



## Welcome to GCLI!

You are starting an exciting journey! To be a leader in the church of Jesus Christ is the greatest privilege in the world. In the Great Commission Leadership Institute, we believe:

1. *Our mission in the church rises and falls on leadership.*  
That's why we are committed to seeing more leaders raised up for the Lord's kingdom.
2. *Leadership can be learned.*  
All great leaders in God's church were weak people who learned how to have a strong faith in a supernatural God.
3. *Leadership is best learned in the local church.*  
By combining "on the job" training in local church ministry with structured coursework, we have the best of both worlds—the practical with the academic.

May God grant you abundant grace as you aspire to serve the Lord Jesus Christ and His church in fulfilling His command to make disciples of all nations!



John Hopler  
Editor, GCLI

**Great Commission Leadership Institute**

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Book 3: Raising Godly Families / The Doctrine of Man and Sin & Grace / The Doctrine of the Scriptures

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GREAT COMMISSION LEADERSHIP INSTITUTE

BOOK 3

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## Article Guide

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4. Elders and Leading the Local Church
5. Women and Leadership
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5. Building Strong Families in the Church\*
6. Sanctification
7. God's Truth on Gender, Marriage, and Morality
8. Parent-Led Education
9. 2020 Plan for Reaching the Next Generation

#### Session VI: Grace / The Doctrine of the Scriptures

1. Grace<sup>†</sup>
2. Studying the Scriptures<sup>†</sup>
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<sup>†</sup> Audio teaching/outline

\*Multiple readings



## INTRODUCTION

### **Questions & Answers**

#### *1. What is the Great Commission Leadership Institute (GCLI) Foundations Program?*

GCLI is a 2-year national program, combining teachings, regional meetings, and local church mentoring, designed to systematically train pastor-elders who are part of Great Commission Churches (GCC).

#### *2. Why was this program developed?*

For over 40 years, God has raised up pastor-elders within Great Commission churches by the church leadership focusing on doctrine, character, and ministry skills of the men within their church. Also, during the 1990s, pastors in GCC churches consistently asked for help in training elders within their churches. A common question asked by men aspiring to be elders in churches was, “What practically can I do, and what steps can I take, to move closer to being an elder?” In response, the GCLI program was established. Since 1999, the GCLI has been a program that combines local church mentoring with the structure of a national program to enhance what God has already been doing for several decades in GCC.

#### *3. What is the typical schedule for a man enrolled in the program?*

Each man will be asked to devote about one to two hours per week on homework. Each session will have two teachings (on CD with outlines) and five or more readings. Overall, each session has six or more homework assignments—one based on the two teachings, and five or more based on the readings. In addition, each person will participate in a one to two hour mentor group, usually twice each month, led by elders in his church. Each participant will also have a personal mentor (an elder in the church), coaching him one-on-one in character areas and in ministry skills, which he will be exercising within the church ministry. Finally, each person will participate in the annual Pastor/Staff Conference, coupled with regional meetings with other elder-pastors in GCC churches near to them.

#### *4. Where will the regional meetings be held?*

The regional meetings will be held in regions throughout the United States. Contact your pastor for the one closest to you.

*5. What will be taught at these regional meetings?*

The regional meetings will cover the “Going Deeper” teachings. That is, we will cover the core values and doctrines covered in the GCLI material, but with greater focus and depth.

*6. Why were the topics in the GCLI Foundations material chosen?*

Our desire in GCLI is to give a basic orientation and overview of those issues that every man should know before he is appointed as an elder. The topics taught on the CDs and the readings are ones that cover these essentials.

*7. Why not simply cover these topics within the local church? Isn't the local church adequate for teaching these topics to elder candidates?*

Yes, the local church is adequate for raising up elders. And be assured that each local church in GCC is the foundation for the GCLI program. GCLI will only enhance what the church is already doing in developing men in doctrine/core values, character, and ministry skills. Furthermore, the mentor group topics will all be covered in groups led by the elders of the local church.

*8. How will GCLI enhance men in doctrine and core values?*

A special dynamic occurs when the Word is taught in a group setting. Few churches have enough elder candidates to provide this dynamic for their local leadership training. Also, GCLI provides articles and testimonies from pastors who have broader gifts and effects than may be present in a particular local church. This impresses the truth more deeply into the lives of church leaders. Finally, specific doctrinal issues that pastors in GCC churches encounter in day to day ministry will be the focus of study in the program.

*9. How will GCLI enhance the character training of those enrolled?*

As part of the program, each participant will take the Elder Qualification Test to develop character qualities in which to grow. The structure of the program, coupled with counsel by regional directors, will enhance the character training done by local pastors.

*10. How will GCLI enhance the ministry skills training of men in the church?*

The structure provided by the program and the counsel by regional leaders will help local pastors focus on developing practical ministry skills in each participant. Pastors' Conference workshops and subsequent networking from the workshops will help develop participant's ministry skills. The mentor group topics are designed to deal with practical day-to-day ministry issues in which every elder must be skilled.

*11. Please describe the mentor group times.*

The mentor groups can best be described as “simulated elder meetings,” where doctrinal and ministry issues affecting the whole church are discussed. The elder candidates will not only be trained in ministry decision-making, but will also be brought into a closer fellowship with the elders of the local church.

*12. What if the material covered is inconsistent with that which is taught in the local church?*

Be assured that the program is designed to deal with doctrines and ministry issues relevant to every church in GCC. Controversial doctrines are addressed in a balanced way or are avoided altogether. No one ministry model is emphasized. In addition, all pastors are invited to help in the development of materials for the program. The goal is that the GCLI program represent the entire association of churches.

*13. Why are the articles written by Great Commission pastors, rather than others in the body of Christ?*

There are two primary reasons we chose Great Commission pastors to be the writers of these articles.

First, one of the goals of GCLI is for you to become part of the leadership community of Great Commission Churches. We are a band of brothers linked together to reach the world with the gospel of Jesus Christ. Reading articles by ones within our association is a way for you to get to know some of the men that you are joining in the mission of world evangelization.

Second, we whole-heartedly believe that God can raise up any man to be an elder-pastor. The pastors in Great Commission Churches are not superstars. They are ordinary men who have been empowered by an extraordinary God. These articles show that any man can become a leader in God's church, if he simply is humble and committed to God, His Word, and His church. Honest testimonies and practical articles by the association's pastors demonstrate to future pastors that being a pastor is not out of reach—it is very doable.

*14. What are the requirements for those interested in enrolling in GCLI?*

The GCLI program is for any man aspiring to be an elder in GCC who:

- Is recommended by a pastor in his local church;
- Agrees to participate in the Pastors Conference and regional meetings; and
- Agrees to participate in the mentor group in his local church.

*15. What are the guidelines that local church pastors should use in selecting participants for GCLI?*

Here are some suggested guidelines:

- Does he have a sincere desire to do the work of an elder and to aspire to that office?
- Is there a general confidence that he could possibly be recognized as an elder in the next few years?
- Is he presently doing effective ministry within the local church?
- Has he had evangelism training in his church?
- Has he had basic small group (or ministry) leadership training in the local church?
- Has he participated in mission activities and conferences through the local church (e.g., Faith-walkers, High School LT, short-term international mission trip, domestic mission trip, etc.)?

*16. Is there a limit to the number of men who can participate in the program from any given church?*

There is no official limit. However, practically, there will be a limit to the number of men any given pastor will be able to mentor.

*17. Is there a recommendation as to the number of participants from each church?*

Although it will vary greatly from church to church, we would recommend (and hope) that churches have enrolled one to four elder candidates in GCLI per existing elder enrolled in GCLI.

*18. What about women and those who are not elder candidates? Can they participate?*

Women and others may (and are encouraged to) participate in the Pastor/Staff Conference, regional conferences, and in the mentor group times (per the discretion of the pastors in each local church). Although the material is primarily designed for developing elders, the material can be used for training other leaders in the local church.

*19. What is the cost of GCLI?*

The program will cost each participant \$75 for the entire two-year program. In addition, each participant will need to pay for registration and housing/food/transportation costs for the Pastor/Staff Conference and the regional meetings.

*20. What are the benefits that a participant receives for this cost?*

- Orientation to the essential topics that a prospective elder needs to know.
- Solid teaching on leadership, including a notebook of readings for the mentor groups.
- Greater unity and camaraderie with leaders in GCC through participation in the group sessions.
- Focused coaching in character and ministry skills.
- A certificate of completion from GCC to be given to all who complete the 2-year program.

*21. What if someone cannot financially afford GCLI?*

Scholarships are provided for those who have financial needs and are not able to afford the cost of the GCLI program. Ask your regional director for more information.

*22. If someone enrolls in the program, will it guarantee his appointment as an elder in GCC or in his church?*

No GCLI participant is guaranteed that completion of the program will qualify him to be an elder. Local church leaders ultimately make the decisions concerning who is appointed as elder in their church. Pastors will certainly have increased peace and confidence in appointing a man who has completed this course. Therefore, the GCLI program is a tangible step toward becoming an elder for any man in a GCC church who desires this work. In addition, completion of the GCLI material is required for ordination by Great Commission Churches.



*23. Can a person enroll in GCLI at any point during the year?*

Yes, someone could enroll, for example, between Sessions II and III, or anytime during the program. GCLI is designed to be a continuous program that rotates every two years.

*24. If I have any further questions or suggestions as to GCLI or would like to contribute to the development of the program, whom should I contact?*

Contact your pastor, your regional director, or John Hopler (614-840-9900, [jrhopler@gmail.com](mailto:jrhopler@gmail.com)).

## How to Use the GCLI Notebook

GCLI is in four books with two sessions per book. Each of the two sessions contains six or more homework assignments. The first assignment of each session will be based on two teachings on CD. Listen to the CDs and follow along with the outlines provided.

In each church, the pastor(s) will lead a mentor group for six or more times. Mentor groups may prefer to meet weekly; others will meet every other week. Overall, in the course of one year, each mentor group will cover 30 teachings/articles.

Each GCLI participant will do the homework assigned and come prepared to share at the mentor group time. The homework will include an exercise which will help develop your convictions in key doctrines and core values. The first week's exercise will be a discussion of what was learned from the CDs. The other five homework exercises will be based upon readings which have been included in this notebook.

Each reading and exercise should take no more than 60-90 minutes to complete.

## A Word to the Wives

For those married men who are participating in the GCLI program, a commonly asked question is: How can my wife participate with me as I pursue the path of leadership?

There are several ways for a man's wife to participate:

*Regional and National Conferences.* Wives are welcome to attend regional and national conferences. In addition, be aware that every other year at the Pastors Conference there will be a special seminar track for the wives. Also, special seminars will be offered for the wives at several regional gatherings (see your regional coordinator for more details).

*CDs and Readings.* Wives are welcome (and encouraged) to listen to CDs of the teachings and to read the articles in the GCLI notebook. In this way, the values and truths are being imparted not just to the husband, but to the husband and wife as a team.

*Small Groups in the Local Church.* We urge each church to form small group activities specifically for the wives of those participating in GCLI. This could either be a wives' group or a couples' group that would meet, for example, monthly.

*One-on-One.* Developing a strong personal relationship with the wife of another pastoral candidate would be one of the most valuable ministries that a pastor's wife could do.



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## **Elder Qualifications Test**

JOHN HOPLER

An evaluation designed to help determine a man's maturity, measured by the standards set forth in 1 Timothy 3:1-7 and Titus 1:6-9.

### **Acknowledgements**

Most of the original information in this booklet was derived from a discussion by the elders of Valley Brook Community Church in Columbia, MD, compiled in writing by Steve Huhta. The author extends his gratitude to them for their service and contribution to this work.

In addition, I want to thank fellow pastors Rick Whitney and Brent Knox for their input and suggestions to me in developing this test.

John Hopler

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## **Elder Qualifications Test**

### HOW TO USE THIS TEST

This is a tool to help discern whether (or how closely) a man is qualified to be an elder.

For any man who is seriously being considered for appointment, the test should be taken by:

1. The man himself.
2. All the elders (locally and regionally) who know him.
3. His wife (or roommate).
4. Other leaders who are close to him.

For those aspiring to leadership, but not close to being appointed, the test should be taken by:

1. The man himself.
2. The elder who knows him best.
3. His wife (or roommate).

After this test is taken, the results should be discussed by the leadership and shared with the man whose life is being scrutinized. Page 27 gives further instructions on how to use the results of this test.



