowed and set the stage for the moral foundation and biblically based family to break down, secularists now control the spiritual, intellectual, educational, economic, and vocational levers of powers for a season.
- d. Repentance alone will not lead to freedom, as we are ruled by encroachers and contraveners.
- e. Christendom moving inside the church building, away from the culture, has significantly contributed to how we have ended up at this low point. Church buildings have become the focal point and breeding place for a subculture that abandoned Jesus'

Kingdom assignment as defined in Matthew 16:18: “Upon this rock I will build my ekklesia, and all the powers of hell will not conquer it.”

- f. In its desire to entertain people and under write the Church budget, the Church focuses less and less on godliness and more and more on feelings.
  - g. The emphasis on the family being Christ-centered has been replaced with an emphasis on family emotional stability.
  - h. Theologically speaking, residing within the walls of a church building falls far short from Jesus’ Kingdom assignment to build His ekklesia.
  - i. Contemporary Christendom’s emphasis on butts, budgets and buildings, while the culture is in steep decline, has all the appearance of “having a form of godliness but denying its power,” ( 2 Timothy 3:5).
  - j. Jesus’ ekklesia must be moved out of the building back into the marketplace, if the family is to survive, and that in short order. As the family rises or falls, the nation rises or falls.
  - k. The Church must encourage the family to get back to playing the long game and provide an answer to the Psalmist’s question in Psalm 11:3: “If the foundations be destroyed, what can the righteous do?”
3. The Christ-centered family believes God.
- a. Your behavior is informed by your beliefs.
  - b. Nothing can displace or overcome God in creation.
    - i. We can depend upon Him when all else falls because of His power and authority.
    - ii. He brought this world into being and will guide it to its successful conclusion.
    - iii. The sovereignty of God is poured out in wrath upon the wicked to defend the helpless and the godly because God is righteous and loves justice.
  - c. God will eventually punish the wicked.
    - i. Although we may be perplexed about the reason for our suffering, our basic confidence is in God's character.
    - ii. We may experience injustice, but God's justice will eventually prevail.

- d. Friends often counsel safety in the seen, in the mountain.
    - i. The Christ-centered family must trust in the unseen God.
    - ii. Friends often see the lurking missiles of destruction.
    - iii. The Christ-centered family must trust the searching eye of God.
    - iv. Times of trouble need not bring forth sorrow.
    - v. They may give rise to statements of confidence in God.
  - e. God is present and watching and testing His people.
    - i. Upright behavior is linked with closeness with God, revealing that God reveals Himself to those who follow Him.
    - ii. To see God's face is to know and understand His nature.
    - iii. As Moses responded, "Then show me your glorious presence." The LORD replied, "I will make all my goodness pass before you, and I will call out my name, Yahweh, before you. For I will show mercy to anyone I choose, and I will show compassion to anyone I choose. But you may not look directly at my face, for no one may see me and live." The LORD continued, "Look, stand near me on this rock. As my glorious presence passes by, I will hide you in the crevice of the rock and cover you with my hand until I have passed by (Exodus 33:18-22).
  - f. The wicked, with worldly wisdom, attack that which is foundational in the life of the righteous.
    - i. They attack the truth of creation as recorded in Genesis, which is foundational to the rest of the Bible and to the faith and practice of the Christian.
    - ii. This is a primary focus of the attacks of the ungodly.
    - iii. The modern Church appears to be oblivious to this critical danger.
    - iv. The attacks of the ungodly cannot and do not define the infinite capacity of God.
4. Rebuild the foundations.
- a. As to rebuilding the foundations, and choosing fight over flight, 44 California pastors declared recently that they will be running in 2020 for local office - city council, school board, parks and recreation, etc.



- b. When God is on our side, and faith anchors our belief system flight never enters the equation, no matter how cruel and mighty our enemies.
  - c. God brought us through slavery.
  - d. God brought us through black codes.
  - e. God brought us through jim crow.
  - f. God brought us through de jure segregation that was in place because of evil laws.
  - g. God brought us through de facto segregation that was in place in spite of the new laws on the books to eliminate racial discrimination and injustice.
  - h. God cannot and does not fail. We must not and cannot fear.
  - i. There is no impossibility in God's economy.
  - j. Christ-centered families know how to fight and conquer, but not how to flee.
5. The finished work at Calvary is our standard and eternal reference!

#### Practice

1. What failures, obstacles, or situations often cause us to feel like giving up?
2. On whom do wicked people focus their attacks?
3. Why do many families feel so helpless and hopeless?
4. What actions does the Lord take on behalf of the Christ-centered family?
5. How and why does God treat the wicked and the righteous differently?
6. How does remembering God's faithfulness in the past encourage us about the future?
7. What have you learned from this lesson about God's character and how should it affect your choices?

## Five Pillars Of Islam And Salvation

### Problem

Can keeping the Five Pillars of Islam get me to heaven?

### Premise

God does not violate your will and right to choose.

### Philosophy

Because God is just, He will punish sin—regardless of how well you keep the Five Pillars of Islam.

### Principle

1. A Muslim longs to reach paradise after death. But as a sinner, how will you escape God's judgment? One may think, "My faithfulness in keeping the Five Pillars may outweigh my sins. Hopefully, God will admit me to paradise."
2. You strive to keep the Five Pillars of Islam.
  - a. Five times a day you kneel toward Mecca.
  - b. The creed (shahada) often forms on your lips.
  - c. You bring no bread or water to your mouth during the daylight of Ramadan.
  - d. You are saving up money for the pilgrimage to Mecca and are freely giving alms to the poor.
  - e. But still you question, "Is keeping the Five Pillars enough?"
3. Your conscience convicts you of failing God's standard of holiness.
  - a. How could the holy God accept to paradise someone stained with even a little sin?
4. Only one sin caused the first man's downfall.
  - a. By eating the forbidden fruit, Adam brought the curse of sin and death into the world.
5. Shall we escape?
  - a. We who have dishonored our parents, lied to our neighbors, or cheated our customers (Exodus 20)?
  - b. We sin routinely by putting selfish interests ahead of loving God (Matthew 22:36–40).
  - c. We proudly overlook or excuse our sins.

- d. But God does not overlook or excuse any sin.
  - e. He will judge every thought, word, and deed (Ecclesiastes 12:14; Matthew 12:36; Revelation 20:12–15).
6. God is a righteous Judge.
- a. Even on earth, a judge must punish sinners.
  - b. A judge cannot pardon someone who has stolen just because the criminal claims to visit the mosque every Friday and fast during Ramadan.
  - c. If sin goes unpunished, the law would be disregarded, and God would be dishonored.
7. God is the just Judge and will not let sin go unpunished, regardless of how well you keep God’s laws or how many good deeds you do.
- a. Keeping the Five Pillars of Islam cannot get you to heaven.
  - b. You are a sinner according to God’s Word (Romans 3:23; 1 John 1:8).
8. The punishment for our sin is death—eternal death in hell.
- a. Our rightful home is hell.
  - b. We need God’s mercy.
9. The Bible explains how God’s mercy fits with His justice: “For by works of the law no human being will be justified in [God’s] sight, since through the law comes knowledge of sin. But now the righteousness of God has been manifested apart from the law, although the Law and the Prophets bear witness to it—the righteousness of God through faith in Jesus Christ for all who believe” (Romans 3:20–22).
10. Keeping the law cannot get us to heaven.
- a. Instead, the law reveals our sin.
  - b. God’s justice requires eternal death in hell for sin, but His mercy provides eternal life in heaven through faith in Jesus.
  - c. “For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord” (Romans 6:23).
11. As the eternal Son of God, Jesus is one with God the Father.
- a. God sent His Son to earth to become man, but Jesus never ceased being God.
  - b. Born by the power of the Holy Spirit to the virgin Mary, Jesus didn’t inherit Adam’s sin nature.
  - c. Jesus is called the second Adam (1 Corinthians 15:22).

- d. While Adam's one disobedience brought the curse of sin on the world, Jesus' perfect life brings the hope of paradise to those who trust in Him.
  - e. Jesus took the punishment for sin—death—by dying on the cross on behalf of believing sinners.
  - f. Then, Jesus rose from the dead, showing He conquered sin and death.
12. Don't try to take care of sin on your own.
- a. Even keeping the Five Pillars of Islam, you will still fall short of God's perfection.
  - b. Turn from sin in repentance and turn to Jesus in faith (Luke 24:46–47; Ephesians 2:8–9; Romans 3:21–31; Galatians 3:6–14).
  - c. God forgives believing sinners and gives them eternal life in heaven.
  - d. God may be working in your heart, showing you your sin and need for Jesus.
  - e. Receive God's gift of eternal life! Trust Jesus as your crucified Savior and follow Him as your resurrected Lord!

### Practice

1. How can God be both merciful and just?
2. Why isn't keeping the Five Pillars enough?
3. How could the holy God accept to paradise someone stained with even a little sin?

## Islam and Christianity

### Problem

What is the eternal difference between Islam and Christianity?

### Premise

Grace and truth came through Jesus Christ (John 1:17).

### Philosophy

While some similarities exist between Islam and Christianity (they are both monotheistic religions, for example), their differences are clear-cut, significant, and irreconcilable. For this article, we will survey four key areas: the founders of the two religions, the contrasting views of God, the sacred literature, and the means of salvation. Islam differs from Christianity in at least four areas.

### Principle

1. Founders of the Religions
  - a. Islam was founded by an Arab merchant named Muhammed about AD 622. Muhammed claimed to have received a revelation from an angel of God, and, although he initially feared his revelation had come from Satan, Muhammed later claimed to be the last and greatest of all of God's prophets. Muhammed had fifteen wives (although he limited other men to four wives apiece) and sanctioned the beating of wives (Sura 4:34). Muhammed was well known for spreading his new religion by force. He commanded, "Fight and slay the Pagans wherever you find them" (Sura 9:5), and he specified the proper way to execute an unbeliever was to cut his throat (Sura 47:4).
  - b. Muhammed led raids against caravans to plunder their goods, broke oaths, ordered the murder of those who mocked him, and wiped out the last Jewish tribe in Medina—he killed all the men and enslaved the women and children. Interestingly, Muhammed acknowledged his own need to seek God's forgiveness on occasion (Sura 40:55).
  - c. In stark contrast to the moral depravity of Muhammed, Jesus Christ was above reproach in every way (2 Corinthians 5:21). Jesus never married, He defended and honored women (John

8:1–11), and His law was “love one another” (John 13:34). Accordingly, Jesus never assassinated anyone, never beat a woman, never enslaved a child, never broke a promise, and never plundered a caravan.

- d. On the cross, when Jesus was mocked by those nearby, His response was, “Father, forgive them” (Luke 23:34).

## 2. Views of God

- a. Islam teaches that Allah, or God, is the sovereign Creator and Ruler of all that is. Muslims emphasize God’s absolute unity, which will admit of no division, and God’s will. In fact, the will of God is more basic to who He is than His love or mercy. God could choose not to be merciful, and He can choose not to love; thus, Allah’s mercy and love are not intrinsic to His nature but are choices He makes.
- b. More important than loving God—or even knowing Him—is submitting to His will.
- c. One meaning of the word Islam is “submission.” According to Islam, God cannot be considered a “father” and He has no son. Allah does not love sinners (Surah 3:140).
- d. Christianity teaches that God is the sovereign Creator and Ruler of all that is.
- e. Christians believe in one God who exists in three eternal, co-equal Persons (Father, Son, and Spirit) who share the same indivisible essence.
- f. According to Christianity, God loves because His very nature is love (1 John 4:8)—not just because He happens to choose to love.
- g. God’s essence includes the attribute of mercy, so divine displays of mercy are more than choices God makes; they are extensions of His character.
- h. God is knowable and desires a relationship with us based on love (Mark 12:30).
- i. Obeying God is important, but obedience without a relationship based on love is worthless (1 Corinthians 13:3).
- j. According to Christianity, God the Father has an eternal relationship with God the Son.
- k. God does love the sinner (Romans 5:8).

### 3. Sacred Literature

- a. Islam holds that the Torah (the first five books of the Old Testament), the Psalms, and the Gospels were given by God—with this caveat: Jews and Christians have corrupted God’s Word and therefore Bibles cannot be fully trusted.
- b. Muslims believe that God’s final Word, the Qur’an, was miraculously given to Muhammed over a period of twenty-three years. The Qur’an, which is perfect and holy, is divided into 114 chapters called suras. In addition to the Qur’an, the Muslims have the Hadith, a collection of Muhammed’s sayings, opinions, and actions as reported by those close to him.
- c. Biblical Christianity holds that the Old and New Testaments of the Bible are God’s inspired Word and the only authoritative rule of faith and practice.
- d. The Bible warns against adding to God’s Word (Revelation 22:18); Christians reject the Qur’an as an attempted addition to God’s Word and as a document that contradicts the Bible in many ways.

### 4. Means of Salvation

- a. Islam teaches a works-based salvation and in this way is similar to other man-made religions.
- b. A Muslim must keep the five pillars of Islam: he must confess the shahadah (“there is no God but Allah, and Muhammed is his prophet”); he must kneel in prayer toward Mecca five times a day; he must fast during the daylight hours one month of the year (Ramadan); he must give money to the poor; and he must make a pilgrimage to Mecca sometime in his lifetime. Islam teaches that the day of judgment will involve a person’s good and bad deeds being weighed in a balance—so the standard for judgment is one’s own actions (Surah 7:8-9; 21:47). The Qur’an forbids anyone from bearing another’s burden of sin (Surah 17:15; 35:18) and pointedly denies the death of Jesus (or Isa) on the cross (Surah 3:55; 4:157–158). If you will be saved, you must save yourself.
- c. Christianity teaches a grace-based salvation. A person is saved by the grace (the undeserved blessing) of God, through faith in the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ (Ephesians 2:8–9;

Romans 10:9–10). The standard for judgment is absolute perfection—the righteousness of Christ. No one can measure up to perfection (Romans 3:23), but God in His grace and mercy has given His Son as the substitute for our sin: “When you were dead in your sins . . . God made you alive with Christ. He forgave us all our sins, having canceled the charge of our legal indebtedness, which stood against us and condemned us; he has taken it away, nailing it to the cross” (Colossians 1:13–14).

- d. We cannot save ourselves, so we turn to Christ, our sinless Savior and the author and finisher of our faith (Hebrews 12:2).
5. Beliefs on essential doctrines.
- a. Islam and Christianity, having different beliefs on essential doctrines such as God, Jesus, Scripture, and salvation, are irreconcilable.
  - b. Both religions cannot be true.
  - c. Christians believe that Jesus Christ, as presented in the Bible, is the true Son of God and Savior of mankind.

### Practice

1. What distinguishes Christianity from Islam?
2. What is the eternal state of the Muslim?
3. What is the eternal state of the Christian?



## Muslim Beliefs

### Problem

What is Islam, and what do Muslims believe?

### Premise

Belief informs behavior.

### Philosophy

Islam is a religious system begun in the seventh century by Muhammad. Muslims follow the teachings of the Qur'an and strive to keep the Five Pillars.

### Principle

1. The History of Islam
  - a. In the seventh century, Muhammad claimed the angel Gabriel visited him. During these angelic visitations, which continued for about 23 years until Muhammad's death, the angel purportedly revealed to Muhammad the words of Allah (the Arabic word for "God" used by Muslims).
  - b. These dictated revelations compose the Qur'an, Islam's holy book.
  - c. Islam means "submission," deriving from a root word that means "peace."
  - d. The word Muslim means "one who submits to Allah."
2. The Doctrine of Islam
  - a. Muslims summarize their doctrine in six articles of faith:
  - b. Belief in one Allah:
    - i. Muslims believe Allah is one, eternal, creator, and sovereign.
  - c. Belief in the angels.
  - d. Belief in the prophets:
    - i. The prophets include the biblical prophets but end with Muhammad as Allah's final prophet.
  - e. Belief in the revelations of Allah:
    - i. Muslims accept certain portions of the Bible, such as the Torah and the Gospels.

- ii. They believe the Qur'an is the preexistent, perfect word of Allah.
  - f. Belief in the last day of judgment and the hereafter:
    - i. Everyone will be resurrected for judgment into either paradise or hell.
  - g. Belief in predestination:
    - i. Muslims believe Allah has decreed everything that will happen.
    - ii. Muslims testify to Allah's sovereignty with their frequent phrase, inshallah, meaning, "if God wills."
- 3. The Five Pillars of Islam
  - a. These five tenets compose the framework of obedience for Muslims:
  - b. The testimony of faith (shahada):
    - i. "la ilaha illa allah. Muhammad rasul Allah."
    - ii. This means, "There is no deity but Allah.
    - iii. Muhammad is the messenger of Allah."
    - iv. A person can convert to Islam by stating this creed.
    - v. The shahada shows that a Muslim believes in Allah alone as deity and believes that Muhammad reveals Allah.
  - c. Prayer (salat):
    - i. Five ritual prayers must be performed every day.
  - d. Giving (zakat):
    - i. This almsgiving is a certain percentage given once a year.
  - e. Fasting (sawm):
    - i. Muslims fast during Ramadan in the ninth month of the Islamic calendar.
    - ii. They must not eat or drink from dawn until sunset.
  - f. Pilgrimage (hajj):
    - i. If physically and financially possible, a Muslim must make the pilgrimage to Mecca in Saudi Arabia at least once.
    - ii. The hajj is performed in the twelfth month of the Islamic calendar.
  - g. A Muslim's entrance into paradise hinges on obedience to these Five Pillars.
    - i. Still, Allah may reject them.

- ii. Even Muhammad was not sure whether Allah would admit him to paradise (Surah 46:9; Hadith 5.266).
- 4. An Evaluation of Islam
  - a. Compared to Christianity, Islam has some similarities but significant differences.
    - i. Like Christianity, Islam is monotheistic.
    - ii. However, Muslims reject the Trinity—that God has revealed Himself as one in three Persons: the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.
  - b. Muslims claim that Jesus was one of the most important prophets—not God’s Son.
    - i. Islam asserts that Jesus, though born of a virgin, was created like Adam.
    - ii. Muslims do not believe Jesus died on the cross.
    - iii. They do not understand why Allah would allow His prophet Isa (the Islamic word for "Jesus") to die a torturous death.
    - iv. Yet the Bible shows how the death of the perfect Son of God was essential to pay for the sins of the world (Isaiah 53:5-6; John 3:16; 14:6; 1 Peter 2:24).
  - c. Islam teaches that the Qur'an is the final authority and the last revelation of Allah.
    - i. The Bible, however, was completed in the first century with the Book of Revelation.
    - ii. The Bible warns against anyone adding to or subtracting from God’s Word (Deuteronomy 4:2; Proverbs 30:6; Galatians 1:6-12; Revelation 22:18).
    - iii. The Qur’an, as a claimed addition to God’s Word, directly disobeys God’s command.
  - d. Muslims believe that paradise can be earned through keeping the Five Pillars.
    - i. The Bible, in contrast, reveals that sinful man can never measure up to the holy God (Romans 3:23; 6:23).
    - ii. Only by God’s grace may sinners be saved through repentant faith in Jesus (Acts 20:21; Ephesians 2:8-9).
  - e. Because of these essential differences and contradictions, Islam and Christianity cannot both be true.

- i. The Bible and Qur'an cannot both be God's Word.
  - ii. The truth has eternal consequences.
- f. Beloved, do not believe every spirit, but test the spirits to see whether they are from God, because many false prophets have gone out into the world. By this you know the Spirit of God: every spirit that confesses that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh is from God; and every spirit that does not confess Jesus is not from God; this is the spirit of the antichrist, of which you have heard that it is coming, and now it is already in the world (1 John 4:1-4; John 3:35-36).

### Practice

1. What is the danger of believing unsound doctrine?
2. What is truth so very critical in making eternal decisions?
3. If Jesus is God how and why did He die?
4. What prevents good people from eternal salvation?
5. What allows a not so good person to have eternal salvation?
6. What is the role of the Gospel and preachers of the Gospel?
7. Who and what is the antichrist?

## Salvation Is Available

### Problem

Why should a Muslim consider becoming a Christian?

### Premise

Either Jesus bears your sin on the cross or you bear your sin in hell.

### Philosophy

People often follow the religion of their parents or culture, whether Muslim, Buddhist, or Catholic. But when we stand before God on Judgment Day, each person must give account for himself—whether he believed in God’s truth. But among so many religions, what is the truth? “Jesus answered, ‘I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me’” (John 14:6).

True Christians are followers of Jesus. How could Jesus claim to be the one and only way to God the Father? Let’s find out in the Scripture, the Bible.

### Principle

1. Jesus’ life, death, and resurrection.
  - a. The Bible records how Jesus fulfilled prophecy when He was born to the virgin Mary. He grew up unique from any other human because He never sinned (1 Peter 2:22). Crowds flocked to hear His teaching and marvel at His miracles. Jesus healed the sick, raised the dead, and walked on water.
  - b. Of all people, Jesus did not deserve to die. Yet Jesus prophesied that He would be crucified and raised from the dead (Matthew 20:18-19). His words came to pass. Soldiers beat Jesus and put a crown of thorns on His head; people mocked and spit on Him; nails pierced His hands and feet into a wooden cross. Jesus had the power to save Himself, but He gave Himself, willingly dying on the cross (John 19:30). Three days later, Jesus rose from the grave!
2. Jesus’ death was essential.
  - a. Every person is a sinner: “For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God” (Romans 3:23). Whether dishonoring parents,

telling a lie, failing to love God best, or disbelieving God's Word, we each have sinned against the holy God.

- b. The punishment for sin is death: "For the wages of sin is death" (Romans 6:23a). God pours out His wrath against unbelieving sinners by separating them forever in hell (2 Thessalonians 1:8, 9). As the just Judge, God will not overlook sin.
  - c. We cannot save ourselves by good works: "For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith—and this not from yourselves, it is the gift of God—not by works, so that no one can boast" (Ephesians 2:8-9). This is a key difference between Christianity and Islam. Islam teaches that a person can earn paradise by keeping the Five Pillars. Even if possible to outweigh bad deeds with good deeds, the Bible teaches that "all our righteous acts are like filthy rags" (Isaiah 64:6b). Even one single sin makes a person guilty of breaking all God's law (James 2:10). Sinful humans can do nothing to merit heaven.
  - d. God sacrificed His Son for sinners: "For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life" (John 3:16). God knew mankind's sin kept them from heaven. God knew the only way the sin debt could be paid was by a perfect One paying the price of death. God knew He alone could pay such an infinite price. So God's eternal plan was to send His Son Jesus to die in the believing sinner's place.
3. Becoming a Christian
- a. Believe in the Lord Jesus, and you will be saved (Acts 16:31b).
  - b. A Muslim may say, "Oh, I believe in Jesus. I believe Isa was a true teacher, a great prophet, and a good man."
    - i. You cannot say Jesus was a true teacher and yet deny His teaching that He is the only way, truth, and life (John 14:6).
    - ii. You cannot believe Jesus was a great prophet and yet reject His prophecy that He would die and rise again in three days (Luke 18:31-33).
    - iii. You cannot admit Jesus is a good man yet disbelieve His claim to be the Son of God (Luke 22:70; John 5:18-47).
  - c. You cannot consider becoming a Christian without realizing

that Christianity excludes all other religions (Acts 4:12). The inescapable conclusion of Christianity is this: either Jesus bears your sin on the cross or you bear your sin in hell.

“Whoever believes in the Son has eternal life, but whoever rejects the Son will not see life, for God’s wrath remains on him” (John 3:36).

4. Believe God and ask for salvation.
  - a. God alone can save! Your prayer should be your expression of the faith God gives you in the Lord Jesus Christ.
  - b. Pray: Dear God, I grieve that I have sinned against You. As a sinner, I’m worthy of death in hell. But I believe You sent Your Son, Jesus, to die on the cross for sin and rise from the dead in victory. I now turn from following my own desires and from trying to reach heaven through my own works. I trust in the Lord Jesus alone as my Savior from sin. I love You, Lord, and submit myself to follow You by Your Word, the Bible. Amen!”

#### Practice

1. A Muslim may ask, “Why would Allah allow His Prophet Isa to be mistreated and killed?”
2. What must a Muslim do to be saved?
3. What is the eternal state of those who reject Jesus Christ?

## Experience God

### Problem

How can we truly experience God?

### Premise

Jesus came to earth as God incarnate.

### Philosophy

When we hear the word "experience," it's natural to think of it as something tangible, or something that provokes some sort of sensory experience. Experiencing God is more than feelings or emotions. God has acted to provide and impart righteousness. By-faith righteousness has a distinctive shape all its own.

On the basis of all God has done we are urged to open ourselves up to transformation rather than conform to this world's ways. The practice of righteousness requires intimate faith. God has created a new living body. He has given each member gifts that enable him or her to contribute to the welfare of the whole. And to function as a body, believers must practice love and serve one another. We must strengthen interpersonal bonds that enable us to minister to one another (Romans 12).

### Principle

1. God does not want us to die for Him, but to live for Him daily.
2. Complete.
  - a. We experience the forgiveness of God through Jesus Christ.
  - b. We experience the presence of God through the Holy Spirit.
  - c. We experience the love and care of God for us through the Father (1 John 4:8).
  - d. He was crucified in order to make provision for permanent forgiveness of our sins (Matthew 26:28; Ephesians 1:7).
  - e. Through His sacrifice, when we put our faith in Him, we experience eternal forgiveness and salvation.
  - f. We experience the blessings of God and facets of His character when we are submit to the lordship of Christ.
3. Relationship.



- a. The Holy Spirit inhabits us when we accept Christ.
  - b. He is our Helper and He is how we have a relationship with God here on the earth.
  - c. He teaches us and speaks to us, enabling us to hear God's voice and know His will: "But the Helper (Comforter, Advocate, Intercessor—Counselor, Strengtheners, Standby), the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in My name [in My place, to represent Me and act on My behalf], He will teach you all things. And He will help you remember everything that I have told you" (John 14:26, AMP).
  - d. The Holy Spirit gives us the understanding to grasp that we are children of God (Romans 8:16).
4. Fellowship.
- a. God has provided the opportunity for us to approach Him, know Him, and experience His presence.
  - b. When we seek Him, we will find Him (Jeremiah 29:12–13; Matthew 7:7–8).
  - c. Through the blood of Jesus, we are cleansed of our sins and are able to draw near to God in total freedom (Hebrews 10:19–23).
  - d. James 4:8 says: "Draw near to God, and he will draw near to you."
5. Presence.
- a. When we think of experiencing God, we think of having the feeling of His presence being around us.
  - b. The presence of God can be overwhelming to us, so He only shows us the small parts of Him that we are capable of handling.
  - c. Exodus 33:11 tells us that "the LORD used to speak to Moses face to face, as a man speaks to his friend."
  - d. Later, Moses asked to see the glory of the Lord, but God could only give him a partial view, because "man shall not see me and live" (Exodus 33:18–23).
  - e. The earth itself trembles at God's presence: "Tremble, O earth, at the presence of the LORD, at the presence of the God of Jacob" (Psalm 114:7).
  - f. One to experiencing His presence is by glorifying Him with

- singing, thanksgiving, and praise (Psalm 100:1–4).
- g. Sometimes we glorify Him by being still before Him: "Be still, and know that I am God. I will be exalted among the nations, I will be exalted in the earth!" (Psalm 46:10).
6. Experience.
- a. When we live our lives focused on God, we experience Him in our everyday lives.
  - b. We experience His faithfulness and goodness.
  - c. He grants us His peace and His presence.
  - d. We get to hear His still small voice (1 Kings 19:11–12).
  - e. We experience Him in the beautiful world He has created and provided for us:
    - i. "When I look at your heavens, the work of your fingers, the moon and the stars, which you have set in place, what is man that you are mindful of him, and the son of man that you care for him?" (Psalm 8:3–4).
7. Don't let the world around you shape you into its own mold.
- a. The world exerts all sorts of pressures to force us to adopt its ways of thinking. We don't have to conform. We can be transformed from within by God.
  - b. The Gk. word nous views mind as "capacity to perceive." We're no longer to look at life's issues as mere human beings, but let our perceptions be reshaped by God's own revelation of reality in the Scriptures.
  - c. To truly see life from God's perspective we must live it in His way. This is not the great risk some fear it to be. We are (dokimazo) test to display the genuineness of that which is tried. Trust God's will to be good, test your confidence by doing God's will, and you will discover God's way truly is good, pleasing, and perfect.
  - d. When we look at ourselves honestly, we realize we need others in the body of Christ and others need us. We are interdependent. Like members of a human body, we need to be in place to be effective and to function as God intends. We should not isolate ourselves from other Christians. Every person can be significantly involved in sharing faith and life with others.

- e. Each N.T. description of the church as the body of Christ emphasizes the importance of love. To function at all any body must have all its members united to each other. No one could live if an arm were in one room, a leg in another. The N.T. reminds us that it is love that binds the body of Christ together, uniting believers in a "one" relationship which enables Christ's body to be responsive to Him, its Head.
  - f. Love is not an abstract concept in Scripture. It is a way of life. Let's not complain if our church isn't characterized by the way of life described here. Each person starts personally to live love among the members. Love is contagious.
  - g. In the Bible "vengeance" is a judicial function. It is justice, not revenge. It is punishment of sin. But don't suppose vengeance is ours to mete out. It is God's prerogative alone. And don't suppose He will draw back from this moral responsibility (2 Thes. 1:5-10).
  - h. Kindness induces a stinging sense of remorse in those whose actions merit punishment. It may be that remorse will only be felt on judgment day and unrequited kindness shown to the wicked and rejected will be the cause of even more severe judgment.
8. Transformation.
- a. The key to truly experiencing God lies in getting to know Him.
  - b. We should hear the Word.
  - c. We should believe the Word.
  - d. We should become the Word.
  - e. We should obey the Word.
  - f. Your beliefs inform your behavior.
  - g. When we invest in studying the Word of God, He transforms our hearts, enabling us to leave sin behind and instead experience Him, His will, and His ways (Romans 12:1-3; 2 Corinthians 5:17).
  - h. The key to living a transformed life is cultivating a renewed mind. The Christian who is too lazy mentally to drink deeply from God's revealed Word or to think courageously about the meaning of personal faith will tend to be shaped by institutionalized values and socially acceptable modes of

thought. The teacher may become the lazy person's god. The teacher must remain an instrument through whom God can work to challenge learners to think, question, and change. The Christian must find God's will personally and individually. No teacher can find God's will for you. Experiencing God through learning is a continuing process, not a once-for-all accomplishment (1 Cor. 1:18-31).

### Practice

1. What does experiencing God mean?
2. What prevents a person from pursuing godliness in all aspects of life?
3. What are the benefits of walking godly?
4. What is the relationship between experiencing God and transformation?
5. What part does faith play in experiencing God?
6. How does one present themselves as a living sacrifice?
7. What is the relationship between presenting yourself as a living sacrifice and experiencing God.

## Misfit

### Problem

What is godliness?

### Premise

Godliness is the disciplined focus upon God.

### Philosophy

2 Peter 1:3 By his divine power, God has given us everything we need for living a godly life. We have received all of this by coming to know him, the one who called us to himself by means of his marvelous glory and excellence.

Godliness is devotion to God which results in a life that is pleasing to him. God is at the center of your thoughts. Your most ordinary duties are done with an eye to God's glory. In Paul's words to the Corinthians, whether he eats or drinks or whatever he does, he does it all for the glory of God.

It is obvious that such a God-centered lifestyle cannot be developed and maintained apart from a solid foundation of devotion to God. Only a strong personal relationship with the living God can keep such a commitment from becoming oppressive and legalistic. John writes that God's commands are not burdensome; a godly life is not wearisome, but this is true only because a godly person is first of all devoted to God.

Devotion to God is the platform of godly character. And this devotion is the only motivation for Christian behavior that is pleasing to God. This motivation is what separates the godly person from the moral person, or the benevolent person, or the zealous person. The godly person is moral, benevolent, and zealous because of his devotion to God. And his life takes on a dimension that reflects the very stamp of God.

It is sad that many Christians do not have this aura of godliness about them. They may be very talented and personable, or very busy in the Lord's work, or even apparently successful in some avenues of Christian service, and still not be godly. Why? Because they are not devoted to God. They may be devoted to a vision, or to a ministry, or

to their own reputation as Christians, but not to God.

Godliness is more than Christian character: It is Christian character that springs from a devotion to God. But it is also true that devotion to God always results in godly character. The essential elements of devotion must express themselves in a life that is pleasing to God. So godliness can be defined as devotion to God which results in a life that is pleasing to him.

Godliness is one of seven qualities we are instructed to add to our faith after we become Christians. There are sixteen references to godliness in Scripture. All of them are in the New Testament, and most of them occur in 1 Timothy and 2 Peter. Let's examine what it is, what it's not, its prerequisites, its barriers, and its potential influence in our lives. Then we'll consider how to grow in godliness through personal application. These thoughts are influenced by Dr. David Jeremiah.

### Principle

1. 2 Peter 1:4 And because of his glory and excellence, he has given us great and precious promises. These are the promises that enable you to share his divine nature and escape the world's corruption caused by human desires. 5 In view of all this, make every effort to respond to God's promises. Supplement your faith with a generous provision of moral excellence, and moral excellence with knowledge, 6 and knowledge with self-control, and self-control with patient endurance, and patient endurance with godliness, 7 and godliness with brotherly affection, and brotherly affection with love for everyone. 8 The more you grow like this, the more productive and useful you will be in your knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ.
2. Peter challenged believers to take full advantage of the divine power and promise of God which made it possible to participate in the divine nature and thus overcome the corruption caused by evil desires (vv. 3-4). Based on this promised power, Peter further challenged Christians to practice the characteristics of the divine nature so that they would experience the assurance of eternal rewards (vv. 5-11).
3. Christ's divine power has provided everything we need for life and godliness. "Divine" translates theias, which is from theos ("God") and

- is used only three times in the New Testament (here and in Acts 17:29; 2 Peter 1:4). "Power" (dynamēōs) is one of Peter's favorite words (1 Peter 1:5; 3:22; 2 Peter 1:16; 2:11). All that believers need for spiritual vitality (life) and godly living (eusebeian, "godliness," "piety" 1:6; 3:11) is attainable through our knowledge of Him (Christ). An intimate "full knowledge" (epignōseōs; 1:2) of Christ is the source of spiritual power and growth (Phil. 1:9; Col. 1:9-10; 2:2).
4. Christ called (1 Peter 1:15) us to this life of godliness by His own glory and goodness (aretē, "moral excellence"; trans. "praises" in 1 Peter 2:9 and "goodness" in 2 Peter 1:5). Christ attracts people enslaved by sin (2:19) by His own moral excellence and the total impact of His glorious Person.
  5. Godliness (eusebeian, used in 2 Peter 1:3 and 3:11 and several other times [in the Gr.] in the Pastoral Epistles) refers to piety, our obligation of reverence toward God. The fourth-century church historian Eusebius was named for this Greek word. Today the words "piety" and "pious" have fallen on hard times in current usage. They are misfits.
  6. Characteristics of Godliness
    - a. Characteristic #1:
      - i. Godliness is the proof of our faith.
      - ii. Godliness is being faithful to our calling by doing the good works for which we were saved.
      - iii. First Corinthians 4:2 says, "Moreover it is required in stewards that one be found faithful."
      - iv. Our good works demonstrate our salvation, and they help our faith continue to grow.
      - v. The initial act of faith and the proof of faith are different, but related. The book of James explains this relationship through the example of Abraham:
      - vi. Was not Abraham our father justified by works when he offered Isaac his son on the altar? Do you see that faith was working together with his works, and by works faith was made perfect? And the Scripture was fulfilled which says, "Abraham believed God, and it was accounted to him for righteousness." And he was called the friend of God. You see then that a man is justified by works, and

- not by faith only. (James 2:21-24)
- vii. Abraham was justified by faith alone, but his faith did not remain alone. True faith is always accompanied by works. When he placed his son on the altar, Abraham demonstrated absolute faith in God. His obedience did not make him righteous, but it proved his righteousness. Godly works are the evidence of genuine faith.
- b. Characteristic #2:
    - i. Godliness is the example of our faith.
    - ii. By following Christ's example, we make Him known to a lost and dying world. Jesus prayed these words to His Father: "I have given them the glory you gave me, so they may be one as we are one. I am in them and you are in me. May they experience such perfect unity that the world will know that you sent me and that you love them as much as you love me" (John 17:22-23, NLT). Christians who follow Christ's example share His values.
    - iii. Our commitment to godliness becomes evident in our words, our lifestyle, our relationships, our attitude, our faith, and our purity (1 Timothy 4:12). When we study Scripture, we are prepared to encourage other believers. Godliness—thinking rightly and acting rightly—is a powerful witness to those around us.
  - c. Characteristic #3
    - i. Godliness is the action of our faith.
    - ii. Unless we make a choice to pursue godliness, we drift away from it like a sailing vessel that has been loosed from its moorings (Hebrews 2:1). Even mature Christians battle the temptation to drift. Our natural desires and the Holy Spirit's desires are contrary to each other, so we are instructed to follow the Spirit's leading each day. Diligently following the Holy Spirit's guidance is the only way to overcome sinful desires (Galatians 5:16-17).
    - iii. Have you ever heard the quip, "You have to walk the walk and talk the talk"? It's an apt representation of the Bible's admonition to "walk in the Spirit." Walk is a present-tense verb that indicates a way of life. It requires a daily habit of



continual obedience. Here are eight specific instructions for walking our walk:

- (1) – Walk in good works—Ephesians 2:10
- (2) – Walk properly—Romans 13:13
- (3) – Walk by faith—2 Corinthians 5:7
- (4) – Walk in love—Ephesians 5:2
- (5) – Walk as children of the light—Ephesians 5:8
- (6) – Walk worthy of the Lord—Colossians 1:10
- (7) – Walk worthy of our calling—Ephesians 4:1
- (8) – Walk as Jesus walked—1 John 2:6

## 7. Counterfeit Godliness

- a. One of Satan’s most powerful tactics is planting weeds in the Church—not literal weeds, but false teachers who dilute the Word of God.
- b. This is the essence of Jesus’ parable about the wheat and the tares in Matthew 13:24-30.
- c. The original word Jesus used to describe these weeds wasn’t as broad as our English word.
- d. The Greek word referred to a variety of worthless ryegrass that resembles wheat so closely it cannot be distinguished from true wheat until harvest time.
- e. Through this parable, Jesus was warning His followers that false teachers can be hard to identify.
- f. In 2 Timothy 3:5, the apostle Paul described people “having a form of godliness but denying its power.”
- g. If these false teachers are so hard to recognize, how can we avoid them? Paul offers these instructions:
- h. If anyone teaches otherwise and does not consent to wholesome words, even the words of our Lord Jesus Christ, and to the doctrine which accords with godliness, he is proud, knowing nothing, but is obsessed with disputes and arguments over words, from which come envy, strife, reviling, evil suspicions, useless wranglings of men of corrupt minds and destitute of the truth, who suppose that godliness is a means of gain. From such withdraw yourself. (1 Timothy 6:3-5)
- i. False teachers deviate from God’s truth in some way.
  - i. Drawing from the wheat parable, we are able to evaluate

- the fruit of a person's life.
  - ii. Is it yielding love, joy, peace, and other fruit of the Spirit?
  - iii. If not, if his life is producing streams of arguments, corruption, greed, and other troubles, the Bible says we should have nothing to do with him.
- j. God's Word provides detailed explanations of heavenly wisdom, which leads to godliness, and earthly or demonic wisdom, which leads to corruption.
  - i. The Way of Godliness—Heavenly Wisdom
    - (1) Teaches Christ's death and Resurrection (2 Timothy 2:8)
  - ii. The Way of Corruption—Earthly Wisdom
    - (1) Speaks profane and idle babblings that spread like cancer (2 Timothy 2:17-18)
  - iii. The Way of Godliness—Heavenly Wisdom
    - (1) Pure, peaceable, gentle, willing to yield, full of mercy and good fruits, without partiality and without hypocrisy (James 3:17)
  - iv. The Way of Corruption—Earthly Wisdom
    - (1) Bitter envy, self-seeking, boastful, deceitful (James 3:14)
  - v. The Way of Godliness—Heavenly Wisdom
    - (1) Submits to God, draws near to Him (James 4:7-8)
  - vi. The Way of Corruption—Earthly Wisdom
    - (1) Unrighteous, sexually immoral, wicked, covetous, malicious; full of envy, murder, strife, deceit, evil-mindedness. Whisperers, backbiters, haters of God, violent, proud, boasters, inventors of evil things, disobedient to parents, undiscerning, untrustworthy, unloving, unforgiving, unmerciful (Romans 1:29-31)
  - vii. The Way of Godliness—Heavenly Wisdom
    - (1) Not quarrelsome, gentle, able to teach, patient (2 Timothy 2:24)
  - viii. The Way of Corruption—Earthly Wisdom
    - (1) Lovers of self and money, boasters, prideful, blasphemers, disobedient to parents, unthankful,

- unholy, unloving, unforgiving, slanderers, without self-control, brutal, despisers of good, traitors, headstrong, haughty, lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God, having a form of godliness but denying its power (2 Timothy 3:2-5)
- ix. The Way of Godliness—Heavenly Wisdom
    - (1) Corrects unbelievers humbly (2 Timothy 2:25-26)
  - x. The Way of Corruption—Earthly Wisdom
    - (1) Always learning but never able to come to the knowledge of the truth; corrupt (2 Timothy 3:7-8)
  - xi. The Way of Godliness—Heavenly Wisdom
    - (1) Follows sound doctrine and godly examples with purpose; lives with faith, longsuffering, love, perseverance, persecution, affliction (2 Timothy 3:10-11)
  - xii. The Way of Corruption—Earthly Wisdom
    - (1) Deceivers who are deceived (2 Timothy 3:13)
  - xiii. The Way of Godliness—Heavenly Wisdom
    - (1) Thoroughly equipped for good works through knowledge of the Scripture (2 Timothy 3:16-17)
  - xiv. The Way of Corruption—Earthly Wisdom
    - (1) Secretly brings in destructive heresies, blasphemes the truth, exploits others with deceptive words; walks according to the flesh, despises authority, presumptuous, self-willed, not afraid to speak evil of dignitaries; entices unstable souls; lewd, slaves of corruption (2 Peter 2)
  - xv. The Way of Godliness—Heavenly Wisdom
    - (1) Produces the fruit of the Spirit: love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control (Galatians 5:22-23)
  - xvi. The Way of Corruption—Earthly Wisdom
    - (1) Produces works of the flesh: sexual immorality, impurity, lustful desires, idolatry, sorcery, hostility, quarreling, jealousy, outbursts of anger, selfish ambition, dissension, division, envy, drunkenness, wild parties (Galatians 5:19-21)

- k. Some characteristics of earthly wisdom are obvious—things like sexual immorality, sorcery, and murder.
  - i. But other characteristics like gossiping, being headstrong, and holding grudges, are subtle.
  - ii. Walking in godliness requires that we guard against worldly wisdom in our own lives and in our churches.
  - iii. Second Timothy 3:6 commands us to withdraw from every professing Christian who strays from sound doctrine.
- 8. Prerequisites to Godliness
  - a. Prerequisite #1:
    - i. We cannot live godly lives without receiving salvation through faith in the death and Resurrection of Jesus Christ.
    - ii. By our standards, non-Christians do good deeds.
    - iii. However, it's impossible to meet God's standard of righteousness without professing faith in Christ.
    - iv. "We are all infected and impure with sin. When we display our righteous deeds, they are nothing but filthy rags" (Isaiah 64:6).
    - v. Trusting in the redemptive work of Jesus Christ is the only way to wash our filthy rags clean.
    - vi. After we do that, godliness is one of the seven qualities we can add to our faith that will make us fruitful and effective as Christians (2 Peter 1:6-7).
  - b. Prerequisite #2:
    - i. We cannot live godly lives without God's grace.
    - ii. In his letter to Titus, the apostle Paul explained, "The grace of God that brings salvation has appeared to all men" (2:11).
    - iii. Grace is the vehicle of salvation, and it imparts godliness to us.
    - iv. Godliness teaches us that "denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly in the present age, looking for the blessed hope and glorious appearing of our great God and Savior Jesus Christ" (verses 12-13).

- c. Prerequisite #3
  - i. We cannot live godly lives without the Holy Spirit.
  - ii. When we trust in Christ, we are baptized by the Holy Spirit (1 Corinthians 12:13), which enables us to walk according to God's will rather than our own (Galatians 5:16).
  - iii. Willpower cannot prevail against temptation.
  - iv. Finding our identity in Christ is the only way to "crucify the flesh," and living in the Spirit is the only way to reap the fruit of godliness (Galatians 5:22-24).
- 9. Barriers to Godliness
  - a. Barrier #1:
    - i. Our humanity keeps us from godliness.
    - ii. According to Galatians 5:17, "The flesh lusts against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh; and these are contrary to one another, so that you do not do the things that you wish."
    - iii. What is the flesh? The flesh is everything you are ... minus God.
    - iv. It is everything you were before Christ became your Savior—everything that distracts you from thoughts of heaven and Christ's return (Philippians 3:19-20).
  - b. Barrier #2:
    - i. Our culture keeps us from godliness.
    - ii. The Christian life isn't compatible with the world in which we live.
    - iii. The world strives for glory, but our model is servanthood.
    - iv. The world puffs up with pride, but our response is humility.
    - v. Intolerance and hatred fuel the world's conflicts while patience and love govern our relationships.
    - vi. The better we understand this contrast, the closer we will walk with the Lord.
    - vii. We must not be "conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of [our] mind, that [we] may prove what is that good and acceptable and perfect will of God" (Romans 12:2).

- c. Barrier #3:
    - i. Our enemy keeps us from godliness.
    - ii. Paul's letter to the Ephesians says, "For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this age, against spiritual hosts of wickedness in the heavenly places" (Ephesians 6:12).
    - iii. Satan and his demons rule this present world, and they rule our hearts until we uproot them by placing our faith in Jesus Christ as the Lord and Savior of our lives.
    - iv. Satan's army will stop at nothing to deceive us (Revelation 12:9), murder us (John 8:44), tempt us (Matthew 4:3), lie to us (John 8:44), and accuse us (Revelation 12:10).
    - v. If we're not being attacked, we must be doing something wrong because we're not a threat to the enemy's plans.
10. The Influence of Godliness
- a. Growing in godliness has the power to influence every area of our lives by shaping our souls into conformity with God's good and perfect will.
  - b. We can expect spiritual growth to affect our relationships with authority, with our peers, and with money.
  - c. Influence #1
    - i. Godliness influences our relationships with authority.
    - ii. The Bible instructs us to pray for all men and, specifically, for "all who are in authority" (1 Timothy 2:2).
    - iii. Let every soul be subject to the governing authorities. For there is no authority except from God, and the authorities that exist are appointed by God. Therefore whoever resists the authority resists the ordinance of God, and those who resist will bring judgment on themselves. (Romans 13:1-2)
    - iv. Earthly rulers derive their authority from Almighty God.
    - v. If we don't like the way they rule, that is more reason to pray for them!
    - vi. We should pray for their wise and peaceable rule, also for their salvation.