## Elder Qualifications Test

### TEST QUESTIONS AND QUALIFICATIONS DESCRIPTIONS

Person being evaluated: \_\_\_\_\_

Person who is doing evaluation: \_\_\_\_\_

The purpose of this test is not to rate the spirituality or maturity of the elder candidate, but to determine, yes or no, whether you personally have confidence that he is above reproach and thereby qualified to be an elder. Therefore, either answer Yes or No to the following questions by writing a “1” for a Yes, and a “0” for a No. Record a “1” if the questions do not apply (e.g., a question as to children if the man has no children). Then add the four answers for a total and insert that number on the Summary Sheet on page 26.

#### A. Above Reproach (NASB, NIV)

Verse: 1 Timothy 3:2

Definition: Greek word “anepileptos” means “not to lay hold of.” That which cannot be laid hold of. Not open to censure, irreproachable, irreprehensible. Phillips translation: of blameless reputation. Amplified Bible: give no grounds for accusation but must be above reproach.

#### Blameless (NIV)

Verse: Titus 1:6,7

Definition: Greek word “anegkleilous” means “not open to censure, irreproachable, unrebukable, irreprehensible.” Phillips translation: unquestioned integrity, of unimpeachable virtue. Amplified Bible: men who are of unquestionable integrity and are irreproachable.

1. Is it true that no one has an unresolved justifiable complaint against him? \_\_\_\_\_
  2. Do those closest to him (wife, other church members) believe he is qualified to be an elder? \_\_\_\_\_
  3. Does he believe he is qualified to be an elder? \_\_\_\_\_
  4. Is he open and vulnerable with others as to his personal life? \_\_\_\_\_
- Total for A** \_\_\_\_\_

Additional Comments: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

**B. Husband of One Wife (NASB, NIV)**

Verse: 1 Timothy 3:2, Titus 1:6

1. Is it true that neither he nor his wife (if he is married) have been divorced? \_\_\_\_\_  
Note: if a divorce in question was Biblically based, write down "1."

2. Is he faithful to his wife physically? \_\_\_\_\_  
(If single, does he have control of his sexual desires?)

3. Is he pure in his relationships with other women in the church? \_\_\_\_\_

4. Does he have a high moral standard as to what he reads, \_\_\_\_\_  
or watches in theatres, videos, T.V. or the internet?

**Total for B** \_\_\_\_\_

Additional Comments: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**C. Temperate (NASB, NIV)**

Verse: 1 Timothy 3:2, Titus 1:6

Definition Greek word "nephaios" means "sober, clear-thinking, mentally alert, able to make sound judgments." Thayer translation: a state untouched by any slumberous or beclouding influence. Phillips translation: a man of self-control. Amplified Bible: circumspect and temperate and self-controlled.

1. Does he regularly deny himself liberties, for the sake of \_\_\_\_\_  
benefiting others? (Romans 14; 1 Corinthians 8 & 10)

2. Does he control his weight? \_\_\_\_\_

3. Does he respond well when confronted with discouraging circumstances? \_\_\_\_\_

4. Is he free from significant and uncontrolled financial debts \_\_\_\_\_  
(not including a house, car or school loan)?

**Total for C** \_\_\_\_\_

Additional Comments: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**D. Prudent or Sensible (NASB, NIV)**

Verse: 1 Timothy 3:2, Titus 1:8

Definition: Greek word “sophron” means “discreet, reasonable, sensible, serious, sound mind, self-controlled.” Implies sound judgment and a disciplined state of mind which is not characterized by impulsiveness or given to extremes. New International Version: self-controlled. Phillips translation: a man of discretion. Amplified Bible: sensible and well-behaved, sober-minded (discreet).

1. Does he generally display good common sense, particularly in financial areas? \_\_\_\_\_
2. Can he give good counsel on matters dealing with personal relationships? \_\_\_\_\_
3. Does he consistently go to the word of God when making important decisions? \_\_\_\_\_
4. Is he able to think creatively on how to see the church make progress? \_\_\_\_\_

**Total for D** \_\_\_\_\_

Additional Comments: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

**E. Respectable (NASB, NIV)**

Verse: 1 Timothy 3:2, Titus 1:6

Definition: Greek word “kosmos” means “modest, honorable, decent, orderly, proper, trim, adorned, decorated, organized, attractive, beautiful.” Webster’s Dictionary: worthy of respect, decent or correct in character or behavior, proper. Wuest translation: one whose life is in accord with the position he holds and which is an adornment to it. Phillips translation: a man of disciplined life. Amplified Bible: dignified and orderly (disciplined) life.

1. Do others take his words to heart? \_\_\_\_\_
2. Does his external appearance measure up to what is considered proper both biblically and culturally? \_\_\_\_\_
3. Does he spend time regularly in planning out his time? \_\_\_\_\_
4. Does he keep his priorities? \_\_\_\_\_

**Total for E** \_\_\_\_\_

Additional Comments: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

**F. Hospitable (NASB, NIV)**

Verse: 1 Timothy 3:2, Titus 1:8

Definition: Greek word “philoxenos” means “lover of strangers, hospitable.” Webster’s Dictionary: given to generous and cordial reception or guests, offering a pleasant or sustaining environment, readily receptive. Amplified Bible: hospitable, showing love for and being a friend to believers, especially strangers or foreigners.

1. Does he often use his home to minister to people? \_\_\_\_\_
2. At church meetings, does he go out of his way to meet visitors or people he doesn’t know? \_\_\_\_\_
3. Does he generally have a cheerful countenance? \_\_\_\_\_
4. Does he regularly invite people to church? \_\_\_\_\_

**Total for F** \_\_\_\_\_

Additional Comments: \_\_\_\_\_

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**G. Able to Teach (NASB, NIV)**

Verse: 1 Timothy 3:2

Definition: Greek word “didaktikos” means “apt to teach.” Phillips translation: have the gift of teaching. Amplified Bible: be a capable and qualified teacher.

1. Is he able to share the word of God in a public group and have a good effect? \_\_\_\_\_
2. Is there clear growth in the lives of those people with whom he shares the word? \_\_\_\_\_
3. Has he led people to Christ? \_\_\_\_\_
4. Have there been people who have joined the church because of his sharing the word of God with them? \_\_\_\_\_

**Total for G** \_\_\_\_\_

Additional Comments: \_\_\_\_\_

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**H. Not Addicted to Wine (NASB, NIV)**

Verse: 1 Timothy 3:3, Titus 1:7

Definition: Greek word "paroinos" means "a man who sits too long at his wine, given to wine, drunken." New International Version: not given to drunkenness. Phillips translation: not intemperate, not overfond of wine. Amplified Bible: not given to wine, not given to drink.

1. Is it true that there are no sins that have mastered him \_\_\_\_\_
  2. Does he make sure to do nothing that is causing a weaker Christian to stumble? \_\_\_\_\_
  3. Is he sober emotionally? \_\_\_\_\_
  4. Does he refrain from excessive drinking or taking addictive drugs? \_\_\_\_\_
- Total for H** \_\_\_\_\_

Additional Comments: \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_

**I. Not Pugnacious (NASB, NIV)**

Verse: 1 Timothy 3:3

Definition: Greek word "plektes" means "excessively inclined to quarrel or fight, a bully, striker, quarreler." New International Version: not violent. Phillips translation: not violent. Amplified Bible: not combative.

1. Is he able to maintain a concern for a person though personally offended by that person? \_\_\_\_\_
  2. Is he diligent to not receive accusations against other people except on the basis of two or three witnesses? \_\_\_\_\_
  3. Does he consistently abandon potential quarrels? \_\_\_\_\_
  4. Does he handle criticism well? \_\_\_\_\_
- Total for I** \_\_\_\_\_

Additional Comments: \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_

**J. Gentle (NASB, NIV)**

Verse: 1 Timothy 3:3

Definition: Greek word "epieidis" means "gracious, encouraging, considerate, kind, yielding, seemly, equitable." Amplified Bible: gentle and considerate.

1. Is he flexible to change his positions on minor issues? \_\_\_\_\_
2. Is he a good and empathetic listener to people? \_\_\_\_\_
3. Is he kind and respectful towards those who are lowly or financially poor? \_\_\_\_\_
4. Is he able to secure the discipline of others without a show of authority? \_\_\_\_\_

**Total for J** \_\_\_\_\_

Additional Comments: \_\_\_\_\_

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**K. Uncontentious (NASB)**

Verse: 1 Timothy 3:3

Definition: Greek word "amakos" means "peaceable, not quarrelsome, not apt to contend, not given to angry debate, abstaining from fighting or strife, not struggling or fighting or giving a violent effort to obtain something, not disputing." New International Version: not quarrelsome. Phillips translation: not a controversialist. Amplified Bible: not quarrelsome but forbearing and peaceable.

1. Does he avoid foolish controversies or arguments about nonessential matters? \_\_\_\_\_
2. Does he promote peace, harmony and unity rather than division when doctrinal issues are discussed? \_\_\_\_\_
3. Does he see the good points in the views of other Christians with whom he generally disagrees? \_\_\_\_\_
4. Is he a man under authority (in the church, in business, and in society)? \_\_\_\_\_

**Total for K** \_\_\_\_\_

Additional Comments: \_\_\_\_\_

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**L. Free From the Love of Money (NASB)**

Verse: 1 Timothy 3:3

Definition: Greek word “aphilarguros” means “not greedy, without love of money.” Phillips translation: not greedy for money. Amplified Bible: not a lover of money — insatiable for wealth and ready to obtain it by questionable means.

**Not Fond of Sordid Gain (NASB)**

Verse: Titus 1:7

Definition: Greek word “aiskrokerdei” means “greedy, of base gain.” New International Version: not pursuing dishonest gain. Phillips translation: not greedy for financial gain. Amplified Bible: not grasping and greedy for filthy lucre (financial gain).

1. Does he trust God when tested financially? \_\_\_\_\_
2. Is he generous with his money? \_\_\_\_\_
3. Does he value ministering to people more than having a job on staff with the church? \_\_\_\_\_
4. Does he tithe? \_\_\_\_\_

**Total for L** \_\_\_\_\_

Additional Comments: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

**M. Manages His Household Well (NASB)**

Verse: 1 Timothy 3:4

Definition: Greek word “kalos proistamenon” means “to direct, be at the head, rule well, be concerned about, care for, give aid.” Also “to stand before; hence to lead, attend to, indicating care and diligence.” Wuest translation: preside over his own household. Phillips translation: must have proper authority in his own household. Amplified Bible: rule his own household well.

1. Does he lead out spiritually in his family? \_\_\_\_\_
2. Does he take the lead in training his children in character? \_\_\_\_\_
3. Is his house clean? \_\_\_\_\_
4. Does he maintain a budget of his finances? \_\_\_\_\_

**Total for M** \_\_\_\_\_

Additional Comments: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

**N. Keeping His Children Under Control with All Dignity (NASB)**

Verse: 1 Timothy 3:4

Definition: Greek word for control is “hupotage,” meaning “subjection.” Also, “primarily a military term, to rank under.” Greek word for dignity is “semnotes,” meaning “seriousness.”  
 New International Version: see that his children obey him with proper respect. Phillips translation: able to control and command the respect of his children. Amplified Bible: keeping his children under control, with true dignity, commanding their respect in every way and keeping them respectful.

**Having Children . . . Not Accused of Rebellion or Dissipation (NASB)**

Verse: Titus 1:6

Defintion: Greek word for dissipation, “asotia,” means “debauchery, wild, wastefulness.” The word for rebellion, “anupotaktuos,” means “not made subject, disobedient, undisciplined.”  
 New International Version: not open to the charge of being wild and disobedient. Phillips translation: not likely to be accused of loose living or lawbreaking. Amplified Bible: not open to the accusation of being loose in morals and conduct or unruly and disorderly.

**Having Children Who Believe (NASB)**

Verse: Titus 1:6

Definition: Greek word for believe, “pistos,” means “faithful, reliable, dependable, trustworthy, inspiring trust, confidence or faith.” Phillips translation: with children brought up as Christians. Amplified Bible: whose children are (well-trained and are) believers.

- 1. Are his children consistently well-behaved in public? \_\_\_\_\_
  - 2. Does he have a good, healthy relationship with his children? \_\_\_\_\_
  - 3. Do his children respect him and his words? \_\_\_\_\_
  - 4. Do his children respect other adults? \_\_\_\_\_
- Total for N** \_\_\_\_\_

Additional Comments: \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_

**O. Not a New Convert (NASB)**

Verse: 1 Timothy 3:6

Definition: Greek word for new, "neophutos," means "newly planted." Not a recently saved or a younger believer, one who has had little opportunity to test his own faith or demonstrate faithfulness. Phillips translation: he must not be a beginner in the faith. Amplified Bible: he must not be a new convert.