- d. Influence #2:
  - i. Godliness influences our relationships with others.
  - ii. When we employ heavenly wisdom and exemplify its characteristics, we grow in unity with other believers.
  - iii. We serve. We give. We love.
  - iv. We choose humility—avoiding anything that detracts from worship (1 Timothy 2:10)—keeping God at the center of our worship and praise.
  - v. Some relationships may be broken by our devotion ... and that’s okay.
  - vi. Insincere believers mislead immature believers, taking advantage of their weak morals and ignorance.
  - vii. The Bible tells us to turn away from these impostors (2 Timothy 3:5; 2 Thessalonians 3:13-15).
  - viii. Believers must guard against any teaching that glorifies self and denies Almighty God.
  - ix. It’s less damaging to break off a relationship with one or two false teachers than to allow their teaching to flourish.
- e. Influence #3:
  - i. Godliness influences our relationship with money.
  - ii. Our relationship with money says a lot about our relationship with God.
  - iii. True godliness means trusting God to provide for our needs while being content with what He supplies (Matthew 6:24-34; Philippians 4:11-13).
  - iv. When we have faith in God’s presence and provision, we experience the peace of knowing we have everything we need.
  - v. The Bible says, “Godliness with contentment is great gain” (1 Timothy 6:6).
  - vi. Being satisfied with what we have is one mark of the Holy Spirit’s work in our lives.
  - vii. Contentment is not the unattainable achievement of elite Christians; it is God’s expectation for every believer.
  - viii. In fact, its opposite, the love of money, is a form of idolatry.
  - ix. Some people believe the Bible teaches that money is evil,

and that's not true.

- x. Scripture says, "The love of money is a root of all kinds of evil" (1 Timothy 6:10).
- xi. It is not wrong for Christians to have money—even a great deal of it— as long as that money does not have them.
- xii. According to Paul, the real problem is greed.
- xiii. Materialism leads to sin, but godliness prompts us to flee from discontentment.
- xiv. For the Christian, anticipating the world to come helps us keep our priorities in proper perspective.

#### 11. Growing in Godliness

- a. Spiritual fitness requires daily training in the same way physical fitness requires regular exercise.
- b. Paul says to "exercise yourself toward godliness. For bodily exercise profits a little, but godliness is profitable for all things, having promise of the life that now is and of that which is to come" (1 Timothy 4:7-8).
- c. As Christians, we should devote ourselves to spiritual fitness with the same enthusiasm body builders devote to working out at the gym.
- d. The best time to begin is right now!

#### Practice

1. Which characteristic of heavenly wisdom comes most naturally to you? Do you find it easy to be a peacemaker? Are you passionate about teaching? How could you use your strength to encourage others toward godliness?
2. If someone followed you around for a week, what would your habits and attitudes tell them about your walk with God? Are there activities that need to be cut from your routine?
3. Godliness promotes unity in the Church and seeks reconciliation. Is there someone you need to forgive? Or is there someone from whom you need to seek forgiveness?
4. How do you respond to authority? Is there a source of authority in your life— in your family, your church, your government, etc.—that you struggle to accept? How will you commit to praying for that



- person or organization?
5. Life is full of distractions. What is distracting you from pursuing godliness and anticipating heaven? How could you shift that priority into a healthy perspective?
  6. Study the characteristics of heavenly wisdom. In what area do you struggle the most? Take a few moments right now to ask God for His wisdom. Ask Him to help you grow in that area.
  7. How would you describe your relationship with money? Are you characterized by contentment, or do you find yourself yearning for more?
  8. Generosity is one of the best ways to break the bondage of greed. Are you faithfully giving to your local church? How could you express faith in God's provision through principled, sacrificial, joyful giving?
  9. According to 2 Peter 1:3, God's divine power is an inexhaustible resource that gives God's people everything they need for an obedient, godly life. Spend some time in prayer, thanking God for providing access to His awesome power.
  10. Ask Him to illuminate any barriers that are keeping you from experiencing His power and ask Him to help you overcome them.

## What Are You Led By?

### Problem

What is living by faith over feelings?

### Premise

Habakkuk 2:4 “Behold, his soul is puffed up; it is not upright within him, but the righteous shall live by his faith.

### Philosophy

As believers, we’re called to live by faith. And yet so many of us choose to live by our feelings. Have you ever made a decision because it simply “felt right”? Have you ever said something because it “felt like the perfect moment”? Before I became a believer, I lived fully by feeling. My feelings informed my reactions to life and directed my every step. If a pathway didn’t feel right, it wasn’t the one I took. Shortly after I became a believer, I still lived by my feelings rather than my faith. I doubted my salvation because it didn’t feel real. I struggled to believe that God still loved me when I sinned because I couldn’t feel His love. I often gave into temptation to sin because it felt better than obedience. My worship time was completely regulated by my feelings as well—if I felt near to God, then I had worshiped effectively and rightly.

2 Cor. 1:24; 4:18; 2 Cor. 5:7; Deut. 12:9; Romans 8:24-25; 1 Cor. 13:12; Galatians 2:20; Hebrews 10:38; 11:1, 27; 1 Peter 1:8; 5:9.

Do you live by your feelings? Do you live in a similar way that I did? If so, we need to consider what God’s Word has to say about our feelings and what living by faith actually looks like.

### Principle

1. Your Feelings Can’t Be Trusted.
  - a. The Bible is quick to tell us that our feelings (or hearts, more accurately) can’t be trusted.
  - b. Trust in the LORD with all your heart, and do not lean on your own understanding (Prov. 3:5).
  - c. Whoever trusts in his own mind is a fool, but he who walks in wisdom will be delivered (Prov. 28:26).
  - d. The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately sick;

- who can understand it? (Jer. 17:9).
- e. Our hearts are constantly changing and affected by sin.
  - f. Our feelings are about as certain as the sand on the beach.
    - i. The sand is always being moved, pushed forward and backward by both wind and water.
    - ii. It's kicked and thrown by people running across it, children building with it and dogs digging in it.
    - iii. It may appear to be a solid foundation for your sandcastle, but add just a little too much water and the entire building will collapse.
  - g. Our feelings are no different than that sand.
    - i. They're easily changed by people and circumstances.
    - ii. One moment you could be happily reading a book in your favorite chair, and a few minutes later be angered by the trail of mud your child just brought in.
    - iii. You may have felt down when you first woke up this morning, but after an invigorating run with your favorite music playlist, your day is looking a lot brighter.
    - iv. Your feelings are fickle.
  - h. Our feelings can also be influenced by others.
    - i. A speaker could make you feel passionate about a new social justice need.
    - ii. A worship leader could make you feel like God's presence is all around you.
    - iii. A pastor could make you feel guilty.
    - iv. A friend could make you feel happy again.
    - v. A salesperson could make you feel anxious that you don't have the latest product.
    - vi. Our feelings are so easily influenced and changed by words, actions and tones.
  - i. This is where we can see the folly of trusting our feelings.
  - j. How can you rely on something to inform you that is always swaying?
  - k. We wouldn't take confidence in a leader if he or she was always second-guessing and changing the plan of action.
  - l. Feelings aren't certain, and they are poorly informed.
2. Affected by Sin.

- a. Because of the fall, our entire being is affected by sin.
  - b. Our bodies decay, fail and die, and our hearts are corrupted.
  - c. Our hearts desire that which is sinful, and we must always be fighting against that.
  - d. Paul himself writes about this battle we have with the flesh.
  - e. For I do not understand my own actions. For I do not do what I want, but I do the very thing I hate. Now if I do what I do not want, I agree with the law, that it is good. So now it is no longer I who do it, but sin that dwells within me. For I know that nothing good dwells in me, that is, in my flesh. For I have the desire to do what is right, but not the ability to carry it out. For I do not do the good I want, but the evil I do not want is what I keep on doing. Now if I do what I do not want, it is no longer I who do it, but sin that dwells within me (Rom. 7:15–20).
  - f. There's a battle that we must always be fighting against the flesh, and that battle also resides in our feelings.
  - g. Our feelings will lead us to do what feels right or good—whether or not it is considered righteous by God.
  - h. Our feelings will try to persuade us to do things that are disobedient to God.
  - i. If we are to live a righteous life, they cannot be trusted.
3. Live by the Certainty of Faith.
- a. We're called to live by faith over feelings (2 Cor. 5:7).
  - b. Our faith is rock solid if we have placed it in God—the unchanging, perfect, eternal, sovereign One.
  - c. And this faith is founded on the infallible, certain, life-changing, authoritative Word of God.
  - d. Scripture tells us how to live and what to believe.
  - e. This is what should govern and determine how we speak, think and act—not our ever-changing, easily influenced feelings.
  - f. Our faith is not blind but informed and guided by God's perfect Word.
  - g. Sometimes these two can be mixed up; we try to live by both faith and feeling.
    - i. We may say, "I am going to be a missionary, evangelist, preacher, teacher, regardless of the Bible telling me that the church needs to confirm me, because I feel like that's



- time.
- i. Noah was already old, and he spent many years building this ark.
    - i. Do you think he felt like building it?
    - ii. Do you think he felt fearful of the sinful people around him—what they might think or do?
    - iii. Do you think he was tempted to give up or to not trust God?
  - j. Probably. But he chose to live by faith in God. His faith in God propelled him forward, not his fickle feelings.
  - k. We're faced with the same decision today. We can live by our feelings or by our faith.
    - l. If your faith is in Christ, it's solid and trustworthy.
    - m. Your feelings are forever shifting and influenced. Which will you look to?
5. Live by Your Faith.
- a. This great truth, which under Martin Luther became the watchword of the Reformation, is quoted three times in the New Testament (Romans 1:17; Galatians 3:11; Hebrews 10:38).
  - b. All three emphasized that those who are "justified" (that is, declared and made righteous in the sight of a holy God) are justified, not by the works of the law, but by faith in the Word of God and His provision for their justification through the substitutionary death and resurrection of Christ for their sins.
  - c. God declares that a righteous person, will live by his or her faith (emûnâh, "steadfastness or faithfulness").
    - i. A righteous Israelite who remained loyal to God's moral precepts and was humble before the Lord enjoyed God's abundant life.
    - ii. To "live" meant to experience God's blessing by enjoying a life of security, protection, and fullness.
    - iii. Conversely, an apparently victorious but proud and perverse Babylonian would die.
    - iv. Faithfulness and faith are related. One who trusts in the Lord is one who relies on Him and is faithful to Him.
  - d. The key principle is the righteous will live by his faith (John 3:36; Romans 1:17; Galatians 2:16; 3:11-12; Hebrews 10:38; 1

John 5:10-12).

- i. God did not give Habakkuk a philosophical answer to the problem of suffering. Humans must live by faith in God, who is ultimately just and in control of history. Even when some events seem to contradict this belief, we are to trust in God.
- ii. In the midst of God's unrelenting condemnations of Babylon stands this bright revelation of God's favor that is quoted in the New Testament (Rom. 1:17; Gal. 3:11; Heb. 10:38).
- iii. In those passages the words "will live" have a broader meaning than in Habakkuk.
- iv. In the New Testament they mean to enjoy salvation and eternal life.
- v. In contrast with the self-reliant, boastful ways of the unrighteous, the righteous are found to be reliant on God and faithful to Him.

6. Inform Your Feelings.

- a. In the end, it is God and His Word that should inform our feelings, not the other way around.
- b. When you are tempted to listen to your feelings or your feelings are overwhelming you, stop and look to God's Word.
- c. Compare what you are feeling to what He says.
- d. Do your feelings line up? Great—follow what God's Word says.
- e. But if your feelings contradict God's Word, you need to say "no" to them.
- f. Those are the feelings we put off and ignore. Though they may feel strong, they're not trustworthy.

7. Perseverance is the consequence of confidence (Heb.10:32-39).

- a. The word hypomeneo means to "patiently endure."
- b. It involves overcoming difficulties and withstanding pressures.
- c. The writer reminds his readers that they have demonstrated this quality, an expression of their confidence in Christ.
  - i. They stood their ground despite suffering.
  - ii. They remained faithful despite insult, persecution, and even the loss of property.
  - iii. And they took a stand beside those in prison.

- d. The challenge now is to hold on, confident, till Jesus comes.
  - e. Hebrews 10:38 but my righteous one shall live by faith, and if he shrinks back, my soul has no pleasure in him.”
  - f. Suffering because we are Christians may tempt us to forsake our faith. Memory of past experiences can give us courage to face present persecution. Christian endurance is never complete until our Master returns. We can trust Him. His reward justifies all the suffering we must endure (Habakkuk 2:4; Romans 1:17; Galatians 3:11).
  - g. God’s Word is your source and foundation.
  - h. Live by it, not your feelings.
8. The Tools Are in Place.
- a. When we claim to live by faith, we are still not without sin.
  - b. Sin is part of who we are, which is probably why our Lord instructed us to think of ourselves as 'unworthy' servants.
  - c. It is not right to proceed with any endeavor while at the same time believing that we ourselves have no guilt.
  - d. It is when we maintain faith in spite of our guilt that miracles occur, just because, this is God's will.
  - e. We can use the train analogy.
  - f. The engine is FACT, the first car is FAITH and the caboose is FEELINGS.
  - g. A train will run with or without a caboose. And your spiritual life will go whether the feelings are present or not.
  - h. But what a mistake it would be to try to pull the train by the caboose. And a mistake to run your life by your feelings.

### Practice

1. Why are our hearts deemed so untrustworthy?
2. What are you led by?
3. What directs your decisions, actions, words and thoughts?
4. How do you know if you are you led by faith over feelings?
5. Why would we trust our feelings?
6. What is faith?
7. How does faith work?



## Family Structure

### Problem

What is the best family structure?

### Premise

Family is a Kingdom Priority.

### Philosophy

The traditional family is under assault these days. Watch a primetime television program about the family and you'll soon discover that fathers are presented as idiotic, mothers as overbearing, and children as wise beyond their years.

To say "traditional" families are under attack, is to acknowledge that our definition of the family may be more culturally informed than biblically informed.

There are those individuals today who that argue that "The Nuclear Family Was a Mistake." They claim that, "The family structure we've held up as the cultural ideal for the past half century has been a catastrophe for many.

God is the originator of the family and continues to hold the patent. The ideal, established at the beginning of humanity, is for one man and one woman to join in a spiritually and physically committed union for a lifetime, conceiving and rearing children (Genesis 1:27–28; 2:18, 21–25). Clearly, this model wasn't followed consistently throughout the Scriptures and is not followed today, where single parents, married couples without children, grandparents rearing their grandchildren, and empty-nesters—just to mention a few—make up a considerable percentage of "Christian" families. We would be hard-pressed not to label these relationships "families," even though they don't meet the ideal set forth in Genesis. The Lord continues to bless these types of families.

A Godly family is a group of people who are related to each other through marriage, birth, or adoption and are committed, first and foremost, to the person and work of Jesus Christ, faithfully witnessing to the love, power, and forgiveness of God to a watching world in its unique time and place."

## Principle

1. The family is the foundational institution of society ordained by God. It is constituted by marriage and is composed of persons related to one another by marriage, blood or adoption. The family is a fundamental institution of human society. Genesis 2:20-25, 4:1.
2. Today, a family is commonly defined as the basic unit in society traditionally consisting of either two parents rearing their children, or various social units differing from but regarded as equivalent to the traditional family.
3. The way in which God is found in families is through the ordering of the home in accordance with the Scriptures—Christ as the Head, the father under the headship of Christ, the mother under the headship of Christ and her husband, children under the headship of Christ, their father and their mother.
4. The three primary types of family structure are nuclear families (two parents and their child or children), extended families (a family that extends beyond the nuclear family, consisting of parents like father, mother, and their children, aunts, uncles, grandparents, and cousins, all living in the same household or in close proximity), and single parent families (a parent or guardian who lives with a child or children and who does not have a spouse or live-in partner).
5. The term “nuclear family” originated in the 1920s, and was originally used in academic fields such as anthropology and sociology. The Oxford English Dictionary claims the term was coined by Bronislaw Malinowski, considered a founder of social anthropology. At the time, the word nuclear was associated more with the Latin nucleus, meaning “kernel,” than with atomic energy. Thus, when applied to the family, it refers to the core members, usually parents and children.
6. Despite a common assumption, the nuclear family wasn’t created after the Industrial Revolution. Using English parish records and other demographic sources, some historians discovered that the nuclear family was the dominant arrangement in England stretching back to the thirteenth century. By the time a couple was ready to wed their own parents were often deceased, making multi-generational households a relative rarity. (Because of early childhood death, for most of human history, the average lifespan was considerably less than 50 years.)

7. The rise of the extended family in England and the Americas began after the Industrial Revolution. Between 1750 and 1900, extended families became more common as middle-class workers were able to support extended dependent relatives, and as life expectancy increased and age of marriage began to decline. (In America, from 1890-1900, the median age at first marriage was 26.1 years for men and 22 years for women.) Even as they became more common, extended families were never as prevalent as nuclear families.
8. By the 1920s, the nuclear family with a man earning the main income had replaced the extended family as the dominant family form. By 1960, 77.5 percent of all children were living with their two parents, who were married, and living apart from their extended family. Today, a majority of adults with children in multi-generational families with kids (65 percent) are either never married (46 percent) or divorced, separated, or widowed (19 percent). About 41 percent of parents who live with extended families are white, compared with 58 percent of parents who do not live with their parents. Minority families with kids are about twice as likely as whites to have grandparents in the house.
9. Family structure in America began to change most significantly when divorce became more common. The divorce rate remained 1 percent or less from 1867 to 1915 and remained less than 2 percent until 1940. The first year the divorce rate exceeded 3 percent was in 1969—the year California became the first state to adopt “no-fault” divorce. (No-fault divorce allows a married couple’s claim of “irreconcilable differences” as sufficient grounds to end a marriage.) The divorce rate peaked between 1979 and 1981 at 5.3 percent. Since then the divorce rate has steadily declined along with the rate of marriage. The current marriage rate is 6.9 per 1,000 total population, and the divorce rate is 2.9 per 1,000 population.
10. Children in the United States are more likely than children in other countries to live in single-parent households, and much less likely to live in extended families. According to Pew Research, almost a quarter of U.S. children under the age of 18 live with one parent and no other adults (23 percent), more than three times the share of children around the world who do so (7 percent). Only 8 percent of children live with relatives such as aunts and grandparents,

compared with 38 percent of children globally. U.S. children from Christian and religiously unaffiliated families are about equally likely to live in this type of arrangement.

11. Every form of family structure is less common than households without children. The presence of children in America has declined significantly since 1960, as measured by fertility rates and the percentage of households with children. Other indicators suggest that this decline has reduced the child-centeredness of our nation and contributed to the weakening of the institution of marriage. It is estimated that in the mid-1800s more than 75 percent of all households contained children under the age of 18. One hundred years later, in 1960, this number had dropped to slightly less than half of all households. In 2011, just five decades later, only 32 percent of households included children. This obviously means that adults are less likely to be living with children, that neighborhoods are less likely to contain children, and that children are less likely to be a consideration in daily life.
12. Which type of family structure should Christians promote, nuclear or extended? Both appear to be consistent with Scripture, provided a few conditions are met. Genesis 2:24 says that in marriage a “man shall leave his father and his mother and hold fast to his wife, and they shall become one flesh.” In the New Testament, this principle of “leaving and cleaving” is reaffirmed by both Jesus (Matt. 19:5) and Paul (Eph. 5:31-32). As pastor-theologian John Piper says, we can draw out four aspects of a marriage that distances it from former participation in the larger familial household. When a man and woman marry there is now a new allegiance, devotion, affection, intimacy, and priority, as well as a new structure of responsibility for who bears the primary burden of providing materially for the family, protecting the new family, and providing leadership in this new unit of marriage—namely, the husband. “Those four new structures of allegiance and responsibility necessarily lead to a kind of leaving mother and father—leaving old structures of allegiance, old structures of provision, old structures of protection, old structures of leadership,” says Piper. “At least that much is built into the very nature of what the New Testament describes as marriage.”
13. Family is the single most important influence in a child's life. From

their first moments of life, children depend on parents and family to protect them and provide for their needs. ... They are a child's first teachers and act as role models in how to act and how to experience the world around them.

14. Psalm 133:1 – How good and pleasant it is when God's people live together in unity! Proverbs 6:20 – My son, keep your father's command and do not forsake your mother's teaching. Colossians 3:20 – Children, always obey your parents, for this pleases the Lord.
15. A good Godly family is one that lines up with biblical principles and one in which each member understands and fulfills his or her God-given role. The family is not an institution designed by man. It was created by God for the benefit of man, and man has been given stewardship over it. The basic biblical family unit is comprised of one man, one woman—his spouse—and their offspring or adopted children. The extended family can include relatives by blood or marriage such as grandparents, nieces, nephews, cousins, aunts, and uncles. One of the primary principles of the family unit is that it involves a commitment ordained by God for the lifetime of the members. The husband and wife are responsible for holding it together, the current attitude of our culture notwithstanding. Although divorce is sought and granted much too easily in our society, the Bible tells us that God hates divorce (Malachi 2:16).
16. The first requirement for the members of a godly family is that they all be Christians, having a true relationship with Jesus Christ as their Lord and Savior. Ephesians 5:22–26 provides the guidelines for husbands and wives in a godly family. The husband is required to love his wife as Christ loved the church, and a wife should respect her husband and willingly submit to his leadership in the family. The husband's leadership role should start with his own spiritual relationship with God and then flow to instructing his wife and children in scriptural values, leading the family into biblical truth. Fathers are instructed to bring up their children in “the training and instruction of the Lord” (Ephesians 6:4). A father is also to provide for his family. If he does not, he “denies the faith and is worse than an unbeliever” (1 Timothy 5:8). So, a man who makes no effort to provide for his family cannot rightly call himself a Christian. This does not mean that the wife cannot assist in supporting the

- family—Proverbs 31 demonstrates that a godly wife may surely do so—but providing for the family is not primarily her responsibility; it is her husband's.
17. Woman was given to man for the purpose of being her husband's helper (Genesis 2:18–20) and to bear children. The husband and wife in a Godly marriage are to remain faithful to one another for a lifetime. God declares equality of worth in that men and women are created in God's image and are therefore equally valuable in His eyes. This does not mean, however, that men and women have identical roles in life. Women are more adept at nurturing and caring for the young, while men are better equipped to provide for and protect the family. Thus, they are equal in status, but each has a different role to play in a Godly marriage.
  18. A Godly marriage, foundational to a godly family, follows the biblical instructions concerning sex. The Bible counters the cultural view that divorce, living together without being married, and same-sex marriage are acceptable in God's eyes. Sexuality expressed according to biblical standards is a beautiful expression of love and commitment. Outside of marriage, it is sin.
  19. Children are given two primary responsibilities in the Godly family: to obey their parents and to honor them (Ephesians 6:1–3). Obeying parents is the duty of children until they reach adulthood, but honoring parents is their responsibility for a lifetime. God promises His blessings on those who honor their parents.
  20. A godly family should have all members committed to Christ and His service. When a husband, wife, and children all fulfill their God-appointed roles, then peace and harmony reign in the home. But, if we try to have a godly family without Christ as Head or without adhering to the biblical principles the Lord has lovingly provided for us, the home will suffer.
  21. The Bible does not lay out a step-by-step order for family relationship priorities. However, we can look to the Scriptures and find general principles for prioritizing our family relationships. God obviously comes first: Deuteronomy 6:5, "Love the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength." All of one's heart, soul, and strength is to be committed to loving God, making Him the first priority. Church membership and regular church

- attendance will be one way a family shows that God is first in their lives (see Hebrews 10:25).
22. If you are married, your spouse comes next. A married man is to love his wife as Christ loved the church (Ephesians 5:25). Christ's first priority—after obeying and glorifying the Father—was the church. Here is an example a husband should follow: God first, then his wife. In the same way, wives are to submit to their husbands “as to the Lord” (Ephesians 5:22). The principle is that a woman's husband is second only to God in her priorities.
  23. The husbands and wives are second only to God in our priorities, and a husband and wife are one flesh (Ephesians 5:31). Parents are to raise godly children who will be the next generation of those who love the Lord with all their hearts (Proverbs 22:6; Ephesians 6:4), showing that God comes first. All other family relationships should reflect that.
  24. Deuteronomy 5:16 tells us to honor our parents so that we may live long and so things will go well with us. No age limit is specified, which leads us to believe that as long as our parents are alive, we should honor them. Once a child reaches adulthood, he is no longer obligated to obey them (“Children, obey your parents...”), but there is no age limit to honoring them. Parents are next in the list of priorities after God, our spouses, and our children. After parents comes the rest of one's family (1 Timothy 5:8).
  25. Following one's extended family in the list of priorities are fellow believers. Romans 14 tells us not to judge or look down upon our brothers (v. 10) or do anything to cause a fellow Christian to “stumble” or fall spiritually. Much of the book of 1 Corinthians is Paul's instructions on how the church should live together in harmony, loving one another. Other exhortations referring to our brothers and sisters in Christ are “serve one another in love” (Galatians 5:13); “be kind and compassionate to one another, forgiving each other, just as in Christ God forgave you” (Ephesians 4:32); “encourage one another and build each other up” (1 Thessalonians 5:11); and “consider how we may spur one another on toward love and good deeds” (Hebrews 10:24). Finally comes the rest of the world (Matthew 28:19), to whom we should bring the gospel, making disciples of Christ.
  26. The scriptural order of priorities is God, spouse, children, parents,

extended family, brothers and sisters in Christ, and then the rest of the world. The goal is to not be neglecting any of our relationships. The biblical balance is allowing God to empower us to meet all of our relationship priorities, inside and outside our families.

27. God created the marriage relationship to be a blessing to everyone involved. Many families today are clearly troubled. Alienation often exists between husband and wife, between parents and children, or among brothers and sisters.
28. The Husband's Responsibilities to His Wife
  - a. The Husband Should Be Committed to Marriage for Life.
    - i. Multitudes of marriages in our society end in divorce. Consider the Bible teaching.
    - ii. Romans 7:2,3 -- Husband and wife are bound as long as they both live. One may remarry only when his spouse has died. To remarry while ones spouse is alive constitutes adultery. (Mal. 2:14-16)
    - iii. Matthew 19:3-9 -- Fornication is the only Scriptural grounds for divorce. One is guilty of adultery if he divorces for another reason and remarries. This constitutes adultery because he is still bound to his first wife, yet having the sexual union with another woman. (Matt. 5:31,32)
    - iv. Man should enter marriage fully realizing that it is a lifetime commitment. Divorce without Scriptural grounds should never be seriously considered nor discussed as an option. However, if one is in an unscriptural remarriage, he must leave it to avoid adultery (cf. 1 Cor. 7:10,11).
  - b. The Husband Should Love His Wife.
    - i. Some men act selfishly or even abuse their wives, and some even claim that the Bible says a man has the right to do this. But consider what the Bible really teaches.
    - ii. Ephesians 5:25-31,33 -- A man should love his wife as Christ loved the church and as he loves his own body.
    - iii. Jesus' love was not a romantic mood or emotion but a choice or commitment. He did not wait till we acted lovingly toward Him but did what we needed even when



- our conduct was unattractive. This required serious sacrifice for our good.
- iv. Likewise a husband should be committed to do his wife good, even if she is not acting lovingly toward him nor attracting him romantically. He must do good even at the cost of serious personal sacrifice.
  - v. 1 Peter 3:7 -- A man should try to understand what his wife needs, rather than being bitter toward her (Col. 3:19). He will not expect her to do heavy work since she is not as strong. And he will respect her as being of equal spiritual value with himself.
  - vi. 1 Corinthians 7:3-5 -- A husband also shows love by expressing affection and fulfilling the wife's sexual needs.
  - vii. Jesus expressed love for the church both by words and by deeds. If a husband properly loves his wife, he will tell her so, but he will also show it by his actions.
- c. The Husband Should Work to Provide for the Physical Needs of the Family.
- i. Many men leave their wives and children without the necessities of life because they quit their jobs for frivolous reasons or waste their income selfishly.
  - ii. Genesis 3:17-19 -- The man was required to labor despite hardships in order to have food. (2 Thess. 3:10.)
  - iii. 1 Timothy 5:8 -- As the head of the family, a man should provide, not just for himself, but for his whole household. The Bible gives many examples of men having occupations or businesses outside the home. Many Bible examples show men employed away from the home in such occupations as shepherd, carpenter, physician, fisherman, merchant, farmer, sailor, preacher, tentmaker, etc. (See also Eph. 5:28,29).
  - iv. This is the God-given duty of the husband. No passage instructs the wife to do this. Man should not neglect his other responsibilities by over-emphasizing work. Yet one who neglects working, expecting his wife or other people to provide income for his family, is worse than an infidel.
- d. The Husband Should Be the Head of the Family.

- i. Some claim that man should not exercise authority over his wife or that his authority should be limited to just certain areas. In practice, women are often the leaders in making family decisions.
- ii. Ephesians 5:22-24 -- The husband is head of his wife as Christ is head of the church. Neither his wife nor their parents are the authority in his family (Gen. 2:24).
- iii. Love will lead a husband to consider the needs and desires of the wife and children. He will make decisions for the good of the whole group, not just to please himself. This requires discussion at times to understand the views of others.
- iv. The husband does have the final authority, and will give account to God for his decisions. Often this responsibility is not a privilege but a burden. He needs the courage to stand for what he is convinced is best, even when the wife or children disagree.
- v. If the wife fails to fulfill her duties, this does not justify the husband in failing to fulfill his duties (Romans 12:17-21; Luke 6:27-35).

## 29. The Wife's Responsibilities to Her Husband

- a. The Wife Should Have a Lifetime Commitment to the Marriage.
  - i. Neither the man nor the woman have the right to end the marriage while their spouse is alive, except for the cause of fornication.
- b. The Wife Should Love Her Husband.
  - i. Modern feminists say a woman does not need a man but should find fulfillment outside marriage.
  - ii. Woman was created to be a companion and helper to man (Genesis 2:18-24). She is not required to marry (1 Cor. 7), but by nature she would find her greatest fulfillment in life by loving and caring for a family (Mal. 2:14.).
  - iii. Young women should be taught to love their husbands and their children (Titus 2:4). This is something a woman can learn to do. Love is a matter of choice and commitment, not primarily a romantic mood.

- iv. The wife too should show affection and fulfill her husband's sexual needs (1 Corinthians 7:3-5).
- c. The Wife Should Submit to the Headship of the Husband.
  - i. God teaches husbands to use their authority in love. Though our society may protest and rebel, He tells wives to submit to their husbands.
  - ii. Just as the church should submit to Christ, not rebelliously but respectfully, so the wife must abide by all her husband's decisions (Ephesians 5:22-24,33). The only exception would be if the husband commanded her to do something that would violate God's law (Acts 5:29).
  - iii. Young women should be taught to be obedient to their husbands (Titus 2:5). This does not mean woman has less ability or less value than man (1 Peter 3:7; Matt. 20:25-28; Gal. 3:28). But someone must be in charge to make decisions in the home. God has determined that this responsibility belongs to the man (Gen. 3:16; Col. 3:18; 1 Peter 3:1-6; 1 Cor. 11:3).
- d. The Wife Should Work at Home Caring for Her Family.
  - i. Our society places little value on the work of homemakers. Instead it encourages women to neglect their family responsibilities to do things God never required them to do.
  - ii. God says the work of mothers is at home (Titus 2:4,5; 1 Timothy 5:14). They are to manage the household, loving and caring for their family. This work is a blessing and should be valued and appreciated (Psalm 113:9).
  - iii. Providing family income is a God-given responsibility for the husband. It is not the wife's responsibility. There may be emergency exceptions (as when the husband has died or is disabled), but generally a mother should not neglect her God-given duties nor give them to other people so she can have a career or job outside the home.
  - iv. Outside jobs and similar activities often hinder wives and mothers from fulfilling duties that God requires of them. Consider responsibilities in the family, the church, Bible study, teaching others, benevolence, hospitality, etc.

- Specifically, where is the authority for a family to enroll their children in day-care so the wife can make money?
- v. The husband and wife have distinct roles. God gave them separate duties and gave each a nature best suited to those duties. To blur these distinctions or to deny they exist is to disobey God. For both the husband and the wife, the greatest satisfaction in marriage comes when they follow God's plan.
  - vi. The husband's failure to properly fulfill his duties does not justify the wife in failing to fulfill her duties (Rom. 12:17-21; 1 Peter 3:1,2; Luke 6:27-35).
- e. The Parents' Responsibilities to Their Children
- i. Society continually undermines and attacks the right of parents to train and supervise their own children.
  - ii. Entertainment, government agencies, peers, and schools all lead children to think they can "do their own thing."
  - iii. Yet when the children do wrong, these same groups immediately blame the parents!
- f. Parents Should Love Their Children.
- i. Today, parents are encouraged to leave the training of their children to others, and are told they may kill "unwanted" babies before they are born.
  - ii. As a result, children are often neglected, abused, even abandoned.
  - iii. Women should be taught to love their children (Titus 2:4).
  - iv. Children are a blessing from God, not an unwanted burden (Psalm 127:3-5; 128:1-4).
  - v. Parents who love their children will do what is best for them.
  - vi. This requires taking quality and quantity time with children.
  - vii. Abusing and neglecting children is not love.
- g. Parents Should Train Their Children to Know and Obey God's Will.
- i. Few children are truly taught to love God. Even in the Lord's church, the majority of children do not become faithful Christians.

- ii. Fathers should bring children up in the training and admonition of the Lord (Ephesians 6:4).
  - iii. Bring the children to all meetings of the church, and teach them God's word at home (Deut. 6:6-9).
  - iv. Training children is primarily the work of parents, rather than the church.
  - v. When children grow up without a knowledge of God and His will, the parents will give account (Prov. 22:6; Gen. 18:19; Deut. 4:9,10; 1 Sam. 2:22-25; 3:13; 2 Tim. 1:5; 3:15).
- h. Parents Should Punish and Reward Children When Necessary to Motivate Them to Do Good and Avoid Evil.
- i. Spanking and all forms of punishment are opposed by our society.
  - ii. The Father in Heaven is an example to parents in chastening children (Hebrews 12:5-11). It causes the child to respect parents and authority in general (v9) and teaches them to act righteously (v11).
  - iii. Proverbs 13:24; 23:13,14 -- Spanking is not contrary to love. Properly done it is an act of love for the child's good to teach him to live right. It should never be done because the parent has lost his temper or to satisfy a lust for power. (See also Prov. 22:15; 19:18; Luke 15:20-24.)
  - iv. Rules and discipline should be consistent. Inconsistency provokes the child to anger (Eph. 6:4). The father and mother should agree and work in harmony (Matt. 12:25).
  - v. Children must be treated fairly and justly -- no favoritism (James 2:8,9). Parents should keep their promises, including the promise to punish (James 5:12).
  - vi. Parents who do not discipline their children will be held accountable by God (1 Sam. 3:13). Instead of following society's ungodly philosophies about child-rearing, Christians need to fight those concepts with every upright weapon at our disposal. Families that follow God's will are the ones that will truly be blessed (Col. 3:21; Matt. 23:23).
30. The Children's Responsibilities to Their Parents
- a. Children Should Listen to Their Parents' Instruction.

- i. Society encourages children to disregard their parents' teachings and make their own choices.
  - ii. Young people often think their parents are unreasonable or do not understand.
  - iii. Listen to the instruction of parents, do not forsake it.
  - iv. Parents are older and more experienced. They may not be perfect (neither are the kids!) yet they are still wiser (Prov. 1:8; 6:20-23; 15:5; 23:22).
- b. Children Should Respect Their Parents.
- i. Young people today mock, ridicule, and openly flaunt their parents.
  - ii. Such conduct is encouraged by many aspects of society and is ignored by many parents.
  - iii. Parents have God-given authority and have generally done much good for the children (Ephesians 6:2,3).
  - iv. They deserve to receive respectful treatment, including respectful speech and attitudes. (Matt. 15:4; Prov. 6:20-23; 15:5; 23:22.)
- c. Children Should Obey Their Parents.
- i. Rebellion is admired and encouraged by many. Acts that parents have disapproved are yet practiced -- openly or by deception -- because "everybody's doing it" or for a hundred other excuses.
  - ii. Some accept such conduct as inevitable. But all such is disobedience and rebellion.
  - iii. Children are commanded by the Lord to obey their parents (Ephesians 6:1; Col. 3:20; 2 Tim. 3:1,2).
  - iv. Jesus set the example of subjection to his parents (Luke 2:51).
  - v. One who refuses to obey his parents is worthy of death, and so are those who approve of such conduct (Romans 1:30,32; Deut. 21:18-21).
  - vi. Children should obey all parental instructions unless they are told to do something sinful (Acts 5:29).
  - vii. The fact that the parents may have made some mistakes or even sinned does not justify disobedience by the children (Rom. 12:17-21; Luke 6:27-35)

- d. Children Should Care for Elderly Parents.
- e. Elderly people today are often neglected or shipped to nursing homes, not because this is really needed for the proper care of the parent, but because the children do not want to be bothered.

1 Timothy 5:4,8,16 -- When children are unwilling to care for their elderly parents, they lack appreciation for what their parents did for them, and they also deny the faith. (Cf. Matt. 15:4-6; Ruth 4:13-15; John 19:25-27.)

Making happy homes is not easy, especially in a corrupt society. But God's plan is always best, and the homes that accomplish the most good are those that learn and do His will.

### Practice

1. What does God say about family unity?
2. Why is family so important?
3. What should be the order of priorities in our family?
4. How do we define family from a Christian perspective?
5. What can Jesus' love for the church teach husbands?
6. What instruction does God's word provide to help us have homes that please Him and accomplish His will?
7. What are the duties of the husband, wife, parents, and children?
8. How important are love and commitment in marriage?
9. For what cause may spouses divorce and remarry?
10. Who should exercise authority as head in the home?
11. Who should provide family income and who should care for the home?
12. How diligent should parents be in teaching and training the children?
13. Should parents use spanking, discipline, and punishment to motivate obedience?
14. Why should children be chastised?
15. Who should care for elderly parents?

## No Excuses

### Problem

Is there ever a time when an excuse is acceptable?

### Premise

Character informs your conduct.

### Philosophy

Excuses began with the first sin ever committed (Genesis 3:11-13). We should not make excuses because they usually cover or lead to sin. In life, you will always hear excuses like “no one is perfect” from someone who wants to justify rebellion towards God’s Word.

### Principle

1. When confessing sin, don't make excuses (James 1:13-15).
2. Don't look for excuses to get out of your marriage (Matthew 5:32).
3. When God gives direction He expects cooperation not excuses. He will supply whatever is needed (Exodus 4:10-12).
4. We are not to make excuses to avoid responding to God's invitation (Luke 14:15-24).
5. Christians are a new creation.
  - a. We should not live a life of willful sin. If a person practices sin that person is not a Christian at all.
  - b. “How about if I don’t want to go to church or become a Christian because there are too many hypocrites?”
  - c. There are hypocrites everywhere you go in life. You don’t accept Christ for others you do it for yourself.
  - d. You are responsible for pursuing godliness. You can make excuses by being afraid to do God’s will.
  - e. If you are sure that God told you to do something don’t be afraid to do it because He is by your side. If that is truly His will for your life it will be accomplished. Always examine yourself and ask yourself this question, am I making an excuse?
6. The old nature is prone to excuse making.
  - a. Excuses can keep you from really living the best life God has for you.
  - b. We can be stronger than our excuses.



- c. A person that is good for making excuses is seldom good for anything else.
  - d. Excuses are a disease that is contagious.
7. Common things a Christian might make excuses for.
    - a. Praying
    - b. Sharing their faith
    - c. Reading Scripture
    - d. Blaming others for sin, instead of taking full responsibility.
    - e. Not going to church.
    - f. Not giving to someone.
    - g. Exercising
    - h. Eating habit
  8. Never make excuses for not accepting Christ (Luke 14:15-20).
  9. The blame game! Adam and Eve (Genesis 3:11-13).
  10. Making excuses when the Holy Spirit convicts you of sin is a bad idea (Romans 14:23; Hebrews 3:8; Psalm 141:4).
  11. Excuses may be used as a means for covering Laziness (Proverbs 22:13; 26:12-16; 20:4).
  12. When we procrastinate we are making excuses (Proverbs 6:4).
  13. There is never an excuse for being rebellious towards God's Word, which will bring you to hell (1 John 1:6; 1 Peter 2:16; John 15:22; Malachi 2:17; 1 John 3:8-10).
  14. There is no excuse for believing there is no God (Psalm 19:1-6; Romans 1:20).
  15. You find out something you don't like about your spouse so you give reasons for getting a divorce (Matthew 5:32).
  16. Making excuses for not doing God's will is insane (Exodus 4:10-14; Exodus 3:10-13).
  17. Excuses are not a good investment of your imagination or creativity (Romans 3:19; Proverbs 6:30; Galatians 6:7; 2 Timothy 1:7).
  18. Life is not certain don't put it off, accept Christ today. Make sure you know where you're going. Is it heaven or hell? (James 4:14; Matthew 7:21-23).
  19. Excuses validate the enemy's strategy (Exodus 5:21).
    - a. As they left Pharaoh's court, they confronted Moses and Aaron, who were waiting outside for them.
    - b. The foremen said to them, "May the Lord judge and punish you

for making us stink before Pharaoh and his officials.

- c. You have put a sword into their hands, an excuse to kill us!
20. You may get by, but you can't get away (2 Corinthians 5:10).

### Practice

1. What is your excuse for not getting saved? (2 Corinthians 6:2)
2. What is your excuse for not reading your Bible? (2 Timothy 2:15)
3. What is your excuse for not praying? (1 Thessalonians 5:18)
4. What is your excuse for not going to church faithfully? (Hebrews 10:25)
5. What is your excuse for not telling people about Jesus Christ? (Acts 20:20)
6. What is your excuse for not handing out tracts? (Proverbs 11:30)
7. What is your excuse for not surrendering everything to God? (Matthew 19:29)
8. What is your excuse for not going to the mission field? (Mark 16:15)
9. What is your excuse for not giving so others can go? (Malachi 3:8)
10. What is your excuse for not stepping out by faith? (Romans 14:23)
11. What is your excuse for not doing something for God? (Luke 21:14)
12. Whom shall I send and who will go? Excuses, excuses, excuses, what are yours?

## Becoming The Word

### Problem

What is involved in becoming the Word?

### Premise

Hear the Word. Believe the Word. Become the Word. Obey the Word.

### Philosophy

"In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God." John 1:1

When most think of the Word they think of the Bible. But we are informed that the Word has been from the beginning. Berry's Interlinear Greek-English New Testament translates John 1:1 this way: "In the beginning was the Word and the Word was with God and God was the Word."

This reveals a very simple, but profound, truth: God was the Word from the very beginning. The Word existed before the flesh creation. God is the Word and God is Spirit, therefore the Word that was from the beginning is Spirit.

The word beginning is the Greek word ARCHE and means "the root, the first or the origin of something." The Word was in the beginning, or the Word was the root, the origin of all things - -and God is the Word. Since nothing existed before the Word, we can safely say that the Word is God the Father, the origin of all things. The Word then was the Spirit of life in the beginning, the origin of all things. John further records: "And the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us, (and we beheld His glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father,) full of grace and truth." John 1:14

The words in the parentheses ( ) are there to bring further understanding of what is being spoken, but are not necessarily part of the Scripture. When we leave out those words, this Scripture reads: "And the Word was made flesh and dwelt among us, full of Grace and Truth." John 1:14

It was the Word that was full of Grace and Truth. Grace is the "divine influence in our lives that reflects the life of God through us." The beloved John informs us: "Howbeit when He, the Spirit of truth, is

come, He will guide you into all truth:" John 16:13

We know it is the Spirit of truth which reveals all truth to us. John goes on to say: "For the law was given by Moses, but grace and truth came by Jesus Christ." John 1:17

Grace and truth came into the earth by Jesus Christ. Jesus was not that grace and truth, He was only the vessel God used to bring grace and truth to His creation, man. The Psalmist writes: "For ever, O Lord, Thy Word is settled in heaven." Psalm 119:89

The word settled means "to set over or establish His Word." The Word is eternal in the heavens, the unlimited Spiritual realm of God. God manifested the Spiritual Word in Jesus when the Word became flesh and came and dwelt among men. Jesus became the Word made flesh. We, too, are to become the living Word of God.

In his second letter to Timothy, Paul revealed a truth that is hard for the finite, carnal mind to understand, and we can only accept it as a revealed truth through the Spirit.

"Who hath saved us, and called us with an holy calling, not according to our works, but according to His own purpose and grace, which was given us in Christ Jesus before the world began." II Timothy 1:9

### Principle

1. Our calling in Christ Jesus was before the world began and it was according to His own purpose and grace. Our pre-existence in God was in Christ Jesus. When Paul wrote to the Romans, he shed more understanding in this unlimited realm of God and how God established all things from the beginning in Himself, and how we were predestined and foreknown by God.
2. "For whom He did foreknow, He also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of His Son, that He might be the firstborn among many brethren. Moreover whom He did predestinate, them He also called: and whom He called, them He also justified: and whom He justified, them He also glorified." Romans 8:29-30
3. As we accept the fact that we were foreknown and predestined in God and that our calling in Him was before the foundation of the world, we understand what Paul wrote: "The gifts and calling of God are without repentance," Romans 11:29. We can be assured that God did not predestine us to do the job He has for us to do without

first preparing us to do it. For we were called of God to be and to do. If we yield ourselves to His purpose for our lives, He will accomplish that job through us.

4. Read the Word.
  - a. It is our first step in "BECOMING THE WORD" of life.
  - b. As we practice the Word in our daily living, the reality of Christ in us, our hope in glory, will become our life.
  - c. "For ever, O Lord, Thy Word is settled in heaven." Psalm 119:89
5. Believe the Word.
  - a. We know He is the way, the truth, and the life. As we allow His life, and His truth to be manifested through us, He will provide the way - - - and the way is through the Word that was from the beginning.
  - b. The word made is the Greek word GINOMAI and means "to become something." God sent His only Son, born of woman, and while He dwelt in His flesh (the same flesh we dwell in), He was the Word of God. We become the Word as we believe the Word and practice it.
  - c. "For what the law could not do, in that it was weak through the flesh, God sending His own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, and for sin, condemned sin in the flesh." Romans 8:3
  - d. When the Word was made flesh, the Spirit of God was clothed upon with flesh. The Spiritual became one with the flesh. The Spirit of God was then manifested through the flesh of Jesus. What does all this mean to us?
  - e. "For even hereunto were ye called: because Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example, that ye should follow His steps." I Peter 2:21
  - f. The question down through the ages has been, "Could Jesus have sinned?" If Jesus could not have sinned then He could not have been an example to us. Jesus was born in sinful flesh, yet He was without sin. He is our example of the Spirit being manifested in the flesh and becoming the Word. Many believe Jesus was born perfect and was perfect from birth, needing to change nothing in His life. Yet, the writer of Hebrews tells us: "Though He were a Son, yet learned He obedience by the

things which He suffered." Hebrews 5:8

6. Become the Word.

- a. Though Jesus was a Spiritual Son, He needed to learn obedience to the Father's voice, just as we need to learn obedience to the Father's voice. This was accomplished in Jesus' life by the things He suffered. The writer of Hebrews also informs us: "For we have not an high priest which cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities; but was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin." Hebrews 4:15
- b. Jesus was tempted in all points as we are. Though He was tempted, He never allowed the temptation to become sin in His life. Jesus was tried in every area of His life, but because He did not fall into sin, He became our example of living a sin-free life.
- c. Jesus did not allow the temptations of this life to alter the direction the Father had predestined for His life. We also need to stand against those temptations that the world has placed in our paths. What are the temptations of the world? Lust and Pride! The beloved John wrote: "Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world. If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in Him. For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life, is not of the Father, but is of the world." I John 2:15-16
- d. When God allows us to be tried, we are tried in these three areas. We are tried through the lust of the eyes, the lust of the flesh, and the pride of life. When the Holy Spirit revealed that Jesus was tempted (tried) in all points as we are, He was tempted in these three areas. After Jesus was baptized by John, He was led into the wilderness to be tempted.
- e. "And Jesus being full of the Holy Ghost returned from Jordan, and was led by the Spirit into the wilderness." Luke 4:1
- f. Mark recorded the above Scriptures as: "Immediately the Spirit driveth Him into the wilderness," Mark 1:12. There is one important lesson we must learn here: Jesus was not tested until His humanity was filled with the Spirit.
- g. Do you wonder why some Christians never seem to be tested or tried, why they go along without change in their lives? They

just seem to be existing in God. These are good, moral, upright, honest people who would not think of missing a church service; but God never seems to require anything of them. They serve on all the committees and belong to all the organizations, but they never have any testings in their lives.

- h. The answer is very simple: they are not endued with the Spirit. They have not come into the Baptism of the Cloven Tongues of fire that was given to cleanse, change, and purify us that we may be acceptable in the beloved. Many will say, "God does not speak to me." The reason for this is they have no spiritual ears to hear what our Father, the Spirit, is speaking to them.
7. Obey the Word.
- a. As we begin to come into the knowledge of truth in these areas in which Jesus was tempted, we then see why Peter wrote that Jesus was our example.
8. The lust of the flesh.
- a. "Being forty days tempted of the devil. And in those days He did eat nothing: and when they were ended, He afterward hungered. And the devil said unto Him, If thou be the Son of God, command this stone that it be made bread." Luke 4:2- 3
  - b. Satan spoke to Jesus, "If thou be the Son of God . . ." Before we can overcome satan's temptations in our lives, we must know who we are in God, but without the Holy Spirit we cannot know. Up until the time we receive the Holy Spirit anointing in our lives, we only have a mental knowledge of God, and a verbal faith. But when the Holy Spirit comes, we know without a doubt who we are, and so does satan. Satan is always there to bring doubt and fear. These are the tools of his trade, and he uses them very well.
  - c. It was not until Jesus was very hungry that satan tried to tempt him with food, knowing that eating is the most natural thing to do to fulfill the lust of the flesh. Many who claim to be Spirit-filled have no control over the appetite of the flesh: whether it be food, money, sex, or the things of the world. They give into every whim and desire of the flesh. Until we overcome the lust of the flesh we can never state as Jesus, "The prince of this world cometh, and hath nothing in Me." John 14:30

- d. The lust of the flesh was the first point that Jesus had to overcome in His life, and this is the main area of our lives that it is so important that we overcome. We must learn not to fulfill the lust of the flesh by the word of satan.
  - e. If satan could have overcome Jesus with the lust of the flesh, He would have been as Esau, who sold his birthright for a bowl of beans. God stated of Esau: "I hated Esau . . ." Malachi 1:3. Jesus could have sold his birthright for a piece of bread. Satan will give us no more than necessary to pervert our way of life. What is your price?
9. The lust of the eye.
- a. "And the devil, taking Him up into an high mountain, shewed unto Him all the kingdoms of the world in a moment of time. And the devil said unto Him, All this power will I give thee, and the glory of them: for that is delivered unto me; and to whomsoever I will I give it. If thou therefore wilt worship me, all shall be thine." Luke 4:5-7
  - b. This Scripture is speaking of Christians that desire everything they see. This keeps God's people in bondage to debt. They desire everything the world has: to look like the world, to act like the world, and to glory in the things of the world. Yet, God's people will justify the lust of the eyes by proclaiming, "I believe God wants me to have all these things."
  - c. All the teachers of the prosperity message would have us believe that lusting and desiring after these things is the will of God. They teach that prospering means a full wallet, a new car, a bigger house, and a new wardrobe. This is not the message of the Word. John wrote:
  - d. "Beloved, I wish above all things that thou mayest prosper and be in health, even as thy soul prospereth." III John 1:2
  - e. Our prosperity in God is measured by good health, a prosperous soul, and knowing who we are in God. Maybe God wants all to be poor? Certainly not. We need to learn that prosperity in God does not come with a dollar sign in front of it.
  - f. There are two places we can come to in God. The first place is when we become His child. God has obligated Himself to meet all our needs according to His riches in glory, Philippians 4:19.



The second place is:

- g. "Therefore I say unto you, What things soever ye desire, when ye pray, believe that ye receive them, and ye shall have them."  
Mark 11:24
- h. This is a place we can come to in God where He will give us what we desire. When we pray and believe, then we will receive what we desire. This is where most would cease to search the Scripture and begin confessing and professing all their lustful desires of this life. If God does not supply their desires, they rush out and fulfill that request to God by their own hand, proclaiming, "God has given this to me!" We can be assured, when God gives us something, it does not come with a payment book. The Scripture that most Christians seem to be willing to overlook is:
  - i. "And this is the confidence that we have in Him, that, if we ask any thing according to His will, He heareth us." I John 5:14
  - j. We must learn to pray according to His will. The only way we can do this is to understand His will as Paul related to the Ephesians:
  - k. "Wherefore be ye not unwise, but understanding what the will of the Lord is." Ephesians 5:17
  - l. The only way we can understand the will of the Lord is through the direction of the Holy Spirit anointing in our lives. We need to understand the Holy Spirit never operates through the lust of the eyes. Those who proclaim that God wants them to have all these things are giving in to the lust of the eyes. If we lust after the things of this life, it is a sin against God, as His Word declares.
  - m. Satan tried to tempt Jesus by offering Him all the kingdoms of the earth. Kingdoms are governments. Jesus did not argue with satan when he said they were his to give, because the kingdoms of this world are his to give. Satan reigns over worldly governments, but not over the earth. The earth is the Lord's and the fullness thereof, Psalm 24:1. The worldly kingdoms are satan's, so do not sell out cheap to him. Do not sell out for a piece of bread, a pot of beans, or for all the kingdoms of the world.

10. The pride of life.
- a. "And he brought Him to Jerusalem, and set Him on a pinnacle of the temple, and said unto Him, If Thou be the Son of God, cast Thyself down from hence: For it is written, He shall give His angels charge over Thee, to keep Thee: And in their hands they shall bear Thee up, lest at any time Thou dash Thy foot against a stone." Luke 4:9- 11
  - b. Many are very proud of who they are in God, and what they have accomplished for God, and what God has done for them. They are so proud of their gifts of the Spirit and how God mightily moves through them that this is all they talk about. The proud need to heed the words of Paul to the Corinthians:
  - c. "For who maketh thee to differ from another? And what hast thou that thou didst not receive? Now if thou didst receive it, why dost thou glory, as if thou hadst not received it?" I Corinthians 4:7
  - d. If we have received it, who have we received it from? And if we got it from someone, why are we so proud, as if it was something we obtained in ourselves? God is no respecter of persons, Acts 10:34. If God gave it to us, He can give it to someone else; and probably will, if we are lifted up in ourselves because we have it. He does not do things for us because we are better in His sight than anyone else. He does these things because He loves us.
  - e. Satan was trying to get Jesus to prove who He was in God. This temptation faces all who are walking and living in the Spirit. Jesus was tried in all points as we are tried - - - but He overcame. Why? Because He became the Word! He was the Word made flesh. He was the express image of the Father.
  - f. "Who being the brightness of His glory, and the express image of His person, and upholding all things by the Word of His power, when He had by Himself purged our sins, sat down on the right hand of the Majesty on high." Hebrews 1:3
  - g. How did Jesus uphold all things? It was by the Word of His power. His power was in the Word, the anointing, the Incarnate Word of God. The word incarnate means "a Spiritual being that was in existence before it was clothed in flesh."

11. Faith in the finish work of Jesus is our lense.
  - a. As we study His Logos (written Word), we are informed of many things pertaining to His Rhema (spoken Word) and His Incarnate Word. The Incarnate Word existed before the written word or the spoken word. The Incarnate Word was in the beginning before God spoke anything into existence.
  - b. "Through faith we understand that the worlds were framed by the Word of God, so that things which are seen were not made of things which do appear." Hebrews 11:3
  - c. The worlds were framed by the Word of God. The worlds were made of things that had no substance. It was the Incarnate Word that spoke the worlds into existence. God clothed that Word in flesh when He sent His only begotten Son to this earth to be the firstfruits of a new creation.
  - d. "But now is Christ risen from the dead, and become the firstfruits of them that slept." I Corinthians 15:20
  - e. When man sinned in the garden, he became dead in his sin. And man remains in his state of death, until He is resurrected in Christ. As Jesus was the Word made flesh, we, too, are to follow in His footsteps.
  - f. "Of His own will begat He us with the Word of truth, that we should be a kind of firstfruits of His creatures." James 1:18
  - g. We, too, are begotten of the Incarnate Word and are part of the Firstfruit Company who will be like Him when He appears, I John 3:2.
  - h. "But every man in his own order: Christ the firstfruits; afterward they that are Christ's at His coming." I Corinthians 15:23
  - i. As Christ was the firstfruit of this new creation, we are the firstfruits at His coming. Many believe Jesus is coming back in His flesh. If He did, the religious system would kill Him again. Paul informs us how Jesus will return: "When He shall come to be glorified in His saints, and to be admired in all them that believe (because our testimony among you was believed) in that day." II Thessalonians 1:10
  - j. Jesus is returning to be glorified in His saints, These are His firstfruits who have become the Word, and have come into the image of the Son.

12. As Jesus prayed to the Father, He proclaimed: "Sanctify them through Thy Truth: Thy Word is Truth." John 17:17
- a. We are sanctified (set apart in the Spiritual realm) through the Truth. His Word is that Truth. The Word and the Truth are the same.
  - b. When Jesus proclaimed, "Sanctify them through Thy Truth," the word through means "channel or by the way of."
  - c. We can only be sanctified through the Holy Spirit of promise.
  - d. The Holy Spirit is the channel in which our sanctification comes.
  - e. All things God does, He does through the Holy Spirit, or the Incarnate Word which are one.
13. Pursue godliness.
- a. What do all these truths mean to us? It is God's desire that we awake out of our sleep and arise to our position in Him. This is not a mental ascent unto God, it is a spiritual ascent, and this is necessary so that we may be acceptable in the Beloved. We are to become the Word of Life.
  - b. God has given us His Logos (written word), and He also speaks to us through the Rhema word (the spoken word). And as James revealed, we have received the engrafted Word.
  - c. "Wherefore lay apart all filthiness and superfluity of naughtiness, and receive with meekness the engrafted word, which is able to save your souls." James 1:21
  - d. The word engrafted means "implanted." God has implanted His Word in us in seed form. We need to allow that seed to germinate and grow up to consume the old, Adam nature, so we can become the Firstfruit Company of His new creation. In his letter to Titus, Paul informs us: "Teaching us that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly, in this present world." Titus 2:12
  - e. We are to live soberly, righteously, and godly in this present world - - - not when we get to some far off place - - - not when Jesus comes again - - - but now in this present world - - - in this present time.
  - f. Jesus gave Peter the keys to the Kingdom. When we want to understand Kingdom truths, we can find them in the first and

second books of Peter. Peter reveals: "For even hereunto were ye called: because Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example, that ye should follow His steps." I Peter 2:21

14. Godly family values.

- a. Jesus left an example for the firstfruit company to follow. If we are to be part of His firstfruit company, then we must follow in His steps. We must become the Word. Yet many will proclaim, "I could never be like Jesus." John tells us that if we are not like Him when He appears, we shall never see Him, I John 3:2-3.
- b. Jesus became the Spiritual Word while He walked in the flesh, being tempted by the things He suffered. We, too, are tempted; and suffer many things. When Paul wrote to Timothy, he related: "Yea, and all that will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution." 2 Timothy 3:12
- c. The church today wants nothing to do with suffering. They are not even willing to be uncomfortable while the Word of God is being taught to them. They must have total comfort and ease or they will not make a show of serving God. Yet, the Holy Spirit revealed through Paul:
- d. "If we suffer, we shall also reign with Him." II Timothy 2:12
- e. If Jesus is our example of the Christian life, then suffering and persecution are part of this life. But the common answer from Christians to this is that Jesus died so we do not have to go through any suffering or problems. However, it makes one wonder why Jesus stated, "The servant is not greater than His Lord," John 13:16. Peter also informs us: "Beloved, think it not strange concerning the fiery trials which is to try you, as though some strange thing happened unto you: But rejoice, inasmuch as ye are partakers of Christ's sufferings: that, when His glory shall be revealed, ye may be glad also with exceeding joy." I Peter 4:12- 13
- f. If Jesus learned obedience by the things He suffered, how are we to learn obedience to His Word? Jesus became the Word. We, too, must become the Word. It is revealed in Hebrews: "For every one that useth milk is unskilful in the Word of righteousness: for he is a babe." Hebrews 5:13
- g. If we are to become the Word, we must know the Word. The

- Psalmist writes: "Mine eyes prevent the night watches, that I might meditate in Thy Word." Psalm 119:148
- h. We must meditate in His Word after that we have filled ourselves with His Word.
  - i. "Study to shew thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the Word of truth." II Timothy 2:15
  - j. Godly family values require that after we fill ourselves with the Word and meditate in the Word, we are then to study the Word to show ourselves approved unto God, a workman that needs not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the Word of truth. When we fill, meditate on, and study God's Word we will thoroughly know the Word of Life, and will then be able to handle the Word skillfully. Jesus provide a critical principle for developing godly family values.
  - k. "Search the Scriptures; for in them ye think ye have eternal life: and they are they which testify of Me." John 5:39
  - l. If we are to know Jesus and His example to us, we must search the Scriptures. The word think means "to form an opinion." If we are to form an opinion of what our promised eternal life in God is all about, then we must search the Scriptures. As we search the Scriptures, we discover that eternal life is dwelling in us as the Holy Spirit of God is given place. We must allow eternal life to grow up and consume that which is temporal.
15. Developing godly family values requires becoming the Word.
- a. The writer of Hebrews stated that everyone who uses milk is unskillful in the Word of righteousness for he is a babe. How long we have been a Christian does not determine if we are yet babes in Christ. That determination is made on whether we are skillful in the Word. God's Kingdom is not determined by seniority, but on our becoming the Word of Life.
  - b. When Jesus became the Word, He could state, "I only do what I see the Father doing, and I only say what I hear the Father saying."
  - c. Jesus was totally under the control of the Holy Spirit from the time He was baptized by John in the Jordan. From that point

on, He became the Word. He became the Word through trials, temptations, tribulations, and by learning obedience to the voice of the Father.

- d. Jesus came to a place in the Father where, when His disciples were concerned about Jesus not eating, He could positively state:
- e. "My meat is to do the will of Him that sent Me, and to finish His work." John 4:34
- f. When we come to this place in the Father, we will truly have become the Word. We have been sent, pre-ordained, foreknown, and called to achieve this place in Christ, but it is necessary for us to become the Living Word of God, dwelling in the flesh. When we accomplish this place in God, we will hear the Father proclaim: "This is My beloved Son in whom I am well pleased."
- g. We are a called generation of people. We must not only read and fill ourselves with the Word, we must meditate, study, and search the Scriptures if we are to become the Word.
- h. The revelation in the words of Jesus, when tried by Satan, must become our proclamation of life in Christ Jesus our Lord: "And Jesus answered him, saying, It is written, That man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word of God." Luke 4:4
- i. Godly family values enables us to live by every Logos Word (written Word), every Rhema word (spoken word), and every Incarnate Word of Christ.

### Practice

1. What prevents the development of godly family values?
2. What do we often substitute for godly family values?
3. Why is it so important to develop godly family values today?
4. What is our responsibility in developing godly family values?
5. Why is personal discipline so very important in developing godly family values?
6. What does it mean to praise God?
7. What does it mean to worship God?

## Praise God

### Problem

What does praising God mean?

### Premise

This lesson explains some of the biblical concepts associated with praising God.

### Philosophy

Psalm 100:1-5 Make a joyful noise to the LORD, all the earth! 2 Serve the LORD with gladness! Come into his presence with singing! 3 Know that the LORD, he is God! It is he who made us, and we are his; we are his people, and the sheep of his pasture. 4 Enter his gates with thanksgiving, and his courts with praise! Give thanks to him; bless his name! 5 For the LORD is good; his steadfast love endures forever, and his faithfulness to all generations.

Psalm 118:28–29 You are my God, and I will praise You; You are my God, I will exalt You. Oh, give thanks to the Lord, for He is good! For His mercy endures forever.

### Principle

1. The phrase “Praise God!” is common in the Church vernacular, but what does it really mean?
  - a. God’s Word is the best place to look to define our terms.
  - b. We must be careful to not get too hung up in traditions and culture practices and lose the meaning that God has given to us through His Word.
  - c. The book of Psalms (sacred songs) is well-known for its focus on praising God.
2. Psalm 117:1–2 says, “Praise the LORD, all you nations; extol him, all you peoples. For great is his love toward us, and the faithfulness of the LORD endures forever. Praise the LORD.”
  - a. Paul quotes this verse in Romans 15:8–13.
  - b. Praising the Lord is something all people should do.
3. To praise is to express adoration or approval.
  - a. We praise the Lord for His traits, His works, and His character.
  - b. Praise includes the acts of blessing, commending, honoring,



- thanksgiving, celebrating, and rejoicing.
- c. We praise the Lord because He is worthy of all our praise.
  - d. He is worthy of all adoration and approval.
4. When David brought the ark of the covenant from Obed-Edom's house back to Jerusalem, "he appointed some of the Levites to minister before the ark of the Lord, to extol, thank, and praise the Lord, the God of Israel" (1 Chronicles 16:4).
- a. In part they were to "give praise to the LORD, proclaim his name; make known among the nations what he has done.
  - b. Sing to him, sing praise to him; tell of all his wonderful acts. Remember the wonders he has done, his miracles, and the judgments he pronounced.
  - c. He remembers his covenant forever, the promise he made, for a thousand generations.
  - d. Sing to the LORD, all the earth; proclaim his salvation day after day.
  - e. Declare his glory among the nations, his marvelous deeds among all peoples.
  - f. For great is the LORD and most worthy of praise; he is to be feared above all gods. . . . Ascribe to the LORD, all you families of nations, ascribe to the LORD glory and strength. Ascribe to the LORD the glory due his name; bring an offering and come before him. Worship the LORD in the splendor of his holiness. . . . Let the heavens rejoice, let the earth be glad; let them say among the nations, 'The LORD reigns!' . . . Give thanks to the LORD, for he is good; his love endures forever. Cry out, 'Save us, God our Savior; gather us and deliver us from the nations, that we may give thanks to your holy name, and glory in your praise.' Praise be to the LORD, the God of Israel, from everlasting to everlasting" (1 Chronicles 16:8–36).
5. We see several important aspects of praising God in David's instructions.
- a. Our praise for God helps make Him known among the nations.
  - b. In praising God we extol His goodness to others.
  - c. Praising the Lord involves remembering the things He has done.
  - d. We praise God for His miracles as well as for His judgments.

- e. His mercy and His justice are both deserving of praise.
  - f. Praising the Lord involves remembering His faithfulness and His promises.
  - g. We praise Him that He will keep all the promises He has made.
  - h. We praise the Lord that His love is everlasting.
  - i. All people, everywhere, should see that God is worthy of praise, based on who He is.
  - j. Even nature is called upon to praise the Lord and proclaim that He reigns.
  - k. We call upon God for salvation because only He can rescue us, and our response to His deliverance is to praise Him.
  - l. God is to be praised “from everlasting to everlasting”; praising the Lord is not a one-time event but something we continually do.
6. Praise is a central part of worshiping God.
- a. David set aside a division of the Levites to praise the Lord with musical instruments in the future temple (1 Chronicles 23:1–5, 30).
  - b. Later, during the rebuilding of the temple, “when the builders laid the foundation of the temple of the LORD, the priests in their vestments and with trumpets, and the Levites (the sons of Asaph) with cymbals, took their places to praise the LORD, as prescribed by David king of Israel.
  - c. With praise and thanksgiving they sang to the LORD: ‘He is good; his love toward Israel endures forever.’ And all the people gave a great shout of praise to the LORD, because the foundation of the house of the LORD was laid” (Ezra 3:10–11).
7. We praise the Lord for His grand plan of salvation, and Christian unity helps encourage praise.
- a. “Accept one another, then, just as Christ accepted you, in order to bring praise to God. For I tell you that Christ has become a servant of the Jews on behalf of God’s truth, so that the promises made to the patriarchs might be confirmed and, moreover, that the Gentiles might glorify God for his mercy. As it is written: ‘Therefore I will praise you among the Gentiles; I will sing the praises of your name.’ Again, it says, ‘Rejoice, you Gentiles, with his people.’ And again, ‘Praise the Lord, all you

- Gentiles; let all the peoples extol him” (Romans 15:7–11).
- b. We praise the Lord and in so doing follow Jesus’ example in praising the Father (Matthew 11:25).
8. In Ephesians 1 Paul writes, “Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ” (verse 3).
    - a. He then proceeds to give us many reasons to praise the Lord “who has blessed us in the heavenly realms with every spiritual blessing in Christ.”
    - b. Reasons for praising God include God’s election and sanctification (verse 4),
    - c. His adoption (verse 5),
    - d. His glorious grace (verse 6),
    - e. His redemption through the blood of Christ (verse 7),
    - f. His forgiveness (verse 7),
    - g. His gifts of wisdom and understanding (verse 8), and His plan for the future (verse 10).
  9. When our lives are filled with the righteousness of Christ, it redounds to the praise of the Lord.
    - a. In Philippians 1:9–11 Paul prayed, “And this is my prayer: that your love may abound more and more in knowledge and depth of insight, so that you may be able to discern what is best and may be pure and blameless for the day of Christ, filled with the fruit of righteousness that comes through Jesus Christ—to the glory and praise of God.”
    - b. James 3:9–10 warns that we cannot both praise God and curse others.
    - c. If we are to genuinely praise God, then our actions (and our words) should be in line with His righteous character.
  10. Our praise of the Lord is to be ongoing: “Through Jesus, therefore, let us continually offer to God a sacrifice of praise—the fruit of lips that openly profess his name” (Hebrews 13:15).
  11. We “declare the praises of him who called [us] out of darkness into his wonderful light” (1 Peter 2:9).
  12. Whom do we praise?
    - a. The Lord alone (Psalm 148:13).
    - b. How do we praise Him?
    - c. With singing (Psalm 149:1), with dancing (verse 2), with

- musical instruments (Psalm 150:3), with our words (Psalm 35:28), with our actions (Colossians 3:17), with our uprightness (Psalm 119:7), and with all our hearts (Psalm 86:12).
- d. When should we praise the Lord? All the time (Psalm 34:1).
  - e. We should express our adoration, approval, thanksgiving, and celebration to the One who created and redeemed us. “How good it is to sing praises to our God, how pleasant and fitting to praise him!” (Psalm 147:1).
13. Let everything that has breath praise the Lord.
- a. Bible commands all living creatures to praise the Lord (Psalm 150:6). One Hebrew word for “praise” is yadah, meaning “praise, give thanks, or confess.” A second word often translated “praise” in the Old Testament is zamar, “sing praise.” A third word translated “praise” is halal (the root of hallelujah), meaning “to praise, honor, or commend.”
  - b. All three terms contain the idea of giving thanks and honor to one who is worthy of praise.
  - c. The book of Psalms is a collection of songs filled with praises to God.
    - i. Among them is Psalm 9, which says, “I will be glad and rejoice in you; I will sing the praises of your name, O Most High” (verse 2).
    - ii. Psalm 18:3 says God is “worthy of praise.”
    - iii. Psalm 21:13 praises God both for who He is and for His great power: “Be exalted in your strength, LORD; we will sing and praise your might.”
  - d. Psalm 150 uses the term praise thirteen times in six verses.
    - i. The first verse provides the “where” of praise—everywhere!
    - ii. “Praise God in his sanctuary; praise him in his mighty heavens.
    - iii. The next verse teaches “why” to praise the Lord: “Praise him for his acts of power; praise him for his surpassing greatness.”
    - iv. Verses 3–6 note “how” to praise the Lord—with a variety of instruments, dance, and everything that has breath. Every means we have to make sound is to be used to

- praise the Lord!
- e. In the New Testament, there are examples of praise given to Jesus.
    - i. Matthew 21:16 refers to those who praised Jesus as He rode a donkey into Jerusalem.
    - ii. Matthew 8:2 notes a leper who bowed before Jesus.
    - iii. Jesus accepted praise as God.
  - f. The early church often shared in times of praise.
    - i. Many of Paul's letters include extended sections of praise to the Lord (1 Timothy 3:14–16; Philippians 1:3–11).
  - g. At the end of time, all of God's people will join in eternal praise of God.
    - i. With the curse of sin removed, those who are with the Lord will forever praise the King of kings in perfection.
    - ii. Our praise of God on earth is simply preparation for the celebration of praise that will take place in eternity with the Lord.
14. In Psalm 118:28–29, the Hebrew word for “praise” is yadah, which means to praise, give thanks, or confess.
  15. In fact, the word translated “give thanks” later on in the passage comes from the same Hebrew word used earlier for “praise”—context determines meaning.
  16. There are two different Hebrew words for “praise” in Psalm 149:3: “Let them praise [halal] His name with the dance; Let them sing praises [zamar] to Him with the timbrel and harp.” Halal means to praise, glorify, boast, commend, etc., and zamar means to make music or sing praises.
  17. In all of these instances, praising God is fundamentally giving Him the recognition He deserves.
    - a. One way we can define what we mean by praising God is to consider the end result.
    - b. The end result of giving God praise is to exalt Him and His name.
    - c. The psalmist quickly follows the declaration of praise with exalting God.
  18. We can praise God in song.
    - a. Singing praises to God was common in biblical times.

- b. The main purpose of the Psalms is to praise God, indicated by the numerous songs on praise.
  - c. We can also praise God in dance, prayer, proclamations, studying God's Word, and the list goes on.
19. No matter how we praise God, we must be sure to lift up His name above all else. "For the Lord is great and greatly to be praised; He is to be feared above all gods" (Psalm 96:4).
  20. Putting other people or things before God is easy to do, but with the Holy Spirit's help, we must praise God with all of our might.
  21. When we praise God, we should exalt Him above all else.
  22. In order to properly give God praise, we must ask God to help us put Him first in our life.

### Practice

1. What blocks our praise?
2. What frees our praise?
3. What is the criteria for praise?
4. What is true praise?
5. What is fake praise?
6. What is Satan's reaction to our praise?
7. What is God's view of our praise?

## **The Bible Has the Keys to Mental Health**

### **Problem**

How does the Bible address mental health?

### **Premise**

The peace of God is the inner peace or sustaining confidence that God gives us when we pray with thanksgiving.

### **Philosophy**

Dr. Gro Harlem Brundtland, reported in 2000 that “five of the 10 leading causes of disability worldwide are mental conditions.”

The five conditions she listed are major depression, schizophrenia, bipolar disorders, alcohol abuse and obsessive-compulsive disorders. In addition, significant mental-health disorders plaguing humanity include phobias, generalized anxiety and panic disorder. Any of these maladies can be disabling.

While treatment options—including medication and counseling—are available, prevention is the better choice. Although treatment often works, it usually is much more costly. The costs often include financial losses, physical-health deterioration and trauma to family members, sometimes resulting in family disintegration.

Many mental illnesses can be prevented, and the Bible provides directives. The Bible tells us how to relieve stress and the kind of stimuli we should allow into our minds.

Mental challenges are far more prevalent than many realize. With one in four adults struggling with mental illness each year. The church hasn't always done a great job of ministering to those affected by mental illness.

Perfect peace is one of God's gifts to those who trust in Him.

Confidence in God rules out fear and anxiety over lesser things.

Peace is based on steadfast trust in God. Such trust produces internal, personal peace, the only basis for peace on a larger scale (Isaiah 9:6-7; 26:3; 57:19-21; Psalm 9:10; 85:7-8; Micah 5:5; John 14:27; 16:33; Romans 4:18-21; 5:1; Ephes. 2:14-16; Phil. 4:7; Isaiah 31:1; 48:2; 50:1; 1 Chron. 5:20; 2 Chron. 13:18; 16:8; Jeremiah 17:7-8).

## Principle

1. A Christian Response to Mental Illness.
  - a. The right action starts with the right attitude (Psalm 139; Matthew 9:35-38; 14:13-21; John 13:33-35; 15:9-17; Romans 7:14-25).
  - b. Mental illness is a reality of life, and churches are often at the front lines of mental health care.
  - c. We need to be ready to respond to people who need us, and this response starts with considering mental illness from a Christian point of view without negating anatomical or biological resources.
2. Why So Much Suffering?
  - a. Christians can find hope and meaning in mental illness and other hardships (Numbers 21:4-9; John 3:13-17; Romans 5:12-17; 8:19-23; 8:35-38).
  - b. One of the reasons mental illness and other forms of suffering feel like threats to faith is because many Christians have bought into the philosophy (knowingly or unknowingly) that we shouldn't suffer in this life, that it's normal to be happy and healthy all the time.
3. Mental Illness and the Church's Responsibility.
  - a. We are part of the solution to this health crisis (1 Corinthians 1:18-25; 13:1-13; 2 Corinthians 2:14-16).
  - b. The church can't afford to ignore mental illness.
  - c. Mental illness is so common, it affects nearly everyone.
  - d. As people called to spread love and hope, we must step out and offer what only the people of God can offer.
4. Shining Light on Stigma.
  - a. Christians must replace false beliefs and stereotypes about mental illness with truth (1 Kings 19:3-4; Jonah 4; Matthew 23:1-4; Mark 5:1-20; Luke 13:1-5; John 9:1-3; 2 Timothy 1:3-7).
  - b. One of the hallmarks of God's people should be our commitment to truth. While we may not always agree on all aspects of what is true, we can be united in our dedication to pursue truth rather than hide away in fear or sleep under a blanket of wishful thinking. The stigma attached to mental illness is based in both fear and misinformation.



5. The Church Is Called to Help with Mental Illness.
  - a. Pursuing our God-given mission means helping hurting people (Matthew 5:13-16; 1 Corinthians 12:12-26; Colossians 3:12-17).
  - b. Many people who sit in church pews on Sunday mornings don't spend a lot of time thinking about the church's mission and purpose. Some believe these questions are for professional pastors and theologians to consider. But the church's mission is every Christian's mission, and it should guide the life of everyone who calls Jesus Lord.
6. God Can Redeem Mental Illness.
  - a. We have more than one reason for hope, even when life seems hopeless (2 Corinthians 1:3-7; 4:13-18; Ephesians 2:1-10; James 1:2-4).
  - b. When it comes to a topic like mental illness, it's easy to focus on pain and struggle and to lose sight of the good work God can do in any circumstance. Believing in God's redemption sometimes requires tremendous trust in the midst of overwhelming pain.
  - c. But we don't trust for no reason—we can see examples of God's redemption all around us if we're paying attention.
7. The power of a positive attitude.
  - a. The Bible instructs us in proper attitude (Philippians 4:8).
  - b. Those who consistently apply these positive words will practice positive thinking, a habit crucial to mental health.
  - c. “A positive outlook is known to improve recovery from surgery and the immune system’s ability to fight off disease as well as aid in cancer recovery, to reduce the fight-or-flight response and hence stress disease [and can] ... restore our tranquillity and turn our unhappy, anxiety-producing hormones into happy ones” (Archibald Hart, M.D., *The Anxiety Cure*, 1999, p. 217).
  - d. The characteristics of an optimistic mind-set include the ability to focus on the positive when the negative seems overwhelming. The key lies in turning a problem into a challenge and then working to meet it.
  - e. We must avoid filling our minds with the negative and degrading aspects of the world around us. The apostle Paul

wrote that some things are so shameful we should not even speak of them (Ephesians 5:12).

- f. If we want good mental health, we should discipline our minds to avoid a degrading mental diet. Garbage in, garbage out. To remain psychologically stable, we must discipline our minds to avoid thinking in the gutter.
  - g. Paul practiced the advice he gave to the Christians at Philippi and exhorted them to follow his example (Philippians 4:9). Peace of mind and a clear conscience are essential characteristics of sound mental health (Acts 23:1; 24:16; 1 Timothy 1:5).
8. Reining in feelings and emotions.
- a. Where do feelings and emotions come from? When God created man in His own image He included the human personality, which can express godly feelings (Genesis 1:27).
  - b. The primary characteristic that summarizes God's very being is love (1 John 4:8, 16). But Paul describes a range of godly characteristics and emotions as aspects of the fruit of His Spirit. They include "love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control" (Galatians 5:22-23; Ephesians 5:18).
  - c. If these traits are dominant in our personality, we are less likely to suffer from mental aberrations. Such a mind will be self-controlled; it will be stable and able to endure the difficulties of life. It will be optimistic, and optimism is a vital part of a healthy mind. "Optimistic people are more able to roll with life's punches and slough off stress and they live longer" (Bradley Wilcox, M.D., Craig Wilcox, Ph.D., and Makoto Suzuki, M.D., The Okinawa Program, 2001, p. 273).
  - d. A person without self-control is as defenseless as a city with broken-down walls (Proverbs 25:28). This person will be vulnerable and driven frequently by negative emotions (Galatians 5:19-21). His accompanying problems can include adultery, sexual immorality, hatred, contentions, jealousies, outbursts of wrath, selfish ambitions, envy and drunkenness. Living this way exacts an automatic penalty that makes one a candidate for instability, unhappiness and mental problems.

- e. We choose our emotions, and we live with the consequences. The types of emotions that prevail in our minds are a major determining factor in whether we succeed at life itself. “Emotions are a mixed blessing. They are responsible for many of man’s finest and greatest achievements. They are also responsible for some of the greatest tragedies in our world” (Norman Wright, *The Christian Use of Emotional Power*, 1974, p. 13). If we choose healthy emotions, we can be healthy and achieve success in life.
9. Take time out.
- a. We live in such a fast-paced world that it is essential to schedule breaks from our routine. “Taking time to rest is not an option in today’s world; it is a necessity. Yet more people struggle here than in almost any other area of their lives. It is perilous not to take time to rest” (Hart, p. 118).
  - b. Jesus and His apostles felt this need (Mark 6:31).
  - c. For mental rejuvenation and avoiding stress overload, we need daily rest. Especially as we get older, an afternoon nap can rejuvenate us. We also need regular vacations if our financial circumstances and work situations permit. Even if one does nothing but stay at home on holidays, breaks from our routines can be beneficial.
  - d. God tells us we need to schedule one day in the week for rest. After completing His work of creation, God rested on the seventh day (Genesis 2:2). The Hebrew word for “rested” is shabath, the verb form of the noun translated as “Sabbath” in Exodus 20:10-11, where God gave the Ten Commandments to Israel and commanded the Israelites to keep His Sabbath holy by resting on the seventh day of every week.
10. Too much change.
- a. About 40 years ago a French doctor who taught at Harvard observed: “If psychiatric illnesses are truly increasing in the Western world, the reason is not to be found in the complex and competitive character of our society but rather in the accelerated rate at which old habits and conventions disappear. Even the marginal man can generally achieve some form of equilibrium with his environment if the social order is

stable, but he is likely to break down when the extent and rate of change exceed his adaptive potentialities. For this reason mental diseases are likely to become more apparent in areas undergoing rapid cultural transitions” (Rene Dubos, *Mirage of Health*, 1959, pp. 208-209).

- b. The Sabbath provides a time to take a break from the world of stress and tension. “... We live in a culture that is constantly feeding us stress-producing messages ... With today’s round-the-clock access to news we now can receive a twenty-four-hour-a-day parade of mostly negative information ... The news, in fact, has become so stressful that some health experts ... recommend periodic ‘news fasts’ to improve psychological health” (Wilcox, Wilcox and Suzuki, pp. 237-238).
11. Confront your fears.
- a. Being afraid of something is normal. Some fears are healthy, but some are not. When a fear becomes persistent and irrational, it is a phobia. “Specific phobias strike more than one in ten people” (Hart, p. 180). Some major fears are agoraphobia, fear of being in public places, and claustrophobia, fear of confinement or crowded places.
  - b. When one has a phobia, he will often anticipate encountering the circumstance that is apt to trigger it, which can set up persistent anxiety. God does not want us to be controlled by such fears (Proverbs 3:25).
  - c. How can we overcome phobias? “They must be confronted, but not in a way that reinforces them. It is possible to overcome almost every phobia. It just takes time and effort. Real-life exposure to whatever situation you might fear is the most effective way to overcome that fear” (Hart, p. 179).
  - d. It is often beneficial to seek godly counsel when confronting a phobia that seriously impacts your life, but developing a relationship with God is even more important. In doing so, you can grow in His love (1 John 4:18).
12. Confront anxiety with confidence.
- a. Although most people are not phobic, almost everyone has to struggle against worry, which is a form of fear. Our age is the era of anxiety. Everyone experiences some anxiety, and it can

be a useful emotion when it triggers us to act to avoid danger. But, if it impacts our life seriously, we must take action to overcome it (Ephesians 4:23). “Every anxiety sufferer must learn new ways of thinking and develop methods for changing their former thinking patterns” (Hart, p. 111).

- b. How do we do this? One anxiety-reducing technique is to cleanse your mind at day’s end.
  - c. The Bible confirms that this is sound advice in a passage that tells us what to do at day’s end (Psalms 4:4).
  - d. Sometimes anxieties relate to meeting our basic needs. Jesus said, “Do not be anxious then, saying, ‘What shall we eat?’ or ‘What shall we drink?’ or ‘With what shall we clothe ourselves?’” Jesus also recommended a cure for these worries: “... Seek first His kingdom and His righteousness; and all these things shall be added to you” (Matthew 6:31, 33). When our priorities conform to God’s will, we can live in confidence that He will help us meet our other needs.
  - e. A relationship with God is fundamental to overcoming our fears (Philippians 2:5; 4:13). The only way we can develop the mind of Christ is to first repent of ignoring God’s biblical instructions, then be baptized and receive God’s Spirit (Acts 2:38; 2 Timothy 1:7).
13. The healing power of humor.
- a. As simple as it sounds, the ability to laugh is an aid to mental health. Joy is akin to laughter, and it, too, is part of the fruit of God’s Spirit (Galatians 5:22; Proverbs 15:13; 17:22).
  - b. Humor triggers literal physiological and mental changes in your body. Laughter “touches us at a deep emotional and physical level ... By its very nature it changes our perception and invites us to look at things in a different light. It shows us that life can be silly, even crazy at times, but it still can be enjoyable” (Wilcox, Wilcox and Suzuki, pp. 272-273). One doctor notes that “humor, smiles, and laughter are the very best stress-busters” (Herbert Benson, M.D., *Timeless Healing*, 1996, p. 277).
  - c. A relationship with God provides the deepest and most-abiding joy. In one study of more than 500 men, “significant

associations emerged between the participants' religious involvement and their health ... such as less depression" (Kenneth Cooper, M.D., *It's Better to Believe*, p. 5).

- d. Physical activity such as gardening, walking and other regular exercise can also benefit your mental health.
14. Avoid dangerous addictions.
- a. People suffering from mental problems—including undue stress—often rely on ingestible substances to help them get through the day. But this kind of crutch can easily lead to a collapse and fall.
  - b. “Many people who suffer from emotional disorders or mental illness turn to drugs and alcohol to self-medicate, as a way of tolerating feelings that are intolerable. Yet, ironically, this method of self-treating seldom works in the long run and frequently makes matters worse” (Johns Hopkins Family Health Book, 1999, p. 1225).
  - c. Besides addictions to mood-altering substances, sometimes people become addicted to things that are normally proper and healthy. Some, for example, develop addictions to food, sex or work. Though not a problem in moderation and within God’s laws, losing control in any of these areas will often lead to greater problems.
  - d. The Bible addresses the need for balance and control (1 Corinthians 6:12). We should have but one addiction—and that is a devotion to love God and our fellow man. The supreme power that should rule over us is God through the Holy Spirit.
15. A social support system.
- a. Good mental health requires contact with other people. One of the first revelations of the Bible is that God designed us to need other people (Genesis 2:18; Ecclesiastes 4:10).
  - b. The need for emotionally supporting family and friends is scientifically established. “What happens if we have no close relationships? The message that emerges loud and clear from scientific evidence accumulated since the mid 1970’s is that having a reasonable quantity and quality of social relationships is essential for mental and physical wellbeing” (Paul Martin, M.D., *The Healing Mind*, 1997, p. 157).

- c. Human interaction spawns growth and is essential mentally and physically (Proverbs 27:17).
  - d. Perhaps the chief benefit of uplifting social contact is that it provides us the opportunity to learn how to love and serve. This is vital to mental health. Rarely if ever will you meet a person who is genuinely focused on helping others who is unhappy or dissatisfied with life. They are happy because they are directing their attention away from themselves.
  - e. Jesus recognized this and demonstrated that love and service are keys to happiness and mental health. He performed the menial task of washing His disciples' feet to demonstrate that His disciples were to serve one another as He had served them (John 13:17, verse 34).
  - f. To love your neighbor as yourself is one of the two great commandments in the Bible (Matthew 22:37-40). The book of Proverbs extols the benefits of friendliness and neighborliness.
  - g. Obedience to the commands of the Bible and nurturing a relationship with God the Father and Jesus Christ form the foundation to completeness and mental well-being (Ecclesiastes 12:13).
16. Stand on and with the Word of God.
- a. Joy and gentleness, accompanied with an awareness of Christ's imminent return, should dispel anxiety. Paul's appeal to the Church is do not be anxious about anything. But this was not a call to a carefree life.
  - b. To care and be genuinely concerned is one thing. To worry is another. Paul and Timothy cared for the people they ministered to (2 Cor. 11:28; Phil. 2:20), yet they retained trust in God. Jesus warned against worry which obviously eliminates trust in God (Matt. 6:25-33).
  - c. Paul exhorted the Church to prayer instead of anxiety. Praying with thanksgiving involves trusting God.
  - d. Four words are used to describe a believer's communion with God.
    - i. Prayer (proseuche) describes a believer's approach to God.
    - ii. Petition (deesei) emphasizes requesting an answer to a

- specific need.
- iii. Thanksgiving (eucharistias) is an attitude of heart which should always accompany one's prayers.
  - iv. Requests (aitemata) speak of definite and specific things asked for.
- e. When the exhortations of the Word of God are heeded, the peace of God will flood one's troubled soul. The Lord Jesus Christ is a believer's peace (Eph. 2:14), and every child of God has peace with God through justification by faith (Rom. 5:1). But the peace of (or from) God relates to the inner tranquillity of a believer's close walk with God.
  - f. This peace of God transcends all understanding, that is, it is beyond our ability to comprehend.
  - g. This peace guards the believers. Guard (phrouresei, 1 Peter 1:5) translates a military term which means "to protect or garrison by guarding."
  - h. Like soldiers assigned to watch over a certain area, God's peace garrisons the hearts and... minds, that is, the emotions and thoughts, of God's children (Phil. 1:2; 4:6, 7; Numbers 6:26; Job 22:21; 34:29; Psalm 29:11; 85:8; Isaiah 26:3; 26:12; 45:7; 48:18, 22; 55:11-12; 57:19-21; Jeremiah 33:6; Luke 1:79; 2:14; John 14:27; 16:33; Romans 1:7; 5:1; 8:6; 14:17; 15:13; 2 Cor. 13:11; Galatians 5:22; Col. 3:15; 2 Thes. 3:16; Hebrews 13:20; Rev. 1:4; Ephes. 3:19; Rev. 2:17; Neh. 8:10; Proverbs 2:11; 4:6; 6:22; 1 Peter 1:4-5; Jude 1:1).

### Practice

1. How did secular counseling invade the Church?
2. Why does the Church appear to have such an aversion to counseling?
3. Why is prevention preferable rather than treating a problem after it arises?
4. What is the root of emotional disorder, barring medical pathologies?
5. What is the root of mental disorder, barring medical pathologies?
6. Why is it that we so readily own negative mental or emotional diagnosis?
7. What is too hard for God?



## Burn Fat?

### Problem

What are the best ways to burn fat and promote weight loss?

### Premise

Without discipline there is no success!