**Not Fond of Sordid Gain (NASB)**

Verse: Titus 1:7

Definition: Greek word "aiskrokerdei" means "greedy, of base gain." New International Version: not pursuing dishonest gain. Phillips translation: not greedy for financial gain. Amplified Bible: not grasping and greedy for filthy lucre (financial gain).

- 1. Has he been a believer for a significant period of time? \_\_\_\_\_
- 2. Has he faced trying circumstances and succeeded? \_\_\_\_\_
- 3. Has he learned how to claim God's promises over a period of time and see them fulfilled? \_\_\_\_\_
- 4. Has he shown proven character in serving in a church ministry? \_\_\_\_\_

**Total for O** \_\_\_\_\_

Additional Comments: \_\_\_\_\_

**P. Good Reputation With Those Outside the Church (NASB)**

Verse: 1 Timothy 3:7

Definition: The Greek words for good reputation, "kalos marturia," mean "beautiful or good testimony." Phillips translation: he should have a good reputation with the outside world. Amplified Bible: he must have a good reputation and be well thought of by those outside (the church).

- 1. Do fellow employees and workers who are unbelievers appreciate and value him? \_\_\_\_\_
- 2. Is he honest, demonstrating integrity in business and personal dealings? \_\_\_\_\_
- 3. Is his social life a good testimony before non-Christians? \_\_\_\_\_
- 4. Do his neighbors respect him? \_\_\_\_\_

**Total for P** \_\_\_\_\_

Additional Comments: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

**Q. Not Self-Willed (NASB)**

Verse: Titus 1:7

Definition: Greek word “authades” means “self-willed, stubborn, arrogant, self-pleasing, selfcentered, own authority, headstrong.” New International Version: not overbearing. Phillips translation: not aggressive. Amplified Bible: not self-willed or arrogant or presumptuous.

- 1. Has he surrendered his will to Jesus Christ in all areas of his life? \_\_\_\_\_
- 2. Is he a “team player” as to the goals and plans laid out by the leaders of the church? \_\_\_\_\_
- 3. Does he generally wait on the Holy Spirit’s leading before making decisions? \_\_\_\_\_
- 4. Does he often ask for advice when making decisions? \_\_\_\_\_

**Total for Q** \_\_\_\_\_

Additional Comments: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**R. Not Quick Tempered (NASB)**

Verse: Titus 1:7

Definition: Greek word “orgilos” means “inclined to anger, passionate, cross, irritable, sharptongued, short fuse.” Phillips translation: hot-tempered.

- 1. Does he hold his temper well? \_\_\_\_\_
- 2. Is he quick to forgive others who have wronged him? \_\_\_\_\_
- 3. Does he generally rejoice in trials? \_\_\_\_\_
- 4. Does he generally refrain from correcting his children in anger? \_\_\_\_\_

**Total for R** \_\_\_\_\_

Additional Comments: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**S. Loving What Is Good (NASB)**

Verse: Titus 1:8

Definition: Greek word “philagothos” literally means “to love (phileo) good (agathos), loving that which is good, a lover of good.” Amplified Bible: a lover of goodness — of good people and good things.

1. Are his closest associates godly people? \_\_\_\_\_
  2. Does he quickly claim the grace of Christ when he sins or fails? \_\_\_\_\_
  3. Does he believe the best about others? \_\_\_\_\_
  4. Does he have a hopeful and optimistic view of life, based on the Scriptures \_\_\_\_\_
- Total for S** \_\_\_\_\_

Additional Comments: \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_

**T. Just (NASB)**

Verse: Titus 1:8

Definition: Greek word “dikaios” means “just, righteous in human relationships, upright, able to make proper judgments and act accordingly, correct, innocent.” New International Version: upright. Phillips translation: fair-minded. Amplified Bible: upright and fairminded.

1. Is he fair and honest in his relationships with other people? \_\_\_\_\_
  2. Does he listen to both sides of a discussion before coming to a conclusion? \_\_\_\_\_
  3. Do others seek him out as a fair counselor? \_\_\_\_\_
  4. Could he confidently and righteously lead in putting out of the church someone who deserved to be removed from fellowship? \_\_\_\_\_
- Total for T** \_\_\_\_\_

Additional Comments: \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_

**U. Devout (NASB)**

Verse: Titus 1:8

Definition: Greek word “hosios” means “holy, pleasing to God, observable practical holiness, being undefiled, innocent, righteous, pious.” New International Version: holy. Amplified Bible: a devout man and religiously right.

- 1. Does he desire to please God more than men? \_\_\_\_\_
  - 2. Does he have a strong prayer life? \_\_\_\_\_
  - 3. Is he committed to obeying God and His word regardless of pressures or trials he goes through? \_\_\_\_\_
  - 4. Does he regularly schedule extra time with the Lord? \_\_\_\_\_
- Total for U** \_\_\_\_\_

Additional Comments: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

**V. Self-Controlled (NASB)**

Verse: Titus 1:8

Definition: Greek word “egkrates” means “disciplined, in full control of oneself, strong, master of, to have power over oneself.” New International Version: disciplined. Amplified Bible: temperate and keeping himself in hand.

- 1. Does he usually accomplish tasks on time? \_\_\_\_\_
  - 2. Does he get to meetings on time? \_\_\_\_\_
  - 3. Is his appearance neat and orderly? \_\_\_\_\_
  - 4. Does he control his eating? \_\_\_\_\_
- Total for V** \_\_\_\_\_

Additional Comments: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_



**W. Holding Fast to the Faithful Word (NASB)**

Verse: Titus 1:9

Definition: Greek word for holding fast is “antekomenon,” which means “clinging to, devoted to, paying attention to, holding firmly to.” New International Version: hold firmly to the trustworthy message. Phillips translation: a man who takes his stand on the true faith. Amplified Bible: he must hold fast to the sure and trustworthy word of God.

**Able to Exhort (NASB)**

Verse: Titus 1:9

Definition: Greek word “parakaleo” means “encourage, appeal, request, comfort, console, to call to or for.” New International Version: can encourage. Phillips translation: stimulate faith. Amplified Bible: to give stimulating instruction and encouragement.

**Sound Doctrine (NASB, NIV)**

Verse: Titus 1:9

Definition: Greek word for sound is “hugianino,” meaning “to be sound, healthy.” Phillips translation: sound teaching. Amplified Bible: in sound (wholesome) doctrine.

**Able . . . to Refute Those Who Contradict (NASB)**

Verse: Titus 1:9

Definition: Greek word for refute, “elegkein,” means “convince, convict, expose, point out, reprove, correct, set forth.” Phillips translation: confute opposition. Amplified Bible: to refute and convict those who contradict and oppose it — showing the wayward their error.

1. Is he able to mobilize a small group or ministry team to serve Christ? \_\_\_\_\_
2. Is he able to boldly refute someone who is teaching wrong doctrine? \_\_\_\_\_
3. Does he have a good grasp of a wide variety of biblical doctrines? \_\_\_\_\_
4. Is he united with the other church leaders on all areas of major doctrine? \_\_\_\_\_

**Total for W** \_\_\_\_\_

Additional Comments: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_



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## Elder Qualifications Test

### SUMMARY SHEET

		<i>Totals</i>
A	<i>Above Reproach</i>	
B	<i>Husband of One Wife</i>	
C	<i>Temperate</i>	
D	<i>Prudent or Sensible</i>	
E	<i>Respectable</i>	
F	<i>Hospitable</i>	
G	<i>Able to Teach</i>	
H	<i>Not Addicted to Wine</i>	
I	<i>Not Pugnacious</i>	
J	<i>Gentle</i>	
K	<i>Uncontentious</i>	
L	<i>Free from the Love of Money / Not Fond of Sordid Gain</i>	
M	<i>Manages His Household Well</i>	
N	<i>Keep His Children Under Control With All Dignity</i>	
O	<i>Not a New Convert</i>	
P	<i>Good Reputation with Those Outside the Church</i>	
Q	<i>Not Self-Willed</i>	
R	<i>Not Quick Tempered</i>	
S	<i>Loving What Is Good</i>	
T	<i>Just</i>	
U	<i>Devout</i>	
V	<i>Self-Controlled</i>	
W	<i>Able to Exhort in Sound Doctrine and Refute Those Who Contradict</i>	



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## **Elder Qualifications Test**

### HOW TO EVALUATE THE RESULTS

1. First and foremost, understand that this is only a tool to help you evaluate if a man is qualified to be an elder. Reliance on the Holy Spirit and much prayer is needed when considering a man's qualifications.
2. The following is a scale to determine a man's qualifications based on the number in the "Total" column on the answer sheet:  
  
0: Not qualified  
1-2: Probably not qualified  
3: Perhaps qualified  
4: Qualified
3. The best way for the man being considered to use the results of this test is to take the one area of qualification in which there was the lowest rating and to devote himself to growing in that one area.
4. This ministry resource is provided by:

Great Commission Churches (GCC)  
6797 N. High St.  
Suite 319  
Worthington, OH 43085  
614-840-9900

GCC is a fellowship of churches and ministries devoted to Jesus Christ and fulfilling the Great Commission.



## The Great Commission Statement of Faith

**The Scripture.** The sole basis of our beliefs is the Bible, the 66 books of the Old and New Testaments. It was uniquely, verbally, and fully inspired by the Holy Spirit, and was written without error in the original manuscripts. It is the supreme and final authority in faith and life in every age.

**God.** There is but one God, infinite in power, wisdom, justice, goodness and love, Creator of the universe, eternally existing in three persons-Father, Son and Holy Spirit-each of whom possesses all the attributes of Deity and the characteristics of personality.

**Man.** God created man in His own image, and man as he was originally created, was innocent before God. But man chose to sin by disobeying God, and therefore was alienated from his Creator and came under divine condemnation. Thus, all human beings are born with a corrupted nature and without spiritual life, and are totally incapable of pleasing God in and of themselves.

**Jesus Christ.** God the Father, by His own choice and out of love for sinful men and women, sent Jesus Christ into the world to reconcile sinners to Himself. Jesus Christ was conceived by the Holy Spirit and born of a virgin. He was God in the flesh, both true God and true man. Jesus Christ lived a sinless life and voluntarily suffered and died as our substitute to pay the penalty for our sins, thus satisfying God's justice and accomplishing salvation for all those who trust in Him alone. He rose from the dead in the same body, though glorified, in which He lived and died. He bodily ascended into heaven and sat down at the right hand of God the Father, where He, the only mediator between God and man, makes intercession for His own. He will return to earth personally, visibly, and bodily to judge all men and establish His kingdom.

**Salvation.** Men and women are freed from the penalty for their sins not as a result, in whole or in part, of their own works, goodness, or religious ceremony, but by the undeserved favor of God alone. God declares righteous all who put their faith in Christ alone for their salvation.

**The Holy Spirit.** The Holy Spirit has come into the world to reveal and glorify Christ, to convict men and women of their sins, and to impart new life to all who place their faith in Christ. He indwells believers from the moment of spiritual birth, seals them until the day of redemption, and empowers them to live a life pleasing to God.

**Assurance.** All who are born again of the Spirit can, through the sure promises of God, be fully assured of eternal life from the very moment they put their faith in Christ. This assurance is not based upon any kind of human merit but upon the finished work of Christ, who completely paid for their sins and upon the indwelling of the Holy Spirit, who is the deposit guaranteeing their inheritance.

**The Resurrection of the Dead.** At physical death, the believer enters immediately into eternal, conscious fellowship with the Lord and awaits the resurrection of his or her body to everlasting glory, and blessing. At physical death, the unbeliever enters into eternal, conscious separation from the Lord and awaits the resurrection of his or her body to everlasting suffering, judgment, and condemnation.

**Baptism and the Lord's Supper.** Jesus Christ has instructed those who believe in Him to be baptized in water as a symbol of their new birth in Christ. Baptism is only for those who have personally believed in Christ. Our practice is to baptize by immersion. The Lord also instituted the Lord's Supper as a remembrance of His suffering, death, and resurrection. Neither baptism nor the Lord's Supper has any merit in helping a person obtain eternal life.

**The Church.** All true believers make up the church worldwide and should assemble together in local churches for worship, prayer, fellowship, and teaching, in order to become conformed to the image of Christ and to become equipped to carry out the 'Great Commission' that Christ gave His followers in Matthew 28:19-20.



## The Great Commission Covenant

As part of Great Commission Churches, I commit to:

1. Love God with all my heart, soul, mind, and strength.
2. Believe and follow God's word at all costs.
3. Love and honor my fellow believer in Christ as Jesus Christ has loved and honored me.
4. Uphold the following core values of Great Commission Churches.

*Grace of God*—God's grace through Jesus Christ is the basis and power, not only of our personal lives, but also of our ministry.

*Commitment to God and His Word*—Our aspiration is that our ministries will be marked by a wholehearted devotion to God, through prayer and by studying, obeying and teaching His Word.

*All Nations Reached With The Gospel*—Our ultimate goal and mission is to reach the whole world with the gospel of Jesus Christ, and to make disciples of all the nations.

*Church*—The local church is God's vehicle for accomplishing the Great Commission. The church is the place for winning people to Christ, building them to maturity, raising up leaders, and for preparing church planting teams to be sent out for the expansion of God's kingdom.

*Church Leadership*—We place a priority upon raising up pastors and other leaders of Christ-like character within the local church.

*Oneness (Love and Unity)*—We desire our ministry to be marked by a Christ-like, selfless love, loyalty, and unity with fellow believers.

*Raising Godly Families*—Strong families are the foundation for strong churches. Therefore we make it a priority to equip members and pastors in building their marriages and families.

*Every Member A Minister*—All Christians are empowered through the Holy Spirit to be workers in the church, not just the pastors. Therefore we seek to equip each member to utilize his/her spiritual gifts to serve others.

5. Strive to believe the best about any who make this covenant, to support them with a loyal tongue, and to be quick to defend them. I will be slow to accept an accusation against them and will not accept such an accusation unless it is supported by the testimony of two or three witnesses. If an accusation should prove to be valid, I will seek to gently and lovingly confront and restore my wayward brother to a faithful walk with Christ.
6. Love all those who make this covenant and to unite with them as fellow team members, believing in them, serving them sacrificially and holding them accountable to this covenant, as we unite together to bring glory to our Lord and to accomplish His work on this earth.



GREAT COMMISSION LEADERSHIP INSTITUTE

## **Session V: Raising Godly Families / The Doctrine of Man and Sin**

### OVERVIEW

This session's topics are Raising Godly Families and The Doctrine of Man and Sin. As a leader of God's church, it is vital that you yourself be committed to building strong marriages and families in the local church. In addition, as a teacher of the gospel of Jesus Christ, it is essential that you are doctrinally sound on key issues related to man and sin.

There are eight homework exercises:

#### ***1. Discussion from the Teachings***

In this exercise, you will reflect upon the main lessons you learned from the teachings.

#### ***2. Building Strong Marriages in the Church***

Strong marriages are vital to healthy families. God wants us to promote, support, and protect this relationship that He has deemed a holy union. These readings will describe some practical steps some churches have taken to help strengthen marriages.

#### ***3. Divorce and Remarriage***

John Hopley addresses this controversial topic by focusing on what God's Word says is permissible biblically. Hopefully, this reading will encourage further dialogue and study of the Scripture, so that each leader and believer will develop his/her own convictions on what God says about divorce and remarriage.

#### ***4. Building Strong Families in the Church***

Strong families are the foundation of our churches. It is vital that we support and equip our families to raise children who will go on to share the Good News of Christ to the next generation. Several pastors have written articles that will help your church be successful in building families.

#### ***5. Sanctification***

How does a believer become sanctified? Understanding the subject of sanctification is obviously of utmost importance, since God's number one goal for believers is to make them holy and like Christ in their character. This reading by Dave Bovenmyer will help you gain an accurate understanding of sanctification, which is important not only for your own personal growth, but also for your effectiveness in shepherding and building others.

**6. *God's Truth on Gender, Marriage, and Morality***

What does the Bible say about gay marriage? How is the church to respond to the gay rights movement? John Hopler addresses this important topic by focusing on the gospel of grace and truth found in Jesus Christ.

**7. *Parent-Led Education***

In raising godly families, one of the most important issues is a child's education. Should the child be homeschooled? Or sent to a Christian school? What about a public school? This article will help pastors counsel parents in educating their children for Jesus Christ.

**8. *2020 Vision for Reaching the Next Generation***

In GCC, each local church has developed a 2020 plan for reaching the next generation by supporting parents to disciple their own children and by forming ministries that reach young people who are outside the church. This article equips pastors in developing a 2020 plan for the church.



GCLI TEACHING

## The Doctrine of Sin and Man: Shattered Humanity

Pastor Doug Brown · Lee's Summit, MO

*“When I consider the heavens and the work of Your fingers, the moon and the stars, which You have ordained; What is man, that You take thought of him? And the son of man, that You care for him? Yet You have made him a little lower than God and you crown him with glory and majesty. You make him to rule over the works of Your hands; You have put all things under his feet, all sheep and oxen, and also the beasts of the field, the birds of the heavens and the fish of the sea, Whatever passes through the paths of the sea. O LORD, our Lord, how majestic is Your Name in all the earth!”*  
—Psalm 8:3-9

### A. What Is Man (meaning both men and women)?

Throughout the history of mankind, there has been a wide range of views of who man is, where man came from, what man’s significance is, and where man is going.

Yet, in our contemporary culture, there are many attempts to define humanity separate from God. The results are catastrophic. “Current approaches attempt to define man through only one characteristic of his being. Yet no single characteristic by itself adequately explains who we are as human beings.”<sup>1</sup>

Some of the contemporary views for defining man:

- |   |                                   |
|---|-----------------------------------|
| 1. Man is just _____.                           | =Naturalism                       |
| 2. Man is just _____.                           | =New Age                          |
| 3. Man is simply an <u>animal</u> _____.        | =Darwinism                        |
| 4. Man is a sophisticated <u>primate</u> _____. | =The Naked Ape (Desmond Morris)   |
| 5. Man is a <u>worker</u> _____.                | =Karl Marx                        |
| 6. “Man is a <u>useless</u> _____ passion.”     | =Existentialism (Jean-Paul Sarte) |
| 7. Man is primarily <u>sexual</u> _____.        | =Sigmund Freud                    |
| 8. Man is a _____.                              | =Various cults (i.e. Mormonism)   |
| 9. Man is the _____ of all things.              | =Humanism                         |
| 10. Man is <u>autonomous</u> _____.             | =Friedrich Nietzsche              |

### B. A Biblical View of Man

Genesis 1:26-27, 2:7,18-25, 9:6, 1 Corinthians 11:7, James 3:9

Man is not a product of chance or cosmic processes. Man is created in the image of God.



*“Then God said, ‘Let us make man in Our image, according to Our likeness; and let them rule . . . And God created man in His own image, in the image of God He created him; male and female He created them’” (Genesis 1:26-27).*

1. Man is created. Therefore, we are creatures. We are not God.
2. Man is created uniquely in the image of God. Therefore, he is set apart from animals and all other created things.
3. Man is created with a unique job description—to be fruitful and multiply, fill the earth, subdue it, and rule it.
4. The terms “in the image of God” and “likeness of God” are used interchangeably (Genesis 1:26-27, 5:1, 9:6).
5. An image or likeness is to reflect, as in a mirror, a likeness of the original. The Hebrew word (*selem*), means a glory. Man is to be a reflection of the glory of God. Yet, we have fallen short of His glory because of sin (Romans 3:23).
6. God’s image does not consist of man’s body, for man’s body was formed from dust. God is Spirit (John 4:24). God is non-material—no physical form. Yet, in the Christian understanding, the spirit is an important part of our makeup.
  - *“Then the Lord God formed man of dust from the ground” (Genesis 2:7).*
  - *“So watch yourselves carefully, since you did not see any form on the day the Lord spoke to you” (Deuteronomy 4:15-19).*
7. Made in the image of God refers to man’s spiritual, moral, and relational likeness to God. God is holy and He created us to reflect the moral likeness of His character.

In the New Testament, there are three “God is” statements to describe the Holy character of God:<sup>2</sup>

- |                           |   |
|---------------------------|---|
| 1. God is <u>spirit</u> . | Man is a spiritual being. (John 4:24)   |
| 2. God is <u>light</u> .  | Man is a moral being. (1 John 1:5)      |
| 3. God is <u>love</u> .   | Man is a relational being. (1 John 4:8) |

God created man to reflect His glory, His holy character. We were created to be spiritually minded and oriented in our desires, attitudes, choices, and values. We were created to live in moral purity and righteousness. A transparent purity of motive and deed, with no darkness at all. We were created to love selflessly. We were not created as robots, but with the ability to choose -- to choose to love. We were created to reveal and reflect the glory of God as we govern and rule His creation.

8. The Fall of man has corrupted the image. It has been defaced, but not erased (Genesis 9:6, 1 Corinthians 11:7, James 3:9).
9. The Fall of man also means the fall of our rule over creation. As a result, the creation is fallen. Our redemption will also mean the redemption of all creation (Romans 8:20-23).
10. Jesus Christ Himself is the image of God in its fullness and wholeness (Colossians 1:15, Hebrews 1:3).

11. Through Jesus Christ, the “image of God” is renewed and restored in our lives. Salvation, sanctification, and glorification are the processes through which God restores the glory of His image. “Since He is the image of God, for us to be transformed to Christ’s likeness is to be renewed in the pattern of the original. It is to become what we were supposed to be. ‘If any man is in Christ, there is a new creation’” (2 Corinthians 5:17)<sup>3</sup> (Romans 8: 29, 12:2, Ephesians 4:22-24, Colossians 3:9-10).
12. Our body is the temple of God, not a prison-house from which to escape (1 Corinthians 6:12-20, 1 Corinthians 15:35-54, Philippians 3:21).

*“Full redemption must include the redemption of the body (Romans 8:23, 1 Corinthians 15:12-17), since man is not complete without the body. The glorious future of human beings in Christ includes both the resurrection of the body and a purified, perfected new earth.” —Anthony Hoekema*

### C. Man Created Male and Female<sup>4</sup>

1. Both Adam and Eve were created in God’s image, equal before God as persons and distinct in their manhood and womanhood.
  - a. Men and women are equal (Galatians 3:28).
  - b. Men and women are different, but complementary in function (Ex.: Procreation - Genesis 1:28; Leadership - 1 Corinthians 11:3).
2. Distinctions in masculine and feminine roles are created by God as part of the created order; they are not the creation of culture (Genesis 2:18).
3. Adam’s headship was established by God before the Fall (Genesis 2:18-20). Headship is not lordship.
4. The Fall brought distortions into the relationships between men and women (Genesis 3:16).
  - a. Husband- domineering vs loving leader
  - b. Wife- control/manipulate vs cheerfully follow

### D. The Fall—Man and the Garden

*“Sin is no little thing. It girded the Redeemer’s head with thorns, and pierced his heart. . . Look upon all sin as that which crucified the Savior, and you will see it to be exceedingly sinful.” - C. H. Spurgeon*

*“And the Lord commanded the man, saying, from any tree of the garden you may eat freely; but from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat, for in the day you eat from it you shall surely die” (Genesis 2:16-17).*

1. The Garden of Eden was paradise, a world according to God’s original intent (Genesis 1:31).
2. Adam deliberately chose to disobey God’s Law (Genesis 3:6). Law given in Genesis 2:16
3. Adam and Eve died that day (Genesis 2:17).
  - a. Alive physically, but now were dying (*moribund* - in the state of dying)
  - b. Dead spiritually—alienated from God
  - c. Morally corrupted and guilty before God with shame

### E. The Curse—Man Outside the Garden

*“To the woman He said, I will greatly multiply your pain in childbirth, in pain you shall bring forth children. Yet your desire will be for your husband and he shall rule over you. . . Cursed is the ground because of you; in toil you shall eat of it all the days of your life. Both thorns and thistles it shall grow for you and you shall eat the plants of the field by the sweat of your face you shall eat bread, till you return to the ground because from it you were taken . . .” (Genesis 3:16-19).*

#### 1. The Effects of Sin

- a. Increased pain in childbirth-\_\_\_\_\_will be born outside of the garden. No one has ever seen the glory of God, the Tree of Life.
- b. “Desire for husband” - *“sin is crouching at the door; and its desire is for you, but you must master it” (Genesis 4:7)*. Desire to usurp the husband’s role. Selfish, disrespectful, unsubmitive, lacking trust.
- c. “He shall rule over you”—domineering, abusive, lord, dictatorial, tyrannical, insensitive, selfish, stubborn.
- d. Creation brought under the \_\_\_\_\_ (Romans 8:19-22). The entire creation, heavens and earth, function abnormally because of Adam’s sin.
- e. Man’s work instead of being a delight as the vice-regent of God, will now be \_\_\_\_\_, arduous, monotonous.
- f. \_\_\_\_\_—all men die. Everything in creation dies. The universe is dying. Sickness, disease ...
- g. Relationship with God and man distorted (Genesis 4:3-9). Man is alienated from God. All of man’s relationships with one another, even family, are affected (i.e., murder, rape, stealing, lying, cheating, abuse, anger, jealousy, adultery).