### Philosophy

1. Hormone sensitive lipase is a complex chemically structured enzyme that acts as a catalyst for the hydrolysis of fat in your body.
2. Simply put, it virtually “busts” your fat deposits.
3. The levels of hormone-sensitive lipase (HSL) in your body are inversely proportional to the serum levels of insulin. What this means is that as the levels of HSL decrease, the insulin levels in your blood increase.
4. This is bad because it slows down the fat burning process and deposits more fat throughout your body.
5. With this in mind, you want your HSL levels to stay at a healthy level. But how do you maintain that?
6. Get your metabolism cranking and increase the available HSL levels in your body:
7. Intermittent Fasting
  - a. Hormone-Sensitive Lipase Boosting Tip: Intermittent Fasting
  - b. Intermittent fasting is a great way to turbo charge fat loss.
  - c. Intermittent fasting increases the levels of fat loss enzymes and hormones in the body. Fasting also boosts up two very crucial fat burning enzymes in the body: the muscle-tissue based lipoprotein lipase and our friend hormone-sensitive lipase.
  - d. Both these enzymes catapult the fat burning by stimulating the cells to take up fat.
8. Standing
  - a. Hormone-Sensitive Lipase Boosting Tip: Standing
  - b. If you think going to the gym for an hour a day will help you get slim, it will not.
  - c. Exercising every day has little effect on the fat burning capacity of the body if you’re sitting down better part of the day.
  - d. Studies done on rats have demonstrated that lipoprotein lipase

and hormone-sensitive lipase are released from the leg muscles only when they are actively flexed or are contracting.

- e. What this means is that hormone-sensitive lipase will only be released from your leg muscles when you're standing.
  - f. Standing while working or watching TV may seem odd, but it is beneficial for the body. It releases more of the hormone-sensitive lipase which burns fat and makes the body leaner and fitter.
9. High-Intensity Training
- a. Hormone-Sensitive Lipase Boosting Tip: High Intensity Training
  - b. Sustained aerobic activity for longer than 15 to 20 minutes mobilizes fat from your bodily fat stores in response to decreasing glycogen levels in the blood.
  - c. With decreased blood sugar levels, your insulin levels are depleted, thus triggering an increase of HSL.
  - d. What does all of this mean? It means that high-intensity interval training will boost your HSL levels and help you burn fat.
  - e. An added benefit of high-intensity exercise is that it results in a phenomenon called EPOC (Excess Post-exercise Oxygen Consumption).
  - f. This causes the body to have a sustained oxygen deficit that takes a long time to be fulfilled after the exercise session is over.
  - g. This may take up to 24 to 36 hours, thus burning more calories at that time as compared to a normal rest day.
  - h. With these things in mind, you can take advantage of your natural store of hormone-sensitive lipase as a weapon against the fat you've been so desperately trying to get rid of.
  - i. It's further proof that your body has everything it needs to straighten itself out. Take care of it and it will take care of you!
    - i. Get quality sleep.
    - ii. Focus on eating real, whole foods.
    - iii. Eat plenty of healthy fats.
    - iv. Avoid processed sugars and refined carbohydrates.
    - v. Try Intermittent Fasting.
    - vi. Move more!
10. No more excuses. Go for it and do it now.

## Principle

### 8. Start Strength Training

- a. Strength training is a type of exercise that requires you to contract your muscles against resistance. It builds muscle mass and increases strength.
- b. Most commonly, strength training involves lifting weights to gain muscle over time.
- c. Research has found strength training to have multiple health benefits, especially when it comes to burning fat.
- d. In one study, strength training reduced visceral fat in 78 people with metabolic syndrome. Visceral fat is a type of dangerous fat that surrounds the organs in the body.
- e. Another study showed that 12 weeks of strength training paired with aerobic exercise was more effective at reducing body fat and belly fat than aerobic exercise alone.
- f. Resistance training may also help preserve fat-free mass, which can increase the number of calories your body burns at rest.
- g. According to one review, 10 weeks of resistance training could help increase calories burned at rest by 7% and may reduce fat weight by 4 pounds (1.8 kg).
- h. Doing body-weight exercises, lifting weights or using gym equipment are a few easy ways to get started with strength training.
- i. Strength training has been shown to increase resting energy expenditure and reduce belly fat, especially when combined with aerobic exercise.

### 9. Follow a High-Protein Diet

- a. Including more protein-rich foods in your diet is an effective way to reduce your appetite and burn more fat.
- b. In fact, multiple studies have found that eating more high-quality protein is associated with a lower risk of belly fat.
- c. One study also showed that a high-protein diet can help preserve muscle mass and metabolism during weight loss.
- d. Upping your protein intake may also increase feelings of fullness, decrease appetite and reduce calorie intake to aid in

- weight loss.
- e. Try incorporating a few servings of high-protein foods into your diet each day to help amp up fat burning.
  - f. Some examples of protein-rich foods include meat, seafood, eggs, legumes and dairy products.
  - g. Eating more protein may be associated with a lower risk of belly fat. Increasing your protein intake can decrease appetite, lower calorie intake and preserve muscle mass.
10. Squeeze in More Sleep
- a. Going to bed a bit earlier or setting your alarm clock a little later can help boost fat burning and prevent weight gain.
  - b. Several studies have found an association between getting enough sleep and weight loss.
  - c. One study of 68,183 women showed that those who slept five or fewer hours per night over a period of 16 years were more likely to gain weight than those who slept for longer than seven hours per night.
  - d. Another study showed that better sleep quality and getting at least seven hours of sleep per night increased the likelihood of successful weight loss by 33% in 245 women enrolled in a six-month weight loss program.
  - e. Other research shows that a lack of sleep may contribute to alterations in hunger hormones, increased appetite and a higher risk of obesity.
  - f. Although everyone needs a different amount of sleep, most studies have found that getting at least seven hours of sleep per night is associated with the most benefits when it comes to body weight.
  - g. Stick to a regular sleep schedule, limit your intake of caffeine and minimize your use of electronic devices before bed to help support a healthy sleep cycle.
  - h. Getting enough sleep may be associated with decreased appetite and hunger, as well as a lower risk of weight gain.
11. Add Vinegar to Your Diet
- a. Vinegar is well known for its health-promoting properties.
  - b. In addition to its potential effects on heart health and blood sugar control, increasing your intake of vinegar may help bump

- up fat burning, according to some research.
  - c. One study found that consuming 1–2 tablespoons (15–30 ml) of vinegar daily reduced people’s body weight, belly fat and average waist circumference over a 12-week period.
  - d. Consuming vinegar has also been shown to enhance feelings of fullness and reduce appetite.
  - e. Another small study of 11 people showed that adding vinegar to the diet reduced daily calorie intake by up to 275 calories.
  - f. It’s easy to incorporate vinegar into your diet. For example, many people dilute apple cider vinegar with water and drink it as a beverage a few times per day with meals.
  - g. However, if drinking vinegar straight doesn’t sound appealing, you can also use it to make dressings, sauces and marinades.
  - h. Vinegar may help increase feelings of fullness, decrease calorie intake and lower body fat.
12. Eat More Healthy Fats
- a. Although it may seem counterintuitive, increasing your intake of healthy fats may actually help prevent weight gain and help you maintain feelings of fullness.
  - b. Fat takes a while to digest and can help slow the emptying of the stomach, which can reduce appetite and hunger.
  - c. One study found that following a Mediterranean diet rich in healthy fats from olive oil and nuts was associated with a lower risk of weight gain compared to a low-fat diet.
  - d. Another small study found that when people on a weight loss diet took two tablespoons (30 ml) of coconut oil daily, they lost more belly fat than those who were given soybean oil.
  - e. Meanwhile, unhealthy types of fat like trans fats have been shown to increase body fat, waist circumference and belly fat in human and animal studies.
  - f. Olive oil, coconut oil, avocados, nuts and seeds are just a few examples of healthy types of fat that may have beneficial effects on fat burning.
  - g. However, keep in mind that healthy fat is still high in calories, so moderate how much you consume. Instead of eating more fat overall, try swapping the unhealthy fats in your diet for these healthy fat varieties.

- h. Fat is digested slowly, so eating it can help reduce appetite. A higher intake of healthy fats is associated with a lower risk of weight gain and decreased belly fat.
13. Drink Healthier Beverages
- a. Swapping out sugar-sweetened drinks for some healthier selections is one of the easiest ways to increase fat burning.
  - b. For example, sugar-sweetened beverages like soda and juice are packed with calories and offer little nutritional value.
  - c. Alcohol is also high in calories and has the added effect of lowering your inhibitions, making you more likely to overeat.
  - d. Studies have found that consuming both sugar-sweetened beverages and alcohol is associated with a higher risk of belly fat.
  - e. Limiting your intake of these beverages can help reduce your calorie intake and keep your waistline in check.
  - f. Instead, opt for calorie-free beverages like water or green tea.
  - g. In one small, 12-week study, drinking 17 ounces (500 ml) of water before meals increased weight loss by 4.4 pounds (2 kg), compared to a control group.
  - h. Green tea is another great option. It contains caffeine and is rich in antioxidants, both of which may help increase fat burning and enhance metabolism.
  - i. For instance, one study in 12 adults showed that green tea extract increased fat burning by 12% compared to a placebo.
  - j. Trading in even just one or two servings of high-calorie beverages for a glass of water or a cup of green tea is a simple way to promote fat burning.
  - k. Sugar-sweetened beverages and alcoholic drinks may be associated with a higher risk of belly fat. Green tea and water have been shown to increase weight loss and fat burning.
14. Fill up on Fiber
- a. Soluble fiber absorbs water and moves through the digestive tract slowly, helping you feel fuller for longer.
  - b. According to some studies, increasing your intake of high-fiber foods may protect against weight gain and fat accumulation.
  - c. One study of 1,114 adults found that for each 10-gram increase in soluble fiber intake per day, participants lost 3.7% of their

- belly fat over a five-year period, even without any other changes in diet or exercise.
- d. Another review also found that increasing fiber intake promoted feelings of fullness and decreased hunger. In fact, an increase of 14 grams of fiber per day was associated with a 10% decrease in calorie intake.
  - e. Not only that, but it was also linked to nearly 4.4 pounds (2 kg) of weight loss over a four-month period.
  - f. Fruits, vegetables, legumes, whole grains, nuts and seeds are a few examples of high-fiber foods that can boost fat burning and weight loss.
  - g. A higher intake of fiber may be associated with fat loss, decreased calorie intake and greater weight loss.
15. Cut Down on Refined Carbs
- a. Decreasing your intake of refined carbohydrates may help you lose extra fat.
  - b. During processing, refined grains are stripped of their bran and germ, resulting in a final product that's low in fiber and nutrients.
  - c. Refined carbs also tend to have a higher glycemic index, which can cause spikes and crashes in blood sugar levels, resulting in increased hunger.
  - d. Studies show that a diet high in refined carbs may be associated with increased belly fat.
  - e. Conversely, a diet high in whole grains has been associated with a lower body mass index and body weight, plus a smaller waist circumference.
  - f. One study in 2,834 people also showed that those with higher intakes of refined grains tended to have a higher amount of disease-promoting belly fat, while those who ate more whole grains tended to have a lower amount.
  - g. For the best results, reduce your intake of refined carbs from pastries, processed foods, pastas, white breads and breakfast cereals. Replace them with whole grains such as whole wheat, quinoa, buckwheat, barley and oats.
  - h. Refined carbs are low in fiber and nutrients. They may increase hunger and cause spikes and crashes in blood sugar levels.

Consuming refined carbs has also been associated with increased belly fat.

#### 16. Increase Your Cardio

- a. Cardio, also known as aerobic exercise, is one of the most common forms of exercise and is defined as any type of exercise that specifically trains the heart and lungs.
- b. Adding cardio to your routine may be one of the most effective ways to enhance fat burning.
- c. For example, one review of 16 studies found that the more aerobic exercise people got, the more belly fat they lost.
- d. Other studies have found that aerobic exercise can increase muscle mass and decrease belly fat, waist circumference and body fat.
- e. Most research recommends between 150–300 minutes of moderate to vigorous exercise weekly, or roughly 20–40 minutes of cardio each day (41Trusted Source).
- f. Running, walking, cycling and swimming are just a few examples of some cardio exercises that can help burn fat and kick-start weight loss.
- g. Studies show that the more aerobic exercise people get, the more belly fat they tend to lose. Cardio may also help reduce waist circumference, lower body fat and increase muscle mass.

#### 17. Drink Coffee

- a. Caffeine is a primary ingredient in just about every fat-burning supplement, and for good reason.
- b. The caffeine found in coffee acts as a central nervous system stimulant, increases metabolism and boosts the breakdown of fatty acids.
- c. In fact, studies show that caffeine intake can temporarily increase energy expenditure and enhance metabolism by 3–11%.
- d. One large study with over 58,000 people found that increased caffeine intake was associated with less weight gain over a 12-year period.
- e. Another study found that higher caffeine intake was linked to a higher rate of success with weight loss maintenance among 2,623 people.



- f. To maximize the health benefits of coffee, skip the cream and sugar. Instead, enjoy it black or with a small amount of milk to prevent the extra calories from stacking up.
  - g. Coffee contains caffeine, which can increase the breakdown of fat and raise metabolism. Studies show that higher caffeine intake may be associated with greater weight loss.
18. Try High-Intensity Interval Training (HIIT)
- a. High-intensity interval training, also known as HIIT, is a form of exercise that pairs quick bursts of activity with short recovery periods to keep your heart rate elevated.
  - b. Studies show that HIIT can be incredibly effective at ramping up fat burning and promoting weight loss.
  - c. One study found that young men performing HIIT for 20 minutes three times weekly lost an average of 4.4 pounds (2 kg) of body fat over a 12-week period, even with no other changes to their diet or lifestyle.
  - d. They also experienced a 17% reduction in belly fat as well as a significant decrease in waist circumference.
  - e. HIIT may also help you burn more calories in a shorter amount of time than other forms of cardio.
  - f. According to one study, performing HIIT helped people burn up to 30% more calories than other types of exercise, such as cycling or jogging, in the same amount of time.
  - g. For an easy way to get started with HIIT, try alternating between walking and jogging or sprinting for 30 seconds at a time.
  - h. You can also cycle between exercises like burpees, push-ups or squats with a short rest period in between.
  - i. HIIT can help increase fat burning and burn more calories in a shorter amount of time than other forms of exercise.
19. Add Probiotics to Your Diet
- a. Probiotics are a type of beneficial bacteria found in your digestive tract that have been shown to improve many aspects of health.
  - b. In fact, the bacteria in your gut have been shown to play a role in everything from immunity to mental health.
  - c. Increasing your intake of probiotics through either food or

supplements may also help rev up fat burning and keep your weight under control.

- d. One review of 15 studies showed that people who took probiotics experienced significantly larger reductions in body weight, fat percentage and body mass index compared to those who took a placebo.
  - e. Another small study showed that taking probiotic supplements helped people following a high-fat, high-calorie diet prevent fat and weight gain.
  - f. Certain strains of probiotics in the genus *Lactobacillus* may be especially effective at aiding weight and fat loss.
  - g. One study in 28 people showed that eating yogurt containing either *Lactobacillus fermentum* or *Lactobacillus amylovorus* bacteria reduced body fat by 3–4% (52).
  - h. Taking supplements is a quick and easy way to get in a concentrated dose of probiotics every day.
  - i. Alternatively, you can try adding some probiotic-rich foods to your diet, such as kefir, tempeh, natto, kombucha, kimchi and sauerkraut.
  - j. Taking probiotic supplements or increasing your intake of probiotics through food sources may help reduce body weight and fat percentage.
20. Increase Your Iron Intake
- a. Iron is an important mineral that has many vital functions in the body.
  - b. As with other nutrients such as iodine, a deficiency in iron may impact the health of your thyroid gland. This small gland in your neck secretes hormones that regulate your metabolism.
  - c. Multiple studies have found that low levels of iron in the body may be associated with impaired thyroid function and a disruption in the production of thyroid hormones.
  - d. Common symptoms of hypothyroidism, or decreased thyroid function, include weakness, fatigue, shortness of breath and weight gain.
  - e. Similarly, a deficiency in iron can cause symptoms like fatigue, dizziness, headaches and shortness of breath.
  - f. Treating iron deficiency can allow your metabolism to work

more efficiently and can fight off fatigue to help increase your activity level.

- g. One study even found that when 21 women were treated for iron deficiency, they experienced reductions in body weight, waist circumference and body mass index.
  - h. Unfortunately, many people don't get enough iron in their diets.
  - i. Women, infants, children, vegans and vegetarians are all at a higher risk of iron deficiency.
  - j. Be sure to incorporate plenty of iron-rich foods in your diet to help meet your iron needs and maintain your metabolism and energy levels.
  - k. You can find iron in meat, poultry, seafood, fortified grains and cereals, leafy green vegetables, dried fruits and beans.
  - l. A deficiency in iron may be associated with impaired thyroid function and can cause symptoms like fatigue and shortness of breath. One study found that treating iron deficiency aided in weight loss.
21. Give Intermittent Fasting a Shot
- a. Intermittent fasting is a diet pattern that involves cycling between periods of eating and fasting.
  - b. Research shows that intermittent fasting may help enhance both weight loss and fat loss.
  - c. One review looked at the effects of intermittent fasting, including alternate-day fasting — a method that involves alternating between days of fasting and eating normally.
  - d. They found that alternate-day fasting over a period of 3–12 weeks reduced body weight by up to 7% and decreased body fat by up to 12 pounds (5.5 kg).
  - e. Another small study showed that eating only during an eight-hour window each day helped decrease fat mass and maintain muscle mass when combined with resistance training.
  - f. There are several different types of intermittent fasting, including some where you eat only on certain days of the week and others where eating is restricted to specific hours of the day.
  - g. Popular types of intermittent fasting include Eat Stop Eat, the Warrior Diet, the 16/8 method and the 5:2 diet.

- h. Find a variation that fits in with your schedule and lifestyle and don't be afraid to experiment to find what works best for you.
  - i. Intermittent fasting has been shown to reduce body weight and body fat and may help preserve muscle mass when combined with resistance training.
22. The Bottom Line
- a. There are plenty of options available to help you shed excess fat and improve your health.
  - b. Incorporating some healthy habits into your routine and switching up your diet can make a big difference. Even minor changes to your lifestyle can have powerful effects on fat burning.
  - c. Be sure to pair these simple tips with a nutritious, well-rounded diet and active lifestyle to simultaneously boost fat breakdown and improve your overall health.
23. The Word of God.
- a. The Bible states numerous times that a healthy body leads to emotional and spiritual wellbeing.
  - b. 1 Corinthians 6:19-20 "Do you not know that your bodies are temples of the Holy Spirit, who is in you, whom you have received from God? You are not your own; you were bought at a price. Therefore honor God with your bodies."
  - c. 1 Corinthians 3:17 "If anyone destroys God's temple, God will destroy that person; for God's temple is sacred, and you together are that temple."
  - d. Ephesians 5:29 "After all, no one ever hated their own body, but they feed and care for their body, just as Christ does the church."
  - e. 3 John 2 "Dear friend, I pray that you may enjoy good health and that all may go well with you, even as your soul is getting along well."
  - f. Romans 12:1 "I urge you, brothers, in view of God's mercy, to offer your bodies as living sacrifices, holy and pleasing to God – this is your spiritual act of worship."

## Practice

1. What does the phrase “Without disciple there is no success” mean?

2. How does better health relate to the pursuit of godliness?
3. How does excessive fat indicate possible health problems?
4. What causes us to resist burning fat or losing weight when we are over weight?
5. Where can we find health with our lack of discipline?
6. What is the source of our anger when we are faced with our need to change our eating habits?
7. What are the benefits of preserving as best we can good health?

## Worship God

### Problem

What is true worship of God?

### Premise

### Philosophy

A theology of worship is a doctrine concerning the worship of God; a biblical theology of worship bases its teaching on what the Bible alone says. Just as a biblical soteriology is based on the Bible's overall teaching concerning salvation, a biblical theology of worship is based on the Bible's overall teaching concerning the worship and adoration of God.

Having a biblical theology of worship is important. Not everything that is called "worship" is actually worship, a lesson learned in the very beginning: both Cain and Abel brought sacrifices to the Lord, but "the Lord looked with favor on Abel and his offering, but on Cain and his offering he did not look with favor" (Genesis 4:4–5). What was Cain's problem (besides jealousy, stubbornness, and murderous rage)? He lacked a proper theology of worship. Cain brought an unacceptable sacrifice to the Lord and demanded that the Lord be pleased.

The church that does not operate under the biblical theology of worship is in danger of failing to give God glory and failing to offer worship that is pleasing to Him. Worship is as misunderstood a doctrine as any other within the church. Contrary to popular belief, worship does not begin and end with the singing portion of our church services. Worship is also not limited to bowing in reverence before God. To begin with, worship is determined by God Himself, not by our sincerity, pious feelings, or musical skill.

Hebrews 12:28 says we must "serve God acceptably with reverence and godly fear" (NKJV). The Greek word translated "serve" here is a form of a Greek word for worship and is used 21 times in the New Testament in the contexts of service and worship. Another form of the word worship is the Greek word *therapeuo*—from which we get the English word *therapy*—and this is most often translated "heal" in

reference to the healing of others. In the New Testament, this word is seen in many passages involving Jesus' healings.

Other Greek words translated "worship" are *proskuneó*, meaning "paying homage" (1 Corinthians 14:25); *sebázomai*, meaning "to render religious honor" (Romans 1:25); and *sébomai*, meaning "to revere or adore" (Acts 16:14). We see a form of the word *sébomai* used by Jesus in reference to vain, hypocritical worship of God (Matthew 15:9), implying that sometimes what we call "worship of God" is something else entirely.

A biblical theology of worship is concerned with the true worship of God. True biblical worship must be reverent (Hebrews 12:28). We must understand who is being worshiped. God is holy, just, perfect, powerful, loving, etc. We are sinners saved by grace coming before a holy God on the basis of our Redeemer. There is no room for pride in adoration (see Luke 18:9–14). Also, worship must be "in truth," that is, our worship must be properly informed (John 4:24). Unless we have accurate knowledge of the God we worship, there is no worshiping in truth. Those who wish to worship biblically must worship God as He is revealed in Scripture. Unbiblical views of God must be rejected.

A biblical theology of worship recognizes that worship involves more than externals. God sees the heart: "These people come . . . honor me with their lips, but their hearts are far from me. Their worship of me is based on merely human rules they have been taught" (Isaiah 29:13). Worship is not about ritual or artistry, although ritual and art can be valid expressions of worship. Worship is not about expressing ourselves, although David's "dancing before the LORD with all his might" was an act of true worship (2 Samuel 6:14). Worship is not about music, although music is often used by worshipers. True worship is about God. We reverence and honor and adore Him, not simply because of what He does for us but for who He is.

A biblical theology of worship will result in worship that produces a change of heart. The worshipper will have an ever greater desire to love and obey the Lord. Worship and service go hand in hand; worship of God should propel us into greater obedience. Jesus said those who love Him will keep His commandments (John 14:15). If we say we love and worship Him, but do not obey Him, our worship is

worthless.

A biblical theology of worship leads to the conviction that worship is a lifestyle, not a moment in time (1 Corinthians 10:31). Our lives are to be dedicated to the worship and service of God. Worship is to be more than a temporary, experience-oriented activity on Sunday, after which we revert to a “normal” life the rest of the week. True worship is constant, inner praise to the God of Scripture, expressed in prayer, in song, in service, in giving, and in living.

### Principle

1. The apostle Paul described true worship perfectly in Romans 12:1-2: “I urge you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God to present your bodies a living and holy sacrifice, acceptable to God which is your spiritual service of worship. And do not be conformed to this world but be transformed by the renewing of your mind that you may prove what the will of God is, that which is good and acceptable, or well pleasing and perfect.”
2. This passage contains all the elements of true worship.
  - a. First, there is the motivation to worship: “the mercies of God.”
  - b. God’s mercies are everything He has given us that we don’t deserve: eternal love, eternal grace, the Holy Spirit, everlasting peace, eternal joy, saving faith, comfort, strength, wisdom, hope, patience, kindness, honor, glory, righteousness, security, eternal life, forgiveness, reconciliation, justification, sanctification, freedom, intercession and much more.
  - c. The knowledge and understanding of these incredible gifts motivate us to pour forth praise and thanksgiving—in other words, worship!
3. Also in the passage is a description of the manner of our worship: “present your bodies a living and holy sacrifice.”
  - a. Presenting our bodies means giving to God all of ourselves.
  - b. The reference to our bodies here means all our human faculties, all of our humanness—our hearts, minds, hands, thoughts, attitudes—are to be presented to God.
  - c. In other words, we are to give up control of these things and turn them over to Him, just as a literal sacrifice was given totally to God on the altar.



- d. But how? Again, the passage is clear: “by the renewing of your mind.”
  - e. We renew our minds daily by cleansing them of the world’s “wisdom” and replacing it with true wisdom that comes from God.
  - f. We worship Him with our renewed and cleansed minds, not with our emotions.
  - g. Emotions are wonderful things, but unless they are shaped by a mind saturated in Truth, they can be destructive, out-of-control forces.
  - h. Where the mind goes, the will follows, and so do the emotions.
  - i. First Corinthians 2:16 tells us we have “the mind of Christ,” not the emotions of Christ.
4. There is only one way to renew our minds, and that is by the Word of God.
- a. It is the truth, the knowledge of the Word of God, which is to say the knowledge of the mercies of God, and we’re back where we began.
  - b. To know the truth, to believe the truth, to hold convictions about the truth, and to love the truth will naturally result in true spiritual worship.
  - c. It is conviction followed by affection, affection that is a response to truth, not to any external stimuli, including music.
  - d. Music as such has nothing to do with worship.
  - e. Music can’t produce worship, although it certainly can produce emotion.
  - f. Music is not the origin of worship, but it can be the expression of it.
  - g. Do not look to music to induce your worship; look to music as simply an expression of that which is induced by a heart that is rapt by the mercies of God, obedient to His commands.
5. True worship is God-centered worship.
- a. People tend to get caught up in where they should worship, what music they should sing in worship, and how their worship looks to other people.
  - b. Focusing on these things misses the point.
  - c. Jesus tells us that true worshipers will worship God in spirit and

- in truth (John 4:24).
- d. This means we worship from the heart and the way God has designed.
  - e. Worship can include praying, reading God's Word with an open heart, singing, participating in communion, and serving others.
  - f. It is not limited to one act, but is done properly when the heart and attitude of the person are in the right place.
6. It's also important to know that worship is reserved only for God.
- a. Only He is worthy and not any of His servants (Revelation 19:10).
  - b. We are not to worship saints, prophets, statues, angels, any false gods, or Mary, the mother of Jesus.
  - c. We also should not be worshipping for the expectation of something in return, such as a miraculous healing.
  - d. Worship is done for God—because He deserves it—and for His pleasure alone.
  - e. Worship can be public praise to God (Psalm 22:22; 35:18) in a congregational setting, where we can proclaim through prayer and praise our adoration and thankfulness to Him and what He has done for us.
  - f. True worship is felt inwardly and then is expressed through our actions.
  - g. "Worshipping" out of obligation is displeasing to God and is completely in vain.
  - h. He can see through all the hypocrisy, and He hates it.
  - i. He demonstrates this in Amos 5:21-24 as He talks about coming judgment.
  - j. Another example is the story of Cain and Abel, the first sons of Adam and Eve.
  - k. They both brought gift offerings to the Lord, but God was only pleased with Abel's.
  - l. Cain brought the gift out of obligation; Abel brought his finest lambs from his flock.
  - m. He brought out of faith and admiration for God.
7. True worship is not confined to what we do in church or open praise (although these things are both good, and we are told in the Bible to do them).

- a. True worship is the acknowledgment of God and all His power and glory in everything we do.
  - b. The highest form of praise and worship is obedience to Him and His Word.
  - c. To do this, we must know God; we cannot be ignorant of Him (Acts 17:23).
  - d. Worship is to glorify and exalt God—to show our loyalty and admiration to our Father.
8. The meaning of the New Testament Greek word most often translated “worship” (proskuneo) is “to fall down before” or “bow down before.”
- a. Worship is a state (an attitude) of spirit.
  - b. Since it’s an internal, individual action, it could/should be done most of the time (or all the time) in our lives, regardless of place or situation (John 4:21).
  - c. Therefore, Christians worship all the time, seven days a week.
  - d. When Christians formally gather together in worship, still the emphasis should be on individually worshipping the Lord.
  - e. Even in a congregation, participants need to be aware that they are worshipping God fully on an individual basis.
9. The nature of true worship is from the inside out and has two equally important parts.
- a. We must worship “in spirit and in truth” (John 4:23-24).
  - b. Worshipping in the spirit has nothing to do with our physical posture.
  - c. It has to do with our innermost being and requires several things.
  - d. First, we must be born again.
  - e. Without the Holy Spirit residing within us, we cannot respond to God in worship because we do not know Him.
  - f. “No one knows the things of God except the Spirit of God” (1 Corinthians 2:11).
  - g. The Holy Spirit within us is the one who energizes worship because He is in essence glorifying Himself, and all true worship glorifies God.
10. Second, worshipping in spirit requires a mind centered on God and renewed by Truth.

- a. Paul exhorts us to “present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, which is your spiritual worship.
  - b. Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewal of your mind” (Romans 12:1b, 2).
  - c. Only when our minds are changed from being centered on worldly things to being centered on God can we worship in spirit.
  - d. Distractions of many kinds can flood our minds as we try to praise and glorify God, hindering our true worship.
11. Third, we can only worship in spirit by having a pure heart, open and repentant.
- a. When King David’s heart was filled with guilt over his sin with Bathsheba (2 Samuel 11), he found it impossible to worship.
  - b. He felt that God was far from him, and he “groaned all day long” feeling God’s hand heavy upon him (Psalm 32:3,4).
  - c. But when he confessed, fellowship with God was restored and worship and praise poured forth from him.
  - d. He understood that “the sacrifices of God are a broken spirit; a broken and contrite heart” (Psalm 51:17).
  - e. Praise and worship toward God cannot come from hearts filled with unconfessed sin.
12. The second part of true worship is worship “in truth.”
- a. All worship is a response to truth, and that which is truth is contained in the Word of God.
  - b. Jesus said to His Father, “Thy word is truth” (John 17:17b).
  - c. Psalm 119 says, “Thy law is truth” (v. 142b) and “Thy word is true” (v. 160a).
  - d. To truly worship God, we must understand who He is and what He has done, and the only place He has fully revealed Himself is in the Bible.
  - e. Worship is an expression of praise from the depths of our hearts toward a God who is understood through His Word.
  - f. If we do not have the truth of the Bible, we do not know God and we cannot be truly worshiping.
13. Since external actions are unimportant in Christian worship, there is no rule regarding whether we should sit, stand, fall down, be quiet, or sing praises loudly while in corporate worship.

- a. These things should be decided based on the nature of the congregation.
  - b. The most important thing is that we worship God in spirit (in our hearts) and in truth (in our minds.)
14. Worship means “reverence paid to a divine being.”
- a. If Jesus was offered and accepted worship, then by doing so He was confirming His divinity.
  - b. This is important because there are those who deny the deity of Christ, relegating Him instead to a lesser position than God.
  - c. Yes, Jesus accepted worship.
  - d. As the second Person of the Trinity, He was and still is worshiped.
15. From the beginning of Jesus’ life, we see examples of Him being worshiped.
- a. As soon as the Magi laid eyes on the infant Christ, “they bowed down and worshiped Him” (Matthew 2:11).
  - b. The Bible records the initial response Jesus received when He made His triumphal entry into Jerusalem: “So they took branches of palm trees and went out to meet him, crying out, ‘Hosanna! Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord, even the King of Israel!’” (Matthew 21:9; John 12:13)
  - c. The word hosanna is a plea for salvation and an expression of adoration.
  - d. This word used by the crowd is definitely a form of worship.
16. Just after Jesus amazed the disciples by walking on water, “those who were in the boat worshiped him, saying, ‘Truly you are the Son of God’” (Matthew 14:33).
- a. Two more memorable examples of Jesus accepting worship occurred just after His resurrection.
  - b. Some of the women (Matthew 28:8-9; Mark 16:1; Luke 24:10) were on their way to tell the disciples of the resurrection when Jesus met them on their way.
  - c. When they realized it was He, they “came to him, clasped his feet and worshiped him” (Matthew 28:9).
17. Then there is the case of Thomas, who didn’t believe Jesus had risen from the dead despite the other disciples’ testifying to that fact. It had been about a week since the resurrection, and Thomas still doubted

- it. Jesus, knowing Thomas doubted, appeared to him and showed him the nail marks in His hands and feet and the wound in His side. How did Thomas respond? “Thomas said to him, ‘My Lord and my God!’” (John 20:28). In none of these instances do we see Jesus telling those worshiping Him to stop, as did mere men and even angels who were being worshiped wrongly by others (Acts 10:25–26; Revelation 19:9–10).
18. We continue to offer worship to Jesus today by offering ourselves to Him as a living sacrifice—offering ourselves to God, through faith in Jesus Christ, to do with as He sees fit (Romans 12:1–2).
    - a. Jesus said, “God is spirit, and his worshipers must worship in spirit and in truth” (John 4:24).
    - b. We worship God in spirit and truth by obedience to His commands.
    - c. Worship is not solely about bowing to Jesus, throwing palm branches at His feet, or singing and shouting about our love for Him.
    - d. Worship is about knowing Him, communing with Him, serving Him, and trusting in Him.
  19. If someone were to save our life, gratitude would be the response.
    - a. When we are given a gift that we could never afford, we make our appreciation known.
    - b. Worship is the expression of that gratitude and appreciation.
    - c. God came as Jesus to save us.
    - d. His love is without condition.
    - e. Our worship recognizes His authority as creator of our universe as well as the savior of our souls.
    - f. Worship, therefore, is of the highest priority for the believer as well as the corporate church.
  20. Christianity is unique among religions in that it is based upon a personal relationship with God. Exodus 34:14 says, “Do not worship any other god, for the LORD, whose name is Jealous, is a jealous God.” The core of our faith is our personal interaction with our creator.
  21. Worship is an act celebrating that personal relationship.
    - a. Through worship, we communicate with our God.
    - b. Through worship, we acknowledge His lordship and divinity.

- c. Whether expressed through music, shouting, prayer or other means, worship is, at its core, the expression of intimacy with God.
  - d. While we are to live in obedience to God's commands, it is not a cold, mindless obedience that He desires.
  - e. Deuteronomy 6:5 says, "Love the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength."
22. The church is the collection of all who call on the name of God, taking advantage of the grace offered to us through the death of Jesus on the cross.
- a. We are told to make disciples and live in obedience to the commands of God.
  - b. First John 3:24 says, "Those who obey his commands live in him, and he in them."
  - c. Each member of the church is called to worship God.
  - d. Each of us is to spend time in prayer, speaking to God from the heart.
  - e. We are to read His words in the Scriptures and meditate on them in our hearts.
  - f. Private time of worship is essential to our personal spiritual maturity.
  - g. As a body of believers, we are to be consistently involved in worship through singing psalms, hymns and spiritual songs, through prayer, through gaining knowledge of the Word, and through the exercise of our spiritual gifts for the benefit of the church and the Kingdom of God.
  - h. Worship is of the highest priority for the church.

### Practice

1. What are the elements of true worship?
2. What are the conditions associated with true worship of God?
3. What hinders true worship of God?
4. When is the best time to worship God?
5. Who should worship God?
6. Where is the best place to worship God?
7. What are the benefits of corporate worship?

## Salvation Today

### Problem

What is Salvation?

### Premise

All are born in sin and must be saved or perish.

### Philosophy

Salvation is deliverance from danger or suffering. To save is to deliver or protect. The word carries the idea of victory, health, or preservation. Sometimes, the Bible uses the words saved or salvation to refer to temporal, physical deliverance, such as Paul's deliverance from prison (Philippians 1:19).

More often, the word "salvation" concerns an eternal, spiritual deliverance. When Paul told the Philippian jailer what he must do to be saved, he was referring to the jailer's eternal destiny (Acts 16:30-31). Jesus equated being saved with entering the kingdom of God (Matthew 19:24-25).

We are saved from "wrath," that is, from God's judgment of sin (Romans 5:9; 1 Thessalonians 5:9). Our sin has separated us from God, and the consequence of sin is death (Romans 6:23). Biblical salvation refers to our deliverance from the consequence of sin and therefore involves the removal of sin.

Only God can remove sin and deliver us from sin's penalty (2 Timothy 1:9; Titus 3:5).

God has rescued us through Christ (John 3:17). Specifically, it was Jesus' death on the cross and subsequent resurrection that achieved our salvation (Romans 5:10; Ephesians 1:7). Scripture is clear that salvation is the gracious, undeserved gift of God (Ephesians 2:5, 8) and is only available through faith in Jesus Christ (Acts 4:12).

We are saved by faith. First, we must hear the gospel—the good news of Jesus' death and resurrection (Ephesians 1:13). Then, we must believe—fully trust the Lord Jesus (Romans 1:16). This involves repentance, a changing of mind about sin and Christ (Acts 3:19), and calling on the name of the Lord (Romans 10:9-10, 13).

A definition of salvation is "The deliverance, by the grace of God, from eternal punishment for sin which is granted to those who accept



by faith God's conditions of repentance and faith in the Lord Jesus." Salvation is available in Jesus alone (John 14:6; Acts 4:12) and is dependent on God alone for provision, assurance, and security.

### Principle

1. God wants us to understand salvation. God wants us to have the confidence of knowing for sure that we are saved, 1 John 5:13.
  - a. We have all sinned. Our sinful nature means we are separated from God. (Romans 3:23).
  - b. Because of our sin, God has declared us "guilty" and the punishment for our sin is eternal separation from God in Hell. (Romans 6:23).
  - c. Because God loved us, He sent His only son Jesus to die upon the cross to pay the penalty for our sins (Romans 5:8; 2 Corinthians 5:21).
  - d. Jesus died in our place, taking the punishment that we deserved.
  - e. His resurrection proved that Jesus' death was sufficient to pay for our sins.
  - f. God grants forgiveness and salvation to all those who place their faith in Jesus – trusting His death as the payment for our sins.
  - g. Faith means that we have opened our heart to believe that which is unseen, yet we know in our hearts is true. (John 3:16; Romans 5:1; Romans 8:1).
2. Salvation is in Jesus Christ Alone.
  - a. This is the message of salvation! If you have placed your faith in Jesus Christ as your Savior, you are saved!
  - b. You have entered into a Covenant with God sealed with the blood of Jesus His Son.
  - c. God will not break His Covenant. All of your sins are forgiven, and God promises to never leave you or forsake you (Romans 8:38-39; Matthew 28:20).
  - d. Your salvation is secure in Jesus Christ (John 10:28-29).
  - e. If you are trusting in Jesus alone as your Savior, you can have confidence that you will spend eternity with God in heaven! Salvation is entirely because of what Jesus did for you. It is a

- totally free gift. Ephesians 2:8-9.
- f. There is nothing that you can do to make you good enough or worthy enough to enter into heaven.
  - g. You are “saved” ONLY by what Jesus Christ did for you on the cross.
  - h. When your heart is opened to believe in Jesus as your personal Savior, you are born again and the proof of you being a new creation, a child of God, is the seal of the Holy Spirit who now lives within you.
  - i. God establishes us in Christ, and anoints us, and put his seal on us and given us his Spirit in our hearts as a guarantee. 2 Corinthians 1:21-22.
3. A primary purposes of the church is for believers in Jesus Christ to fellowship with one another.
    - a. The church is the people.
    - b. Now that you have placed your faith in Jesus Christ, we strongly encourage you to attend and participate in the church and speak to the pastor. Let him know about your new faith in Jesus Christ.
  4. A second purpose of the church is to teach the Bible.
    - a. You can learn how to apply God’s instructions to your life.
    - b. Understanding the Bible is key to living a successful and powerful Christian life.
    - c. 2 Timothy 3:16-17.
  5. A third purpose of the church is worship.
    - a. Worship is thanking God for all He has done! God has saved us. God loves us. God provides for us. God guides and directs us.
    - b. How could we not thank Him?
    - c. God is holy, righteous, loving, merciful, and full of grace. Revelation 4:11 declares, “Thou art worthy, O Lord, to receive glory and honor and power: for thou hast created all things, and for thy pleasure they are and were created.”word
  6. Devotion
    - a. It is very important for us to spend time each day focusing on God. Some people call this a “quiet time.”
    - b. Others call it “devotions,” because it is a time when we devote

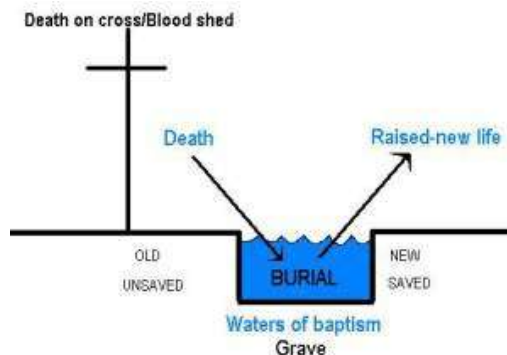
ourselves to God. Some prefer to set aside time in the mornings, while others prefer the evenings.

- c. It does not matter what you call this time or when you do it. What matters is that you regularly spend time with God.
  - d. What events make up our time with God?
7. Prayer.
- a. Prayer is simply talking to God. Talk to God about your concerns and problems.
  - b. Ask God to give you wisdom and guidance. Ask God to provide for your needs.
  - c. Tell God how much you love Him and how much you appreciate all He does for you. That is what prayer is all about.
8. Bible Reading.
- a. In addition to being taught the Bible in church, Sunday School, and/or Bible studies – you need to be reading the Bible for yourself. A good place to start is with the Book of John.
  - b. John presents the majesty and beauty of Jesus in the flesh. In John you will discover the Love of Jesus for His disciples.
  - c. The Bible contains everything you need to know in order to live a successful Christian life. It contains God’s guidance for how to make wise decisions, how to know God’s will, how to minister to others, and how to grow spiritually.
  - d. The Bible is God’s Word to us. The Bible is essentially God’s instruction manual for how to live our lives in a way that is pleasing to Him and satisfying to us.
  - e. You have a new Teacher living within you – the Holy Spirit. Ask Him to teach you as you read the Bible.
9. Power Relationships.
- a. 1 Corinthians 15:33 tells us, “Be not deceived: evil communications corrupt good manners.”
  - b. The Bible is full of warnings about the influence people can have on us.
  - c. Spending time with those who engage in sinful activities will cause us to be tempted by those activities.
  - d. The character of those we are around will “rub off” on us. That is why it is so important to surround ourselves with other people who love the Lord and are committed to Him.

- e. Associate with individuals who can help you and encourage you (Hebrews 3:13; 10:24).
- f. Ask your friends to keep you accountable in regard to your quiet time, your activities, and your walk with God. Ask if you can do the same for them.
- g. This does not mean you have to give up all your friends who do not know the Lord Jesus as their Savior.
- h. It does mean that you have a new relationship to them and that you want them to be saved.
- i. Continue to be their friend and love them. Let them know that Jesus has changed your life and you cannot do all the same things you used to do.
- j. Ask God to give you opportunities to share Jesus with your friends.

#### 10. Baptism.

- a. The word “baptize” means to immerse in water.
- b. Baptism is the Biblical way of publicly proclaiming your new faith in Christ and your commitment to follow Him.
- c. The action of being immersed in the water illustrates being buried with Christ.
- d. The action of coming out of the water pictures Christ’s resurrection.
- e. Being baptized is identifying yourself with Jesus’ death, burial, and resurrection (Romans 6:3-4).
- f. Baptism also makes you a part of the local church, and assures you of the watch care of a group of believers who will have your best interests at heart.
- g. Baptism is not what saves you.
- h. Baptism does not wash away your sins.
- i. Baptism is simply a step of obedience, a public proclamation of your faith in Christ alone for salvation.
- j. Baptism is important because it is a step of obedience – publicly declaring faith in Christ and your commitment to Him.



## Practice

1. What does salvation mean?
2. What actually happens when you are saved?
3. How do you know for certain that you are saved?
4. What is the importance of baptism?
5. What is the importance of reading the Bible?
6. What is the importance of prayer?
7. What is the importance of Church attendance?

## The Holy Spirit

### Problem

Who or what is the Holy Spirit?

### Premise

The Holy Spirit is the powerful constant companion.

### Philosophy

The Bible declares that the Holy Spirit is God. The Bible tells us that the Holy Spirit is a divine person, a being with a mind, emotions, and a will.

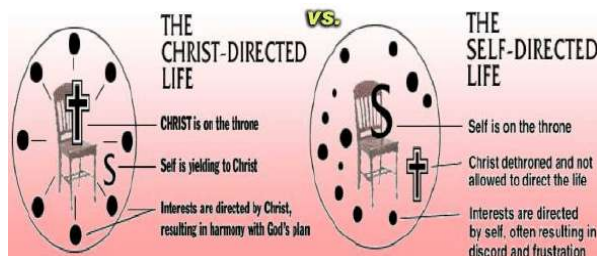
The fact that the Holy Spirit is God is clearly seen in Scripture, including Acts 5:3-4. In this verse Peter confronts Ananias as to why he lied to the Holy Spirit and tells him that he had “not lied to men but to God.” It is a clear declaration that lying to the Holy Spirit is lying to God. We can also know that the Holy Spirit is God because He possesses the characteristics of God. For example, His omnipresence is seen in Psalm 139:7-8, “Where can I go from your Spirit? Where can I flee from your presence? If I go up to the heavens, you are there; if I make my bed in the depths, you are there.” Then in 1 Corinthians 2:10-11, we see the characteristic of omniscience in the Holy Spirit. “But God has revealed it to us by his Spirit. The Spirit searches all things, even the deep things of God. For who among men knows the thoughts of a man except the man’s spirit within him? In the same way no one knows the thoughts of God except the Spirit of God.”

We can know that the Holy Spirit is indeed a divine person because He possesses a mind, emotions, and a will. The Holy Spirit thinks and knows (1 Corinthians 2:10). The Holy Spirit can be grieved (Ephesians 4:30). The Spirit intercedes for us (Romans 8:26-27). He makes decisions according to His will (1 Corinthians 12:7-11). The Holy Spirit is God, the third Person of the Trinity. As God, the Holy Spirit can truly function as the Comforter and Counselor that Jesus promised He would be (John 14:16, 26, 15:26).

### Principle

1. Realize you can chose how you will live your Christian Life. These

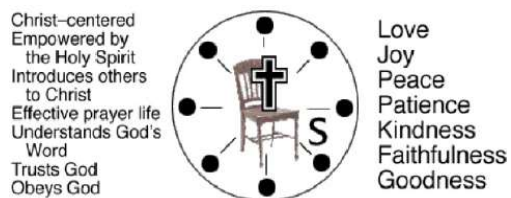
two diagrams illustrate in a simple way the struggle we will have to allow Jesus to lead our life, or to follow our own ways: Christ-Directed-versus-Self



- a. In order to live a Christ-Directed Life you need to be filled (controlled) by the Holy Spirit. We must realize that this is what God designed us for when we are “Born Again”.
- b. God Has Provided For Us an Abundant and Fruitful Christian Life.
- c. John 10:10.
- d. John 15:5.
- e. Galatians 5:22, 23.
- f. Acts 1:8.