#### 2. God will judge the world (Acts 17:31).

### F. Man In Adam—Inherited Sin

The whole human race has been born “outside of the garden” with no access to the Tree of Life, alienated and separated from God because of Adam’s sin. In our sin, we were \_\_\_\_\_ to please God or to live up to His Law (Romans 5:6). We were ungodly, sinners, and enemies of God (Romans 5:6-10). Sin was introduced into the world like an uninvited guest through Adam. He opened the door to sin and death came along with it.

*“Behold I was brought forth in iniquity and in sin my mother conceived me” (Psalm 51:5).*

*“Therefore just as through one man sin entered the world and death through sin and so death spread to all men, because all sinned” (Romans 5:12).*

1. Scripture teaches us that sin is not just an action, but also a condition of the heart. (Romans 7:17, Jeremiah 17:9, Matthew 15:19, Romans 5:12).
2. The whole human race sinned in Adam (Romans 5:12). Because of Adam’s sin:
  - a. The whole human race died.

“For if by the transgression of the one the many died ...” (Romans 5:15).

b. The whole human race under judgement.

“...for on the one hand the judgment arose from one transgression ...” (Romans 5:16).

c. The whole human race under condemnation.

“So then as through one transgression there resulted condemnation to all men ...” (Romans 5:18).

### 3. Special relationship between Adam and humanity.

Representative—Adam is referred to as the “first Man” (1 Corinthians 15:45-47), the \_\_\_\_\_ of the human race. He is the representative or ambassador of mankind. He is our covenant head. Jesus is the “Last Adam.” He is the covenant head of a new race.

- Adam and Christ are appointed by God to be Head.
- Adam and Christ represent their race.
- Actions of the head are imputed to the whole.

David and Goliath—“Choose a man for yourselves and let him come down to me. If he is able to fight with me and kill me, then we will become your servants” (1 Samuel 17:8-9).

Adam sinned as our head and has passed down to all mankind an \_\_\_\_\_ sin-infection.

Christ, the “Last Adam” (1 Corinthians 15:45-47), is the head of a new creation (2 Corinthians 5:17). Because of His act of righteousness, all those who receive Christ are justified in grace, righteous, and reign in life (Romans 5:16-19). This is our new standing with God.

Principle of Romans 5:12-19—As we were in Adam, so also were are now in Christ.

We inherit a sin-bias from Adam. We do not inherit the guilt for his transgression (Romans 5:13-14, Ezekiel 18:20).

*“Guilt is a legal term. There is guilt only where there is actual transgression. Human babes inherit hereditary moral and physical consequences of Adam’s fall, but they are not born guilty! There simply cannot be guilt until there is transgression. Romans 5:13 settles that once for all: ‘Sin is not imputed when there is no law (i.e., where there is no transgression). The point made in Romans 5:13-14, is that sin and death continued between Adam and Moses, yet because the Law was not yet given, men were not transgressors after the similitude of Adam, who transgressed a specific command. Mark well that clear distinction which Paul makes: Sin and death naturally inherited, but guilt not imputed!”<sup>5</sup>*

### G. Man the Sinner—Total Depravity

God created heaven and earth and all that is in it, including mankind. He declared that it was very good. God gave man the ability to choose and he chose to disobey God. As a result, man has not only introduced evil into his world, but he himself has changed.

1. Man is not basically good (Romans 3:10-18).

2. Man chose to sin in accordance with his free will, his God-given ability to choose (Genesis 2:16-17).

3. Sin has changed man to the very core.

a. Spiritually dead (Ephesians 2:1, 4:18, Colossians 1:21, 2:13).

Spiritually dead does not mean that our spirit/soul ceases to exist. It means that we are excluded from God -- we are alienated from God. Our sin has made a separation between us and God.

b. Morally corrupt (Matthew 15:18-19, Romans 3:10-18, Galatians 5:19).

Man is not morally dead. He still has the ability to know right and wrong and can respond to what is right. But he has no power within himself to be righteous in God's eyes (Romans 7:15-24).

"... although man is spiritually dead and needs regeneration to new spiritual life, he is not morally dead, even though sadly perverted. He is not only alive to moral good, but is constitutionally bound to appreciate it when it is truly perceived, however much he may resist it. Being spiritually dead, man is utterly unable to regenerate himself; but being morally alive he can at least respond to the truth which regenerates."

c. Physically dying (Genesis 3:19).

4. Total Depravity

The phrase "total depravity" means every part of man's mental and moral nature is infected with sin. Sin extends to the whole person—spirit, soul, and body (1 Thessalonians 5:23). "It means all the 'parts' of man are affected, it does not mean that all the parts are all bad.... There is no human body on earth which is absolutely free from disease. From birth, every part is affected in greater or lesser degree by that hereditary infection which eventually issues in death. Yet though all parts are affected, it is utterly untrue to say that all the parts are all disease. Degrees of disease, latent, dormant, chronic, may co-exist with degrees of health in the same body."<sup>7</sup>

## H. A New Creature—Man in Christ

1. *Justified*—Christ died for sinners and the ungodly (Romans 5:1-11).

a. \_\_\_\_\_ with God.

b. Introduced to \_\_\_\_\_ in which we stand before a holy God.

c. Exult in \_\_\_\_\_ of the glory of God.

d. Exult in our \_\_\_\_\_—produces perseverance, which produces proven character which produces hope.

e. \_\_\_\_\_ of God overflowing in our hearts.

f. Saved from God's \_\_\_\_\_.

g. Saved by His \_\_\_\_\_—more to come.

h. Exult in \_\_\_\_\_—reconciled.

2. *Sanctified*—The Holy Spirit transforms believers.

- a. The Holy Spirit \_\_\_\_\_ our hearts through faith (Acts 15:8-9).
- b. The Holy Spirit \_\_\_\_\_ us from glory to glory (2 Corinthians 3:18).
- c. The Holy Spirit \_\_\_\_\_ us in the very spirit of our mind (Ephesians 4:23).
- d. God Himself \_\_\_\_\_ us entirely—our whole being (1 Thessalonians 5:23).

3. *Glorified*—God \_\_\_\_\_ believers to the image of Christ.

- a. God has predestined believers to be conformed to the image of His Son (Romans 8:29).

## I. Christianity in a Postmodern World

*“Humpty Dumpty sat on a wall. Humpty Dumpty had a great fall. All the king’s horses and all the king’s men couldn’t put Humpty Dumpty back together again.” —Mother Goose*

*“Humpty Dumpty sat on a wall. Humpty Dumpty had a great fall. Humpty Dumpty shouted Amen! God can put me back together again!” -Christian Mother Goose*

Christianity is the only hope for man. It is only through Christianity that man has real dignity, real significance, and meaning. Sin has changed man and only through the power of the gospel can man be changed back again.

We live in a postmodern culture where there are no ultimate answers to man’s identity and moral problem. There is an ache and a longing in the heart of man for intimacy and significance. Man has a guilt and shame problem. The gospel of Jesus Christ removes the guilt and shame, and restores intimacy and adventure to man. These days offer Christianity a golden opportunity to shine the light of God’s glory to a dark and depressed world.

*“The harvest is plentiful, but the workers are few” (Luke 10:2). Pray.*

### Endnotes:

<sup>1</sup> R. C. Sproul, *A Shattered Image*, pg., 23

<sup>2</sup> J. Sidlow Baxter, *A New Call to Holiness*, pg., 108

<sup>3</sup> Richard A. Pyne, *Ibid.*, pg., 63

<sup>4</sup> Some of these ideas come from *The Council on Biblical Manhood and Womanhood, The Danvers Statement*

<sup>5</sup> J. Sidlow Baxter, *Ibid.* pg., 105

<sup>6</sup> J. Sidlow Baxter, *Our High Calling*, pg., 135

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid.*, pg., 133

### Additional Resources

*The Journal For Biblical Manhood and Womanhood*

*Recovering Biblical Manhood & Womanhood*, John Piper and Wayne Grudem

*Our High Calling*, J. Sidlow Baxter

*Bible Doctrine*, Wayne Grudem

*Romans*, D. Martyn Lloyd-Jones

*Know The Truth*, Bruce Milne

*Humanity and Sin*, Robert Pyne

*He is There and He is Not Silent*, Francis Schaffer

*Lifeviews*, R. C. Sproul

*Shattered Image*, R. C. Sproul (tape set)



GCLI TEACHING

## Five Shared Beliefs on the Family

Pastor Rick Whitney · Manhattan, KS

For over 25 years, we have all been thankful to see how God has built and strengthened the many marriages and families found throughout this association of churches. And we have always felt that what God has taught us in this area was central to our understanding of God's will for our lives. Our shared beliefs on both marriage and children are part of our Core Values and have helped establish us as a movement.

In this paper, I hope to remind us of five \_\_\_\_\_ that we have sought to follow in our families. Specifically, those standards that we have practiced and taught over the years that are critical to building healthy, outreach-minded, truly Christian families. Looking back over the last 25 years, we are proud of how rare divorce is in our movement. In fact, it is hardly ever spoken of. And we are proud of the children we are raising up.

But now we have become increasingly involved as a movement of churches in helping to serve broken families throughout our society. My hope is that we will remember these "distinctives," these standards, which have established our own marriages and families and have "brought us safely thus far," and that we will proclaim these same truths to this very desperate and hungry world.

The following are five beliefs that have marked our movement as they relate to our understanding of the family and how we "lift up" marriage, in the church:

### 1. Our commitment to obeying the Great Commission within our families has safeguarded and strengthened them in foundational ways.

We have understood that our marriages, children, and homes serve as a "base of operation" for reaching out with the gospel. And just as a soldier who is active in fighting for God's Kingdom enjoys His special protection and blessing, so too our marriages have enjoyed His blessing. We are probably not even fully aware of how our initial commitment to sharing the gospel, and our continuing involvement in the gospel, has sanctified our home life.

*"There is one who scatters, yet increases all the more, and there is one who withholds what is justly due, but it results only in want. The generous man will be prosperous, and he who waters will himself be watered" (Proverbs 11:24-25).*

*"A Christian marriage . . . serves a threefold purpose: to enrich the lives of the man and woman, to create a family, and to further the Kingdom of God." - Jack Roeda*

Since our very beginning, we who are married have sought to obey the spirit of Paul's encouragement when he wrote to the married Corinthians to act "as though they were not." Marriage has always been held in honor among us, but never held as an excuse for not being involved in this great struggle of reaching our world with the gospel.



Sadly, almost every Christian book that has been written on the family over the last two decades ignores this commitment to sharing the gospel. It is foundational to a healthy Christian marriage. We have practiced, modeled, and taught that marriages and families need to be devoted to reaching out with the Good News, if our families ever hope to be biblically sound.

While we have highly valued the importance of the Great Commission as a salting and energizing influence in our home life, we humbly recognize that we have not arrived and have much still to learn. The Scripture sets a very high bar, *“He who loves father or mother more than Me is not worthy of Me; and he who loves son or daughter more than Me is not worthy of Me” (Matthew 10:37).*

**2. When we speak of a man’s family being devoted to the Great Commission, we are talking about active service and labor, not simply passive church attendance. By this, we mean:**

A. That a man’s wife and children are alongside him as fellow workers.

*“But when Priscilla and Aquila heard him, they took him aside and explained to him the way of God more accurately” (Acts 18:26).*

B. That a pastor’s wife is proud to be involved in this “noble struggle” and his children are proud to be called, “preacher’s kids.” holy nation, royal priesthood (Peter) - recognize and embrace being part of a team

*“Let our sons in their youth be as grown-up plants, and our daughters as corner pillars fashioned as for a palace” (Psalms 144:12).*

C. That while it is good to attend church, it is even better for a pastor’s family to be involved in \_\_\_\_\_ our lives by serving the church and laboring in the gospel.

*“For whoever wishes to save his life shall lose it; but whoever loses his life for My sake and the gospel’s shall save it” (Mark 8:35).*

While not presently popular in our culture, the following is a central tenet in our understanding of Christian marriage.

**3. We are committed to men leading in their families and women submitting to their husband’s leadership.**

*“Wives, be subject to your own husbands, as to the Lord. For the husband is the head of the wife, as Christ also is the head of the church, He Himself being the Savior of the body. But as the church is subject to Christ, so also the wives ought to be to their husbands in everything. Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ also loved the church and gave Himself up for her; that He might sanctify her....” (Ephesians 5:22-26).*

*“If Christ’s love for the Church is to be the model for marriage, then this much both partners can learn: You have to put up with a lot, and you have to cherish a lot.” - George McCauley*

This core belief continues to dismay our society. The world does not understand that both men and women have equal standing in the eyes of the Lord, yet different roles. But we will continue to teach this vital truth for the sake of order in our homes and to model Christian



\_\_\_\_\_ / \_\_\_\_\_ and Christian \_\_\_\_\_ to a lost and needy world.

*“The problems of America are the problems our families are facing - multiplied a million-fold.”  
-Dwight D. Eisenhower*

Even pagan, ancient Rome recognized that men need to lead out in their families. Yet they crumbled as a society when they gave up on this.

*“The most important feature of those families was the authority of the father. It would be difficult to overestimate the influence they had upon the history and destiny of Rome, but . . . the stern face of the traditional father had faded out by the second century A.D. Instead we see on every hand the flabby face of the son of the house, the eternal spoiled child of society, who has grown accustomed to luxury and lost all sense of discipline . . . also many women evaded the duty of maternity for fear of losing their looks and many were not content to live their lives by their husband’s side.” —from Daily Life in Ancient Rome*

**4. When we evaluate a man, we look first at the \_\_\_\_\_ of his marriage and family, before evaluating his ministry skills or other credentials.**

*“It is a trustworthy statement: if any man aspires to the office of overseer, it is a fine work he desires to do. An overseer, then, must be above reproach, the husband of one wife, temperate, prudent, respectable, hospitable, able to teach, not addicted to wine or pugnacious, but gentle, uncontentious, free from the love of money. He must be one who manages his own household well, keeping his children under control with all dignity (but if a man does not know how to manage his own household, how will he take care of the church of God?); and not a new convert, lest he become conceited and fall into the condemnation incurred by the devil. And he must have a good reputation with those outside the church, so that he may not fall into reproach and the snare of the devil” (1 Timothy 3:1-7).*

*“He must manage his own family well, with children who respect and obey him.” -(1 Timothy 3:4, NLT).*

*“For this reason I left you in Crete, that you might set in order what remains, and appoint elders in every city as I directed you, namely, if any man be above reproach, the husband of one wife, having children who believe, not accused of dissipation or rebellion. For the overseer must be above reproach as God’s steward, not self-willed, not quick-tempered, not addicted to wine, not pugnacious, not fond of sordid gain, but hospitable, loving what is good, sensible, just, devout, self-controlled, holding fast the faithful word which is in accordance with the teaching, that he may be able both to exhort in sound doctrine and to refute those who contradict” (Titus 1:5-9).*

*“An elder must be well thought of for his good life. He must be faithful to his wife, and his children must be believers who are not wild or rebellious. An elder must live a blameless life because he is God’s minister.” - NLT*

Since Scripture tells us that a man’s family is the central \_\_\_\_\_ where his heart and leadership ability is revealed, we have always started here. In Timothy and Titus, much is made of a man’s ability in his home.

The main thing is to be humble and accountable to your fellow elder(s)/regional director, etc. And this is difficult. It seems that we are more open to receiving help in any other arena of ministry, but with our families it can be a very “touchy” thing. But if we are humble, God will bless.

We also recognize that there are different expectations upon a pastor in relation to his children when they have grown up and moved out of the home. There reaches a point when our children become adults and will give an account for their own lives. But it is obvious that while our children are still at home, there is a great responsibility to be good managers of them.

*“How can a man be a believer in Jesus Christ, and yet have a cold and hard heart in the things of the Kingdom toward his children and mate? You will find that where sons and daughters have turned out a curse to their parents, and those parents have been Christians, it might have been attributed by this - **that while the parents have been Christians, they were not Christians** at home. I believe nine out of ten such cases can be explained that way.” - Charles Spurgeon*

*“A man ought to live so that everybody knows he is a Christian . . . **and most of all, his** family **ought to know.**” - D. L. Moody*

*“**If your Christianity doesn’t work at home, then it doesn’t work at all.** Therefore you must not try to export it.” - Anonymous*

*“The family and the home can never exert their proper influence on our world, **while ignoring the Bible’s exhortation calling for discipline and a recognition of authority.** If children do not learn this at home, they will go out into society without proper attitude toward authority and law. There is always the exceptional child, but the average tells us that children are largely what the home has made of them.” - Billy Graham*

##### **5. Because a man’s credentials rest in his family, we have never asked a man to sacrifice his family for the sake of his ministry.**

*“Marriage is a testing ground for one’s integrity, courage, and character.” - J. Allen Petersen*

It is hard to imagine any one of us leading God’s people if we have lost their respect, in any area. And in this arena of the family, the respect of our people is vital. Our world is still looking to the Church for answers to the challenges we face in marriage and with our children. With our own families, we have always sought to model the truth we preach about. If we lose this \_\_\_\_\_ of respect, we have lost all hope of genuinely moving our audience to God’s truth concerning the family. With this in mind, regardless of a man’s gift or abilities, if there are needs in the home, then these are the needs to which he must apply himself.

*“A church within a church, a republic within a republic, a world within a world, it is spelled in four letters— HOME. If things go right there, they go right everywhere. The front door of the home is the foundation of the Church, as well as the State.” - Thomas DeWitt Talmage*

*“And this I say for your own benefit; not to put a restraint upon you, but to promote what is seemly, and to secure undistracted devotion to the Lord” (1 Corinthians 7:35).*

There is a tension point here. We believe that a life, marriage, and family lived in sacrifice for our Lord is pleasing to Him. But we also know that, at times, men need to concentrate their time to building up

their family. And we have encouraged this. Not as an allowance for the flesh, but as a very real responsibility that, at times, needs to be addressed. Our goal is to see our marriages and families built up in such a way, that we can resume a life of sacrifice. If we don't reach this level of strength again, then we have more work to do.



GCLI TEACHINGS

**Exercise**

1. What was the main lesson you learned from this seminar?

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2. In Rick Whitney’s teaching on the family, he talked about making the family the priority over ministry. Is it a temptation for you to make ministry your “mistress?” What steps have you taken to insure that your family will be your priority?

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3. As to his family, what is the standard you believe your church should have in recognizing a man as an elder? Be specific. What steps do you think your church should take if a man is below the standard you described?

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GCLI TEACHINGS

**Exercise**

4. How does the doctrine of sin affect how you should teach in the church?

It should lead us to have greater humility in the way we teach because everyone is equally affected by the nature of sin.

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5. What are the dangers for a church that does not adequately teach on the sinfulness of man?

At least one of the dangers would be falling into the trap that so many in the world fall into, thinking that man is naturally good and/or that we can somehow overcome the nature of our depravity on our own, without the help of another.

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GREAT COMMISSION LEADERSHIP INSTITUTE

RAISING GODLY FAMILIES / THE DOCTRINE OF MAN AND SIN

## **Building Strong Marriages in the Church**

At the heart of raising godly families is the importance of building strong marriages. What practical steps can be taken to fortify the marriage relationships in your local church? The next section will focus on some practical ministries that have been started by pastors to help husbands and wives develop strong marriages in Christ.





BUILDING STRONG MARRIAGES IN THE CHURCH

## How Evergreen Strengthens Families

Pastor Brent Knox · Bloomington, MN

### 1. Fit To Be Tied

Most couples enter marriage with limited preparation. Yet for many, this relationship will be their greatest challenge in life. Newlyweds often discover that they don't possess the tools required to build a happy home. Our society trains people well for careers. But our society does not train people well for marriage. This is a vacuum the Church must fill. Many couples feel a need to be better equipped and trained for marriage and will turn to the local church for help.

At Evergreen, we have a very large group of singles and engaged couples coming to church trying to find a church home (or trying to find a pastor willing to marry them!). As a result, there are a large number of couples seeking to marry through Evergreen every year. As pastors of Evergreen, we do not consider ourselves simply "Justices of the Peace," willing to marry anyone who asks. Rather, we have a responsibility before God to do everything in our power to ensure that the weddings we perform result in successful, life-long, God-honoring marriages. We cannot counsel every engaged couple because that would be too time-consuming. This is why we developed the premarriage ministry called "Fit To Be Tied." No couple can be married by an Evergreen pastor unless they complete the course successfully.

"Fit To Be Tied" is a six-week premarriage seminar/small group taught by a lay couple. The ministry consists of:

1. A small group of engaged couples that meet weekly for six weeks. The group is led by a seasoned married couple. Usually the small group time begins with a lecture from the couple and is followed by a small group discussion. A homework assignment is given.
2. The homework will consist of listening to specified marriage teaching tapes and working on a guided discussion project.
3. Each couple will then be assigned to a mentor couple. The purpose of the mentor couple is to provide an engaged couple with a living example of a healthy, Christ-centered marriage, offer engaged couples direction and counseling as they prepare for marriage, and evaluate an engaged couple's readiness for marriage in light of biblical standards. We will not marry a couple if any of the following conditions exist:
  - a. If the couple is sexually active.
  - b. If the couple is living together.
  - c. If the man or woman has been previously married. This situation needs to be discussed in detail to ascertain whether or not a marriage is right biblically.

*"There is no more lovely, friendly and charming relationship, communion or company than a good marriage."*

*- Martin Luther*



- d. If the man or woman is not a believer.

“Fit To Be Tied” has been a very helpful ministry to expose engaged couples to God’s principles for successful marriages. Many couples have never heard of these principles before. And they find that they have a lot to talk about! Also, we have found that “Fit To Be Tied” has attracted a lot of new couples. This becomes their first small group experience at Evergreen and they enjoy it. Because of this positive experience, many couples are eager to get into a married couple’s small group once they are married. “Fit To Be Tied” is a very good “fishing pool” event for small groups!

*“The first bond of society is marriage.”*

*- Cicero*

## 2. Marriage and Parenting Tune-Up

The world is desperately looking for help in marriage and parenting. Many people will turn to the church for help. Churches must step in and provide something.

Each spring and fall we provide a mini-marriage retreat on a Saturday morning called “Marriage Tune-Up.” If the topic is on parenting, it is called a “Parenting Tune-Up.” As our cars need tune-ups every once in awhile to regain peak performance, so do our marriages. Even the best marriages need to be tuned up!

There are many possible topics to cover in marriage and parenting. For the tune-ups, we chose just one topic and cover it deeply. Past marriage tune-up subjects have been:

1. “How to Create Intimacy in Marriage”
2. “Conflict Management: Solving Anger Before It Blows You Apart”

The tune-up is more than just a teaching event. We mix in small group interaction and a couples project. It is truly a mini couples conference. The small group time can be a “fishing pool” event for small group leaders to get to know potential members for their small groups. This is a typical schedule:

9:00-10:15 Teaching #1

10:30-11:30 Teaching #2

11:30-12:15 Small group discussion

12:30-1:30 Send couples out to nearby restaurants to complete a couples communication project.

1:30-2:30 Teaching #3

## 3. Annual Conferences

By far, the most popular event for married couples at Evergreen is the annual Marriage Enrichment Conference. It is an event with rich tradition, great teaching, and wonderful fellowship. It has become a weekend that has repaired failing marriages, renewed strong marriages, prompted people to renew their relationship with God and get baptized, and convinced tentative couples to get into a small group. It is also the highlight for small groups. More relational bonding takes place in that one weekend than six months of small groups!

We have discovered the secret of having fantastic marriage conferences. If you follow the recipe, you will have memorable conferences that your people will knock themselves out to get to every year.

## Evergreen's Secret Recipe for Dynamic Couples Conferences.

(Warning! Do not cut back on any ingredients!)

1. It must be out of town.
2. It must be at least two nights—starting Friday evening and ending Sunday at noon. Do not worry about the cost!
3. It must be at a place with recreational options.
4. You must include a good blend of teaching, small group interaction, designed couple's communication projects, and free time for recreation.
5. People who come to the conference who are not small group attenders should be assigned a small group to be with for the weekend. Assignments and introductions can be done on Friday night. If you do this right, then many couples will be excited to join that small group later!
6. Small Groups should plan social activities during the conference time.
7. Plan a dynamic worship time to begin some of the teachings.
8. Stage baptisms and allow people to share their testimonies publicly.
9. Plan different topics from year to year.
10. Promote, promote, promote. Make it seem like that if someone doesn't come, they will be missing the highlight of the year.