2. The Holy Spirit Directed Life

- a. The degree to which spiritual traits are manifested in your life depends upon the extent to which you trust the Lord with every detail of your life, and upon your maturity in Christ. One who is only beginning to understand the ministry of the Holy Spirit should not be discouraged if he is not as fruitful as more mature Christians who have known and experienced this truth for a longer period.
- b. Why is it that most Christians are not experiencing the abundant life?
- c. Christians who follow the Flesh Cannot Experience the Abundant and Fruitful Christian Life



3. Self Directed Life

- a. The third truth gives us the only solution to this problem...
- b. Jesus Promised the Abundant and Fruitful Life as the Result of Being Filled (Directed and Empowered) by the Holy Spirit.
- c. The self-directed person trusts in his own efforts to live the

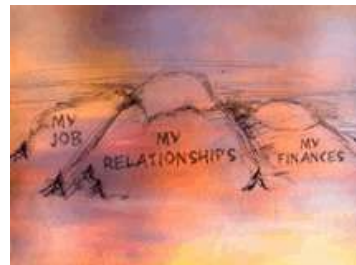


Christian life: He is either uninformed about, or has forgotten, God's love, forgiveness, and power (Romans 5:8-10; Hebrews 10:1-25; 1 John 1; 1 John 2:1-3; 2 Peter 1:9; Acts 1:8).

- d. He has an up-and-down spiritual experience.
  - e. He cannot understand himself – he wants to do what is right, but cannot.
  - f. He fails to draw upon the power of the Holy Spirit to live the Christian life. (1 Corinthians 3:1-3; Romans 7:15-24; 8:7; Galatians 5:16-18)
  - g. The Spirit-filled life is the Christ-directed life by which Christ lives His life in and through us in the power of the Holy Spirit
  - h. One becomes a Christian through the ministry of the Holy Spirit, according to John 3:1-8. From the moment of spiritual birth, the Christian is indwelt by the Holy Spirit at all times (John 1:12; Colossians 2:9, 10; John 14:16, 17). Though all Christians are indwelt by the Holy Spirit, not all Christians are filled (directed and empowered) by the Holy Spirit.
  - i. The Holy Spirit is the source of the overflowing life (John 7:37-39).
  - j. The Holy Spirit came to glorify Christ (John 16:1-15). When one is filled with the Holy Spirit, he is a true disciple of Christ.
  - k. In His last command before His ascension, Christ promised the power of the Holy Spirit to enable us to be witnesses for Him (Acts 1:1-9).
  - l. How, then, can one be filled with the Holy Spirit?
4. Holy Spirit Filled by Faith
- a. Then We Can Experience the Abundant and Fruitful Life Which Christ Promised to Each Christian.
  - b. Please remember that this does not mean your life will always be great. The Holy Spirit will take you through times of testing and tribulation, just as He did Jesus, but always with the goal of producing the Character of Jesus Christ in your life. Faith holds on when things are darkest. But whatever God takes you through, He will never abandon you there. He will bring you through the valley and you will find increased faith and strength of character that is more precious than the purest gold.
  - c. You can experience the filling of the Holy Spirit right now if you:



- d. Sincerely desire to be directed and empowered by the Holy Spirit (Matthew 5:6; John 7:37-39).
  - e. Confess your sins. By faith thank God that He has forgiven all of your sins – past, present and future – because Christ died for you (Colossians 2:13-15; 1 John 1; 2:1-3; Hebrews 10:1-17).
  - f. Present every area of your life to God (Romans 12:1-2)
  - g. By faith claim the fullness of the Holy Spirit, according to:
    - h. His Command – Be filled with the Spirit. “And do not get drunk with wine, for that is dissipation, but be filled with the Spirit” (Ephesians 5:18).
    - i. His Promise – He will always answer when we pray according to His will. 1 John 5:14, 15.
5. Faith Expressed Through Prayer
- a. We are filled with the Holy Spirit by faith alone. Sincere prayer is one way of expressing your faith. The following is a suggested prayer:
    - i. “Dear Father, I need You. I acknowledge that I have been directing my own life and that, as a result, I have sinned against You. I thank You that You have forgiven my sins through Christ’s death on the cross for me. I now invite Christ to again take His place on the throne of my life. Fill me with the Holy Spirit as You commanded me to be filled, and as You promised in Your Word that You would do if I asked in faith. I now thank You for directing my life and for filling me with the Holy Spirit.”
  - b. Being Filled and Controlled by the Holy Spirit is not a one-time event like being Born Again (Becoming a Christian).
  - c. It is a daily, moment by moment walk with the Holy One who lives within you.



## Practice

1. What is the Spirit-filled life?
2. What is the role of the Holy Spirit salvation?

3. What does indwelt by the Holy Spirit mean?
4. What is the source of the overflowing life?
5. What is the mission of the Holy Spirit?
6. What it mean to be filled with the Holy Spirit?
7. How does the Holy Spirit enable us to be witnesses for Jesus Christ?
8. How can one be filled with the Holy Spirit?

## Christian Leadership

### Problem

What is Christian leadership?

### Premise

You can't give what you don't have.

### Philosophy

There is no finer example for Christian leadership than our Lord Jesus Christ. He declared, "I am the good Shepherd. The good Shepherd lays down his life for the sheep" (John 10:11). It is within this verse that we see the perfect description of a Christian leader. He is one who acts as a Shepherd to those "sheep" in his care. When Jesus referred to us as "sheep," He was not speaking in affectionate terms. In truth, sheep rank among the dumbest animals in creation. A stray sheep, still within earshot of the flock, becomes disoriented, confused, frightened, and incapable of finding its way back to the flock. Unable to ward off hungry predators, the stray is perhaps the most helpless of all creatures. Entire flock of sheep are known to have drowned during times of flash flooding even in sight of easily accessible higher ground. Like it or not, when Jesus called us His sheep, He was saying that without a Shepherd, we are helpless. The Shepherd is one who has several roles in regard to his sheep. He leads, feeds, nurtures, comforts, corrects and protects. The Shepherd of the Lord's flock leads by modeling godliness and righteousness in his own life and encouraging others to follow his example. Of course, our ultimate example—and the One we should follow—is Christ Himself. The Apostle Paul understood this: "Follow my example, as I follow the example of Christ" (1 Corinthians 11:1). The Christian leader is one who follows Christ and inspires others to follow Him as well.

The Christian leader is also a feeder and a nourisher of the sheep, and the ultimate "sheep food" is the Word of God. Just as the Shepherd leads his flock to the most lush pasture so they will grow and flourish, so the Christian leader nourishes his flock with the only food which will produce strong, vibrant Christians. The Bible—not psychology or the world's wisdom—is the only diet that can produce

healthy Christians. “Man does not live on bread alone but on every word that comes from the mouth of the LORD” (Deuteronomy 8:3). The Christian leader also comforts the sheep, binding up their wounds and applying the balm of compassion and love. As the great Shepherd of Israel, the Lord Himself promised to “bind up the injured and strengthen the weak” (Ezekiel 34:16). As Christians in the world today, we suffer many injuries to our spirits, and we need compassionate leaders who will bear our burdens with us, sympathize with our circumstances, exhibit patience toward us, encourage us in the Word, and bring our concerns before the Father’s throne.

Just as the Shepherd used his crook to pull a wandering sheep back into the fold, so the Christian leader corrects and disciplines those in his care when they go astray. Without rancor or an overbearing spirit, but with a “spirit of gentleness” (Galatians 6:2), those in leadership must correct according to scriptural principles. Correction or discipline is never a pleasant experience for either party, but the Christian leader who fails in this area is not exhibiting love for those in his care. “The LORD disciplines those he loves” (Proverbs 3:12), and the Christian leader must follow His example.

The Christian leader is a protector. The Shepherd who was lax in this area soon found that he regularly lost sheep to the predators who prowled around—and sometimes among—his flock. The predators today are those who try to lure the sheep away with false doctrine, dismissing the Bible as quaint and old fashioned, insufficient, unclear, or unknowable. These lies are spread by those against whom Jesus warned us: “Watch out for false prophets. They come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly they are ferocious wolves” (Matthew 7:15). Our leaders must protect us from the false teachings of those who would lead us astray from the truth of the Scripture and the fact that Christ alone is the way of salvation: “I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through Me” (John 14:6).

Leadership is a position of humble, loving service. Church leadership is ministry, not management. Those whom God designates as leaders are called not to be served, but to serve; not celebrated, but to labor. Those who would lead God's people must exemplify

sacrifice, devotion, submission, and lowliness. Jesus Himself gave us the pattern when He stooped to wash His disciples' feet, a task that was customarily done by the lowest of slaves (John 13). If the Lord of the universe would do that, no church leader has a right to think of himself as above the flock.

## Principle

1. Christian leader model.
  - a. There is Noah with his perseverance.
  - b. There is Abraham with his great faith.
  - c. There is Joseph's unmatched integrity.
  - d. There is Daniel, a man of lofty moral character.
  - e. Queen Esther showed tremendous courage in a hostile environment while the humble maidservant Ruth is a portrait of quiet dignity and inner strength.
  - f. And no study in biblical leadership could ignore King David—a man whose passion for God is unparalleled in the pages of Old Testament writings.
  - g. Moving into the New Testament, we have Mary, the mother of Jesus, who is a model of unequalled virtue.
  - h. There is Peter with his extra helpings of devotion and enthusiasm.
  - i. There is the Apostle Paul, a man who considered suffering for the sake of the Gospel a reason for great personal joy.
2. There is our Lord Jesus Christ. Of Himself, He declared, "I am the good Shepherd." John 10: 11-14.
3. When Jesus referred to us as "sheep," He had a clear understanding of our neediness.
  - a. In truth, sheep rank among the dumbest animals in creation.
  - b. A stray lamb, still within earshot of the flock, becomes disoriented, confused, frightened, and incapable of finding it's way back to the flock.
  - c. Unable to ward off hungry predators, the stray is, perhaps, the most helpless of all creatures.
  - d. As I said, sheep are not very bright animals.
  - e. Entire flocks of sheep are commonly known to have drowned during times of flash flooding even though they could have

- simply moved to the safety of higher ground.
- f. Like it or not, when Jesus called us His sheep, He was saying we are dumb, defenseless, and dependent.
4. And yet the Good Shepherd loves us!
    - a. He loves us even though we are not particularly lovable.
    - b. He loves us in spite of ourselves.
    - c. And how is His love measured?
    - d. The Good Shepherd gave His life for His sheep.
    - e. Some leaders offer mere words of encouragement to their followers.
    - f. Other leaders might even give of their personal wealth, but Jesus, the Head of the Church, gave His blood on the cross for He knew there was no other way of saving His people.
    - g. This is amazing love, and yet this Jesus was no ordinary martyr, for three days after His crucifixion, He walked away from the tomb!
    - h. He walked away from the tomb and He lives today making intercession for His saints!
  5. Jesus proved His perfect love by sending the Holy Spirit to indwell within all believers.
    - a. He did this because He would not leave us as orphans after His departure from earth.
    - b. In life, He loved us.
    - c. In death, He loved us.
    - d. In Heaven, He loves us.
  6. Jesus is the essence of Christian leadership.
    - a. The unfathomable love we receive is pure, undefiled, and is wholly unmerited.
    - b. But this love is not mere sloppy sentiment—His perfect love sustains us in this present age and throughout the endless ages to come!
    - c. My mother loved me, but her love could not save me from my sinful nature.
    - d. The love of Jesus has the power to redeem us, body, soul, and spirit, from the ravages of sin and death!
  7. Jesus is coming again, and when He returns, He shall establish His rule as earth's undisputed King!

- a. King Jesus will right all the wrongs while restoring this reeling planet that presently groans under the heavy weight of sin.
  - b. And no power will oppose Him. No power will hinder His righteous reign. He is the King of Kings!
8. Scripture reveals that Jesus is the ideal balance of sacrificial love and unbridled strength.
- a. He loves us beyond all human understanding, but this love extends beyond the boundaries of affection.
  - b. His love has the life-giving power that transforms us from sinners into Saints!
9. As a Christian leader, you are to love those in your charge and you are to lead them in all truth and righteousness.
- a. When ravenous wolves surround the flock, you are to defend them, if necessary, even to the point of death.
  - b. To be less is to be a hireling.

### Practice

1. What is a model?
2. What is a Christian leader?
3. What qualifies a leader as a Christian leader?
4. What is a Christian leader's responsibilities?
5. What is the role of the Holy Spirit in the life of a Christian leader?
6. How does a Christian leader remained focused on the things of God?

## Christian Discipleship

### Problem

What is Christian discipleship?

### Premise

Making disciples is not a suggestion, it is a command.

### Philosophy

A disciple is a follower, one who accepts and assists in spreading the doctrines of another. A Christian disciple is a person who accepts and assists in the spreading of the good news of Jesus Christ.

Christian discipleship is the process by which disciples grow in the Lord Jesus Christ and are equipped by the Holy Spirit, who resides in our hearts, to overcome the pressures and trials of this present life and become more and more Christlike. This process requires believers to respond to the Holy Spirit's prompting to examine their thoughts, words and actions and compare them with the Word of God. This requires that we be in the Word daily—studying it, praying over it, and obeying it. In addition, we should always be ready to give testimony of the reason for the hope that is within us (1 Peter 3:15) and to disciple others to walk in His way. According to Scripture, being a Christian disciple involves personal growth.

Putting Jesus first in all things (Mark 8:34-38). The disciple of Christ needs to be set apart from the world. Our focus should be on our Lord and pleasing Him in every area of our lives. We must put off self-centeredness and put on Christ-centeredness.

Following Jesus' teachings (John 8:31-32). We must be obedient children and doers of the Word. Obedience is the supreme test of faith in God (1 Samuel 28:18), and Jesus is the perfect example of obedience as He lived a life on earth of complete obedience to the Father even to the point of death (Philippians 2:6-8).

Fruitfulness (John 15:5-8). Our job is not producing fruit. Our job is to abide in Christ, and if we do, the Holy Spirit will produce the fruit, and this fruit is the result of our obedience. As we become more obedient to the Lord and learn to walk in His ways, our lives will change. The biggest change will take place in our hearts, and the overflow of this



will be new conduct (thoughts, words and actions) representative of that change. The change we seek is done from the inside out, through the power of the Holy Spirit. It isn't something we can conjure up on our own.

Love for other disciples (John 13:34-35). We are told that love of other believers is the evidence of our being a member of God's family (1 John 3:10). Love is defined and elaborated on in 1 Corinthians 13:1-13. These verses show us that love is not an emotion; it is action. We must be doing something and involved in the process. We are told to think more highly of others than of ourselves and to look out for their interests (Philippians 2:3-4). The next verse in Philippians (verse 5) really sums up what we are to do when it comes to everything in life: "our attitude should be the same as that of Christ Jesus." Jesus is the perfect example to us for everything we are to do in our Christian walk.

Evangelism - Making disciples of others (Matthew 28:18-20). We are to share our faith and tell nonbelievers about the change Jesus Christ has made in our lives. No matter what our maturity level in the Christian life, we have something to offer. Too often, we believe the lie from Satan that we don't really know enough or haven't been a Christian long enough to make a difference. Not true! Some of the most enthusiastic representatives of the Christian life are new believers who have just discovered the awesome love of God. They may not know a lot of Bible verses or the "accepted" way of saying things, but they have experienced the love of the living God, and that is exactly what we are to share.

## Principle

1. Discipleship is Modeled
  - a. Disciple-making is accomplished by modelers, not just messengers. Disciples develop not merely through the intake of correct information, but also through witnessing the life and choices of other disciples they encounter on their way.
  - b. This is why the Old Testament emphasizes both the memorization of Scripture and conversations about the Law that take place in the daily rhythms of life.
  - c. Psalm 119, for example, is heavy on the need for learning and

internalizing the Law of God, while Deuteronomy 6 focuses on the daily discussions of the Law in everyday life.

- d. It's also why Paul told the early churches they should imitate him as he followed Christ.
  - e. Jesus was always teaching, not just through his public discourses, but also through his actions.
2. Discipleship is Balanced
- a. The goal of discipleship is balanced.
    - i. orthodoxy (sound doctrine),
    - ii. orthopraxis (right practice),
    - iii. orthopatheia (proper sentiment).
  - b. When any of these three elements are excluded from a disciple's development, the other two elements are adversely affected, and the mission of the church is hindered.
  - c. Speaking of educational ministry in the church, Allison recommends a discipleship model that consists of doctrinal teaching, character building, and Belief System development.
3. Discipleship Includes a Belief System
- a. Disciple-making presupposes a Belief System—our viewing the world through Christ. What is a Belief System?
  - b. Belief System is an articulation of the basic beliefs embedded in a shared grand story that are rooted in a faith commitment and that give shape and direction to the whole of our individual and corporate lives.
  - c. Often associated with the definition of a Belief System are the big questions of life, questions that help narrate the story through which human beings view reality.
    - i. Definition.
    - ii. Purpose
    - iii. Problem.
    - iv. Solution.
    - v. Timing.
  - d. Timing clarifies the shape of Belief System thinking and keeps one from losing the important “this-world” dimension of discipleship. Timing naturally leads to the next element of discipleship—one that is too often neglected.
4. Discipleship is Eschatological

- a. Discipleship is eschatological in nature, because the church that makes and receives disciples is eschatological in nature.
- b. This is not about the “last things” doctrines often relegated to the back of systematic theology textbooks.
- c. This is eschatology in a broader sense, as encompassing the Christian vision of time and the destiny of our world.
- d. Eschatology in this sense informs both our evangelism and our ecclesiology.
- e. Seeing discipleship from an eschatological standpoint impacts the way we walk, preach and teach.
- f. The alternative is to minimize the eschatological understanding of discipleship, which will leave us with an incomplete Belief System, imbalanced discipleship, and eventually, a tragic inability to model the Christian way of life, since modeling implies obedience in a particular time and place.

### Practice

1. What is a disciple?
2. What is the mandate for discipleship making?
3. What is Christian discipleship?
4. What does the Christian Discipleship process require of believers?
5. Why should the disciple always be ready to give testimony of the reason for the hope that is within?
6. Why is discipleship eschatological?
7. What are the consequences of failing to develop as a disciple?

## The Voice of God

### Problem

How can we recognize the voice of God?

### Premise

God does not contradict Himself.

### Philosophy

The Bible records God speaking to people (Exodus 3:14; Joshua 1:1; Judges 6:18; 1 Samuel 3:11; 2 Samuel 2:1; Job 40:1; Isaiah 7:3; Jeremiah 1:7 ;Acts 8:26; 9:15). There is no biblical reason why God could not speak to a person audibly today. With the hundreds of times the Bible records God speaking, we have to remember that they occur over the course of 4,000 years of human history. God speaking audibly is the exception, not the rule. Even in the biblically recorded instances of God speaking, it is not always clear whether it was an audible voice, an inner voice, or a mental impression.

God speaks to us through His Word (2 Timothy 3:16–17). Isaiah 55:11 tells us, “So is my word that goes out from my mouth: it will not return to me empty, but will accomplish what I desire and achieve the purpose for which I sent it.” The Bible is God’s Word, everything we need to know in order to be saved and live the Christian life. Second Peter 1:3 declares, “His divine power has given us everything we need for life and godliness through our knowledge of Him who called us by his own glory and goodness.”

God can speak to us through events—i.e., He can guide us through arranging our circumstances. And God helps us to discern right from wrong through our consciences (1 Timothy 1:5; 1 Peter 3:16). God is in the process of conforming our minds to think His thoughts (Romans 12:2). God allows events to occur in our lives to direct us, change us, and help us to grow spiritually (James 1:2–5; Hebrews 12:5–11). First Peter 1:6–7 reminds us, “In this you greatly rejoice, though now for a little while you may have had to suffer grief in all kinds of trials. These have come so that your faith—of greater worth than gold, which perishes even though refined by fire—may be proved genuine and may result in praise, glory and honor when Jesus Christ is revealed.”

God can speak audibly to people. In the Bible, God speaking audibly is the exception, not the ordinary. If anyone claims that God has spoken to him or her, always compare what is said with what the Bible says. If God were to speak today, His words would be in full agreement with what He has said in the Bible (2 Timothy 3:16–17).

### Principle

1. Samuel heard the voice of God, but didn't recognize it until he was instructed by Eli (1 Samuel 3:1-10).
2. Gideon had a physical revelation from God and he still doubted what he had heard, to the point of asking for a sign, not once but three times (Judges chapter 6, esp. vs. 17-22, 36-40)!
3. When we are listening for God's voice, how can we know that He is the one speaking?
4. Today we have something that Gideon and Samuel did not. We have the complete Bible, the inspired word of God, to read, study and to meditate on.
  - a. 2 Timothy 3:16-17.
  - b. Do you have a question about a certain topic or decision in your life? See what the Bible has to say about it.
  - c. God will never lead you or direct you contrary to what He has taught or promised in His Word, Titus 1:2.
  - d. A topical Bible, which lists Bible verses by many different subjects, can be helpful.
5. To hear God's voice we must recognize it.
  - a. John 10:27.
  - b. If we are to know God's voice, we must spend time with Him daily.
6. Spend quality time daily in prayer, Bible study and quiet contemplation of His Word.
  - a. There are no magic numbers or formulas for this.
  - b. Find out what others in the Church are doing in this regard.
  - c. Find what works for you and then make the time for it.
  - d. The more time you spend intimately with God and His Word the easier it will be to recognize His voice.
  - e. God speaks to us so that we may understand truth.
  - f. He speaks primarily through His Word, but sometimes also

through the Holy Spirit to our consciences, through circumstances and through other people.

- g. By applying what we hear to the truth of Scripture, we can learn to recognize His voice.
7. Pray, especially when you're unsure of God's will for your life. "If any of you lacks wisdom, he should ask God, who gives generously to all without finding fault, and it will be given to him" (James 1:5). "Be still before the Lord and wait patiently for Him" (Psalm 37:7).
  8. If you don't know what to pray, you can always personalize and pray verses such as, "Show me the way I should go, for to You I lift up my soul" (Psalm 143:8) and, "Guide me in Your truth and teach me" (Psalm 25:5).
  9. The primary way God commands us is through His Word, 2 Timothy 3:16. If Scripture commands something of us, there's no need to hesitate and wonder if it's really God's will for us.
  10. He cares so much about us that He already gave a plain and clear guidebook to life – the Bible, Psalm 119:105; Psalm 19:7; Psalm 119:9.
  11. God never contradicts Himself, so He'll never ask you to do something contradictory to Scripture. He will never ask you to sin. He will never ask you to do something Jesus Christ wouldn't do. We need to immerse ourselves in the Bible, so we will know which actions meet God's standards, Joshua 1:8.
  12. Christians have the Holy Spirit to discern what is, or is not, God's will for our lives. The Spirit of truth will guide you into all truth, John 16:13.
  13. Sometimes the Holy Spirit will either agitate our conscience if we're making a wrong decision, or He will pacify and encourage us when we're leaning toward the right decision.
  14. Even if He doesn't intervene in such noticeable ways, we can have confidence that He's always in charge. Sometimes God will alter a situation without us even realizing He has acted. The Lord will guide you always, Isaiah 58:11.
  15. If God is calling you to take a leap of faith, be encouraged by His presence, Joshua 1:9. "Cast all your anxiety on Him because He cares for you" 1 Peter 5:7. Trust in the Lord with all your heart and lean not on your own understanding, Proverbs 3:5-6.

16. What we are not to do is expect to hear voices from God. There is a dangerous trend today where people seek to hear a “word from the Lord,” extraneous to what He has already given us in the Bible. “The Lord told me . . .” has become the mantra of experience-driven Christianity.
17. Unfortunately, what He “tells” one person often contradicts what He “tells” another, and these extra-biblical revelations have proven to be very divisive, tearing apart church after church as one person’s experience seeks to take precedence over another’s. This results in chaos, benefitting no one except Satan, who loves to sow discord among believers.
18. We should make the apostle Peter our example in these matters. In spite of the miraculous experience on the Mount of Transfiguration, where he beheld the glorified Christ speaking with Moses and Elijah, Peter refused to rely on that experience, 2 Peter 1:18-19.

#### Practice

1. Where does the Bible record God speaking to people? What did He say?
2. What prevents God from speaking audibly to a person today?
3. Who does God speak to today and how does He speak?
4. What exactly does the Bible, God’s Word, tell us today?
5. How does God speak to us through events?
6. Why does God allow events to occur in our lives?

## Christian Ethics

### Problem

What are Christian ethics?

### Premise

Conduct and choice follows character.

### Philosophy

Christian Ethics: (1) A system of values based upon the Scriptures, (2) principles of behavior in concordance with the behaviors of prophets, (3) standards of thought and behavior as taught by Jesus. The Holy Bible is the primary guide to what is ethical and moral. The Scriptures were inspired by God, and thus the Bible is the major or only source of knowledge of what is right and wrong. The ethics themselves are those derived by interpretations of the behaviors of individuals in Bible stories, and not from the Bible stating specifically what is ethical. There is no known mention of ethic, ethics, ethical, moral, morals, or morality in the Bible. There exists the Greek "ethos" as "customs" in Luke 1:9 "According to the custom of the priest's office," but customs are not ethics.

The behaviors and teachings of individuals in the Bible are subjectively interpreted as good or bad - or the references are said to be holy or evil within the eyes of God, which then leads the reader to conclude which specific acts are deemed right or wrong - and then the interpretations of good and bad are given the names of ethical and unethical.

To hold within one's mind a classification of ethics, the individual first must have created thoughts of right and wrong, and then encircled the thoughts within the classification named ethics. Since the philosophical concept of ethics most commonly relates to the judging of whether the behavior of people might be right or wrong, then it is assumed that everyone who holds the philosophical view of ethics has judged the behaviors of people, Matthew 7:1-5; Romans 14:10,13; Matthew 22:37-40.

### Principle

1. A normative ethic philosophy is a system of ideas that sets guidelines



- for determining right or appropriate behavior as it applies to a group.
- a. It is similar to morality, which applies to individuals.
  - b. Throughout history, mankind has developed several different theories of ethics based on the consequence of the action, the governing law of the culture, or other means.
  - c. Christian ethics is that system which is mandated by God as explained in the Bible.
2. An ethic is different from a law. Ethics are philosophies as to how to find out what would be a good law to follow. Some comparisons are listed below:
- a. Biblical ethic: worship God as holy (Deuteronomy 6:13)
  - b. Biblical law: do not sacrifice to idols (Exodus 20:5)
  - c. Biblical ethic: love God (Deuteronomy 6:5)
  - d. Biblical law: obey God (Deuteronomy 6:1-3)
  - e. Biblical ethic: honor your father and mother (Exodus 20:12)
  - f. Biblical law: do not curse your parents; obey your parents (Exodus 21:17; Deuteronomy 21:18-19)
  - g. Biblical ethic: love others (Mark 12:30)
  - h. Biblical law: do not steal (Exodus 20:15)
  - i. Biblical ethic: consider your body a temple of the Holy Spirit (1 Corinthians 6:19)
  - j. Biblical law: do not practice sexual sin (1 Corinthians 6:9)
3. Christian ethics give overall guidelines without specifically stating all the laws which would epitomize those ethics. We are called to develop the spiritual maturity to determine our own course of action.
- a. Biblical ethic: we should use our body to honor God (1 Corinthians 6:19-20)
  - b. Specific action: do not indulge in mind-altering drugs for the purpose of entertainment.
  - c. Biblical ethic: children are a blessing from God (Psalm 127:3-5).
  - d. Specific action: abortion and child abuse are unbiblical.
4. At other times, Christian ethics lead us to reject manmade laws. Although we are to obey our civil authorities (Romans 13:1-7), Christian ethics must always come first, the classic example being spreading the gospel (Acts 4:18-20).
5. Passages like 1 Corinthians 6:12 and Romans 14:1-6 make it appear

- that Christian ethics are relative to the situation and the spiritual maturity of the individual.
- a. But the discussion about eating meat sacrificed to idols in Romans 14:1-6 demonstrates how an ethic can be represented by different laws at different times.
  - b. The ethic in both the Old and New Testaments is "be set apart" (Leviticus 20:26; 1 Peter 2:9).
  - c. In the Old Testament, this ethic was followed, in part, by certain dietary restrictions (Leviticus 11).
  - d. In the New Testament, it is expressed by love (John 13:35).
  - e. The dietary restrictions were removed as an obsolete cultural reference (Mark 7:19), but there may come a situation where love for a fellow believer is expressed through a voluntary restriction of certain types of food (Romans 14:19).
  - f. This is not ethical relativism because the ethics did not change. It is only the applications of the ethics that had to be modified.
6. Part of spiritual growth is coming to the realization that believers are a new creation (2 Corinthians 5:17), indwelt with the Holy Spirit (1 Corinthians 12:13), and freed from the law (Romans 8:2).
    - a. But we are still bound to Christian ethics, and the Bible is filled with specific ways in which we can manifest those ethics.
    - b. Whatever the law, Christian ethics can be summarized in Mark 12:29-31.
  7. Read Colossians 3:1-6.
  8. While more than just a list of "do's" and "don'ts," the Bible does give us detailed instructions on how to live as a Christian should.
    - a. The Bible is all we need to know how to live that Christian life.
    - b. However, the Bible does not explicitly cover every single situation we will face in our lives.
    - c. How then is it sufficient? That is where Christian Ethics comes in.
  9. Science defines ethics as, "a set of moral principles."
    - a. The study of morality."
    - b. Therefore, Christian Ethics would be the principles, derived from the Christian faith, by which we act.
    - c. While God's Word may not cover each and every situation we face throughout our lives, it's principles give us the standards

- by which we must carry ourselves in those situations where there are no explicit instructions.
- d. For example the Bible does not say anything explicitly on the use of illegal drugs, yet based on the principles we learn through scripture we can know that it is wrong.
10. The Bible tells us that our body is a temple of the Holy Spirit and that we should honor God with it (1 Corinthians 6:19-20).
    - a. Knowing what these drugs do to our body, the harm they cause to various organs, we know that by using them we would be destroying the temple of the Holy Spirit.
    - b. That is certainly not honoring to God.
    - c. The Bible also tells us that we are to follow the authorities that God Himself has put into place (Romans 13:1).
    - d. Given the illegal nature of the drugs today, by using them, you are not submitting to the authorities, but rather, rebelling against them.
    - e. Does this mean if illegal drugs were legalized it would be ok? Not without violating the first principle.
  11. By using the principles we find in Scripture, Christians can determine their course for any given situation.
    - a. In some cases it will be simple, like the “Rules for Christian Living” we find in Colossians chapter 3.
    - b. In other case, however, we need to do a little digging.
    - c. The absolute best way to do that, in this author’s opinion is to pray over God’s Word.
    - d. The Holy Spirit indwells each and every believer, and part of his role is teaching us how to live.
  12. John 14:26.
  13. 1 John 2:27.
  14. So when we pray over Scripture, the Spirit will guide us and teach us.
    - a. He will show us the principle we need to stand on for any given situation.
  15. While God’s Word does not cover each and every situation we will face in our lives, it is all sufficient for living a Christian life.
    - a. Most things we can simply see what the Bible says and follow the proper course based on that.
    - b. In the cases where Scripture does not give explicit instructions

- for a given situation, we need to look for the principle behind it.
- c. Again, in some of those cases it will be easy.
  - d. Most of the principles Christians follow are sufficient for most situations.
  - e. In the rare case, where there is neither explicit scripture, nor seemingly clear principle, we need to rely on God.
  - f. We must pray over His Word, and open ourselves to His Spirit.
  - g. The Spirit will teach us and guide us through the Bible to find the principle we need to stand on so we may walk and live as a Christian should.

### Practice

1. What are the primary lessons found in Colossians 3:1-6?
2. What should you rely on in the rare case, where there is neither explicit scripture, nor seemingly clear principle?
3. How can a Christian determine the appropriate course for any given situation?

### What is the New Covenant?

19. The new covenant is spoken about first in the book of Jeremiah.
  - a. The old covenant that God had established with His people required obedience to the Old Testament Mosaic law.
  - b. Because the wages of sin is death (Romans 6:23), the law required that people performed rituals and sacrifices in order to please God and remain in His grace.
  - c. The prophet Jeremiah predicted that there would be a time when God would make a new covenant with the nation of Israel.
20. "'The day will come,' says the Lord, 'when I will make a new covenant with the people of Israel and Judah....But this is the new covenant I will make with the people of Israel on that day,' says the Lord. 'I will put my law in their minds, and I will write them on their hearts. I will be their God, and they will be my people'" (Jeremiah 31:31,33).
  - a. Jesus Christ came to fulfill the law of Moses (Matthew 5:17) and create a new covenant between God and His people.
  - b. The old covenant was written in stone, but the new covenant is written on our hearts, made possible only by faith in Christ, who shed His own blood to atone for the sins of the world.
  - c. Luke 22:20 says, "After supper, [Jesus] took another cup of wine and said, 'This wine is the token of God's new covenant to save you – an agreement sealed with the blood I will pour out for you.'"
21. Now that we are under the new covenant, we are not bound by the law.
  - a. We are now given the opportunity to receive salvation as a free gift, not as a reward for any of our good works (Ephesians 2:8-9).
  - b. Through the life-giving Holy Spirit who lives in all believers (Romans 8:9-11), we can now share in the inheritance of Christ and enjoy a permanent, unbroken relationship with God.
  - c. Hebrews 9:15 declares, "For this reason Christ is the mediator of a new covenant, that those who are called may receive the promised eternal inheritance – now that He has died as a ransom to set them free from the sins committed under the first covenant."

### What is the Kingdom of God?

1. The kingdom of God is the rule of an eternal sovereign God over all creatures and things (Psalms 103:19; Daniel 4:3).
  - a. The kingdom of God is also the designation for the sphere of salvation entered into at the new birth (John 3:5-7).
2. The kingdom of heaven is a term used only in Matthew and it refers to the millennial kingdom - the rule of Christ - the God of heaven upon the earth and as such it is part of the kingdom of God (Matthew 3:2; 4:17 4:23; 5:2).
  - a. Matthew presents Jesus as the King of the kingdom.
  - b. Jesus came to bring the kingdom of heaven on earth but He was rejected.
  - c. However, the LORD is the sovereign ruler of all of the earth and all creation will someday be subject to Him (every knee will bow).
3. The kingdom of God embraces all created intelligence, both in heaven and earth that are willingly subject to the LORD and are in fellowship with him.
  - a. The kingdom of God is therefore, universal - includes created angels and men, eternal - as God is eternal, and spiritual - found within all born again believers.
  - b. We enter the kingdom of God when we are born again and we are then part of that kingdom for eternity.
  - c. It is a relationship "born of the spirit" (John 3:5) and we have confident assurance that it is so because the Spirit bears witness with our spirits (Romans 8:16).
4. God is sovereign, omnipotent, omniscient and the ruler over all of His creation.
  - a. However, the designation "the kingdom of God" compasses that realm that is subject to God and will be for eternity - the rest of creation will be destroyed.
  - b. Only that which is part of the "kingdom of God" will remain.

What is Christianity and what do Christians believe?

1. 1 Corinthians 15:1-4 says, “Moreover, brethren, I declare unto you the gospel which I preached unto you, which also ye have received, and wherein ye stand; By which also ye are saved, if ye keep in memory what I preached unto you, unless ye have believed in vain. For I delivered unto you first of all that which I also received, how that Christ died for our sins according to the scriptures; And that he was buried, and that he rose again the third day according to the scriptures.”
2. In a nutshell, that is the belief of Christianity.
  - a. Christianity is unique among all other faiths, because Christianity is more about a relationship, rather than religious practice.
  - b. Instead of adhering to a list of “dos and don’ts,” the goal of a Christian is to cultivate a close walk with God the Father.
  - c. That relationship is made possible because of the work of Jesus Christ, and the ministry in the life of the Christian by the Holy Spirit.
3. Christians believe that the Bible is the inspired, inerrant Word of God, and that its teaching is the final authority (2 Timothy 3:16, 2 Peter 1:20-21).
  - a. Christians believe in one God that exists in three persons, the Father, the Son (Jesus Christ), and the Holy Spirit.
4. Christians believe that mankind was created specifically to have a relationship with God, but that sin separates all men from God (Romans 5:12, Romans 3:23).
  - a. Christianity teaches that Jesus Christ walked this earth, fully God, and yet fully man (Philippians 2:6-11), and died on the cross.
  - b. Christians believe that after His death on the cross, Christ was buried, He rose again, and now lives at the right hand of the Father, making intercession for the believers forever (Hebrews 7:25).
  - c. Christianity proclaims that Jesus’ death on the cross was sufficient to completely pay the sin debt owed by all men and this is what restores the broken relationship between God and man (Hebrews 9:11-14, Hebrews 10:10, Romans 6:23,

Romans 5:8).

5. In order to be saved, one must simply place his faith entirely in the finished work of Christ on the cross.
  - a. If someone believes that Christ died in his own place and paid the price of his own sins, and rose again, then that person is saved.
  - b. There is nothing that anyone can do to earn salvation. Nobody can be “good enough” to please God on his or her own, because all of us are sinners (Isaiah 64:6-7, Isaiah 53:6).
  - c. Secondly, there is nothing more to be done, because Christ has done all the work! When He was on the cross, Jesus said, “It is finished” (John 19:30).
6. Just as there is nothing one can do to earn salvation, once someone has placed his/her trust in the work of Christ on the cross, there is nothing anyone can do to lose his/her salvation either.
  - a. Remember, the work was done and completed by Christ! Nothing about salvation is dependent upon the one who receives it!
  - b. John 10:27-29 states “My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me: And I give unto them eternal life; and they shall never perish, neither shall any [man] pluck them out of my hand. My Father, which gave [them] me, is greater than all; and no [man] is able to pluck [them] out of my Father's hand.”
7. Some may think, “This is great--once I am saved, I can do just as I please, and not lose my salvation!”
  - a. But salvation is not about being free to do as one pleases.
  - b. Salvation is becoming free from having to serve the old sin nature, and being free to pursue a right relationship with God.
  - c. As long as believers live on this earth in their sinful bodies, there will be a constant struggle with giving in to sin.
  - d. Living in sin hinders the relationship God seeks to have with mankind, and as long as one lives in sin as a believer, he will not enjoy the relationship God intended to have with him.
  - e. However, Christians can have victory over the struggle with sin by studying and applying God’s Word (the Bible) in their lives, and being controlled by the Holy Spirit--that is, submitting to the



Spirit's influence and leading in everyday circumstances, and through the Spirit obeying God's Word.

8. So, while many religious systems require that a person do certain things or not do certain things, Christianity is about having a relationship with God.
  - a. Christianity is about believing that Christ died on the cross as payment for your own sin, and rose again.
  - b. Your sin debt is paid and you can have fellowship with God.
  - c. You can have victory over your sin nature and walk in fellowship and obedience with God.
  - d. That is true biblical Christianity.

What is a Christian?

1. Webster's Dictionary defines a Christian as "a person professing belief in Jesus as the Christ or in the religion based on the teaching of Jesus."
  - a. While this is a good starting point in understanding what a Christian is, like many secular definitions, it falls somewhat short of really communicating the biblical truth of what it means to be a Christian.
2. The word Christian is used three times in New Testament (Acts 11:26; Acts 26:28; 1 Peter 4:16).
  - a. Followers of Jesus Christ were first called "Christians" in Antioch (Acts 11:26) because their behavior, activity, and speech were like Christ.
  - b. It was originally used by the unsaved people of Antioch as a kind of contemptuous nickname used to make fun of the Christians.
  - c. It literally means, "belonging to the party of Christ" or an "adherent or follower of Christ," which is very similar to the way Webster's Dictionary defines it.
3. Unfortunately over time, the word "Christian" has lost a great deal of its significance and is often used of someone who is religious or has high moral values instead of a true born again follower of Jesus Christ.
  - a. Many people who don't believe and trust in Jesus Christ consider themselves Christians simply because they go to church or they live in a "Christian" nation.

- b. But going to church, serving those less fortunate than you, or being a good person does not make you a Christian.
  - c. As one evangelist once said, "Going to church doesn't make one a Christian anymore than going to a garage makes one an automobile."
  - d. Being a member of a church, attending services regularly, and giving to the work of the church cannot make you a Christian.
4. The Bible teaches us that the good works we do cannot make us acceptable to God.
- a. Titus 3:5 tells us that it is "not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to His mercy He saved us, through the washing of regeneration and renewing of the Holy Spirit."
  - b. So, a Christian is someone who has been born-again by God (John 3:3; John 3:7; 1 Peter 3:23) and has put their faith and trust in Jesus Christ.
  - c. Ephesians 2:8 tells us that it is "by grace you have been saved through faith, and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God."
  - d. A true Christian is someone who has repented of his or her sin and put faith and trust in Jesus Christ alone.
  - e. Their trust is not in following a religion or a set of moral codes, or a list of do's and don'ts.
5. A true Christian is a person who has put his or her faith and trust in the person of Jesus Christ and fact that He died on the cross as payment for sins and rose again on the third day to obtain victory over death and to give eternal life to all who believe in Him.
- a. John 1:12 tells us: "But as many as received Him, to them He gave the right to become children of God, to those who believe in His name."
  - b. A true Christian is indeed a child of God, a part of God's true family, and one who has been given new life in Christ.
  - c. The mark of a true Christian is love for others and obedience to God's Word (1 John 2:4; 1 John 2:10).

## Why Go to Church?

### Problem

Today's Church looks like the world.

### Premise

Staying away from church is dangerous.

### Philosophy

Hebrews 10:24-25 Think of ways to encourage one another to outbursts of love and good deeds. [25] And let us not neglect our meeting together, as some people do, but encourage and warn each other, especially now that the day of his coming back again is drawing near.

Matthew 18:20 For where two or three gather together because they are mine, I am there among them."

### Principle

1. In 1 Corinthians 12, Paul compares Christians to a body, the body of Christ. Every Christian is a part of this body (vs. 27), every part needs the others (vs. 21), and every part should be concerned for the others (vs. 25-26). No part of the body, no member of the church family, can claim to be a self-sufficient unit (vs. 15-16). Since the local church is the method God has chosen for us to join together and live like a cohesive body, church attendance is very important.
2. Although all Christians make up the universal church, God uses local churches in very specific, important ways.
  - a. Your church is where you learn about God (Acts 2:42).
  - b. It's also how we build each other up through encouragement (Hebrews 3:13), exhortation (Hebrews 10:24), service (Galatians 5:13), honor (Romans 12:10), and compassion (Ephesians 4:32).
3. Church attendance is not a requirement. We don't have to go to church to be saved. But staying away from church is dangerous. When we avoid other believers and reject their encouragement, the world will influence our beliefs and thoughts more than the Word (Hebrews 10:25). Your beliefs determine your behavior over time. In

the church, God provides people who remind us Who He is and how much He loves us (Romans 15:14). In the Church we can grow in love for God and others (1 John 4:12).

4. We need to gather on Sunday mornings for worship.
  - a. There is good sermon content online.
  - b. There are churches that actually offer online services.
  - c. It is possible to read your Bible, pray, and perhaps listen/watch/read a sermon at home.
5. The truth is that you can experience some of what you get at church at home.
  - a. You may find a better message by listening to one of the popular TV preachers.
  - b. You might carve out more time to pray by staying at home.
  - c. And you can even roll up your sleeves and get involved in works of service in your local community rather than going to church.
  - d. You can even worship and sing in your shower.
  - e. This kind of attitude really misses the point when it comes to church.
    - i. At church we do hear a message preached from a pastor.
    - ii. We do pray and sing and serve.
    - iii. However that's not all church is about.
    - iv. There is more than simply what we "get out" of a Sunday morning.
6. Church life is body life.
  - a. Church life is true village life.
  - b. You cannot replace that at home.
  - c. You cannot get that at a conference.
  - d. You cannot get that online.
  - e. God has wired us, created us, for family and community.
  - f. When God ordained the Church, calling out a special people for His name, He didn't call a person. He called a family.
  - g. The American Western individualism causes us to skip right over the plural aspect of the Christian faith.
  - h. In Scripture, God called out a family.
  - i. In Scripture worship is spoken of us in a corporate context.
  - j. The commands and the calls to worship and the theology were

- delivered to a family of people, not to a person.
  - k. We grow best in family and community.
  - l. When God's people are gathered together as a family by the Holy Spirit there is power.
    - i. We change.
    - ii. We learn from each other.
    - iii. We become family.
  - m. It is important to not simply be a token or part time participant in your church, but a committed full time member.
  - n. Attend as often as you physically can.
  - o. Go to as many of the events as you can.
  - p. Participate in the seemingly non-essential things.
  - q. You are part of the family.
  - r. Privileges in the body:
    - i. We have personal access to God through Christ and can draw near to him without an elaborate system.
    - ii. We grow in faith, overcome doubts and questions, and deepen our relationship with God.
    - iii. We enjoy encouragement from one another.
    - iv. We worship together.
  - s. When God's people gather as a family every week to bow their heads and lift up their hands in worship, it's a powerful testimony about who God is and who we are.
  - t. Our message is clear, "Yes God is" and "Yes He is awesome" and "Yes He is holy and worthy of our deepest praise and adoration".
7. We miss something when we come in on Sunday and then run out right after the service.
- a. We miss something when we stay home and watch service online without cause.
  - b. We miss something when do a lot of Christian, church stuff, but don't actually attend worship service on Sunday.
  - c. We miss the life of the body of Christ.
  - d. We don't achieve holiness alone, rushing is rugged defiance and an invitation to our enemies - sin, Satan, and temptation.
  - e. We achieve holiness as we share our lives with each other, give and receive encouragement, spurring one another on to

- love and to good deeds. Don't try it alone.
- f. God has given us Christ's church for support and assistance.
  - g. And He intends us to keep on meeting with others throughout our whole life.
  - h. Since Christ is our high priest, and we are a kingdom of priests (1 Peter 2:9), we ought to assemble together for common worship, teaching, and service.
8. To neglect worship service is to give up the encouragement and help of other Christians.
    - a. We gather together to share our faith and to strengthen one another in the Lord.
    - b. Anti-Christian forces are growing in strength.
    - c. Difficulties must never be excuses for missing church services.
    - d. As difficulties arise, we must make an even greater effort to be faithful in attendance.
  9. Worship Service is not self-improvement group therapy. Church isn't just so I can change and be better at my job and my marriage and my card game.
  10. The last days are days when apostasy will become more and more prevalent (apostasy of both the individual and the church). We are in those days right now.
    - a. It takes courage and grace to stake claims for the truth of the Word of God, for it seems we are in the minority, but it is important.
    - b. We need to know what God's Word has to say about sin, immorality. All that the Bible teaches comes through the true Church.
    - c. We need to guard and gird ourselves against the tide of apostasy.
    - d. Church life is Christ life.
  11. Christ is coming again. We don't know the day or the hour, but He is coming for the Church and we must rapture ready!
  12. If you're not all in, you're missing out.

### Practice

1. Why do we need to gather at Church for worship?
2. What do we miss when we rush right out of service and away from

the Church?

3. How does God use local churches?
4. Why is staying away from church dangerous?
5. What results when we avoid other believers and reject their encouragement?
6. Why is church attendance very important?
7. What do we give up when we neglect worship service?
8. What is causing the Church of today to look more and more like the world?

## Promises

### Problem

It is all but impossible to trust the promises made to us and that we make to others.

### Premise

God cannot lie.

### Philosophy

God has a financial principle that is applicable to Christians, and God will bless those who are willing to obey this principle in faith.

### Principle

1. God's promise begins with a declaration by God; it covers God's future plan for not just one race, but all the nations of the earth; and it focuses on the gifts and deeds that God will bestow on a few to benefit the many. We may define God's promise this way: the divine declaration or assurance made at first to Eve, Shem, Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob and then to the whole nation of Israel that:
  - a. He would be their God.
  - b. they would be His people.
  - c. He would dwell in their midst.
2. The blessing of land and of growth as a nation as well as the call to bless the nations was part of the promise to Abraham. Added to these words of assurance were a series of divine actions in history. These words and deeds of God began to constitute the continuously unfolding divine plan by which all the peoples and nations of the earth would benefit from that day to this.
3. Jesus made a phenomenal promise to the disciple who lives as He said—the promise of reciprocal behavior, of receiving back just what he gave plus.
4. Luke 6:38 If you give, you will receive. Your gift will return to you in full measure, pressed down, shaken together to make room for more, and running over. Whatever measure you use in giving—large or small—it will be used to measure what is given back to you."
5. This illustration comes from the marketplace where grain was poured



- out, shaken down, and then filled to overflowing so the buyer received the full amount purchased. Such is the full measure that will be returned to one who has been generous.
6. If we judge and condemn and are unforgiving of others, then we receive the same treatment. We shall be judged, condemned, and unforgiven both on earth and in heaven.
  7. If we do not judge and condemn men, but rather forgive them, then God and most men will not judge and condemn us; they will also be forgiving.
  8. Property matters are involved in reciprocal behavior. The believer is to give and to possess a spirit of giving and not to be selfish and hoarding. If he gives, he shall receive back much more. In fact, his cup shall be running over. God will pour all the good things of this earth into his life (bosom).
  9. A person receives what he gives. What a person puts into life is what he gets out of life.
  10. 2 Cor. 9:7 You must each make up your own mind as to how much you should give. Don't give reluctantly or in response to pressure. For God loves the person who gives cheerfully.
  11. The giver who pleases God gives deliberately, not grudgingly and not from compulsion. It is absolutely crucial to note one thing: God does not accept the gift of a person who does not want to give.
  12. The giver must give as he purposes in his heart. This does not mean that people are not to be encouraged to give nor that they cannot be stirred to give. It means that a person is...
    - a. to think about the need.
    - b. to think about what he should give sacrificially.
    - c. to make a deliberate decision about what he should sacrifice in order to give what he should.
    - d. to give exactly what he should give.
  13. The giver must not give grudgingly: not out of sorrow, not with reluctance or regret. If the giver is going to be mulling over his gift and regretting that he had given it, his gift is unacceptable to God. The person needs to straighten her heart out with God, for...
    - a. She is failing to see the desperate needs of the world.
    - b. She is failing to see what Jesus Christ has done for him.
  14. The giver must not give out of necessity. A person's gift is not

- acceptable to God when he...
- a. is forced to give.
  - b. gives because he fears what others will think.
  - c. gives just to please others.
  - d. gives to keep others from pestering him.
  - e. gives out of a desire for personal honor and recognition.
15. The giver must give cheerfully if he wishes God to accept his gift. The word "cheerful" means joyful. The giver is pleased and delighted to give to meet the needs of God's people and of the world. God loves the cheerful giver, for the cheerful giver is just like His Son, Jesus Christ. Jesus Christ willingly and cheerfully gave all He was and had to meet the needs of the world.
  16. "Upon the first day of the week let every one of you lay by him in store, as God hath prospered him, that there be no gatherings when I come" (1 Cor. 16:2).
  17. "For if there be first a willing mind, it is accepted according to that a man hath, and not according to that he hath not" (2 Cor. 8:12).
  18. Paul is not talking here about how much we give so much as how we give. He told them how much to give in 8:12-15; it was to be in proportion to what they had.
  19. But for a believer to give grudgingly, or out of a sense of obligation, is to miss the blessing of giving. Giving must be from the heart, and God loves a cheerful ("hilarious" in the Gk.) giver. Some Christians take this verse to mean that it matters not how much we give, so long as we give cheerfully what we have purposed in our hearts. Absolutely not! A cheerful heart is not a substitute for an obedient heart. Our hearts should be both faithful and cheerful, because we give the right gift with the right motive.
  20. All sufficiency with nothing is left out is God's promise to those who obey Him. God is faithful to supply what we need spiritually (2:6), materially (9:8), and physically (12:9). But God meets our needs, not simply for our own enjoyment, but that we might be able to serve Him and help others. We are to abound "to every good work". Paul exhorts Christians to go to work that they might be able to help others (Eph. 4:28). Here he refers to Ps. 112:9 and Isa. 55:10 to prove that God blesses the person who is faithful in giving. God supplies seed so that sowers might make bread for food and also

- have more seed for sowing.
21. The principle of tithing means that the God who made us, who gave us our life, our talents, our minds, the strength with which we work and the very land and materials which we employ in our work, requires us to return to Him the first tenth of our increase or income.
  22. As far as the direct matter of tithing is concerned, God does not consider that we are "giving" anything—but are paying God a very nominal amount that He requires as our Maker, our Sustainer, our Landlord, our Protector and our God.
  23. God promises: "Honor the Lord with your possessions, and with the first fruits of all your increase; so your barns will be filled with plenty, and your vats will overflow with new wine" (Proverbs 3:9–10).
  24. Yes, if you are faithful in obeying God and returning to Him the first tenth, or "tithe", of your income, He will bless your life in many ways. God has promised, and God never breaks His word.
  25. In Malachi 3:8, God declares: "Will a man rob God? Yet you have robbed Me. But you say, 'In what way have we robbed You?' In tithes and offerings." God here indicts us for robbing our Him and His Work today. I believe that this is the under lying reason that there is such a lack of faith today. I believe that this is the under lying reason for so much confusion and deceit in the Church today.
  26. God continues: "You are cursed with a curse, for you have robbed Me, even this whole nation" (v. 9).
  27. God promises in His word: "Bring all the tithes into the storehouse, that there may be food in My house, and try Me now in this, says the Lord of Hosts, if I will not open for you the windows of heaven and pour out for you such blessing that there will not be room enough to receive it" (v. 10).
  28. God promises to bless you if you tithe as He commands, through faith in Him and in His word. God does bless the tither even in material ways. He may not always do so immediately. You may have to obey Him and exercise faith for a while. But as you serve Him, obey Him and trust Him, God keeps His promise.

## Practice

1. What does the principle of tithing mean?
2. What is your experience regarding God's promises?

3. What does God's promise begin with?
4. What does God's promise cover?
5. On what does God's promise focus?
6. How can we define God's promise?
7. What did the promise to Abraham include?
8. Jesus made a phenomenal promise to the disciple who lives as He said, what was it?
9. How is a cheerful giver like Jesus?
10. What is required for God to pour good things into a person's life?

## Godly Principle

### Problem

People make terrible choices in the dark.

### Premise

Ignorance is darkness, illumination is light.

### Philosophy

The obvious blessings that come to those who obey God's principle of tithing do not change just because there some who still have arguments or questions.

### Practice

1. Long before the "law of Moses" was ever codified, Abraham gave a tithe to God. We read in Genesis 14:17–20 how Abraham honored God's High Priest Melchizedek after God had delivered his enemies into his hand: "And he gave him a tithe of all."
2. Abraham was the one human being God chose to pre-enact the sacrifice which God would later make—the willingness to give up his own son (Genesis 22).
3. Abraham is the one God inspired the Apostle Paul in the New Testament to describe as the father of the faithful (Romans 4:1, 11, 16).
4. Abraham gave a tithe to the king of peace. Abraham tithed on a bounty that had virtually been given him by God.
5. Tithing is on any financial increase which God grants us as His created children.
6. Jacob promised to serve the God of Abraham and stated: "Of all that You give me I will surely give a tenth to You" (Genesis 28:22).
7. When God temporarily instituted the Levitical priesthood, He directed that the tithe be paid to them during that time as His human representatives:
8. "And all the tithe of the land, whether of the seed of the land or of the fruit of the tree, is the Lord's. It is holy to the Lord.... And concerning the tithe of the herd or the flock, of whatever passes under the rod, the tenth one shall be holy to the Lord" (Leviticus 27:30, 32).

9. Numbers 18:21: "Behold, I have given the children of Levi all the tithes in Israel as an inheritance in return for the work which they perform, the work of the tabernacle of meeting."
10. Since God's ministry during this time was a physical ministry—of offering sacrifices and oblations—and since the Levites were fulfilling this ministry as their work, God's tithe went to them as His representatives and servants.
11. Hebrews describes how Abraham paid tithes to Melchizedek.
12. Hebrews 7:2 Then Abraham took a tenth of all he had won in the battle and gave it to Melchizedek. His name means "king of justice." He is also "king of peace" because Salem means "peace."
13. The spiritual priesthood of Melchizedek is demonstrated through Christ.
14. Hebrews was written to Jewish Christians who understood at least the letter of God's Law and had no "argument" about the principle of tithing. Hebrews presents tithing as a principle. And shows that it is a principle, which has existed from the days of Melchizedek, and it is used for doing the work of winning souls to Christ, making disciples and teaching disciples to walk in victory today.
15. The "Word" is the One who guided and blessed Abraham in tithing to God. And Christ is "the same yesterday, today and forever" (Hebrews 13:8).
16. In the New Testament, even after the Temple was destroyed in 70 AD, we find no scriptural command to stop tithing, and no indication that the Apostles and the Apostolic Church ceased to tithe.
17. In the New Testament, Jesus Christ addressed tithing. In speaking to the scribes and Pharisees, who often made a self-righteous display of strictly keeping some of the smaller points of God's Law, Jesus said: "Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites. For you pay tithe of mint and anise and cummin, and have neglected the weightier matters of the law: justice and mercy and faith. These you ought to have done, without leaving the others undone" (Matthew 23:23).
18. Jesus said that spiritual qualities such as mercy and faith ought to be put ahead of carefully and strictly paying tithes on every little plant that might grow in your garden, especially when that strictness leads to self righteousness. Christ said "not to leave the other undone", not

- to fail to tithe as God has commanded.
19. Luke 11:42 "But how terrible it will be for you Pharisees! For you are careful to tithe even the tiniest part of your income, but you completely forget about justice and the love of God. You should tithe, yes, but you should not leave undone the more important things.
  20. Society would like to regard God's principle of tithing as of least importance. But speaking of even the smaller points of God's Law, Jesus stated: "Whoever therefore breaks one of the least of these commandments, and teaches men so, shall be called least in the kingdom of heaven; but whoever does and teaches them, he shall be called great in the kingdom of heaven" (Matthew 5:19).

### Practice

1. Was the idea of tithing an invention of Moses?
2. Was tithing "done away" by Jesus?
3. Was tithing just for the physical nation of Israel, a form of taxation for both church and state?
4. Who guided and blessed Abraham in tithing to God?
5. How is the spiritual priesthood of Melchizedek demonstrated through Christ?
6. What do we tithe on?
7. What is the reason that we should regard God's principle of tithing as important?
8. What was one of the primary reasons God chose Abraham?
9. Why did the tithe go to the Levites?
10. How does Hebrews present tithing?

## Why Struggle?

### Problem

Many Christians struggle with the issue of tithing. At the same time, many Christians refuse to submit to the biblical exhortations about making offerings to the Lord.

### Premise

Tithing and giving is intended to be a joy and a blessing.

### Philosophy

Leviticus 27:30 "A tenth of the produce of the land, whether grain or fruit, belongs to the Lord and must be set apart to him as holy.

Numbers 18:26 "Say this to the Levites: 'When you receive the tithes from the Israelites, give a tenth of the tithes you receive—a tithe of the tithe—to the Lord as a gift.

Deut. 14:24 Now the place the Lord your God chooses for his name to be honored might be a long way from your home.

2 Chron. 31:5 The people responded immediately and generously with the first of their crops and grain, new wine, olive oil, honey, and all the produce of their fields. They brought a tithe of all they owned.

Matthew 23:23 "How terrible it will be for you teachers of religious law and you Pharisees. Hypocrites! For you are careful to tithe even the tiniest part of your income, but you ignore the important things of the law—justice, mercy, and faith. You should tithe, yes, but you should not leave undone the more important things.

Luke 11:42 "But how terrible it will be for you Pharisees! For you are careful to tithe even the tiniest part of your income, but you completely forget about justice and the love of God. You should tithe, yes, but you should not leave undone the more important things.

Luke 18:12 I fast twice a week, and I give you a tenth of my income.'

Hebrews 7:5-9 Now the priests, who are descendants of Levi, are commanded in the law of Moses to collect a tithe from all the people, even though they are their own relatives. [6] But Melchizedek, who was not even related to Levi, collected a tenth from Abraham. And Melchizedek placed a blessing upon Abraham, the one who had already received the promises of God. [7] And without question, the



person who has the power to bless is always greater than the person who is blessed. [8] In the case of Jewish priests, tithes are paid to men who will die. But Melchizedek is greater than they are, because we are told that he lives on. [9] In addition, we might even say that Levi's descendants, the ones who collect the tithe, paid a tithe to Melchizedek through their ancestor Abraham.

### Principle

1. The fundamental principle of the tithe (ma'aser, Heb.), the practice of dedicating to God a tenth of the increase of the produce of the ground or cattle, was the recognition on the part of the people that all their possessions actually belonged to the Lord. This acknowledgment of God's ownership was accomplished through the tithe in that the surrender of the tenth, like the firstfruits, symbolized the consecration of the whole.
2. Mosaic legislation regarding the tithe is found primarily in three places:
  - a. According to Lev. 27:30-33, a tithe of the crops, of the fruit of the trees, and of the herd or flock had to be given. The tithe of the grain or fruit could be redeemed, i.e., bought back, by the owner at one-fifth above the market value (v. 31). Regarding the flock or herd, however, the tithe was determined by passing the increase of the cattle under the rod, with every tenth animal, whether perfect or defective, being reckoned as the tithe.
  - b. Numbers 18:21-32 specifies that the tithe of the produce of the ground and of the cattle be assigned to the Levites in return for their service in the tabernacle (Num 18:21-24; cf. Heb 7:5). The Levites, in turn, were to give a tenth of their receipts, i.e., a tithe of the tithe, to Aaron, who, as the head of the priests, represented the whole priesthood (Num 18:26-28).
  - c. Deuteronomy 12:5-18 further specifies that a tithe (in all probability a "second" tithe) was to be brought to an appointed sanctuary, which was later Jerusalem, each year for a festival celebration—a sacred meal to be shared by the family, the household servants, and the Levites. If the distance to the sanctuary was too great, the tithe could be exchanged for

money, with the offerer using the money to purchase whatever was needed for the festive meal upon arrival (Deut 14:22-27). Every third year this special tithe was to be stored in one's respective hometown, with the stranger, the fatherless, and the widow, as well as the Levites, sharing in the goods as needed (Deut 14:28, 29).

3. After bringing his tithes, the offerer was to go to the sanctuary, make a declaration of honesty, and ask the Lord's blessings upon his tithes (Deut 26:12-15; cf. Mal 3:8).
4. The tithe was a requirement of the law in which all Israelites were to give 10 percent of everything they earned and grew to the Tabernacle/Temple.
5. The Old Testament Law required multiple tithes which would have pushed the total to around 23.3 percent, not the 10 percent which is generally considered the tithe amount today.
6. The person's obedient response to God's Word is a response of trust or faith. Thus, to really hear God's Word is to obey God's Word (Exodus 19:5; Jeremiah 7:23).
7. The Bible views disobedience as a failure to hear and do God's Word (Psalm 81:11). Israel's story was one of a nation who failed to hear or to listen to God (Jeremiah 7:13; Hosea 9:17). Jesus warned: "He that hath ears to hear, let him hear" (Matthew 11:15).
8. Obedience is essential to worship (1 Samuel 15:22; John 4:23-24). The obedience of faith brings about salvation (Romans 1:5; Romans 10:16-17). Obedience secures God's blessings (John 14:23; 1 John 2:17; Rev. 22:14). Spiritual insight is gained through obedience (John 7:17). A life of obedience to God is the fruit of faith (James 2:21-26).
9. True obedience means imitating God in holiness, humility, and love (1 Peter 1:15; John 13:34; Phil. 2:5-8). True disciples do the will of God (Matthew 7:21). Facing clashing claims for one's allegiance, the Christian obeys God rather than other persons (Acts 5:29).
10. Obedience springs from gratitude for grace received (Romans 12:12). Christians obey God as an expression of their spiritual freedom (Galatians 5:13; 1 Peter 2:16). Jesus taught that our love for God motivates us to obey Him (John 14:21; John 14:23-24; John 15:10).
11. The Bible speaks of obedience from the wife to the husband (Ephes.

- 5:22), from children to their parents (Ephes. 6:1), from slaves to masters (Col. 3:22). Obedience with joy should be shown to church leaders (1 Thes. 5:12-13). Obedience is expected from all Christians to persons in authority (1 Peter 2:13-14).
12. The New Testament places special emphasis on Jesus' obedience. Christ's obedience stands in contrast to Adam's disobedience (Romans 5:12-21). A desire to obey the will of God motivated Jesus' actions (Luke 4:43; John 5:30).
  13. Jesus acted and spoke only as the Father directed (John 3:34). By living a life of obedience, Jesus showed Himself to be the Savior (Hebrews 5:7-10). Christ's work on the cross is viewed as a sacrifice of obedience (Romans 5:19; Hebrews 10:7-10).
  14. God has spoken in the Scriptures. Disobedience to God's Word comes from a sinful heart—a heart that will not trust God. Obedience comes from a heart that trusts God.
  15. The New Testament nowhere designates a percentage of income a person should set aside, but only says it is to be "in keeping with income" (1 Corinthians 16:2).
  16. Today we have taken the 10 percent figure from the Old Testament tithe and applied it as a starting point for Christians in their giving.
  17. The New Testament talks about the importance and benefits of giving. We are to give as we are able. Sometimes that means giving more than 10 percent. It all depends on the ability of the Christian. Every Christian should diligently pray and seek God's wisdom in the matter of tithing and how much to give (James 1:5).
  18. Above all, all tithes and offerings should be given with pure motives and an attitude of worship to God and service to the body of Christ.
  19. "Each man should give what he has decided in his heart to give, not reluctantly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver" (2 Corinthians 9:7).
  20. If God's people obey Him, they find the blessings He yearns to give. If they disobey, believers receive judgment and necessary discipline.

### Practice

1. What was the tithe requirement of the law?
2. How does obedience affect one's spiritual life?
3. What was the fundamental principle of the tithe in the Old

### Testament?

4. What is the fundamental principle of the tithe in the New Testament?
5. How was the acknowledgment of God's ownership accomplished?
6. How does obedience affect our relationships with others?
7. What is the Mosaic legislation regarding the tithe?
8. What does first fruits symbolize?
9. What motivates us to obey God?
10. Since God changes not, how is His Church and Church Pastor to be provided for?
11. How was the tithe calculated in the Old Testament?
12. How is member giving calculated in the New Testament?

## **Robbers**

### **Problem**

When we study the Old Testament, we find that it is actually possible for human beings to "rob God."

### **Premise**

Giving to get is robbery.

### **Philosophy**

Proverbs 21:3 The Lord is more pleased when we do what is just and right than when we give him sacrifices.

### **Principle**

1. Around 586 bc, the Jews were carried into exile to Babylon because of their gross negligence in obeying God. Among their chief sins were idolatry and not distinguishing between the common and the holy (Ezekiel 22:26). For their disobedience, the Jews suffered many years of captivity in the land of their enemies until finally, around 539 bc, Babylon was overthrown by the Persian Empire under Cyrus the Great, and God caused this victorious king to issue an edict permitting the Jews to return to the Promised Land.
2. About two years later Cyrus allowed Zerubbabel, the reestablished nation's new governor, to lead a group of Jews from Babylon back to the Promised Land. This migration included more than 42,000 men, along with many more women and children (cf. Ezra 2), who began building a new temple for God. But before they had even laid the foundation, opposition from neighboring armies stopped their work, and building ceased.
3. Approximately 15 years later, the prophet Haggai explained the financial problems the Jewish nation was then experiencing. Their problems, he explained, were a direct result of failure to support the rebuilding of the temple of God, His Work of that day, through tithes and offerings.
4. Under the urging of Haggai and the prophet Zechariah, work was resumed around 520 bc and the temple was completed in 516 bc, exactly 70 years after the Jews were taken into captivity.
5. After the Jews' return from Babylonian captivity, one of their greatest

- sins was failure to pay tithes to God. Nehemiah, however, while governor in the 440's bc, began exhorting the people to zealously obey their Creator.
6. As a result, they all "joined with their brethren, their nobles, and entered into... an oath to walk in God's Law... and to observe and do all the commandments of the Lord our Lord, and His ordinances and His statutes" (Nehemiah 10:29).
  7. God's word tells us that in the future His people will be walking in His "statutes" (Ezekiel 36:27).
  8. Nehemiah and the Jews agreed "to bring the tithes of our land to the Levites, for the Levites should receive the tithes in all our farming communities.... and we will not neglect the house of our God" (Nehemiah 10:37, 39).
  9. They seemed fully determined that they would not overlook the needs of God's Work and of those who served in it. The people agreed to make sure that the priests and Levites were given the tithe that was due them for the service they rendered to their fellow Israelites.
  10. It was not long after Nehemiah's reforms that most of the Jews once again became very lax in keeping God's laws and statutes. Breaking God's principle of tithing was a particular problem, as revealed by the prophet Malachi in the book that bears his name, written in the late 400's bc.
  11. Speaking through this prophet, God asked: "Will a man rob God? Yet you have robbed Me. But you say, 'In what way have we robbed You?' In tithes and offerings. You are cursed with a curse, for you have robbed Me, even this whole nation" (3:8–9). Many today are under a divine curse.
  12. Many fail to realize that all of mankind's woes, his headaches and heartaches, his problems of crime and violence, drug abuse and disease, are the direct result of disobeying God. One of the most frequent forms of rebellion is not giving faithfully.
  13. We should "render... to God the things that are God's" (Mark 12:17).
  14. Malachi 3 does not say that failing to pay tithes is robbing the priests. It plainly states that such behavior is robbing God. And that, in the eyes of God, is very serious business.
  15. Bring all the tithes into the storehouse, that there may be food in My

- house, and prove Me now in this,' says the Lord of hosts, 'if I will not open for you the windows of heaven and pour out for you such blessing that there will not be room enough to receive it (v. 10).
16. This is the challenge that God gives to every Christian. He says to "prove" Him, that is, test Him, try Him out, and you will see. These verses are principles from our God to bless those who faithfully tithe. These principles do not say that God will make you rich.
  17. God did greatly bless Abraham with material wealth (Genesis 13:2). And we know that Abraham tithed.
  18. God also blessed Jacob shortly after he vowed to tithe to Him (30:43).
  19. God most definitely wants His people to "prosper... and be in health" (3 John 2).
  20. God knows it is not good for everyone to be rich (1 Timothy 6:9–10, 17–19). Some people simply cannot handle material riches. God is calling us to a higher level of love and productivity (2 Peter 1:5-11).
  21. When we faithfully give, God promises to "rebuke the devourer for your sakes, so that he will not destroy the fruit of your ground, nor shall the vine fail to bear fruit for you in the field... and all nations will call you blessed, for you will be a delightful land" (Malachi 3:11–12).
  22. In the book of Proverbs, God reinforces His promise: "Honor the Lord with your possessions, and with the first fruits of all your increase; so your barns will be filled with plenty, and your vats will overflow with new wine" (3:9–10).
  23. God has all power. He can and will bless any person or nation that obeys Him. "God... cannot lie" (Titus 1:2). And "the Scripture cannot be broken" (John 10:35).
  24. God will by His Word bless every individual who faithfully gives.
  25. He tells us: "There is one who scatters, yet increases more; and there is one who withholds more than is right, but it leads to poverty" (Proverbs 11:24). This is a living principle. Believe your Bible. God's way is real. It works.

### Practice

1. What caused the Jews to be carried into exile to Babylon?
2. What were their chief sins?
3. Why did the Jews suffer many years of captivity in the land of their

- enemies?
4. What did the people agree to do?
  5. What caused the Jews to become lax in keeping God's laws and statutes?
  6. How does a man rob God?
  7. What did the Jews begin to do after leaving Babylon?
  8. What stopped their work and how does their behavior reflect our behavior?
  9. What did the prophet Haggai tell the Jews was the source of their financial problems?
  10. What is meant when God says to "prove" Him?



## Help Others

### Problem

Self centeredness stifles growth.

### Premise

When we pay the tithes and offerings that God commands, we not only bring blessings to ourselves; we also allow God to use us to bless others.

### Philosophy

Acts 20:35 And I have been a constant example of how you can help the poor by working hard. You should remember the words of the Lord Jesus: 'It is more blessed to give than to receive.' "

Philip. 2:4-5 Don't think only about your own affairs, but be interested in others, too, and what they are doing. [5] Your attitude should be the same that Christ Jesus had.

### Principle

1. God uses our tithes to provide for other people and give them His much-needed Truth. So by diligently giving back to God of all our increase, we are forced to think of others—rather than selfishly retaining everything for ourselves.
2. When we are motivated by a desire to serve others, we develop a giving, sharing, caring and generous spirit. "The generous soul will be made rich, and he who waters will also be watered himself" (Proverbs 11:25). This means we should not give "grudgingly or of necessity; for God loves a cheerful giver" (2 Corinthians 9:7).
3. Our motivation should extend beyond necessity, it should be to gladly and willingly please God and help others.
4. Christ set the perfect example by being willing to give us everything, including His very life. "For you know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though He was rich, yet for your sakes He became poor, that you through His poverty might become rich" (2 Corinthians 8:9).
5. God Almighty is the Great Giver of every good and perfect gift (James 1:17). "He who overcomes shall inherit all things." (Revelation 21:7).

6. We must transcend the selfish mind set that comes so naturally and learn to truly care for the happiness and well-being of others (Mark 12:31).
7. One important way God blesses others is through your example. Others who may know that you are a tither can see you learning to love, fear, obey and serve God. They will also see you being blessed, perhaps materially, and certainly spiritually, growing closer toward God in faith and obedience.
8. And it is often through your positive example that others are inspired to walk on that same path in order to experience those same blessings.
9. Tithing teaches humility and obedience to God. Through tithing, we acknowledge that God is our Ruler and is, therefore, the real possessor of everything (Genesis 14:22). In the final analysis, we do not actually own anything. We are stewards or custodians of a few of God's possessions.
10. By faithfully tithing, we learn an important lesson—faith. It takes genuine faith to believe that God exists "and that He is a rewarder of those who diligently seek Him" (Hebrews 11:6).
11. It takes faith to obey God, especially when it seems we "can't really afford to tithe." If we "prove" God per His Word, He promises to pour out such blessings upon us that "there will not be room enough to receive it" (Malachi 3:10).
12. By exercising faith in God we become stronger and stronger—overcoming day by day (Revelation 3:12). This does not mean that we earn our salvation or that we, of ourselves, can do anything that is truly "good".
13. Matthew 19:17 "Why ask me about what is good?" Jesus replied. "Only God is good. But to answer your question, you can receive eternal life if you keep the commandments."
14. Romans 3:10-12 As the Scriptures say, "No one is good— not even one. [11] No one has real understanding; no one is seeking God. [12] All have turned away from God; all have gone wrong. No one does good, not even one."
15. But when our good works are done by and through the indwelling power of the Holy Spirit, through which God lives in us, then we are indeed following in Jesus' footsteps. Christ said that even He could

- do nothing of Himself.
16. John 5:19 Jesus replied, "I assure you, the Son can do nothing by himself. He does only what he sees the Father doing. Whatever the Father does, the Son also does.
  17. John 5:30 But I do nothing without consulting the Father. I judge as I am told. And my judgment is absolutely just, because it is according to the will of God who sent me; it is not merely my own.
  18. John 8:28 So Jesus said, "When you have lifted up the Son of Man on the cross, then you will realize that I am he and that I do nothing on my own, but I speak what the Father taught me.
  19. Living by faith builds in us even greater faith. We come to trust God more. We stop worrying and fretting so much about our personal finances, for we absolutely believe the words of Jesus Christ:
  20. "Therefore do not worry, saying, 'What shall we eat?' or... 'What shall we wear?'... For your heavenly Father knows that you need all these things. But seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things shall be added to you. Therefore do not worry about tomorrow" (Matthew 6:31–34).
  21. Peace of mind is what we experience when we come to fully trust God.
  22. Philip. 4:6-7 Don't worry about anything; instead, pray about everything. Tell God what you need, and thank him for all he has done. [7] If you do this, you will experience God's peace, which is far more wonderful than the human mind can understand. His peace will guard your hearts and minds as you live in Christ Jesus.
  23. After regularly setting aside the tithe of our income for use in God's Work, we quickly learn that we can live on the remaining portion. This requires careful budgeting and financial discipline. Many Christians have been astounded by the rare opportunities, unexpected discounts or other "blessings" that come their way once they begin to tithe faithfully.
  24. Jesus Christ, our Lord and Savior, said: "Do not lay up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust destroy and where thieves break in and steal; but lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust destroys and where thieves do not break in and steal. For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also" (Matthew 6:19–21).

25. Jesus taught us to give generously of our "treasure." He said: "It is more blessed to give than to receive." He highly commended the poor widow who gave so generously to God's treasury at the temple in Jerusalem. "Then He looked up and saw the rich putting their gifts into the treasury, and He saw also a certain poor widow putting in two mites. So He said, 'Truly I say to you that this poor widow has put in more than all; for all these out of their abundance have put in offerings for God, but she out of her poverty has put in all the livelihood that she had'" (Luke 21:1–4).
26. Jesus said: "Give, and it will be given to you: good measure, pressed down, shaken together, and running over will be put into your bosom. For with the same measure that you use, it will be measured back to you" (6:38).
27. Christ commanded us to give. That command comes with a promise that if we do give, we will receive far more in return. God promises to bless those who faithfully give to Him and His Work, those who give in the right attitude of love.
28. Our motive for giving should never be self-aggrandizement. We should not "give" for the express purpose of receiving a rich return on our "investment", like the false gospel of wealth and prosperity. When we give from a pure and generous heart, then God says we will certainly be blessed.
29. Paul told Timothy: "Command those who are rich in this present age not to be haughty, nor to trust in uncertain riches but in the living God, who gives us richly all things to enjoy. Let them do good, that they be rich in good works, ready to give, willing to share, storing up for themselves a good foundation for the time to come, that they may lay hold on eternal life" (1 Timothy 6:17–19).
30. If we faithfully support the Work of God today by tithing and giving, then God will count those good works as eternal treasure. By our faithful obedience to God, His Work will be done, and His Gospel will be taken to all the world.
31. If we faithfully "render... to God the things that are God's" (Matthew 22:21), He promises to bless us in this life. Tithing done in a good attitude will positively affect your life now in so many ways, but all the more powerfully for all eternity.
32. Then all those who have tithed faithfully of their "riches" will fully

understand what Paul called "the unsearchable riches of Christ" (Ephesians 3:8). Don't miss out on that.

### Practice

1. How follow in Jesus' footsteps?
2. How does God use our tithes to provide for other people?
3. What does diligently giving back to God of all our increase teach us?
4. How do we develop a giving, sharing, caring and generous spirit?
5. What does the Scripture teach us regarding giving grudgingly or of necessity?
6. What should our motivation be for giving?
7. What was the perfect example giving demonstrated by Christ?
8. What is the promise goes with the command comes to give?
9. What do we learn when we set aside the tithe for use in God's Work?
10. What should we expect once we begin to tithe faithfully?

## Where and How?

### Problem

There are many tricksters wearing clergy collars causing misdirected resources and mistrust.

### Premise

It is vitally important that you tithe and give where you are biblically fed.

### Philosophy

Exodus 22:29 "Do not hold anything back when you give me the tithe of your crops and your wine. "You must make the necessary payment for redemption of your firstborn sons.

Numbers 18:25-26 The Lord also told Moses, [26] "Say this to the Levites: 'When you receive the tithes from the Israelites, give a tenth of the tithes you receive—a tithe of the tithe—to the Lord as a gift.

Deut. 14:22-23 "You must set aside a tithe of your crops—one-tenth of all the crops you harvest each year. [23] Bring this tithe to the place the Lord your God chooses for his name to be honored, and eat it there in his presence. This applies to your tithes of grain, new wine, olive oil, and the firstborn males of your flocks and herds. The purpose of tithing is to teach you always to fear the Lord your God.

2 Cor. 8:2-5 Though they have been going through much trouble and hard times, their wonderful joy and deep poverty have overflowed in rich generosity. [3] For I can testify that they gave not only what they could afford but far more. And they did it of their own free will. [4]

They begged us again and again for the gracious privilege of sharing in the gift for the Christians in Jerusalem. [5] Best of all, they went beyond our highest hopes, for their first action was to dedicate themselves to the Lord and to us for whatever directions God might give them.

2 Cor. 8:10-15 I suggest that you finish what you started a year ago, for you were the first to propose this idea, and you were the first to begin doing something about it. [11] Now you should carry this project through to completion just as enthusiastically as you began it. Give whatever you can according to what you have. [12] If you are

really eager to give, it isn't important how much you are able to give. God wants you to give what you have, not what you don't have. [13] Of course, I don't mean you should give so much that you suffer from having too little. I only mean that there should be some equality. [14] Right now you have plenty and can help them. Then at some other time they can share with you when you need it. In this way, everyone's needs will be met. [15] Do you remember what the Scriptures say about this? "Those who gathered a lot had nothing left over, and those who gathered only a little had enough."

### Principle

1. Perhaps you've heard the old saying: Money makes the world go 'round. While this is, of course, not true, it is the case that our lives often revolve around money. A lot of our time and effort goes into making, spending, budgeting, investing and worrying about money! No doubt this is why God's Word has so much to say about the topic. There is more said about money and possessions in Scripture than about faith or prayer or heaven! It's estimated that one out of every ten New Testament verses, including a third of Jesus' parables, deals with the subject.
2. Take a good look at one particular aspect of managing your money: tithing. Some refer to this as "stewardship," however, stewardship is a much broader topic. It covers the management of all the resources that God has entrusted to us: our money; our time; our talents; our relationships; etc.
3. Tithing is only concerned with our money. And although it has to do with the giving of our money, tithing is even narrower than giving in general. It's a very basic kind of giving that is often surpassed as we grow in generosity.
4. Tithing is an important issue for every Christian to consider because it reflects the truth of another old saying about money: Money talks! When we tithe we are making significant declarations about our relationship with God. In fact, we cannot wholeheartedly make these statements unless we are tithing.
5. The Word of God is being preached with increasing power at your Church.
6. Your pastor at your Church has both the understanding and the

- courage to challenge our modern society with the full and undiluted message of the Bible.
7. The Truth of the Bible is being made plain and clear at your Church. The real Good News of the Kingdom of God is being preached at your Church.
  8. In Church you learn the purpose and principles of giving.
  9. In Church you learn that giving to God first out of what he has allowed you to have demonstrates that He has first priority in your life.
  10. God expects us to supply the material needs of those who devote themselves to meeting the spiritual needs of the members.
  11. God does not expect us to give more than we can, but we will be blessed when we give cheerfully.
  12. Give God the honor of having first claim on your money, time, and talents.
  13. Generosity makes our giving delightful to us and to God.
  14. The point of giving is not so much the amount we give, but why and how we give. God does not want gifts given grudgingly. Instead, he wants us to give out of dedication to Christ, love for fellow believers, the joy of helping those in need, as well as the fact that it was simply the good and right thing to do.
  15. Giving is a natural response of love. Paul did not order the Corinthians to give, but he encouraged them to prove that their love was sincere. 2 Cor. 8:7-8
    - a. Each person should follow through on previous promises. 2 Cor. 8:10-11; 2 Cor. 9:3.
    - b. Each person should give as much as he or she is able. 2 Cor. 8:12; 2 Cor. 9:6.
    - c. Each person must make up his or her own mind how much to give. 2 Cor. 9:7.
    - d. Each person should give in proportion to what God has given him or her. 2 Cor. 9:10. God gives to us so that we can give to others.
  16. Sacrificial giving must be responsible. Give generously, but not to the extent that those who depend on you must go without having their basic needs met.
  17. Give until it hurts, but don't give so that it hurts your family and



- relatives who need your financial support. 2 Cor. 8:12
18. The person who has a stingy heart and gives only a little will receive only a little in return. Don't let a lack of faith keep you from giving freely and generously. 2 Cor. 9:6-8
  19. Professing Christians and others who hope for an afterlife may console themselves with the promise of everlasting joy and happiness in Glory. But in this life, the fear of financial ruin or just the daily frustration of trying to pay bills on time leaves many feeling frustrated, unfulfilled and hopeless. Yet Jesus Christ Himself said: "I have come that they may have life, and that they may have it more abundantly" (John 10:10).
  20. And the Apostle John wrote to the Christians of his day, saying: "I pray that you may prosper in all things and be in health" (3 John 2).
  21. Make no mistake. This is not a gospel of "prosperity" or "health and wealth." The very focus of God's way of life is not about how to "get," but rather how to "give".
  22. If we faithfully tithe and do our part, God whom we serve will never abandon us. God will always provide for our genuine needs.
  23. The steps of a good man are ordered by the Lord, and He delights in his way. Though he fall, he shall not be utterly cast down; for the Lord upholds him with His hand. I have been young, and now am old; yet I have not seen the righteous forsaken, nor his descendants begging bread (Psalm 37:23–25).
  24. Since our God and Savior is "the same yesterday, today and forever" (Hebrews 13:8), God can not fail. It is not in His nature.
  25. Having your mind free from fear, doubt and worry is essential to a right relationship with God. Endless fretting about how to make the next house or car payment causes us to be self-absorbed—unable to truly focus on God and what He wants to teach us.
  26. Worry and anxious care over money matters is an enemy of faith in God (Matthew 6:24–34; Luke 12:13–34). And faith in God is an integral part of the real solution to our financial woes.
  27. Most of humanity is unaware that God has anything important to say about our personal finances. That general ignorance, plus unwise spending habits, is primarily why many people are barely scraping by. Their funds seem insufficient for much beyond mere subsistence. That is also part of the reason why so many are trapped under a

heavy load of personal debt and seem utterly unable to rid themselves of that oppressive nightmare. They often fall prey to depression, self delusion and self-pity.

28. The way out requires faith in God and submission to His commands (Psalm 19:7–11). Submission to God is not living under tyranny. "His commandments are not burdensome" (1 John 5:3). God's way is always liberating—it frees us from oppression and burdens. "Come to Me, all you who labor and are heavy laden," said Christ, "and I will give you rest. Take My yoke upon you and learn from Me, for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For My yoke is easy and My burden is light" (Matthew 11:28–30).
29. Our financial burdens are no exception. If you have fallen into a deep financial rut, or wish to avoid doing so in the future, you must heed God's instructions. God will help you to resolve whatever financial problems you have faced.

#### Practice

1. Where is the Word of God being preached with increasing power
2. Who has both the understanding and the courage to challenge our modern society with the full and undiluted message of the Bible?
3. Where is the Truth of the Bible being made plain and clear?
4. Where is the real Good News of the Kingdom of God being preached?
5. What do you learn in Church about giving?
6. What makes our giving delightful to us and to God?
7. What is the result of being unaware that God has anything important to say about our personal finances?
8. What is the focus of God's way of life?
9. How does money talk?
10. What is essential to a right relationship with God?

## Perspectives Do Differ

### Philosophy

A church is a repair shop for sinners, not a club for saints.

### Practice

1. Michael and Liam's are members of the same Church family and close friends. Michael was a member before Liam came along. Liam complains to Michael that he is not being fed and he and his family are going to leave the Church.
2. There are two different church members:
  - a. One came to serve and one to find fault.
  - b. One came to serve, and one to be served
  - c. Michael was a more seasoned member.
3. Liam's love for the church began to change and he expresses that he is leaving the church:
  - a. The ungodly things we do can cause sheep to leave the fold.
  - b. None of us are without sin.
4. Liam's reasons for leaving the church:
  - a. The pastor was not feeding him.
  - b. The pastor was uncaring.
  - c. The church is full of hypocrites/hypocritical members; the man he held to high standards (pillar of the church "deacon") was cheating on his wife and was screaming at a referee.
5. The Differences the author identified:
  - a. 15% of the Millennial Generation are in church
  - b. Can the millennials use you as the reason they are not in church?
  - c. We need to evaluate ourselves according to the Word.
  - d. Liam said he was not being served or fed:
  - e. Many of our church members have lost the biblical understanding of what it means to be part of the body of Christ.
6. What do we need to do to become better church members?
  - a. The desired result is to have an impact on the community – This is the great commission.
7. The church is for everyone and there is no perfect church.
8. Liam expresses that he and Michael are two different members.

9. Matthew 23:3 So practice and obey whatever they say to you, but don't follow their example. For they don't practice what they teach.
10. Mark 10:45 For even I, the Son of Man, came here not to be served but to serve others, and to give my life as a ransom for many."
11. Romans 6:1 Well then, should we keep on sinning so that God can show us more and more kindness and forgiveness?
12. Galatians 6:1 Dear brothers and sisters, if another Christian is overcome by some sin, you who are godly should gently and humbly help that person back onto the right path. And be careful not to fall into the same temptation yourself.
13. Hebrews 10:25 And let us not neglect our meeting together, as some people do, but encourage and warn each other, especially now that the day of his coming back again is drawing near.
14. 1 Peter 2:1 So get rid of all malicious behavior and deceit. Don't just pretend to be good! Be done with hypocrisy and jealousy and backstabbing.

### Practice

1. What type of members make up the church?
2. How, when and where did we get the consumer, entertainment and self validation mentality?
3. Why do we have different member perspectives?
4. Were Liam's expectations unrealistic?
5. What is an indicator on consumer mentality?
6. Are we blind to the problems in the church?
7. What should determine our loyalty and devotion in the Church?
8. If there are problems in the church, what are we doing about it?
9. What do you do when you are sick?
  - a. Spread it to others?
  - b. Home remedies?
  - c. Die?
10. What happens when a church is unhealthy?
  - a. The church membership will decrease?
  - b. The church will split?
  - c. Church doors close?

## Functioning Church Member

### Philosophy

It was a big deal for this young boy living in the small Southern town. I didn't know what a country club was, but I knew one was coming to town. And it included a swimming pool, a dining area, and meeting rooms.

The owners also promised to build a small golf course, a promise they would fulfill a couple of years later.

Now don't get the wrong impression. This country club was not the typical upscale clubs we often envision. It was really a small private enterprise trying to make a few bucks in a small town by offering a few amenities.

### Principle

1. I will be a functioning church member. All members of a church are called to be involved. "Membership means that we are all necessary members of the whole." We are all part of the body of Christ, and we are all necessary members of that body.
2. Each body part has a function and that function is used to accomplish what the body sets out to do. In the same way, each church member has a function or a role to contribute to the mission and direction of the Church.
3. Look at the Biblical principles of being a church member found in 1 Cor. 12:23-31.
4. Membership means we are different but we still work together
5. Each part of the Body has to do its own work.
6. The Body suffers when we fail to do our part - 1 Cor. 12:26.
7. Membership means everything we say and do is based on biblical foundation of love. Biblical definition of love - 1 Cor. 13
8. Membership means we are all necessary parts of the whole 1 Corinthians 12:12, 27. We are the body; not just any body. We are the body of Christ on this earth. Since we're Jesus' body on earth we have to be like Jesus and do like Jesus.
9. Membership means we're all different but we still work together 1 Corinthians 12:14-26.
10. What each of us brings to the table is necessary for the body to

- function.
11. Be who God made you to be and let others be who God made them to be.
  12. Membership means everything we say and do is based on the biblical foundation of love – 1 Corinthians 13.
  13. If church members would ever learn to love each other, they'd change the world! 1 Corinthians 13:4-5
  14. Church members cannot not love each other and be the body of Christ, because He is love.
  15. If you are currently asking yourself if you should be serving or not, attempt to do a self-evaluation of your spiritual health.
  16. Church membership is functioning membership
    - a. If you can see things that need to be done, you are an eye.
    - b. If you have the ability to listen to others, you are an ear.
    - c. If you have the gift of discernment and can detect problems, you are a nose.
    - d. If you have the ability to talk to people, and maybe teach, you are a mouth.
    - e. If you are hands on and can do things, you are a hand.
    - f. If you like to go out and minister to do missions, you are a foot.
    - g. If you are a techie or good with finances or organization, you are a brain.
    - h. If you are a feeler and care about others, you are a heart.
  17. Working definition of church membership
    - a. Church membership is the outward demonstration of one's inner commitment to identify with Christ and His followers, be taught the Scriptures, submit to God's ordained authority structure, selflessly serve other believers, and grow in the grace and knowledge of Christ together.
  18. The true Church is Biblical
    - a. Corporation of the committed ...not a Club for Christians, but a...
    - b. Hospital for the healing ...not a hospice for the hurting, but a...
    - c. Unity of laborers...not a uniformity of likes, but a...
    - d. Reproductive complex...not a retreat center, but a...
    - e. Comprehensive curriculum...not a cafeteria of choices, but a...
    - f. Hotel for businesspeople busy about their master's business ...

not a home for bums.

19. Church is a body of many members 1 Cor 12.
20. Love is the central attitude of a functioning member 1Cor 13.
21. Spiritual Gifts must be used properly as a functioning member 1Cor 14.
22. Membership means we are all necessary parts of the whole.