*"There is nothing more admirable than two people who see eye-to-eye keeping house as man and wife, confounding their enemies, and delighting their friends."*

- Homer

### 4. Small Groups

The backbone of Evergreen's ministry to families is Small Groups. We believe strongly in the "Jethro Principle." Moses was buried with the requests of the Israelites to mediate their problems. His father-in-law had the solution: Divide the nation of Israel into small groups. Let leaders of ten handle the problems and disputes. If the problems were too great for the leader of ten, then go to the leader of 50, then the leader of 100, then eventually, if the problem was great enough, it reached Moses. We believe that both Moses and the people were happier with the small group arrangement.

There are so many potential problems that come with family life. Marriage and parenting issues are the bulk of the pastor's counseling. It is imperative that a small group system is set up to be the first place that troubled families refer to in times of stress, otherwise pastors will be bogged down with counseling.

Evergreen has many types of family small groups: engaged and young marrieds, struggling marriages, wives attending solo, parents of small children, parents of older children, parents of teens, empty-nesters, blended families, etc.

In an effort to help train our small group leaders to be more effective counselors, we have developed a "Marriage First Aid Kit." We do not expect our small group leaders to be expert counselors, but we do expect them to be able to administer "marriage first aid" to hurting marriages. Often the "first aid" is all that the hurting couple needs.

## 5. Marriage First Aid Kit

The purpose of the “Marriage First Aid Kit” is to provide first aid to “bleeding and hurting” couples. It is designed to offer a practical solution to most marriage problems. It is a packet of information that contains problem categories, assignments (listening to tapes and communication projects), and an accountability plan.

*“A happy marriage  
is the union of two  
good forgivers.”*

*- Ruth Bell Graham*

The following is an excerpt from the “Marriage First Aid Kit.”

*The first step is diagnosing the problem. Most marriage problems will fit into one or more of the “problem” categories listed. It is not hard diagnosing the problem. Just listen and ask questions. A key in counseling discernment is simply ask yourself questions as you are listening, “If I were in their shoes, what would I do? How would I react? How would I think?” If you listen carefully and ask questions, the problems will become clear.*

*The second step is suggesting homework. The “Marriage First Aid Kit” is designed to offer a practical solution that will help. But people must take responsibility for their own lives. These solutions will work if the couple will take a little personal initiative. We don’t want to encourage people to depend on us. We want them to depend on God and take personal initiative. As pastors, we try to give assignments and then ask people to complete the assignment before they contact us again. In this way we are able to judge how humble and teachable a person is.*

*The third step is offering “soft accountability.” Check back with the couple and see how things are going.*

The “Marriage First Aid Kit” follows a simple pattern.

1. **Learn.** What can the couple listen to (or read) in order to receive good instruction and renew their minds? Remember, our lives are transformed by the renewing of our minds. Don’t underestimate the power of the Word of God. If tapes are assigned, make sure the couple listens to the tapes together, sitting at a table, taking notes. Reading assignments should be read together. All tapes should be listened to.
2. **Projects.** After listening to or reading the material, each couple is to do special projects. The couple should do at least two of the projects of their choice.
3. **New Habits.** The couple should devise a plan to do the first two steps (above) AND devise a plan to establish new habits.
4. **Accountability.** Ask the couple to report back to you after they have completed step three. Ask them what they are learning and what NEW HABITS they want to implement in their life. Call them again in several weeks to see how things are going.

Then the “First Aid Marriage Kit” lists common marriage problems and prescribes an assignment for each problem listed. This marriage kit has provided the small group leaders and pastors a very practical tool for helping troubled marriages.



## BUILDING STRONG MARRIAGES IN THE CHURCH

### Premarital Counseling

Pastor Terry Lewis · Lewis Center, OH

There they sit. A young couple that has decided to get married and now are in my office asking me to marry them. What do I say? What advice can I give them from my Bible? What principles are proven and tried over the generations? How can I find out what areas of their relationship need the most work before the wedding day? How do I prepare them so they hopefully won't be in the fifty percent category of marriages that fail, even for believers?

Those thoughts are no strangers to most young pastors and Christian leaders. Although I have been a pastor for over ten years and have performed over 50 weddings, I am still on the hunt for better ways to help young couples. Many Great Commission pastors have done more weddings than I. But for the many others that are still new at this role, here are some tips and tools that I have found useful and hope they are beneficial to you as well.

*“Don’t marry the person you think you can live with; marry only the individual you think you can’t live without.”*

*- Dr. James C. Dobson*

#### Initial Meeting

Your first visit with a couple is to see if you will be comfortable as a Christian pastor in participating in the wedding. **Ask honest/blunt questions.** How long have you

been dating? How far have you allowed your physical intimacy to go? Do you both consider yourselves believers? Have your parents given their support? **Pastor, if you do not have personal convictions yet on who you should marry or not marry, you need to get them. The clearer you are on your convictions and conditions for participating, the more you will be able to help the couple in front of you.** A good place to begin your study is John Hopley’s article concerning divorce and remarriage (found in this manual).

Once you are comfortable with marrying the couple, it is important to require premarriage counseling. I usually require three or four one hour sessions. I often try to include my wife in at least half of these. Your goal at this point is to best prepare them for married life, not just plan out a wedding ceremony.

I have used several different tools to help me with these premarriage counseling sessions, but I am most excited about a product produced by the group, Life Innovations, called *PREPARE*. The *PREPARE* program is an **inventory questionnaire that is designed to identify some of the strengths in the couple’s relationship and problematic issues to be talked through before they wed.**

The inventory costs thirty-five dollars per couple and you, as the pastor, are required to attend half day training, but I believe the information you will receive on significant issues from their responses will be invaluable in helping them. The inventory focuses on 12 areas of married life:

Communication  
 Conflict  
 Resolution  
 Personality  
 Issues  
 Financial Management  
 Marital Satisfaction  
 Leisure Activities  
 Children and Parenting  
 Family and Friends  
 Realistic Expectations  
 Idealistic Distortions  
 Role Relationship  
 Spiritual Beliefs

***“Happy marriages begin when we marry the ones we love, and they blossom when we love the ones we marry.”***

***- Unknown***

As an example, a statement in the inventory would be worded, “Sometimes I have trouble believing anything my partner tells me.” The inventory has response options of: 1-Strongly agree; 2-Agree; 3-Indecision; 4-Disagree; 5-Strongly disagree. I always have the couple take the inventory in separate rooms.

Let us say, for example, that a couple’s responses return to you with the male responding with a four and the female with a one to the above statement. Since truth-telling and trust are fundamental to any healthy marriage, you know at least one thing to bring up in your times together. This is one of 165 statements to which they respond. For more information on the people behind PREPARE and a sample of the 165 questions asked, log onto their website at [www.lifeinnovations.com](http://www.lifeinnovations.com).

This program should never replace your instructions from the Scriptures on the sacrificial responsibilities of a man and woman in a Christian marriage. But with my Bible in one hand and the inventory results in the other, I find I am ready to help most couples through a few sessions that will help them for married life far better than merely discussing the wedding arrangements.

In addition to the PREPARE program, I have asked couples to read a book or two on the subject of marriage from Christian authors such as Jim Dobson’s *StraightTalk* and *Love Must Be Tough*, and Gary Chapman’s *Five Love Languages*.

The other thing I challenge couples to do is to find a small group of other couples who can help them get adjusted to married life. Tom Neven, in a recent article wrote, “I refuse to believe that the drastically lower divorce rate of fifty years ago can be explained by suggesting that husbands and wives magically got along better than they do today. Human nature was not substantially different, but the social order most certainly was. Our grandparents understood that an entire community shared the stake in the survival of their marriages, and they benefited from the support mechanisms that discouraged marital dissolution at the same time they helped couples survive the rough spots all marriages go through.”

What Neven is saying is that the Church has got to pick up where the all-too-often distant family leaves off. Helping newlyweds get involved in a small group of other couples is one of the best gifts you could give them.

***“What you are as a single person, you will be as a married person, only to a greater degree. Any negative character trait will be intensified in a marriage relationship, because you will feel free to let your guard down -- that person has committed himself to you and you no longer have to worry about scaring him off.”***

***- Josh McDowell***

Experts say that the best times to influence people is at transitional times in a person's life. There are not many opportunities like engaged counseling to share directly and excitingly about what God promises to a couple who live under His direction.

My last piece of advice comes from when Mark and Kristi Hagen did the premarriage counseling for my wife, Kelly, and me. At the end of every session of instructions and warnings, they would always say that **the most important rule to keep your relationship fresh is to have fun.** As an engaged couple, there can be a lot of stress from the invitations, to the dress, to the license, and of course, the in-laws. Remind the couple to always take out time to have fun. **Put the to-do list aside and enjoy one another's company and laughter.**



## Establishing Moral Safeguards for Staff

Pastor Doug Brown · Lee's Summit, MO

Samson had everything going for him. He was a mighty man of God and was used in a powerful way by the Lord. However, he lost it all because he did not have self-control.

The sad truth is this is not an isolated event. Moral impropriety is not only ravaging our culture, but also the Church. We can all think of a number of examples of mighty men of God who have fallen because of immorality. We are not exempt from the sensuously driven society that we live in.

The Scriptures exhort us to take heed lest we fall. Paul buffeted his body and made it his slave, lest after he preached to others he would find himself disqualified. Peter the Great, a Russian Czar and a great conqueror, who killed his son in a fit of rage said, "I have conquered empires, but I was not able to conquer myself."

*"Remember that a successful marriage depends on two things: (1) finding the right person and (2) being the right person."*

- Tom Mullen

God has commanded us to stand against the tide of immorality. He is calling us to set the example of self-control and moral set-apartness. We are challenged not to be like Esau, who sold his birthright for a single meal and forfeited God's blessing. We also must not sell out our leadership influence because we were not able to control our appetites. "The only worthwhile victory," states a Chinese proverb, "is victory over self." Proverbs states, that it is better to rule your spirit than to rule others (Proverbs 16:32).

Three arenas need to be addressed in order for us to live uprightly:

1. Heart
2. Boundaries
3. Accountability

### 1. The Heart

*"You have heard it said, 'You shall not commit adultery'; but I say to you, that everyone who looks upon a woman to lust for her has committed adultery with her already in his heart. And if your right eye makes you stumble, tear it out and throw it from you; for it is better for you that one of the parts of your body perish, than for your whole body to be thrown into hell. And if your right hand makes you stumble, cut it off, and throw it from you; for it is better for you that one of the parts of your body perish, than for your whole body to go into hell" (Matthew 5:27-30).*

We can come up with all kinds of laws, rules, and safeguards to prevent moral indiscretion, but to no avail because law cannot change the heart. Jesus spoke forcefully to the religious leaders of His day for their hypocrisy. "Woe to you, Scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you are like whitewashed tombs which on the outside appear beautiful, but inside they are full of dead men's bones and all uncleanness.



*Even so you too outwardly appear righteous to men, but inwardly you are full of hypocrisy and lawlessness” (Matthew 23:27-28).*

We need a power to change our heart. That power is the Holy Spirit who dwells within us. Therefore, putting first things first, is the necessity for each one of us to be daily walking in the Spirit. For it is the Spirit who strives against our flesh and then transforms us.

## 2. Boundaries

*“Do not move the ancient boundary which your fathers have set” (Proverbs 22:28).* Once we have a growing heart to heart relationship with the Lord, we then can establish moral boundaries that will help us stay on course. We have established and published these boundaries for our staff at Lee’s Summit Community Church. During a staff meeting, we read through these safeguards together and then committed ourselves to them.

**Safeguards for Staff**—Maintaining moral purity between male and female staff 2 Corinthians 8:20-21/1 Thessalonians 5:22

1. *Establish certain visual boundaries.* Do not allow yourself to be alone with a staff member of the opposite sex in a car, restaurant, travel, etc.
2. *Maintain an appearance that is unquestionable in the office.* Doors are left open or doors have windows, if the door must be closed. Do not allow yourself to be alone in the same office after hours.
3. *No physical contact.* Appropriate physical contact such as handshakes or hugs shared with staff of the opposite sex in front of spouse or other staff are acceptable.
4. *Avoid verbal comments with hidden or secretive meanings.* Includes comments that have unfavorable overtones. Includes secret words or comments that only the one male/female staff member would understand.
5. *Do not discuss personal problems with opposite sex.* Problems and issues relating, in particular, to home, marriage, and children which involve more than a brief comment or prayer request should be promptly referred for counseling with a staff person of the same gender.
6. *Openly convey love for your spouse and children.* Speak openly and freely of how you value these relationships.
7. *Determine what is an appropriate emotional distance.* While establishing a solid working relationship/friendship with staff of the opposite sex, there should remain a distinct difference between how you relate emotionally with your spouse and staff of the opposite sex.