Pledge:

I am a church member.

Because I am a member of the body of Christ I must be a functioning member, whether I am an 'eye,' an 'ear,' or a 'hand.' As a functioning member I will give. I will serve. I will minister. I will evangelize. I will study. I will seek to be a blessing to others. I will remember that 'if one member suffers, all the members suffer with it; if one member is honored. all the members rejoice with it.

Practice

1. What is a biblical Church?
2. Should I be serving in my church?
3. Am I consistently spending time studying the Bible?
4. Do I normally pray and seek God's guidance in decision making?
5. Am I regularly offering heart-felt worship to God?
6. Could your current spiritual health be affecting your desire to serve God through serving in His church?
7. If you are not currently serving in some capacity within the church, in what areas or in what ways do you feel that you could serve others in the Body of Christ?
8. What is an unbiblical view of membership?
9. Membership is about \_\_\_\_\_ Instead of giving , Being \_\_\_\_\_ instead of serving, Rights Instead of \_\_\_\_\_, And \_\_\_\_\_ instead of sacrifice.
10. In your experience, why do some church members "stick" and others "slide" (as in slide out the door)?
11. What are the differences & similarities between membership in a local organization (e.g., Lion's Club, Country Club) and being a member of a church?
12. What are some reasons (excuses) people sometimes give for failing

- to do their part?
13. What does it communicate when people fail to be a functioning church member?
  14. Why must love be the foundation for church members?



## Unifying Church Member

### Philosophy

A house divided cannot stand, and a divided church will not be a healthy one. That is why every member should actively work to be a unifying force in the church. This commitment means both avoiding division, but also seeking ways to contribute to unifying the church's community. Ultimately the mission of the church is much greater than one person, don't be a member who holds the church back because you are causing division.

### Principle

1. God desires for Christians to get along. Jesus was clear when He said: "By this all people will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another" (John 13:35). The world will know if we are Christians by the way we act toward one another. When you become a Christian, God expects you to be a part of His church. He wants you to be a unifying presence there. He demands that you become a unifying presence there.
2. That Thing Called Unity
3. Unity is important. Unity is critical.
4. When church members don't work together, the church is weaker as a whole.
5. Unity is vital to the health of the church. That means every church member, you and I included, must contribute to the unity of the church.
6. Paul said a lot about unity when he wrote his letter to the Ephesians. Paul liked the church at Ephesus.
7. Paul wrote, " This is why, since I heard about your faith in the Lord Jesus and your love for all the saints, I never stop giving thanks for you as I remember you in my prayers" (Ephesians 1:15-16).
8. Paul was thankful for those church members. He was thankful for their faith in Jesus and for their love for all the saints. Paul was thankful because these church members were showing love for one another.
9. Unity is critically important.
10. Paul urged the members "to walk worthy of the calling you have

received, with all humility and gentleness, with patience, accepting on another in love, diligently keeping the unity of the Spirit with the peace that binds us" (Ephesians 4:1-3, emphasis added).

11. You have a responsibility as a church member.
12. You are to be a source of unity.
13. You are never to be a divisive force.
14. You are to love your fellow church members unconditionally. That doesn't mean you agree with everyone all the time, it does mean you are willing to sacrifice your own preferences to keep unity in your church.
15. Paul's letter to the church at Colossae said: "Above all, put on love-the perfect bond of unity" (Col.3:14).
16. Unity is really important in your church. Are you doing your part?
17. Gossip and Other Negative Talk
18. Romans 1:29-31 is pretty depressing. It's a listing of many unrighteous acts.
19. "They are filled with all unrighteousness, evil, greed, and wickedness. They are full of envy, murder, quarrels, deceit, and malice. They are gossips, slanderers, God-haters, arrogant, proud, boastful, inventors of evil, disobedient to parents, undiscerning, untrustworthy, unloving, and unmerciful."
20. In the middle of this list is the evil deed of gossip.
21. The simple dictionary meaning of gossip speaks volume. Some call it
22. "Idle talk."
23. Some connect it to rumors.
24. Others say it's unproven personal or private information about others.
25. Gossip is bad. Gossip is destructive in your church.
26. Gossip can destroy the unity of a church.
27. A unified church is powerful.
28. Gossips tears apart that unity and renders a church powerless.
29. James minced no words when he wrote about the negative power of the tongue.
30. "And the tongue is a fire. The tongue, a world of unrighteousness, is placed among the parts of our bodies. It pollutes the whole body sets the course of life on fire, and is set on fire by hell" (James 3:6).
31. How should we respond to this issue of gossip in our church?
32. Don't be a source of gossip.

33. If you someone in the church begins to share gossip with you, gently rebuke him or her.
34. Kindly say that you would rather not hear any gossip and you would hope it wouldn't continue to spread.
35. You can be a unifier in your church with those simple words.
36. If there are just a few more members like you, word will begin to travel. Other church members will know that gossip is not tolerated in your church.
37. The congregation will be a place of joy and unity.
38. Love life. See good days. Control your tongue. Stop the gossip. Be a unifier.
39. Forgiveness and Unity
40. The author and his wife joined a church that they loved. They loved the Pastor and his preaching, the fellowship, and the ministries of the church. The Pastor would be willing to meet with any men on Tuesday morning at 5:00 a.m. to pray for God's leadership in the church. Just a few men that wanted to make the commitment. He loved the fellowship with the Pastor. He loved seeing God really move in their lives. Then, they began to pray with no words spoken aloud. But every time he tried to pray his mind went back to high school years. He had been physically abused by a teacher and he felt ashamed, angry, and unforgiving. In order to be an Instrument in the church, he had to forgive his teacher. His prayer life opened up again and God began to use him in unexpected ways.
41. Jesus said, "For if you forgive people their wrongdoing, your heavenly Father will forgive you as well. But if you don't forgive people, your Father will not forgive your wrongdoing" (Matthew 6:14-15).
42. Unity in the church will not happen if members have unforgiving hearts.
43. Members have anger and hurt because of something another member has said or done.
44. Some members are angry and hurt at the pastor and staff because
45. of something they said or did, or failed to do.
46. In Colossians 3:12-13 he spoke to the members of the church: "Therefore, God's chosen ones, holy and loved, put on heartfelt compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness, and patience, accepting

one another and forgiving one another if anyone has a complaint against another. Just as the Lord has forgiven you, so you must also forgive."

47. Every church is made up of imperfect members and imperfect pastors.
  - a. We all make mistakes.
  - b. We will all sin.
  - c. We are all hypocrites.
48. Church unity is torn apart when members refuse to forgive. Christ loved us so much that He died on a cross to forgive us. As He has forgiven us, so we must forgive others.

### The Second Pledge

I am a church member

I will seek to be a source of unity in my church. I know there are no perfect pastors, staff, or other church members. But neither am I. I will not be a source of gossip or dissension. One of the greatest contributions I can make is to do all I can in God's power to help keep the church in unity for the sake of the gospel.

### Sign Date

### Practice

1. Have you ever been to an ugly business meeting in a church?
2. Do you think an outsider would have been impressed with the "Christian" behavior he/she witnessed?
3. Have you ever heard Christian gossip about other Christians?
4. Is that loving one another?
5. What did Paul mean when he said in Colossians 3:14 that love is the perfect bond to unity? What does that mean for the local church today?
6. What is the best path to take if someone brings gossip to you in your

church? What does the Bible say about gossip?

7. How is forgiveness related to unity in the local church? What does the Bible say about forgiving one another?
8. Look at Matthew 6:14-15. Relate those words to being a church member. What does it mean if one church member does not forgive?
9. Read all of 1 Corinthians 13. Paul wrote the "love chapter" to the church at Corinth where problems with unity were pervasive. What does this chapter mean for church members today? Explain as you go through each verse.
10. How do you respond to gossip when you hear it?
11. How do you respond to the gossiper when they share gossip with you?
12. How do you respond to the person gossip is about when you experience gossip?

#### Reflection

1. Think about the importance of responding to all parties in the correct way.
2. Review, if needed, 1 Corinthians 13 to help determine appropriate actions.
3. Decide whether or not forgiveness is dependent upon feelings, actions, or circumstances. Ask God to reveal to you if there is anyone that you have failed to truly forgive. Then ask God to help you make the decision to forgive that individual regardless of how you feel, what they did, or whether or not they have asked for forgiveness.

## Not My Preference and Desires

### Philosophy

It is easy to think that the church was established by God to serve its members. There are many things in a church that are meant to help its members grow. But the church is not as much about the members as it is about its Savior. Do not allow your preferences to be a hindrance to the worship of Christ. If they are then you are worshipping yourself.

### Principle

1. Christians can act like demanding children who want things their way. Temper tantrums in churches may not include church members lying on the floor kicking and screaming, but some come close.
2. The strange thing about church membership is that you actually give up your preferences when you join.
3. There may be much about your church that you like a lot, but you are there to meet the needs of others. You are there to give. You are there to sacrifice.
4. Jesus would say things that confounded His listeners. His disciples had a tendency to fight with one another. The closest followers of Jesus having a "me first" fight. "Sitting down, He called the Twelve and said to them, 'If anyone wants to be first, he must be last of all and servant of all' (Mark 9:35).
5. As a church member, my motivation should not be to get my preferences to the top of the list.
6. I am supposed to be last, not first.
7. I am supposed to be a servant instead of seeking to be served.
8. The Servant Motif
  - a. The word servant occurs fifty-seven times in the New Testament.
  - b. The word serve occurs fifty-eight times in the New Testament.
  - c. Serving is important in the Bible.
  - d. Jesus said we are to serve.
  - e. Paul said it also after becoming a Christian, "I was made a servant of this gospel by the gift of God's grace that was given to me by the working of His power" (Ephesians 3:7).

- f. We will never find joy in church membership when we are seeking things our way.
  - g. We will find joy when you choose to be last. That is what Jesus meant when He said the last will be first.
  - h. True joy means giving up our rights and preferences and serving everyone else. That's what church membership means as well.
9. A Survey Speaks
- a. A research team conducted a survey of churches that were inwardly focused. They were not serving past their own walls and their own members. These churches were self-serving. The survey found ten dominant behavior patterns of members in these churches.
10. Worship wars.
- a. One or more in the church want the music they way they like it. Any deviation is met with anger and demands for change. Service must remain constant. Certain instrumentation is required while others are prohibited.
11. Prolonged minutia meetings.
- a. The church spends an inordinate amount of time in different meetings. Most deal with inconsequential items. The Great Commission and Great Commandment are rarely the topics of discussion.
12. Facility focus.
- a. The church facility develops iconic status. The highest priorities in the church are the protection and preservation of rooms, furniture and other visible parts of the church's buildings and grounds.
13. Program driven.
- a. Every church has programs even if they don't admit it. We start doing ministry a certain way, it takes on programmatic status. The program is not the problem. The problem develops when the program becomes an end instead of a means to a greater ministry.
14. Inwardly focused budget.
- a. A disproportionate of the budget is used to meet the needs and comfort of the members instead of reaching beyond the walls of

- the church.
15. Inordinate demands for pastoral care.
    - a. All church members deserve care and concern, especially in times of need and crisis. Problems develop when church members have unreasonable expectations for even minor matters. Members expect pastoral staff to visit them regularly because they have membership status.
  16. Attitudes of entitlement.
    - a. The overarching attitude is one of demanding and having a sense of deserving special treatment.
  17. Greater concern about change than the gospel.
    - a. Any noticeable changes in the church evoke the ire of many; those same passions are not evident about participating in the work of the gospel to change lives.
  18. Anger and hostility.
    - a. Members are consistently angry. They regularly express hostility toward the church staff and other members.
  19. Evangelistic apathy.
    - a. Few members share their faith on a regular basis. More are concerned about their own needs than the greatest eternal needs of the world and community in which they live.
  20. Almost every behavior above, church members were looking out for their own needs and preferences. You get the picture.
  21. Me. Myself. Church membership from a biblical perspective is about servanthood. It's about giving. It's about putting others first.
  22. The Mind of Christ
    - a. The attitude we should embody was written by Paul in Philippians 2:5-11. "Make your own attitude that of Christ Jesus." So what did Jesus do?
      - i. He "did not consider equality with God as something to be used for His own advantage."
      - ii. "He emptied Himself by assuming the form of a slave."
      - iii. "He humbled Himself."
      - iv. He became "obedient to the point of death—even to death on a cross."
    - b. Philippians 2 is not only a description of the obedience of Christly it is an example for us to follow.



- i. We are to be servants
  - ii. We are to be obedient.
  - iii. We are to put others first.
  - iv. We are to do whatever it takes to keep unity in our church.
- c. If we approach church membership from the perspective of entitlement, we have it upside down. You always ask first what you can do for you church.
  - d. Then you will have discovered the joy of being last.

### Practice

1. What is behind our sense of entitlement?
2. Show from key Bible verses the difference between church membership and country club membership from the perspective of personal preferences and desires. Of course, the Bible doesn't speak of country club membership, so you will need to assume the benefits of belonging to one.
3. Find and explain key passages in the Bible that talk about Christians being like servants. How would you describe a servant as it applies to being a member of a church?
4. Why do many churches have "worship wars"? What does that have to do with the right or wrong attitude about church membership?
5. Describe someone in your church that best fits the description of having the mind of Christ and a servant attitude. Find key New Testament passages that would fit him or her.
6. Go verse by verse through Philippians 2:5-11. Explain how the attitude of Christ in each verse becomes a pattern for us as a church.
7. Read Mark 10:28-31. Peter addresses Jesus with an unspoken, subtle, telling question. Without saying the words, Peter asks Jesus when they will get what is coming to them as a result of serving Christ. His fleshly nature was concerned with his "rights." Paying

special attention to verse 31, what was Jesus' response to Peter's unspoken question?

8. If every member shared your view of church membership, what would the church body look like?
9. Would the church display the Burger King mentality of "have it your way?"
10. Or, would the church reflect Christ's command in Matthew 6:33 to seek first the Kingdom and God's righteousness?

### The Third Pledge

I am a church member.

I will not let my church be about my preferences and desires. That is self-serving. I am a member in this church to serve others and to serve Christ. My Savior went to a cross for me. I can deal with any inconveniences and matters that just aren't my preference or style.

Sign and Date

### Reflection

1. We will never find joy in church membership when we are constantly seeking things our way. But paradoxically, we will find the greatest joy when we choose to be last. That's what Jesus meant when He said the last will be first. True joy means giving up our rights and preferences and serving everyone else.
2. Evaluate your own heart and spend some time in prayer asking God to help yourself and everyone else to have a biblical understanding of church membership.

## Pray For Church Leaders

### Problem

Other than myself, who do I pray for?

### Premise

Prayer can lift up a broken spirit and repair.

### Philosophy

Pastor Mike has a clear calendar, but the calendar is not really clear. He sets aside time to finish his sermon. The phone rings and his assistant tells him about a car accident involving a family in the church. Pastor Mike jumps in his car and heads to the hospital. His assistant calls once again to let him know the entire Godsey family of five was in the car and Gary Godsey the husband and father was seriously injured. As he arrives the family receives word that the husband and father did not make it. Pastor Mike stays with them for three hours until he is certain enough people are there for the family. He runs home to see his wife and grab a sandwich. It is now afternoon. He's trying to prepare his sermon but also fighting the emotional exhaustion of this morning. His assistant apologetically tells him that two people need to speak with him and they considered it urgent. Mike meets with the two men. He listens for two hours and consoles, and attempts to encourage the staff member.

### Principle

1. Pastor Mike is caught off guard by another visitor, a key leader in the church named George. George struggles to speak and then says, "My wife is having an affair." The pastor stays with George for two hours and they pray and talk about next steps.
2. Pastor Mike is too drained to get back to his sermon and it is nearly five o'clock in the afternoon.
3. He looks at his emails and cringes at one of the emails. It's from one of his critics in the church.
4. She has two complaints, his sermon from last Sunday and Pastor Mike's failure to visit her sister-in-law who had a minor outpatient

- surgery yesterday and is not a member. He shuts his laptop cover and moves to his car slowly. He will stop and grab a bite to eat, stop the Godsey family and stay with them for a while and then to the local basketball game to give the invocation. He doesn't get home until after nine o'clock and goes to his study and begins to cry.
5. Gary Godsey, the father and husband who was killed was his best friend. This was the first time Pastor Mike had to grieve.
  6. Biblical Emphasis:
    - a. Paul never hesitated to ask the church to pray for himself and leaders of local churches. James tells us that prayers of people who are rightly living are a power thing. Usually Ephesians 6 is used as a list for deacons, but can also be a powerful prayer list for church leaders.
  7. Life Application:
    - a. "Prayer is where the action is."- John Wesley Did you know there are about 650 prayers recorded in the Bible? This is because prayer is important. Throughout Scripture, God repeatedly invites his people to pray to him in all kinds of circumstances for all kinds of reasons. God especially delights in his people praying for the church.
  8. Examine scripture:
    - a. We say that prayer is important, but do we always act like it is? Do we take advantage of communicating with God?
    - b. James 5:16 – "The prayer of a righteous person is powerful and effective."
    - c. The Message puts it this way "The prayer of a person living right with God is something powerful to be reckoned with."
  9. "Let the thought sink deep into the heart of every church, that their minister will be such a minister as their prayers make him. . . How perilous is the condition of that minister . . . whose heart is not encouraged, whose hands are not strengthened, and who is not upheld by the prayers of his people!" Gardiner Spring (1785-1873)
  10. Pray for the Pastor and other church leaders.
  11. Pray for him and his family
  12. Pray for his protection – to be above reproach, to avoid the "devil's trap"
  13. Pray for his physical and mental health

14. Pray for his sermon preparations, wisdom, insight, and words to preach
15. Pray for the Pastor and Other Church Leaders
16. All church leaders need prayer.
17. It may refer to the senior leader or it could be someone else on staff.
18. Church members must pray for our church leaders.
19. We should pray that God would give him the wisdom, insight, and words to preach.
20. We should pray for his preaching.
21. Pray for Him and His Family
22. 1 Timothy 3:5 "If anyone does not know how to manage his own household, how will he take care of God's church." This is one of the most convicting and challenging verses for Pastors.
  - a. They worry that they neglect their families because of the demands of the church.
  - b. They worry about their families living in a glass house.
  - c. They anguish when critics direct barbs at family members.
23. We must be the prayer intercessors for pastors and their families.
24. Pray for the pastor's family.
25. In 1 Timothy 3:2-4 it says "An overseer, therefore, must be above reproach, the husband of one wife, self-controlled, sensible, respectable, hospitable, an able teacher, not addicted to wine, not a bully but gentle, not quarrelsome, not greedy—one who manages his household competently, having his children under control with all dignity."
26. Just to get past "the above reproach" part is an accomplishment! The word reproach means "to find fault."
27. To be "above reproach" means to be above finding fault.
28. The pastor is certainly not expected to be perfect; he is to have a reputation above most everyone else.
29. The pastor must maintain self-control. He must be sensible, respectable, and hospitable.
30. He must be a good teacher. He must be gentle and not argumentative. He must not be greedy.
31. To add more pressure, his family must reflect a healthy Christian family.
32. He must have a good reputation among outsiders, so that he does

- not fall into disgrace and the devil's trap.
33. "Outsiders" refers to the unbelievers who are not part of the church.
  34. "The devil's trap" is something that is set intentionally. It means that the devil has devised a plan to bring the pastor down.
  35. The devil sees the pastor as a threat and one of his highest priorities is to take him down and take him out.
  36. The nature of the trap will be temptation where the pastor's reputation will be harmed.
  37. The devil is powerful. But God is so much more powerful.
  38. We will pray for the protection of our pastor and other church leaders.
  39. We will do all we can through prayer to keep our pastor out of the devil's trap.
  40. Pray for His Physical and Mental Health
  41. Serving and leading a church well expends all of a pastor's energy.
  42. He is on call every day and every hour.
  43. The pastor often neglects his own health and well-being.
  44. We can pray for the protection of our pastor's health.
  45. We should also pray for our pastor's mental health.
  46. The pastor has to make dozens of decisions each week that require discernment and wisdom.
  47. He needs wisdom to know what to preach and teach and how to present God's Word.
  48. He needs wisdom dealing with church members each week so he can best discern how to respond to the plethora of demands upon him.
  49. He will feel stress and pressure every day.
  50. We can pray that he will experience the peace that only God can give.

### Practice

1. Using scriptural backing, explain why the pastor's family is such an important factor in his ministry.
2. As a child, what did you pray about before going to sleep?
3. As an adult, how has your prayers changed? Or have they?

4. Are we still praying just for material comfort and prosperity?
5. Do we examine ourselves to see if we are a person living right with God?
6. Are we honest with ourselves?
7. In light of 1 Timothy 3, why is praying for pastor\staff important?
8. Given the struggle with false teachers (1:7), why is Timothy given this of qualifications for leadership?
9. Why a list of qualifications only and not duties also?
10. What, if anything is distinctly Christian about these qualifications?
11. Why are all these qualifications outward, not inward, in orientation?
12. What is Paul's main concern?
13. What is Paul's main purpose for writing these instructions to Timothy?
14. Do you understand why we church members must pray for the pastor's protection?
15. What is mean by "above reproach" in 1 Timothy 3:2?
16. Is that standard even possible for the pastor?
17. Explain the implications of the devil's trap in 1 Timothy 3:7.
18. What is the meaning of "outsider" in 1 Timothy 3:7?
19. Why should they be a concern to church members or pastors?
20. Find some key passage in the Bible where intercessory prayer takes

place (someone praying for someone else). Relate those passages to praying for your pastor.

### The Fourth Pledge

I am a church member

I will pray for my pastor every day. I understand that the pastor's work is never ending. His days are filled with numerous demands that bring emotional highs and lows. He must deal with critics. He must be a good husband and father. Because my pastor cannot do all things in his own power, I will pray for his strength and wisdom daily.

Sign and Date

### Reflection

1. Consider this: Who are the primary targets in battle?
2. The enemy's leadership. The same holds true for spiritual warfare. Church leaders are strategically targeted by our spiritual enemy—the devil and his angels.
3. How do we fight back? Through prayer and scripture.
4. Will you commit to pray daily for your pastor and his leadership team? Take some time to pray for them now.
5. Read 2 Kings 6:8-18. Remember that when you pray, you are calling out to God Almighty who is able to defend you and conquer the enemy. Prayer for your pastor and his leadership team is absolutely critical in relationship to the church's health. By praying for your leaders you are giving them essential care packages to emerge victorious from the heat of battle. If you have not done so already, commit to pray daily for your pastor and his leadership team. Now is a great time to start!



## Lead Family To Be Healthy Church Members

### Philosophy

A healthy church member will teach their children to be healthy church members. Lord willing, your children will watch you love, serve, and unify your church. As they see you interact as a church member, they will know how they should act.

### Principle

1. Meet Bob. This relatively unknown and quiet man changed the world. He always seemed to be at church. He was always Joyous, always serving, always kind. You could tell he loved serving the church. Bob died a few years ago. The same could be said about Bob's wife and two sons. They too love the church and find joy in serving.
2. Bob noticed a young man and began to watch but was also concerned. He loved his youthful enthusiasm but knew what was coming. The more involved the young man became, the more he would see the imperfections of the church, the pastor, the staff, and other church members. Bob knew the pattern. Get excited about church. Get involved. Discover imperfections. Get Discouraged. Leave the church.
3. Bob explained to the young man, no church is perfect. No pastor is perfect. No church member is perfect and the young man was to close to perfect either. He told him that we are to find joy in serving the church and those in the church. We are not part of the church to see what we can get out of it, but part of the church to serve and care for others.
4. We could never have the perfection of Christ but we could strive to be more like Him.
5. Eventually the young man learned to love the church and the people despite their imperfections. He wished his parents would have taught him o love the local church like Bob did. Bob's sons are grown now. They love serving their local churches just like their dad. After all he taught them well.
6. Church and Family
  - a. Paul wrote these words in Ephesians 5:22-266, "Wives, submit to your own husbands as to the Lord, for the husband is the

head of the wife as Christ is the head of the church. He is the Savior of the body. Now as the church submits to Christ, so wives are to submit to their husbands in everything. Husbands, love your wives, just like Christ loved the church and gave Himself for her to make her holy, cleansing her with the washing of water by the word."

- b. Paul made it clear the relationship between the church and the family in verses 32-33: "This mystery is profound, but I am talking about Christ and the church. To sum up each one of you is to love his wife as himself, and the wife is to respect her husband."
  - c. The biblical text continues in Ephesians 6:1-4, the subject s parents and children: "Children, obey your parents as you would the Lord, because this is right. Honor your father and mother, which is the first commandment with promise, so that it may go well with you ad that you may have long life in the land. Fathers, don't stir up anger in your children but bring them up in the training and instruction of the Lord."
  - d. We are supposed to sacrifice and love our families unconditionally, so are we to love those churches where God has placed us.
  - e. Our family members are not perfect, and neither are the members of the church.
  - f. We are to find our joy in serving both our families and the church.
  - g. We are to encourage our family members to be faithful to the church.
  - h. We should pray together as family members for our churches.
  - i. We are to strive to love our families more deeply and we should exhort our family members to love the church more deeply.
7. Praying Together as a Family for the Church
- a. We should learn to pray for the leadership of the church in a number of
  - b. ways:
    - i. For Spiritual protection.
    - ii. For protection from moral failure.
    - iii. For the preaching of the Word.

- iv. For their families.
  - v. For encouragement.
  - vi. For physical strength.
  - vii. For courage.
  - viii. For discernment.
  - ix. For wisdom in their leadership.
  - c. Part of the opportunity and honor of being a church member is the teaching of our family to love the church.
  - d. Teaching often begins by praying together as a family for the church where God placed us.
8. Worshipping Together as a Family
- a. As a church member, we are responsible for encouraging and leading our entire family to worship together in the church.
  - b. Many church members are single, so they have no immediate family with whom they can worship in the church. Still people watch them and how they love the church. They are to be an example to others.
  - c. The situation is especially poignant when a church member has a family member who is not a Christian or part of the church.
  - d. Apostle Paul addressed the issue of divorce and separation. He instructed that the believing spouse should never take the initiative to leave the unbelieving spouse (vv.10-13).
  - e. One of the primary reasons for the admonition; the believing spouse is a testimony of Christ to the unbelieving spouse and to any children in the family.
  - f. I Corinthians 7:14: "For the unbelieving husband is set apart for God by the wife and the unbelieving wife is set apart for God by the husband. Otherwise your children would be corrupt, but now they are set apart for God."
  - g. It can be lonely to be the believer in an unbelieving family.
  - h. It can likewise be lonely going to worship at your church alone, while your spouse remains behind.
  - i. Like the missionary who travels thousands of miles to tell the good news to the unevangelized people, the church member is to tell the good news in his or her own home.
  - j. The believing spouse is the wife. Whether the wife knows it or not, the husband is watching her closely.

- k. How she responds to her husband impacts her witness.
  - l. How she loves the church and those in the church affects her husband.
  - m. A godly spouse can be a key factor in the unbelieving spouse coming to Christ.
9. Falling Deeply in Love with the Bride of Christ
- a. We are not merely to like our church or serve our church well.
  - b. We are to fall deeply in love with our church
  - c. Christ is the bridegroom and the church is the bride.
  - d. Our commitment is to love that bride with an unwavering and unconditional love.
10. Unconditional love is not always easy.
- i. Unconditional love means we will continue to fall more deeply in love regardless of the response.
  - ii. It means our love for the church will grow even as we may disagree with something or encounter disagreeable people.
- b. We should do all we can in God's power to bring our family with us to church.
  - c. We will prayer for our church leaders together.
  - d. We will worship together. And we will serve together.
  - e. We will remind ourselves that unconditional love has been demonstrated perfectly for us. His name is Jesus. He loves us, sins and all that he died on the cross for us.
  - f. "But God proves His own love for us in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us" (Roman 5:8).

### Practice

1. Do our children see us worship and serve?
2. How does the biblical teaching of the log and the speck in Matthew 7 apply to church membership?
3. What is the relationship of our immediate families and the church family? What biblical texts make this connection?
4. What is the role of a believing spouse to an unbelieving spouse?

How does that manifest itself in church membership?

5. Why is unconditional love such a challenge, especially as it applies to church membership?
6. How is Christ's death on the cross an example for us as church members relating to one another?
7. Psalm 122. How did David feel about going to the "house of the Lord?"
8. Consider how you feel about your Church. David had an undeniable love for the house of the Lord. Can you say that you love your Church?
9. Does it bring you joy when it's time to worship together as one body on Sunday mornings?
10. How do you make time with your family to pray for the your house hold and your Church family.

### The Fifth Pledge

I am a church member

I will lead my family to be good members of this church as well. We will pray together for our church. We will worship together in our church. We will serve together in our church. And we will ask Christ to help us fall deeper in love with this church because He gave His life for her.

Sign Date

### Reflection

1. Consider the mutual benefits of worshipping and praying together with your family. It not only benefits yourself but also everyone else involved. If possible, make time with your family to pray for the your house hold and your Church family. Try to set aside a brief amount of time each week to pray for your Church family with your family.
2. Do some self-evaluation and ask the Lord to show you the truth

about yourself and if needed, to rekindle your love for God's church.

## Treasure Church Membership as a Gift

### Philosophy

Church membership is not a right, but it is a privilege that was purchased at the Cross of Jesus. Membership in the invisible body of Christ was purchased at the cross. When your local church is a Bible preaching and teaching Church, then it will be acting as the local, visible representative of that invisible body. Therefore, your membership even in the local church was purchased at the Cross. Thinking this way gives us a different perspective on church membership and I hope it brings joy to an often neglected area of grace.

### Principle

1. Imagine a child facing two scenarios: first scenario, the mother tells "Johnny" he has to clean his room. It has to be spotless. It will probably take him hours and he has to put some effort into it. Anything else is not acceptable. The room must be cleaner than it has ever been before.
2. The second scenario the mother tells Johnny that someone has given him an incredible gift. She increases his excitement by letting him know this gift will be one of the greatest he has received or ever will receive. If Johnny has a choice between the two scenarios, which would he choose? Do you believe that the second scenario would be the most obvious?
3. Every church member faces two distinct scenarios, where the choice is that obvious. The first option we approach church membership is similar to country club membership. We join the church to see what we can get out of it. We will determine what we like and don't like. We are members who expect perks, privileges, and service.
  - a. So what happens when the country club church membership is asked to contribute to the work of the church?
  - b. What happens if such a member is asked to serve in the nursery for a few weeks?
  - c. What happens if that member is asked to lead a group of fifth-graders? Bible Study class?
4. One country club member may agree to the request out of obligation.

Country club church membership is not about working; it's about being served. Other country club church members just get mad when they are asked. Some may respond that they did their time in the earlier years. They make ministry sound like a prison sentence. Another group gets angry toward the pastors.

5. The second option to church membership is the biblical option that sees membership as a gift, something to be treasured. Membership means we have the opportunity to serve and give. Our entire attitude is different when we approach membership the biblical way.
6. The Biblical Perspective of the Gift of Church Membership
  - a. "For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God" (Romans 3:23).
  - b. No one deserves salvation. Everyone deserves death (Romans 6:23).
  - c. When we repent of sin and place our faith in Jesus Christ, we receive the gift of salvation, the gift of Christ's work for us, and the gift that means we cannot earn salvation through our own works.
  - d. When we receive the gift of salvation, we become part of the body of Christ.
  - e. "Now you are the body of Christ, and individual members of it. And God has placed these in the church" (1 Cor. 12:27-28).
  - f. You received the free gift of eternal salvation. It includes eternal salvation, forgiveness of sin by Christ's death on the cross, includes adoption by God the Father, the indwelling of the Holy Spirit. It includes becoming a part of the body of Christ.
  - g. Membership in the Body of Christ, the church, is a gift from God.
  - h. It's not a legalistic obligation, it's not country club perks, and it's not a license for entitlements.
  - i. It's a gift from God. A gift that we should treasure with joy and anticipation.
7. Universal Church or Local Church?
  - a. The universal church means all believers everywhere for all ages.
  - b. The universal church and local church are mutually inclusive.



- c. The New Testament books are written about and to local churches.
  - d. Romans, 1 & 2 Corinthians, Galatians, Ephesians, Philippians, Colossians, and 1 & 2 Thessalonians were written specifically for the local churches.
  - e. 1& 2 Timothy, Titus, and Philemon were books written to individuals in specific church context. The book of Revelation has the context of letters to local churches.
  - f. It's a lame and invalid excuse to say you will limit your involvement to the universal church.
  - g. The Bible is clear that we are to be connected to a specific church in a specific context.
8. Understand the Gift
- a. Church membership is a gift. A gift to be treasured.
  - b. It should not be taken for granted or considered lightly.
  - c. We must always be thankful for it. When we are thankful for something, we have less time and energy to be negative.
  - d. When we receive a gift with true appreciation, we naturally want to respond to the Giver.
  - e. We see service to God as a natural outflow of the joy of our salvation. And the consequent joy of our church membership.
  - f. We consider it a privilege to serve the King. We look for those opportunities at the church where we serve.
  - g. Healthy church membership means you find your joy in being last, instead of seeking your way and being first.
  - h. Look at this passage from Matthew 20:26-28. The context is some of Jesus' disciples seeking to be first. Jesus brings them together and tells them their attitudes stink.
  - i. Jesus tells them what it means to be His true follower: "It must not be like that among you. On the contrary, whoever wants to become great among you must be your servant, and whoever wants to be first among you must be your slave; just as the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life-a ransom for many."
  - j. We respond to gifts with gratitude. One way to express our gratitude is to serve like Jesus did and like He told us to do.
  - k. Churches would be a lot healthier if members decided to serve

and to be last.

### Practice

1. How does the gift of salvation relate to the gift of church membership?
2. Why do many church members have a sense of entitlement? What does the Bible say about that?
3. Explain how Christians are in both the universal church and in the local church?
4. Read the entire story of Jesus rebuking His disciples in Matthew 20:20-28. How could that story relate to church membership?
5. Think of the most memorable gift you've received. How did you treat that gift?
6. Did your love for that gift affect the care you gave to that gift?
7. Relate this to church membership. Church membership is a gift. How are you treating that gift?
8. Do you treasure your membership?
9. Look at each part of the entire membership covenant you have reviewed to this point. What areas will be your greatest challenge?
10. In what areas can you make immediate changes?

### The Sixth Pledge

I am a church member

This membership is a gift. When I received the free gift of salvation through Jesus Christ, I became a part of the Body of Christ. I soon thereafter identified with the local body and was baptized. And now I am humbled and honored to serve and to love others in our church. I pray that I will never take my membership for granted, but see it as a gift and an opportunity to

serve others and to be a part of something so much greater than any one person or member.

## Sign and Date

## Reflection

1. The way you treat a gift directly reflects the amount of love you have for that gift. If it is difficult to treasure your membership, perhaps it is time to fall in love with the bride of Christ
2. all over again!
3. Pray that God will give you an overwhelming love for His church.
4. Establish a practical plan that will help you honor these commitments. If it helps, write out each commitment in your own words. For example, the fifth commitment is about leading your family to be healthy church members. You could write: "I am a church member. I will help lead my family to be healthy church members. On each Tuesday after supper, we will make the time to pray together our Church. I will make sure that everyone wakes up on time on Sunday morning so we can worship together as a family at our Church. We will seek out opportunities to serve as a family at our Church and we will ask God to help us love the church like He does."

## Flash Back

### Philosophy

As with any family, no church is perfect.

### Principle

1. I am a church member.
  - a. I will seek to be a source of unity in the church. I know there are no perfect pastors, staff, or other church members. But neither am I. I will not be a source of gossip or dissension. One of the greatest contributions I can make is to do all I can in God's power to help keep the church in unity for the sake of the gospel.
2. I am a church member.
  - a. I will not let my church be about my preferences and desires. That is self-serving. I am in this church to serve others and to serve Christ. My Savior went to a cross for me. I can deal with any inconveniences and matters that are just not my preference or style.
3. I am a church member.
  - a. I will pray for my pastor every day. His work is never-ending. His days are filled with constant demands for his time; with the need to prepare sermons; with those who are rejoicing in births; with those who are traveling through the valley of the shadow of death; with critics; with the hurts and hopes of others; and with the need to be a husband and a father. My pastor cannot serve our church in his own power. I will pray for God's strength for him and his family every day.
4. I am a church member.
  - a. I like the metaphor of membership. It's not membership as in a civic organization or a country club. It's the kind of membership given to us in 1 Corinthians 12: "Now you are the body of Christ and individual members of it" (1 Corinthians 12:27). Because I am a member of the body of Christ, I must be a functioning member, whether I am an "eye," an "ear," or a "hand." As a functioning member, I will give. I will serve. I will minister. I will evangelize. I will study. I will seek to be a blessing to others. I

will remember that "if one member suffers, all the members suffer with it; if one member is honored, all the members rejoice with it" (1 Corinthians 12:26).

5. I am a church member.
  - a. I will lead my family to be good members of this church as well. We will pray together for our church. We will worship together in our church. We will serve together in our church. And we will ask Christ to help us fall deeper in love with this church, because He gave His life for her.
6. I am a church member.
  - a. This membership is a gift. When I received the free gift of salvation through Jesus Christ, I became a part of the body of Christ. I soon thereafter identified with a local body and was baptized. And now I am humbled and honored to serve and to love others in our church. I pray that I will never take my membership for granted, but see it as a gift and an opportunity to serve others, and to be a part of something so much greater than any one person or member.
7. I am a church member.
  - a. And I thank God that I am.
8. The Bible gives us a clear instructions of how we are to demonstrate love and relationships within our own families.
9. Ephesians 5:22-26 – the relationship of husband and wife
10. Ephesians 5: 32-33 – summary of the husband/wife relationship and its relevance to the church
11. Ephesians 6:1-4 – the relationship of parents and children
12. These passages demonstrate our call to love our families unconditionally. We are also members of the Body of Christ, and therefore His bride, the church. As members of this family, we have the same expectation and command to love one another unconditionally.
13. No pastor is perfect. No church member is perfect (not even ourselves!) However, as in our own families, we should seek to find joy in loving and serving our family and church members regardless of their imperfections.
14. Accountability must be grounded in love (I Corinthians 13)
15. Pray together, as a family, for your pastor and his leadership team.

16. Pray for:
  - a. Spiritual Protection
  - b. Protection from moral failure
  - c. Preaching of the Word (the Bible)
  - d. Their families
  - e. Encouragement
  - f. Physical strength and health
  - g. Courage
  - h. Discernment
  - i. Wisdom in their leadership
17. Worship together
  - a. In worshiping together we demonstrate our love for God and our devotion to our church family by meeting with them as the Body of Christ, for the purpose of worshiping God. In doing this, we set an example for non-believers. We also demonstrate our unconditional love for other church members (our family members) by worshiping collectively in spite of our own preferences and disappointments (preacher, music style, song selection, attire of others, etc...).
18. Fall deeply in love with the Bride of Christ
  - a. The church is the Bride of Christ. If we want to have an unconditional love for our Savior's bride, the church we are a part of, we must love others within the church regardless of their response to us and in the face of disagreements and disagreeable people.
19. Demonstrate Obedience to God's Word
  - a. Hebrews 10:24-25 – "stir up one another to love and good works"; "not neglecting to meet together, as is the habit of some..."
20. The Fifth Pledge:
  - a. I will lead my family to be good members of this church as well. We will pray together for our church. We will worship together in our church. We will serve together in our church. And we will ask Christ to help us fall deeper in love with this church because He gave His life for her.
21. Romans 3:23, 2 Corinthians 5:21, Acts 3:19. We have been given the gift of salvation, the gift of Christ's work for us and the gift of salvation

- free from our own works.
22. Ephesians 2:8-9. This gift of free Salvation (the high cost was paid by Christ), includes the following:
    - a. eternal salvation
    - b. forgiveness of sins
    - c. adoption by God the Father
    - d. the indwelling of the Holy Spirit
    - e. becoming a part of the body of Christ
  23. When we accept this gift, we become a part of Christ's body (I Corinthians 12:27-28)
  24. Becoming part of Christ's body does NOT include a legalistic obligation. It is not about country club perks. It is not a license to entitlements.
  25. It is a gift; a gift from God. This gift is to be treasured with great joy and anticipation.
  26. Some may argue that we become part of the universal church, the body of all believers in Christ, across eternity. These might argue that this excludes the need for participation in the local church.
  27. However, scripture demonstrates the validity and need for the local church. Consider the fact that the majority of the New Testament books are written about, and to, local churches. The book of Acts mentions no less than 18 local churches. Consider also the New Testament books written directly to local churches: Romans, 1 & 2 Corinthians, Galatians, Ephesians, Philippians, Colossians and 1 & 2 Thessalonians.
  28. Four of Paul's books were written to individuals in local churches: 1 & 2 Timothy, Titus & Philemon.
  29. The Bible gives a clear message of the roles of individuals in specific local churches.
  30. We have been given a gift. Beyond our eternal salvation through Christ, we have been given the gift of church membership (in the Body of Christ and a local body of imperfect, yet forgiven believers).
  31. We must treasure that gift. We must express our genuine gratitude and appreciate for this gift.
  32. True appreciation, of any gift, results in a response to the giver. Our perspective of the giver and the gift also change as a result of true gratitude.

33. Our perspective of service to God, our church and each other, also change as we seek to genuinely respond to the joy of our salvation and the joy of our membership in our church.
34. Membership and service becomes a privilege, rather than an obligation or right.
35. The Sixth Pledge:
  - a. This membership is a gift. When I received the free gift of salvation through Jesus Christ, I became a part of the body of Christ. I soon thereafter identified with a local body and was baptized. And now am humbled and honored to serve and to love others in our church. I pray that I will never take my membership for granted, but see it as a gift and an opportunity to serve others and to be a part of something so much greater than any one person or member.

### Practice

1. Why is unconditional love such a challenge, especially as it applies to church membership?
2. How are you instilling the love for the Church in your children and family?
3. What do you love about your church?
4. How do you express that love to your church, other members, leaders and the community outside the church?
5. What is hindering your love for the church?
6. How does Matthew 7:3-5 apply to our love for our fellow church members?
7. How do you protect and strengthen your love for the Church in the face of imperfections you encounter in the church, members and staff?
8. What actions do you need to take to restore and/or renew your love for the church?
9. What is the relationship between love for the Church and the need for accountability (Matthew 18:15-20)?
10. Why is Our very salvation considered is a gift from God? What is the Scriptural bases for your answer?



## **I'll Be Back**

### Philosophy

Holidays such as Easter and Christmas are often times when pastors and congregations focus not only on Jesus but on the potential for an increase in visitors. Everything is extra-special on those days. There are special programs, worship is typically different, and we even take the time to throw out our everyday dress in exchange for something new. These holidays are indeed special and draw a crowd for a good reason--Jesus is the Savior of the world. But what happens when the holidays have passed? How can we encourage visitors to return every Sunday?

### Principle

1. Preach the gospel every Sunday:
  - a. Ultimately what will keep a visitor returning is the gospel. It is the Good News that saves and it is the gospel that we need to hear over and over again. "So faith comes from hearing and hearing through the word of Christ" (Rom. 10:17).
2. Preach the word faithfully:
  - a. Seeing the Bible opened, studied, and exposed upon during worship will bring people back. We need to hear the Word preached and it is God's Word that will keep us coming back.
3. Think evangelistically:
  - a. It takes great effort to look up and see others who walk into the building. We have to remember that the Great Commission in Matthew 28 is for us. We are called to go and make disciples of all nations and teach them. We can't do that if we aren't thinking about others on Sunday mornings. Actively pray that the Lord will help you think of how you might love and serve your neighbor. Your neighbor might just be a visitor for the first time.
4. Be hospitable:
  - a. Hospitality takes intentionality and thoughtfulness and must begin with an outward focus on others. It can be as simple as saying hello to hosting someone in your home. If you are having lunch after church, invite your neighbor to join. Extending genuine love and care displays the love of Christ to

visitors. As Hebrews 13: 2 exhorts us, "Do not neglect to show hospitality to strangers, for thereby some have entertained angels unawares."

5. Follow up:
  - a. Most churches have guest cards where guests are invited to share contact information. Don't forget to actually contact your guests. We won't know how our hospitality or even our evangelism will affect others, but we can guarantee doing nothing will produce nothing.
6. Welcome the hurting:
  - a. Our churches should be a place where those who are struggling, marginalized, hurting, and in deep sin should be welcomed. They should be welcomed so that by the grace of God they might be cared for and restored. This would mean being a place that doesn't show partiality (James 2). It would mean being a place that doesn't throw stones but seeks to extend grace and truth (John 8:7). It would mean being a place where sinners come for help.
7. Trust God
  - a. Trust the Lord and pray for those who visit. It's not about numbers; it's about souls who know Jesus. So, whenever we are thinking about retention we must not focus on numbers and how many fill our pews, but on Jesus and the proclamation of the gospel. We want to love our neighbors. And we should all pray that like the First Century church in Acts the Lord would add to our number day by day those who are being saved (Acts. 2:47).

### Practice

1. What is the role of preaching in bringing visitors back?
2. What is the role of members in bringing visitors?
3. How do you help the Church be a welcoming body?
4. What is the importance of follow up with visitors?
5. Who is responsible for Church growth?

## **Now That I'm a Christian...what Now?**

### Philosophy

You have made a life-changing decision! Perhaps you are asking, "Now what? How do I begin my journey with God?"

### Principle

1. Salvation.
2. 1 John 5:13 tells us, "These things have I written unto you that believe on the name of the Son of God; that ye may know that ye have eternal life, and that ye may believe on the name of the Son of God."
3. God wants us to understand salvation. God wants us to have the confidence of knowing for sure that we are saved. Briefly, let's go over the key points of salvation:
4. We have all sinned. Our sinful nature means we are separated from our Holy Righteous Creator God. (Romans 3:23).
5. Because of our sin, God has declared us "guilty" and the punishment for our sin is eternal separation from God in Hell. (Romans 6:23).
6. Because God loved us, He sent His only son Jesus to die upon the cross to pay the penalty for our sins (Romans 5:8; 2 Corinthians 5:21). Jesus died in our place, taking the punishment that we deserved. His resurrection proved that Jesus' death was sufficient to pay for our sins.
7. God grants forgiveness and salvation to all those who place their faith in Jesus – trusting His death as the payment for our sins. Faith means that we have opened our heart to believe that which is unseen, yet we know in our hearts is true. (John 3:16; Romans 5:1; Romans 8:1).
8. Jesus-Salvation-in-No-One-Else. This is the message of salvation! If you have placed your faith in Jesus Christ as your Savior, you are saved! You have entered into a Covenant with God sealed with the blood of Jesus His Son. God will not break His Covenant. All of your sins are forgiven, and God promises to never leave you or forsake you (Romans 8:38-39; Matthew 28:20). Remember, your salvation is secure in Jesus Christ (John 10:28-29). If you are trusting in Jesus alone as your Savior, you can have confidence that you will spend

eternity with God in heaven! Salvation is entirely because of what Jesus did for you. It is a totally free gift. "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." Ephesians 2:8-9

9. There is nothing that you can do to make you good enough or worthy enough to enter into heaven. You are "saved" ONLY by what Jesus Christ did for you on the cross. When your heart is opened to believe in Jesus as your personal Savior, you are born again and the proof of you being a new creation, a child of God, is the seal of the Holy Spirit who now lives within you.
10. And it is God who establishes us with you in Christ, and has anointed us, and who has also put his seal on us and given us his Spirit in our hearts as a guarantee. 2 Corinthians 1:21-22.
11. Church.
12. Don't think of the church as a building. The church is the people. It is very important that believers in Jesus Christ fellowship with one another. That is one of the primary purposes of the church. Now that you have placed your faith in Jesus Christ, attend Church regularly sit under Bible preaching and teaching.
13. A second purpose of the church is to teach the Bible. You can learn how to apply God's instructions to your life. Understanding the Bible is key to living a successful and powerful Christian life. 2 Timothy 3:16-17 says, "All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness: That the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works."
14. A third purpose of the church is worship. Worship is thanking God for all He has done! God has saved us. God loves us. God provides for us. God guides and directs us. How could we not thank Him? God is holy, righteous, loving, merciful, and full of grace. Revelation 4:11 declares, "Thou art worthy, O Lord, to receive glory and honor and power: for thou hast created all things, and for thy pleasure they are and were created."word
15. Devotion.
16. It is very important for us to spend time each day focusing on God. Some people call this a "quiet time." Others call it "devotions," because it is a time when we devote ourselves to God. Some prefer

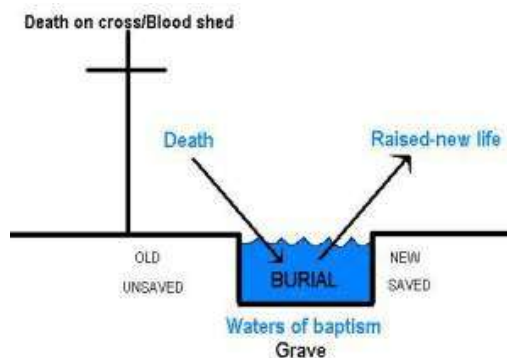
to set aside time in the mornings, while others prefer the evenings. It does not matter what you call this time or when you do it. What matters is that you regularly spend time with God.

17. Prayer.
18. Prayer is simply talking to God. Talk to God about your concerns and problems. Ask God to give you wisdom and guidance. Ask God to provide for your needs. Tell God how much you love Him and how much you appreciate all He does for you. That is what prayer is all about.
19. Bible.
20. In addition to being taught the Bible in church, Sunday School, and Bible studies – you need to be reading the Bible for yourself. A good place to start is with the Book of John. John presents the majesty and beauty of Jesus in the flesh. In John you will discover the Love of Jesus for His disciples.
21. The Bible contains everything you need to know in order to live a successful Christian life. It contains God's guidance for how to make wise decisions, how to know God's will, how to minister to others, and how to grow spiritually. The Bible is God's Word to us. The Bible is essentially God's instruction manual for how to live our lives in a way that is pleasing to Him and satisfying to us. You have a new Teacher living within you – the Holy Spirit. Ask Him to teach you as you read the Bible.
22. Relationships
23. 1 Corinthians 15:33 tells us, "Be not deceived: evil communications corrupt good manners." The Bible is full of warnings about the influence "bad" people can have on us. Spending time with those who engage in sinful activities will cause us to be tempted by those activities. The character of those we are around will "rub off" on us. That is why it is so important to surround ourselves with other people who love the Lord and are committed to Him.
24. Associate with individuals who can help you and encourage you (Hebrews 3:13; 10:24). Ask your friends to keep you accountable in regard to your quiet time, your activities, and your walk with God. Ask if you can do the same for them. This does not mean you have to give up all your friends who do not know the Lord Jesus as their Savior. It does mean that you have a new relationship to them and

that you want them to be saved. Continue to be their friend and love them. Let them know that Jesus has changed your life and you cannot do all the same things you used to do. Ask God to give you opportunities to share Jesus with your friends.

25. Baptism.

26. Many people have a misunderstanding of baptism. The word “baptize” means to immerse in water. Baptism is the Biblical way of publicly proclaiming your new faith in Christ and your commitment to follow Him. The action of being immersed in the water illustrates being buried with Christ. The action of coming out of the water pictures Christ’s resurrection. Being baptized is identifying yourself with Jesus’ death, burial, and resurrection (Romans 6:3-4). Baptism also makes you a part of a local church, and assures you of the watch care of a group of believers who will have your best interests at heart.



27. Baptism is not what saves you. Baptism does not wash away your sins. Baptism is simply a step of obedience, a public proclamation of your faith in Christ alone for salvation. Baptism is important because it is a step of obedience – publicly declaring faith in Christ and your commitment to Him. If you are ready to be baptized, you should speak with one of the Pastors at the church you attend.

### Practice

1. What prevents you from spending time with God?
2. What is Salvation and how are we saved?
3. What can you do to make you good enough to enter into heaven?
4. What does baptism illustrate?
5. What is baptism and why is it important?
6. What is required for baptism and how is it conducted?
7. How do we treat friends who are not saved?
8. What is the value of reading the Bible?
9. What is Prayer?
10. What are two fundamental purposes of the Church?

## The Holy Spirit

### Philosophy

Live lives of holiness by the grace of God:

God the Father has called you.

God the Son has died for you.

God the Holy Spirit indwells you.

Each Person of the Trinity is assisting you in your battle against the flesh. You can choose how you will live your Christian Life.

### Principle

1. These two diagrams illustrate in a simple way the struggle we will have to allow Jesus to lead our life, or to follow our own ways:

2. Christ-Directed-versus-Self

3. In order to live a Christ-Directed Life you need to be filled (controlled) by the Holy Spirit. We must realize that this is what God designed us for when we are "Born Again".

4. God Has Provided For Us an Abundant and Fruitful Christian Life.

5. Jesus said, "I came that they might have life, and might have it abundantly" (John 10:10).

6. "I am the vine, you are the branches; he who abides in Me, and I in him, he bears much fruit; for apart from Me you can do nothing" (John 15:5).

7. "But the fruit of the spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control; against such things there is no law" (Galatians 5:22, 23).

8. "But you shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and shall be My witnesses both in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and even to the remotest part of the earth" (Acts 1:8).

9. The Holy Spirit Directed Life

10. The degree to which spiritual



Christ-centered  
Empowered by  
the Holy Spirit  
Introduces others  
to Christ  
Effective prayer life  
Understands God's  
Word  
Trusts God  
Obays God

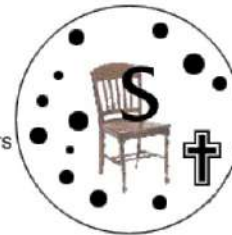


Love  
Joy  
Peace  
Patience  
Kindness  
Faithfulness  
Goodness

traits are manifested in your life depends upon the extent to which you trust the Lord with every detail of your life, and upon your maturity in Christ. One who is only beginning to understand the ministry of the Holy Spirit should not be discouraged if he is not as fruitful as more mature Christians who have known and experienced this truth for a longer period.

11. Christians who follow the Flesh Cannot Experience the Abundant and Fruitful Christian Life
12. Self Directed Life
13. The third truth gives us the only solution to this problem...
14. Jesus Promised the Abundant and Fruitful Life as the Result of Being Filled (Directed and Empowered) by the Holy Spirit.
15. The self-directed person trusts in his own efforts to live the Christian life: He is either uninformed about, or has forgotten, God's love, forgiveness, and power (Romans 5:8-10; Hebrews 10:1-25; 1 John 1; 1 John 2:1-3; 2 Peter 1:9; Acts 1:8).
16. He has an up-and-down spiritual experience.
17. He cannot understand himself – he wants to do what is right, but cannot.
18. He fails to draw upon the power of the Holy Spirit to live the Christian life. (1 Corinthians 3:1-3; Romans 7:15-24; 8:7; Galatians 5:16-18)
19. The Spirit-filled life is the Christ-directed life by which Christ lives His life in and through us in the power of the Holy Spirit
20. One becomes a Christian through the ministry of the Holy Spirit, according to John 3:1-8. From the moment of spiritual birth, the Christian is indwelt by the Holy Spirit at all times (John 1:12; Colossians 2:9, 10; John 14:16, 17). Though all Christians are indwelt by the Holy Spirit, not all Christians are filled (directed and empowered) by the Holy Spirit.
21. The Holy Spirit is the source of the overflowing life (John 7:37-39).
22. The Holy Spirit came to glorify Christ (John 16:1-15). When one is filled with the Holy Spirit, he is a true disciple of Christ.
23. In His last command before His ascension, Christ promised the power of the Holy Spirit to enable us to be witnesses for Him (Acts

Ignorance of his  
spiritual heritage  
Unbelief  
Disobedience  
Loss of love for  
God and for others  
Poor prayer life  
No desire for Bible  
study



Legalistic attitude  
Impure thoughts  
Jealousy  
Guilt  
Worry  
Discouragement  
Critical spirit  
Frustration  
Aimlessness



- 1:1-9).
24. Fruit is the result of a living union; a machine may produce works, but it can never produce fruit. Christian character comes from within, by the power of the Spirit. The Spirit seeks to transform us into Christ's likeness (2 Cor. 3:18; Rom. 8:29 and 12:1-2).
  25. To be filled with the Spirit is to be controlled by the Word of God, for the results are identical.
  26. Ephes. 5:18-24 Don't be drunk with wine, because that will ruin your life. Instead, let the Holy Spirit fill and control you. [19] Then you will sing psalms and hymns and spiritual songs among yourselves, making music to the Lord in your hearts. [20] And you will always give thanks for everything to God the Father in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ. [21] And further, you will submit to one another out of reverence for Christ.
  27. Col. 3:15-19 And let the peace that comes from Christ rule in your hearts. For as members of one body you are all called to live in peace. And always be thankful. [16] Let the words of Christ, in all their richness, live in your hearts and make you wise. Use his words to teach and counsel each other. Sing psalms and hymns and spiritual songs to God with thankful hearts. [17] And whatever you do or say, let it be as a representative of the Lord Jesus, all the while giving thanks through him to God the Father.
  28. "Walking in the Spirit" is not some emotional experience, detached from everyday life. It is the daily experience of the believer who feeds on the Word, prays, and obeys what the Bible says.
  29. Holy Spirit Filled by Faith
  30. We Can Experience the Abundant and Fruitful Life Which Christ Promised to Each Christian.
  31. Please remember that this does not mean your life will always be great. The Holy Spirit will take you through times of testing and tribulation, just as He did Jesus, but always with the goal of producing the Character of Jesus Christ in your life. Faith holds on when things are darkest. But whatever God takes you through, He will never abandon you there. He will bring you through the valley and you will find increased faith and strength of character that is more precious than the purest gold.
  32. You can experience the filling of the Holy Spirit right now if you:

33. Sincerely desire to be directed and empowered by the Holy Spirit (Matthew 5:6; John 7:37-39).
34. Confess your sins. By faith thank God that He has forgiven all of your sins – past, present and future – because Christ died for you (Colossians 2:13-15; 1 John 1; 2:1-3; Hebrews 10:1-17).
35. Present every area of your life to God (Romans 12:1-2)
36. By faith claim the fullness of the Holy Spirit, according to:
37. His Command – Be filled with the Spirit. “And do not get drunk with wine, for that is dissipation, but be filled with the Spirit” (Ephesians 5:18).
38. His Promise – He will always answer when we pray according to His will. “And this is the confidence which we have before Him, that, if we ask anything according to His will, He hears us. And if we know that He hears us in whatever we ask, we know that we have the requests which we have asked of Him” (1 John 5:14, 15).
39. Faith Expressed Through Prayer
40. We are filled with the Holy Spirit by faith alone. Sincere prayer is one way of expressing your faith. The following is a suggested prayer:
41. “Dear Father, I need You. I acknowledge that I have been directing my own life and that, as a result, I have sinned against You. I thank You that You have forgiven my sins through Christ’s death on the cross for me. I now invite Christ to again take His place on the throne of my life. Fill me with the Holy Spirit as You commanded me to be filled, and as You promised in Your Word that You would do if I asked in faith. I now thank You for directing my life and for filling me with the Holy Spirit.”
42. Being Filled and Controlled by the Holy Spirit is not a one-time event like being Born Again (Becoming a Christian). It is a daily, moment by moment obedience to the Holy One who lives within you.



## Practice

1. What does it mean to be filled with the Holy Spirit?
2. How can one be filled with the Holy Spirit?

3. What is the ministry of the Holy Spirit?
4. Why is it that many Christians are not experiencing the abundant life?
5. What is the self directed life?
6. What is a carnal Christian?
7. What is the difference between a carnal Christian and an unsaved sinner?
8. What is the relationship between the indwelling of the Holy Spirit and the filling of the Holy Spirit?
9. What is the Spirit directed life?
10. What is the fruit of the self directed life?

## New Testament Church

### Philosophy

Ephes. 2:19-22 So now you Gentiles are no longer strangers and foreigners. You are citizens along with all of God's holy people. You are members of God's family. [20] We are his house, built on the foundation of the apostles and the prophets. And the cornerstone is Christ Jesus himself. [21] We who believe are carefully joined together, becoming a holy temple for the Lord. [22] Through him you Gentiles are also joined together as part of this dwelling where God lives by his Spirit.

### Principle

1. Church is the English translation of the Greek word ekklesia. The use of the Greek term prior to the emergence of the Christian Church is important as two streams of meaning flow from the history of its usage into the New Testament understanding of Church.
  - a. First, the Greek term which basically means "called out" was commonly used to indicate an assembly of citizens of a Greek city and is so used in Acts 19:32, 39. The citizens who were quite conscious of their privileged status over against slaves and noncitizens were called to the assembly by a herald and dealt in their meetings democratically with matters of common concern. When the early Christians understood themselves as constituting a Church, no doubt exists that they perceived themselves as called out by God in Jesus Christ for a special purpose and that their status was a privileged one in Jesus Christ. (Eph. 2:19).
  - b. Second, the Greek term was used more than one hundred times in the Greek translation of the Old Testament in common use in the time of Jesus. The Hebrew term (qahal) meant simply "assembly" and could be used in a variety of ways, referring for example to an assembling of prophets (1 Sam. 19:20), soldiers (Num. 22:4), or the people of God (Deut. 9:10). The use of the term in the Old Testament in referring to the people of God is important for understanding the term "Church" in the New Testament. The first Christians were Jews who used the Greek translation of the Old Testament. For them to use a

self-designation that was common in the Old Testament for the people of God reveals their understanding of the continuity that links the Old and New Testaments. The early Christians understood themselves as the people of the God who had revealed Himself in the Old Testament (Heb. 1:1-2), as the true children of Israel (Rom. 2:28-29) with Abraham as their father (Rom. 4:1-25), and as the people of the New Covenant prophesied in the Old Testament (Heb. 8:1-13). As a consequence of this broad background of meaning in the Greek and Old Testament worlds, the term "Church" is used in the New Testament of a local congregation of called-out Christians, such as the "Church of God which is at Corinth" (1 Cor. 1:2), and also of the entire people of God, such as in the affirmation that Christ is "the head over all things to the Church, Which is his body" (Eph. 1:22-23).

- c. What Church means in the New Testament is further defined by a host of over one hundred other descriptive expressions occurring in relationship to passages where the Church is being addressed. Three basic perspectives embrace most of these other descriptions.
  - d. First, the Church is seen as the body of Christ; and a cluster of images exists in this context as emphasis falls on the head (Eph. 4:15-16), the members (1 Cor. 6:12-20), the body (1 Cor. 12:12-27), or the bride (Eph. 5:22-31).
  - e. The Church is also seen as God's new creation (2 Cor. 5:17), the new persons (Eph. 2:14-15), fighters against Satan (Eph. 6:10-20), or bearers of light (Eph. 5:7-9).
  - f. Thirdly, the Church is quite often described as a fellowship of faith with its members described as the saints (1 Cor. 1:2), the faithful (Col. 1:2), the witnesses (John 15:26-27), or the household of God (1 Pet. 4:17).
2. Church is the word used to translate the Greek word *ekklesia* that in the New Testament designates the community created by the preaching of the gospel of Jesus Christ. Theologically, church members are those people who participate in Baptism, receive the gift of the Holy Ghost, and gather together for common Worship and the celebration of the Communion. Sociologically, church is used to

- refer to a religious organization which is Universal in its scope.
3. The Church is a distinctive New Testament reality. Yet it is at the same time a continuation, through a new phase of redemptive history, of Israel, the seed of Abraham, God's covenant people of Old Testament times. The differences between the church and Israel are rooted in the newness of the covenant by which God and his people are bound to each other. The new covenant under which the church lives (1 Cor. 11:25; Heb. 8:7-13) is a new form of the relationship whereby God says to a chosen community, "I will be your God; you shall be my people" (Exod. 6:7; Jer. 31:33). Both the continuity and the discontinuity between Israel and the church reflect this change in the form of the covenant, which took place at Christ's coming.
  4. The new features of the new covenant are as follows:
    - a. First, the Old Testament priests, sacrifices, and sanctuary are superseded by the mediation of Jesus, the crucified, risen, and reigning God-man (Heb. 1-10), in whom believers now find their identity as the seed of Abraham and the people of God (Gal. 3:29; 1 Pet. 2:4-10).
    - b. Second, the ethnic exclusivism of the old covenant (Deut. 7:6; Ps. 147:19-20) is replaced by the inclusion in Christ on equal terms of believers from all nations (Eph. 2-3; Rev. 5:9-10).
    - c. Third, the Spirit is poured out both on each Christian and on the church, so that fellowship with Christ (1 John 1:3), ministry from Christ (John 12:32; 14:18; Eph. 2:17), and foretastes of heaven (2 Cor. 1:22; Eph. 1:14) become realities of churchly experience.
  5. The unbelief of most Jews (Rom. 9-11) led to a situation depicted by Paul as God breaking off the natural branches of his olive tree (the historical covenant community) and replacing them with wild olive shoots (Rom. 11:17-24). The predominantly Gentile character of the church is due not to the terms of the new covenant but to Jewish rejection of them, and Paul taught that this will one day be reversed (Rom. 11:15, 23-31).
  6. The New Testament defines the church in terms of the fulfillment of Old Testament hopes and patterns through a relationship to all three Persons of the Godhead, brought about by the mediatorial ministry of Jesus Christ.

7. The church is seen as:
  - a. The family and flock of God (Eph. 2:18; 3:15; 4:6; John 10:16; 1 Pet. 5:2-4),
  - b. His Israel (Gal. 6:16);
  - c. The body and bride of Christ (Eph. 1:22-23; 5:25-28; Rev. 19:7; 21:2, 9-27).
  - d. The temple of the Holy Ghost (1 Cor. 3:16; Eph. 2:19-22).
8. Those in the church are called the "elect" (chosen), the "saints" (consecrated ones, set apart for God), and the "brothers" (adopted children of God).
  - a. Essentially, the church is, was, and always will be a single worshiping community, permanently gathered in the true sanctuary which is the heavenly Jerusalem (Gal. 4:26; Heb. 12:22-24), the place of God's presence.
  - b. Here all who are alive in Christ, the physically living with the physically dead (the church militant with the church triumphant) worship continually.
  - c. In the world, this one church appears in the form of local congregations, each one called to fulfill the role of being a microcosm (a small-scale representative sample) of the church as a whole.
  - d. This explains how it is that for Paul the one church universal is the body of Christ (1 Cor. 12:12-26; Eph. 1:22-23; 3:6; 4:4), and so is the local congregation (1 Cor. 12:27).
9. It is customary to characterize the church on earth as:
  - a. One (because it really is so in Christ, as Eph. 4:3-6 shows, despite the great number of local churches and denominational groupings).
  - b. Holy (because it is consecrated to God corporately, as each Christian is individually, Eph. 2:21).
  - c. Catholic ([universal] because it is worldwide in extent and seeks to hold the fullness of the faith).
  - d. Apostolic (because it is founded on apostolic teaching, Eph. 2:20).
10. All four qualities may be illustrated from Ephesians 2:19-22.
11. There is a distinction to be drawn between the church as we humans see it and as God alone can see it.

- a. This is the historic distinction between the "visible church" and the "invisible church."
  - b. Invisible means, not that we can see no sign of its presence, but that we cannot know (as God, the heart-reader, knows, 2 Tim. 2:19) which of those baptized, professing members of the church as an organized institution are inwardly regenerate and thus belong to the church as a spiritual fellowship of believers loving their Savior.
  - c. Jesus taught that in the organized church there would always be people who thought they were Christians and passed as Christians, some indeed becoming ministers, but who were not renewed in heart and would therefore be exposed and rejected at the Judgment (Matt. 7:15-27; 13:24-30, 36-43, 47-50; 25:1-46).
  - d. The "visible-invisible" distinction is drawn to take account of this.
  - e. It is not that there are two churches but that the visible community regularly contains imitation Christians whom God knows not to be real (and who could know this for themselves if they would, 2 Cor. 13:5).
12. The New Testament assumes that all Christians will share in the life of a local church:
- a. meeting with it for worship (Heb. 10:25),
  - b. accepting its nurture and discipline (Matt. 18:15-20; Gal. 6:1), and
  - c. sharing in its work of witness.
13. Christians disobey God and impoverish themselves by refusing to join with other believers or attend their Church (when there is a local congregation that they can belong to).
14. God does not prescribe for Christian worship in the detailed fashion of Old Testament times, but the New Testament shows clearly what the staple ingredients of corporate Christian worship are:
- a. praise ("psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs," Eph. 5:19),
  - b. prayer
  - c. preaching
  - d. teaching
  - e. regular administration of the Ordinances (Acts 20:7-11).



15. Singing to God's praise was evidently a big thing in the apostolic church, as it has been in all movements of spiritual power ever since:
  - a. Paul and Barnabas, along with their praying (aloud), sang hymns in the prison in Philippi (Acts 16:25),
  - b. The New Testament contains a number of what appear to be hymn fragments (Eph. 5:14; Phil. 2:6-11; 1 Tim. 3:16; and others) while the "new songs" of Revelation are both numerous and exuberant, indeed ecstatic (Rev. 4:8, 11; 5:9-10, 12-13; 7:10, 12; 11:15, 17-18; 12:10-12; 15:3-4; 19:1-8; 21:3-4).
  - c. Any local church anywhere that is spiritually alive will undoubtedly take its singing, praying, preaching, and teaching very seriously.
16. The preeminent characteristic of the Church in the New Testament is devotion to Jesus Christ as Lord.
  - a. He established the Church under His authority (Matt. 16:13-20) and created the foundation for its existence in His redeeming death and demonstration of God's power in His resurrection.
  - b. Christ's position as the Lord evoked, sustained, and governed the major characteristics of the life of the Church in the way members were admitted, treated one another, witnessed to His power, worshiped, and lived in hope of His return.
17. Persons were admitted to the local congregation only upon their placing their trust in Christ as Savior (Acts 2:37-42), openly confessing this (Rom. 10:9-13), and being baptized (Acts 10:44-48).
  - a. Baptism or immersion in water was performed because Christ had commanded it (Matt. 28:18-20) and was itself a dramatic symbolic picturing of the burial and resurrection of Christ (Rom. 6:3-4).
  - b. Joining the Church made one a fully participating member in it, unlike many of the religious groups in the first century in which there was a substantial period of probation before full acceptance.
  - c. When Christ accepted the person, the congregation did also, even though the members might be aware of weaknesses (Rom. 14:1-4).
  - d. The way in which members of the Church were called on to treat one another was modeled by what God had done in Christ

- for the Church.
- i. They were to forgive one another (Col. 3:12-14) and to love one another (Eph. 5:1-2; 1 John 3:16) because God had done this for all of them in Christ.
  - ii. This foundation for Christian fellowship gave an ultimacy to its requirements that reflected on each Church member's relationship with God (1 John 2:7-11).
- e. Members of the Church were called on to demonstrate the power of Christ's redemption in their own lives by exemplary conduct, embracing every area of life (Rom. 12:1-13:7; Col. 3:12-4:1).
  - f. The overcoming of sins in the lives of Christians was a witness to the redeeming power of Christ in action in the community (Gal. 5:22-26), and the sins to which the communities were prone were clearly identified and challenged (Gal. 5:19-21).
  - g. The Christians were expected to adopt a new life style that was appropriate to their commitment to Christ (Eph. 4:17-24).
18. The worship of the early Church demonstrated the lordship of Christ, not only in the fact that He was extolled and praised but also in the fact that worship demonstrated the obligation of Christians to love and to nurture one another (1 Cor. 11:17-22; 14:1-5).
- a. In distinction from worship as it was practiced in the pagan cults of Greece and Rome, Christian worship not only stressed the relation of a person to the Deity but went beyond this to stress that worship should edify and strengthen the Christians present (1 Cor. 14:26) and should challenge pagans to accept Christ (1 Cor. 14:20-25).
  - b. Christian worship was often enthusiastic and usually involved all Christians present as participants (1 Cor. 14:26).
  - c. This openness both inspired creativity and opened the way for excesses which were curbed by specific directives (1 Cor. 14:26-33a; 1 Tim. 2:1-10) and by the rule that what was done should be appropriate to those committed to a God of peace (1 Cor. 14:33a).
  - d. All of these characteristics of the life of the Church existed in the context of an urgency created by the awareness that Christ was going to return (1 Thess. 1:9-10).

- e. Christ's return would bring judgment to the unbelievers (1 Thess. 5:1-10) and thus made witnessing to them an urgent concern.
  - f. How central this belief was to the early Church is illustrated by the fact that the Lord's Supper, which they observed at His command was seen as proclaiming "the Lord's death till he come (1 Cor. 11:26).
  - g. The return of Christ would result in glorious joy and the transformation of the Christians—a hope that sustained them in difficult times (2 Thess. 1:5-12).
19. A striking feature of the organization of the early Churches is that every member of the Church was seen as having a gift for service which was to be used cooperatively for the benefit of all (Rom. 12:1-8; 1 Pet. 4:10).
- a. Paul used the imagery of the human body to illustrate this unique feature of the Church's life, stressing that every Christian has a necessary function and a responsibility to function with an awareness of his or her share in the body of Christ (1 Cor. 12:12-31).
  - b. In the context of this strong belief that every member has a ministry, certain persons were designated to fulfill specific tasks in relation to the functioning of the Church such as apostles, bishops, elders, and deacons.
  - c. As these offices are examined, it is important to remember that the organization of the early Churches was not necessarily the same in every locality.
  - d. A large Church would need more organizational structure than a small one, and the presence of an apostle or his designated representative would cause the other leaders in a given Church to be seen in a different light.
  - e. In addition to these variables, the Church was in a period of rapid growth; and as it responded to the needs of ministry, roles or offices, such as the appointment of the seven in Acts 6:1-7, were created to enable the Church to fulfill its ministry in Christ.
20. "Apostle" usually designated one appointed as the authorized representative of Jesus Christ, and the term in the New Testament is

most frequently applied to one of the Twelve (Acts 1:15-26) or to Paul (Gal. 1:1-24).

- a. The term was occasionally used in a wider sense to indicate the validity and importance of one of the early Church's leaders, such as James (Gal. 1:19) or Barnabas (Acts 14:4; compare Rom. 16:7).
  - b. The office is seen by many theologians and biblical scholars as foundational in the Church's history (Eph. 2:20).
21. The English word "bishop" is the normal translation of the Greek noun episkopos, which occurs five times in the New Testament (Acts 20:28; Philem. 1:1; 1 Tim. 3:2; Titus 1:7; 1 Pet. 2:25).
- a. Prior to the advent of Christianity episkopos meant "inspector," "watchman," or "overseer."
  - b. It was used of the finance officers of Greek guilds and of the officers Athens sent to its subject-states. Finance officers administered revenues for Greek temples.
  - c. One of the five usages of episkopos in the New Testament was as a title applied to Jesus: "the Shepherd and Bishop of your souls" (1 Pet. 2:25).
  - d. The other four uniformly referred to one who had a role or office in an early Gentile Christian congregation.
  - e. In addressing the elders of the Church of Ephesus the Apostle Paul stated, "the Holy Ghost hath made you overseers (episcopous), to feed the Church of God" (Acts 20:28).
  - f. In the salutation to his Epistle to the Philippians he greeted "the bishops and deacons" of the Church at Philippi (1:1).
  - g. In 1 Timothy 3:1-7 qualifications were given for a "bishop": reputation, marital status, character traits, hospitality, teaching ability, non-drunkenness, attitude toward money, responsible parenthood, and length of time as a Christian.
  - h. A similar list of qualifications for a "bishop" appears in Titus 1:6-9.
  - i. The noun episkope, meaning "overseership," "bishopric," or "office," appears in Acts 1:20 (Ps. 109:8) and in 1 Timothy 3:1.
  - j. The verb episkopeo, meaning "to exercise oversight," appears in some Greek New Testament manuscripts and hence some English translations (KJV, ASV) in 1 Peter 5:2.

- k. Paul, addressing the Ephesian "elders," reminded them that the Holy Spirit made them "overseers" (episkopous) "to feed (verb which is cognate to the noun "pastor") the Church of the Lord."
  - l. From this many conclude that in Paul's time "elder," "bishop," and "pastor" were terms used to describe three different functions of the same Christian leader, not three distinct ministerial offices.
22. According to Philippians 1:1 the Church at Philippi had more than one bishop. During the second century A.D.
- a. Churches came to have a single bishop, and then that bishop came to exercise oversight over nearby rural Churches as well as the city Church so that his ecclesiastical territory became known as a "diocese" or "see" ("eparchy" in the East).
  - b. Bishops of Churches that had been founded by apostles were said to be in succession to the apostles, and hence their teaching was held to be authentic and their authority collegial.
  - c. By 400 A.D. in the West, the bishop of Rome began to assume extraordinary authority above other bishops.
  - d. Today the Roman Catholic Church, the Eastern Orthodox Churches, the Old Catholic Church, the Anglican communion, and the (Lutheran) Church of Sweden teach the doctrine of apostolic (or episcopal) succession.
  - e. Other Lutheran bodies, the United Methodist Church (USA), and the Moravian Church have bishops who serve as superintendents.
  - f. Bishops and elders had quite similar responsibilities; and Paul, addressing the elders in Acts 20:17, stated that they were bishops or overseers (v. 28).
  - g. Usually, however, the term "bishop" is in the singular (1 Tim. 3:1), and the term "elders" is plural (Jas. 5:14) as a specific Church is addressed.
  - h. The responsibilities of a bishop are described in 1 Timothy 3:1-7 and Titus 1:7-9.
  - i. He is described as representing the Church in a way which would suggest that each Church had one designated leader who functioned much in the way a contemporary pastor does.
23. The term "deacon" is derived from the Greek word diakonos, which is

usually translated "servant" or "minister."

- a. Only a few times in the New Testament (Phil. 1:1; 1 Tim. 3:8, 12, and, in some translations, Rom. 16:1) is it translated "deacon" and used to denote one holding a Church office.
  - b. The noun form comes from a verb which means "to serve," probably originally in the sense of waiting on tables.
  - c. It came to be used to signify a broad range of types of service.
  - d. In the New Testament, the noun is used to refer to ministers of the gospel (Col. 1:23), ministers of Christ (1 Tim. 4:6), servants of God (2 Cor. 6:4), those who follow Jesus (John 12:26), and in many other similar ways.
  - e. Although Philippians 1:1 and 1 Timothy 3 clearly indicate that the office of deacon existed in New Testament times, no explicit Bible reference describes the duties of deacons or refers to the origin of the office.
  - f. In Philippians 1:1 and in numerous references in early Christian literature outside the New Testament, bishops and/or elders and deacons are mentioned together, with deacons mentioned last.
  - g. Because of this order, and because of the natural connotations of the word diakonos, most interpreters believe that deacons, from the beginning, served as assistants of the Church leaders.
  - h. Certainly, that was clearly the role of deacons by the second century.
24. Deacons continued to fill an important role in the ministry of the early Church, serving the needs of the poor, assisting in baptism and the Lord's Supper, and performing other practical ministerial tasks.
- a. The nature of the qualifications of deacons outlined in 1 Timothy 3:8-13 perhaps indicates the function of deacons in the New Testament period.
  - b. In most respects, the qualifications of deacons mirror those of the "bishops," the leaders of the Churches.
  - c. The high standards of morality and character expected of both demonstrates the Church's serious regard for the offices and the importance of their functions.
  - d. The requirements that deacons must have a clear understanding of the faith (1 Tim. 3:9) and that their

- faithfulness already be proven (1 Tim. 3:10) indicate that their duties consisted of more than menial chores.
- e. The exclusion of those who are "double-tongued" (v. 8) may be evidence that the work of the deacons brought them into close contact with the everyday lives of the Church members, as would occur in visiting the sick and ministering to the other physical needs of fellow Christians.
  - f. Such service would both give them greater knowledge of items for gossip and allow them greater opportunity to spread such gossip, thus making it crucial that they should not be prone to talebearing.
  - g. The requirement that deacons not be greedy may indicate that they were assigned the responsibility for collecting and distributing Church resources.
25. Whether the deacons' functions extended to leading in worship is not clear.
- a. Gifts for teaching, a requirement for "bishops," are not mentioned in the qualifications for deacons.
  - b. The connotations of table service in the word diakonos and the centrality of the Lord's Supper in the worship of the early Church strongly imply that distributing the elements and, in the early years, serving the agape meal were important functions of deacons.
  - c. Many interpreters believe that the account of the choosing of the seven in Acts 6 describes the selection of the first deacons, although the term diakonos is not used in the passage and the term diakonia ("service" or "ministry") is used only for the work of the twelve.
  - d. The tasks that the seven performed, however, later seem to be principal functions of deacons.
  - e. On the other hand, two of the seven, Stephen and Philip, are known to us as prominent preachers and evangelists, roles which may not have been common for deacons.
  - f. The seven were set apart for their task in a ceremony in which the apostles "laid their hands on them" (Acts 6:6).
  - g. This ceremony may reflect the origin of later ordination practice.

26. The list of qualifications in 1 Timothy 3:11 requires that "women" must "likewise" (NASB) be similar in character to the men.
  - a. Although this remark may refer to the wives of male deacons (KJV, NIV) it probably should be interpreted as a parenthetical reference to female deacons, or deaconesses (NIV footnote; NASB footnote; NRSV footnote).
  - b. Romans 16:1 refers to Phebe as a diakonos of the Church at Cenchrea. Williams New Testament translates this as deaconess. The NRSV uses "deacon."
  - c. Other translations use "servant." In this verse, Phebe's role as "helper" and Paul's obvious regard for her work seem to support the conclusion that she functioned as a deacon in her Church.
  - d. Deaconesses are mentioned prominently in Christian writings of the first several centuries. They cared for needy fellow believers, visited the sick, and were especially charged with assisting in the baptism of women converts.
27. Deacons were required to be godly (1 Tim. 3:8-13).
  - a. Since their duties are not specified and they are usually listed with the bishops, it is usually assumed that deacons devoted themselves to the temporal work of the local Church, assisting the pastor in whatever ways were most appropriate to the local congregation of Christians as the seven did in Acts (6:1-7).
  - b. The organization of the early Churches was not governed by a board of deacons that each Church had to follow.
  - c. The guiding principle was that the Church was the body of Christ with a mission to accomplish, and lead by the Holy Spirit in fulfilling its responsibilities (Rom. 12:1-8; 1 Cor. 12:4-11; Eph. 4:11-16).
28. Jesus taught His disciples that by following Him they were to be involved in a movement that would continue (Matt. 16:13-20; John 14:12-14), but it was after the resurrection of Jesus that the mission of the Church really began (Matt. 28:16-20; John 20:19-23; Acts 1:6-11).
29. The earliest Christians were Palestinian Jewish followers of Jesus and found it difficult to witness to non-Jews (Acts 10:1-48).
  - a. The bridge to the Gentiles was the Hellenistic Jewish



- Christianity, which sprang into existence with the conversion of Jews from the dispersion who were visiting in Jerusalem and converted at Pentecost (Acts 2:5-47).
- b. These Jews whose residence had been in the cities of the Roman Empire were called Hellenistic because they were generally more open to the Greco-Roman culture than their Palestinian colleagues. They spoke and wrote Greek as their primary language, gave their children Greek names (such as Stephen which means "crown" in Greek), and were more willing to relate to Gentiles. It was this group of the early Christians that was the major channel in spreading the gospel to the Gentiles (Acts 19:11-26).
30. Paul was a Hellenistic Jew (Acts 21:39); and when he became a Christian, he was called to and accepted a ministry to the Gentiles (Acts 22:21; Eph. 3:1-13). Significantly, he inaugurated his ministry of founding new Churches from the base of a Church composed of both Gentiles and Hellenistic Jewish Christians (Acts 11:19-26; 13:1-3). Paul's strategy was to visit synagogues in the cities of the Roman Empire and to proclaim Jesus as the Christ (Acts 18:5). The usual result was that some Jews and some Gentiles who were interested in Judaism (called God-fearers, Acts 18:7) believed in Christ, were expelled from the synagogue, and formed the nucleus for a growing Church (Acts 18:5-11; 19:8-10).
  31. The Acts of the Apostles gives only a glimpse of the early Christian heroes and heroines with a focus on Peter, Paul, and a few others (Acts 18:1-4, 24-28). There were, however, many heroic Christian witnesses unknown to us who first carried the gospel to Rome (Acts 28:14-15) and to the limits of the Empire in India, Egypt, and the outlying areas of Europe.
  32. The New Testament has a lot more to say about the kind of community the Church ought to be before the world than it has to say about its mission to the world.
    - a. Jesus made it clear that the reason he wanted his people to develop true community was "so that the world may believe" (John 17:21). This is his ultimate goal.
    - b. There is no doubt that it is when the Church most clearly lives out the gospel in the relationship of its members, it becomes

- the most powerful force for attracting non-members.
- c. It was so in the early Church in Jerusalem.
  - d. " They all joined together constantly in prayer..." (1:14).
  - e. " ...they were all together in one place" (2:1).
  - f. " Every day they continued to meet together...They broke bread in their homes and ate together with glad and sincere hearts, praising God and enjoying the favour of all the people" (2:46, 47).
  - g. " ...they raised their voices together in prayer to God" (4:24).
  - h. "All the believers were one in heart and mind" (4:32).
  - i. " And all the believers used to meet together..." (5:12).
  - j. It is no wonder that "the Lord added to their number daily those who were being saved" (Acts 2:47).
33. Their hearts were filled with joy, for they were at peace with God and men. They were happy, for they loved God and one another. Such a joyful community attracts people, just as a beautiful flower garden attracts butterflies and bees.
34. Such a Church grows daily, naturally and without much conscious effort.
- a. Jesus' purpose for his followers was that they should be "salt for everyone on earth" and "light for the whole world" (Matthew 5:13, 14 - italics mine). His final message to his Church was that they were to take the gospel to the ends of the earth and he promised them the resources to do it (Matthew 28:18-20; Luke 24:45-49; Acts 1:8).
  - b. It seems apparent from these passages that he must have repeated this challenge to his followers many times over the forty days of his resurrection appearances, although in different words and with different emphases.
  - c. Jesus also gave his disciples some indication of how they were to go about it.
    - i. On the night of his arrest he prayed to his Father: "As you sent me into the world, I have sent them into the world" (John 17:18).
    - ii. Three days later, on the evening of his resurrection from the dead, he said to his disciples, "As the Father has sent me, I am sending you" (John 20:21).

- d. These words from John's Gospel represent the simplest form of the Great Commission, yet they are the most profound and most challenging. That is probably why they are the most neglected. The Church's ministry to the world is to be similar to his. As he had been sent, so he sends his disciples.
35. Salvation.
- a. To proclaim the Gospel throughout the world and make disciples of all kinds of people. "Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all things that I have commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age" (Matt. 28:19-20). "And He said to them, Go into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature" (Mark 16:15).
  - b. The passages above, often referred to as the Great Commission, were among Jesus' final admonitions to His disciples before He ascended to Heaven. Mark's gospel refers to Christ's command for his followers to "go preach the gospel to the world," while Matthew's reflects His emphasis for the Church "to go and make disciples of all nations." The combination of these two elements, evangelism and discipleship, are generally considered as Christ's primary mission for His Church.
  - c. "Evangelism" is the ministry of proclaiming the good news of Jesus Christ that will bring men's souls into fellowship with God.
  - d. "Discipleship" is the training of believers to become disciplined followers of Jesus and His principles.
  - e. The mission of the Church is, in reality, a continuation of Christ's earthly ministry (John 14:12).
  - f. Jesus viewed that redeeming men's souls was His whole purpose for coming to the earth. "For the Son of Man has come to save that which was lost" (Matt. 18:11). And in turn, He imparted this same objective to His disciples. He said to them, "Follow Me, and I will make you fishers of men" (Matt. 4:19).
  - g. The Apostle Paul later confirmed that the ministry of bringing people to God has been imparted to all those who have been

brought to Him (the Church). He wrote, "God... has reconciled us to Himself through Jesus Christ, and has given us the ministry of reconciliation" (2 Cor. 5:18).

- h. It is the purpose of every believer, not only pastors and clergymen, to bring souls to Jesus Christ.
- i. Perhaps the statement which best summarizes this mission of Christ and His Church, was given as Jesus read from Isaiah's prophecy in Nazareth's synagogue on the Sabbath day. He said, "The Spirit of the LORD is upon Me, because He has anointed Me to preach the gospel to the poor. He has sent Me to heal the brokenhearted, to preach deliverance to the captives and recovery of sight to the blind, to set at liberty those who are oppressed, to preach the acceptable year of the LORD" (Luke 4:18-19).

### 36. Education.

- a. To mature believers and prepare them to perform works of ministry. "And He Himself gave some to be apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, and some pastors and teachers, for the equipping of the saints for the work of ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ..." (Eph. 4:11-12).
- b. Another important mission of the Church, by means of its ministers, is to strengthen the body of believers and equip them for works of ministry. The Church should be an atmosphere of spiritual edification, where God's Word is taught, where believers are grounded, disciplined and led toward maturity. This not only serves to anchor their faith in Christ, but prepares them for service. According to God's plan, each member of the body of Christ is called to serve in some aspect of ministry (Rom. 12:6, 1 Cor. 12:14-31), especially as it pertains toward bringing souls to Christ (2 Cor. 5:17).
- c. Even the laity is charged to encourage and spur their brethren on toward works of ministry, and according to scripture, this is one of the primary reasons of our Church attendance. "And let us consider one another in order to stir up love and good works, not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as is the manner of some, but exhorting one another, and so much the more as you see the Day approaching" (Heb. 10:24-25).

### 37. Liberation.

- a. To represent the interests of the Kingdom of God in the world, and to influence our society with the ideals of the Lord. "You are the salt of the earth; but if the salt loses its flavor, how shall it be seasoned? It is then good for nothing but to be thrown out and trampled under foot by men. You are the light of the world. A city that is set on a hill cannot be hidden" (Matt. 5:13-14).
- b. Jesus used salt and light as metaphors of the influential characteristics of His Church in the world. Historically, salt has always been a valuable commodity used, among other things, as an antiseptic to withdraw infection. Light, of course, dispels darkness and is an essential element of life.
- c. Likewise, the presence of the Church in the world is Christ's antiseptic to sin, an influence of God's righteousness that tends to displace the infection of evil. The Church is intended to represent His interests in the affairs of society. It was never intended to be passive, nor to be confined within four walls of a building, but to be involved as a catalyst of God's high ideals in the world around us.

### 38. Dedication

- a. Christ has intended for His Church to let its light shine to the world — to love, to care for, and to meet needs of humanity, while upholding the redemptive truths and righteousness of Jesus Christ. "And let our people also learn to maintain good works, to meet urgent needs, that they may not be unfruitful" (Titus 3:14).
- b. Jesus told His Church, "Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works and glorify your Father in heaven" (Matt. 5:16).

### 39. Exaltation.

- a. To serve as a community of worship and fellowship — to manifest the presence and love of Jesus. "For where two or three are gathered together in My name, I am there in the midst of them" (Matt. 18:20).
- b. God originally made man for His own pleasure, to enjoy his fellowship and worship (Rev. 4:11, John 4:23). Thus, a part of the Lord's purpose of the Church, besides bringing people to

God, is to gather His people together and facilitate a corporate environment of worship, to express our love toward Him and one another.

- c. Jesus described these as the two highest ideals of Christianity. "And you shall love the LORD your God with all your heart, with all your soul, with all your mind, and with all your strength. This is the first commandment. And the second, like it, is this: You shall love your neighbor as yourself. There is no other commandment greater than these" (Mark 12:30-31).
- d. The Lord is greatly pleased to receive the corporate love and worship of His children who are joined together in unity and love toward one another (Eph. 4:1-4, 1 John 1:7). His presence is manifested in such an environment, and authenticates our Christian witness in the eyes of the world. "By this all will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another" (John 13:35).
- e. Sunday Church services were originally modeled from Lord's Day gatherings of the early Church which included the agape "love feast" (Acts 20:7).
- f. They would share a common meal together (Acts 2:46) and then partake in the Lord's Supper — in recognition of the Lord's sacrificial body, and in recognition of His beloved body, the Church. It was a gathering of love to the Lord and toward one another.

### Practice

1. What does the word "Church" mean?
2. What were the characteristics of the early Church's life?
3. How was the Church organized?
4. How did the early Church grow and expand?
5. What is the witness of the Church?
6. What is the mission of the Church?
7. Who is responsible for winning souls to Christ?
8. What is the role of the bishop?
9. What is the role of the deacon?
10. What is the preeminent characteristic of the Church in the New Testament?

11. What is the Church in the Old Testament?
12. What is the Church in the New Testament?
13. What is the true nature of Praise?
14. What is true worship?
15. What are the staple ingredients of corporate Christian worship?
16. What is the customary to characterization of the Church?
17. What are the four qualities of the Church as illustrated in Ephesians 2:19-22?
18. What is the distinguishing character of the church militant with the church triumphant?
19. What and where is the true sanctuary?
20. Theologically what are church members?