*“Bad marriages don’t cause infidelity; infidelity causes bad marriages.”*

*- Frank Pittman*



### 3. Accountability

*“Faithful are the wounds of a friend but deceitful are the kisses of an enemy” (Proverbs 27:6).* Safeguards are useless unless there are consequences. Accountability provides safeguards with consequences. Accountability is a two-way street. Being accountable means that we are honestly open with someone else with what is going on in our hearts. Accountability is also having the humility to receive advice or admonishment from someone else regarding inappropriate behavior or comments. Once these arenas are embraced from the heart, it allows the staff to have security and confidence in the working relationship. It builds a team dynamic that helps build a love and respect for each other. And, most importantly, it allows the staff to stay focused on our mission of glorifying the Lord and making Him known. May God bless you and your team for His glory!

***“I also know that it is far more important to be the right kind of person than it is to marry the right person. In short, whether you married the right or wrong person is primarily up to you.”***

***- Zig Ziglar***



BUILDING STRONG MARRIAGES IN THE CHURCH

## You Can Host Your Own Couples Conference

Pastor Harry Poindexter · Overland Park, KS

### Why Should We Have a Couples Conference?

There are many reasons why you should consider hosting a couples conference. Here are several: 1) It provides you with opportunities to address issues that are facing couples in your church; 2) It can be a great opportunity to link new couples into your church; 3) It can provide couples some special opportunities to build new relationships as couples; 4) It can be a great opportunity for a couple to get away from routine for a time of rest, relaxation, and reflection; 5) If you do a conference with other churches it can be bridge building time between the churches; 6) You can use the conference for creating future opportunities to minister either to groups or to individuals.

### Who Can Have a Couples Conference?

You can have a couples conference with many or with a few. All it takes is purpose, planning, and the willingness to push on through. With a larger conference you can get some economies of scale that aren't available with a smaller group, but with a smaller group you get the advantage of a more personal setting.

### Comments About Our Couples Conference

We have had a couples conference in the Missouri/Kansas Region for 14 or 15 years. Right now, we are averaging about 150 couples per year to our conference. We have used speakers from Great Commission predominately, however we have also used some speakers from outside our circles and we have had encouraging results. There are many types of speakers and it helps to have variety.

We usually try to have our couples conference around Valentine's Day. It makes a Valentine's present an easy thing for a couple. It is a slow time for hotels and for the activity calendar for most people. It is far enough away from Christmas that most can fit it into their budget. It is a natural time for people to consider relational issues in their marriage. It is considered a "romantic opportunity" for most couples—they are willing to get away from kids and routine.

We build in both teaching and time for relaxation in our conferences. We have teachings on Saturday morning, early afternoon, and an evening session from 6:00 pm (includes dinner) to about 9:00pm. The afternoon and the rest of the evening are free for recreation and for personal time. On Sunday, we start at 9:00 am with two sessions back to back, ending by 12:30 which allows enough time for couples to travel back home.

*"Supreme authority in both Church and home has been divinely vested in the male as the representative of Christ, who is the Head of the Church. It is in willing and glad submission rather than grudging capitulation that the woman in the Church (whether married or single) and the wife in the home find their fulfillment."*

- Elisabeth Elliot

There are two things that require a lot of lead time. We usually try to line up a speaker nine months to a year in advance. We try to secure a location nine months to a year in advance. We have couples coming from St. Louis, Columbia, and from the Kansas City area, so we usually have our conference in the Ozarks which is midway between St. Louis and Kansas City.

*"The Bible opens and closes with a wedding."*

*- Selwyn Hughes*

### **How Can I Organize a Couples Conference?**

The following are some of the items you would have to consider in putting a couples conference together. We call our couples conference M.A.T.E.S. — Marriage Advancement Training and Enrichment Seminar.

#### M.A.T.E.S. Details

##### *Communication*

1. Fall/Winter letters
2. Brochure/ bulletin flyer - picture of speaker and wife - bio & schedule
3. Reservation letter

##### *Speaker/Details*

1. Who? Fees
2. Topics - What is the speaker passionate about? Is there an issue that needs to be addressed among many of your couples?
3. Travel - airfare, car rental, meals for two. We always invite the wife along with the speaker.
4. Notes - Will he use notes? You will need to purchase a folder and make arrangements to duplicate the notes.
5. Other arrangements

##### *Music - Who will lead and organize music?*

1. Song selection
2. Personnel
3. Equipment - overhead, instruments, etc.
4. Specials
5. Other churches

##### *Sound - Will you provide your own sound, use the hotel's system (usually not very good), or use an outside contractor?*

1. Equipment
2. Transportation
3. Personnel
4. Tapes
5. Other

*Registration - Find someone with the gift of administration.*

1. Letters
2. Financial deposits-We have a separate bank account.
3. Registration materials
4. Name tags
5. Notebooks or folders

*Program*

1. MC
2. Banquet (?)
3. Skits/Drama
4. Games/prizes
5. Childcare - We provide a room for nursing mothers that is wired with sound. We ask parents of infants to be sensitive to the noise level of their child and to use the nursing room if they are likely to cause a distraction to others.
6. Scheduling - What is your weekend going to look like?

If you want to do a couples conference and want additional input, feel free to contact me (Harry Poin-dexter, [hpoindexter@gmail.com](mailto:hpoindexter@gmail.com)).

***"Spoil your spouse.....  
not your children."***

***- Unknown***



BUILDING STRONG MARRIAGES IN THE CHURCH

## Helping Men Break the Bondage of Pornography

Pastor Ed Russ · Raleigh, NC

It seems that, with every step we take, we are bombarded by images that attempt to distract and hinder us from fully following Jesus Christ. We cannot escape unless we literally cut ourselves off from all outside influence, but then we miss the opportunity to exert our righteous influence on others. Jesus Christ promised to give us life and to give it to us abundantly. There is nothing that has to bind and hinder us in our pursuit of Jesus.

Not all have freedom though. Pornography has ensnared countless men through its constant bombardment. Anecdotal research done by xxxchurch.com finds that nearly 70% of men are trapped by pornography. Even more surprisingly, they found that 76% of the Christian ministry leaders they surveyed were involved to some degree with pornography (as reported by www.cnn.com, April 6, 2007). Pornography is everywhere: on TV, in the print media, video, and the Internet, which brought this problem to a higher level. The Internet makes access easy and anonymous.

The addiction to pornography is as powerful as any addiction: alcohol, drugs, food, and nicotine. Unlike other addictions, it can be very well hidden because of its anonymity and easy access. No one smells like smoke or alcohol. No one becomes overweight by viewing pornography. Also, the shame associated with pornography drives it further out of sight. Socially, there seems to be a certain sympathy to those addicted to alcohol, drugs, etc. Pornography comes with a social stigma.

We, as elders and aspiring elders, must meet the challenge of pornography directly. Its addictive venom is destroying lives right now. Families are broken, marriages ruined, ministries destroyed, finances depleted, and disciples are not being made because men are hindered in running for God. This paper will give you some ideas of how to deal with this issue in the lives of men in your church. Dealing with pornography is not for the faint of heart, but take courage, Jesus will use you mightily to help set men free that are bound. Only be very strong and courageous!

Before the problem can be solved, it must be unmasked. Pray for God to reveal the problem that any men may have with pornography. When pornography addiction is revealed in a man's life, it is a great opportunity for that man to find freedom and healing. God longs to be gracious and to give that freedom.

As we pray, we must create a culture of openness and humility. Be open about your own personal struggles, even if your struggles have nothing to do with pornography. After a life group time where I shared my struggles and temptations, a brother called me up, asking to meet with me. He confessed his addiction to pornography. That was a huge step for him, and his comment to me was along the lines of, "When I heard you confessing your struggles and sin, I knew I was safe to talk with you about my

*"Trying to figure out how much sinful content from media you can handle and still be 'okay' is like a person who takes half a poison pill every day because 'only half' won't kill you."*

*- Joshua Harris*

***“But I say to you, that every one who looks on a woman to lust for her has committed adultery with her in his heart.”***

***- Jesus Christ  
(Matthew 5:28)***

sin.” We all struggle with something. Let it be known what you struggle with and the door will be open for you to help others.

Look for signs in a man’s life that may point to problem areas. Be aware of sudden, drastic personality changes, sudden drop in attending church activities, vague answers to accountability type questions. If he is married, take great notice if his wife suddenly changes negatively, withdraws, seems angry, and bitter. Many things can cause these effects. Pornography is one of the most common. If you notice any of these, under the counsel of your pastor(s), initiate conversation in hopes of reaching that man and recapturing his heart for God. Remember, Jude 22-23 (ESV), “*And have mercy on those who doubt, save others by snatching them out of the fire; to others show mercy with fear, hating even the garment stained by the flesh.*”

As we deal with pornography in a man’s life, one of the most important things we need to do is to assess the level of struggle:

Level 1: Swimsuits, gawking at the beach

Level 2: Intimate apparel advertisements, Victoria’s Secret, Sports Illustrated swimsuit edition

Level 3: Soft Core Pornography, viewing upper body nudity, simulated sex acts

Level 4: Hard Core Pornography, viewing full body nudity, real sex acts, visiting clubs

Level 5: Personal sex acts with another (adultery and fornication)

We need to appropriately respond according to the level the man struggles. Do not accept any level as acceptable, but the consequences he will have to deal with will vary depending upon the level in which he is struggling. Also, the higher the level, the greater the battle he will have to fight to become free. Keep in mind that dealing with the higher levels will also bring significant marriage and family issues that must be dealt with in wisdom and grace. Much input and counsel from the pastors will be vital to successfully navigate through the struggle. Also, let grace be the first and recurring response. When a man reveals his struggle, avoid the temptation to first think about and deal with the consequences of his sin. Rejoice that at least this sin is revealed and the man is on the path to freedom.

In all things, remember that Jesus is more than able to set any man free. Lasting freedom will come for the man only as he falls desperately in love with Jesus. Fight for him. Pray and fast for him, and for his family. Be willing to get in the trenches with him, staying up all night if necessary to pray and talk with him. Phone calls in the middle of the night may come. Though inconvenient, welcome them as opportunities. Confront and reprove when necessary. Does he need to get rid of his computer or TV? Should he cancel all his credit cards and not have any spending money? Does his wife or roommate (or you) know where he is at all times? These practical accountable steps may be necessary to help the man get over the hump, but do not depend solely upon these accountability steps. These steps can be followed precisely, but the man’s heart may still be left untouched. Read through Colossians. We think “do not taste, do not touch” is wise, but they do nothing to help a man change his heart. Go for the heart. What that means for every man will be different. The goal is the same: that we all become the best disciples of Jesus, deeply in love with Him. A good verse to remember is 2 Timothy 2:22 (ESV), “*So flee youthful passions and pursue righteousness, faith, love, and peace, along with those who call on the Lord from a pure heart.*”

There are numerous resources that help men overcome pornography. Consider using some of these resources as needed. An Internet search will give you information about each.

[Break Free](#) and [At the Altar of Sexual Idolatry](#) books by Steve Gallagher

Celebrate Recovery

Pure Life Ministries

Focus on the Family

XXX Church

***“My temptations  
have been my  
Masters in Divinity.”***

***- Martin Luther***

Men, be strong in the Lord. God will use you mightily. Be very careful, however, that you, too, do not become ensnared by pornography. Be very open and humble with your pastor(s) and your wife. Listen and respond to their counsel. They are there for your protection! Let's be free, let's help men get free so we can get on with the task of making disciples of all the nations!



BUILDING STRONG MARRIAGES IN THE CHURCH

## Counseling Couples in Crisis

Pastor Dave Blum · Manassas, VA

Counseling a married couple that is experiencing significant and unresolved conflict can be the best of times or the worst of times. It can make you think, “This is why I jumped into ministry in the first place, to help people see Christ affect the very center of their lives.” Or, it can make you think, “You know, I don’t care about the extra crowns in Heaven for doing this kind of stuff. I’d rather be fishing or planning my next sermon which, no doubt, will include some veiled reference to the stubborn people I am now sitting with.”

Sound familiar? I’ve felt both ways (and a lot in-between). Marital conflict will come and go. It will be there as long as people are in process of being redeemed and sanctified (and as long as people like you and I take the marriage vows). So let me offer some perspective from the standpoint of the **counselor**; some things that will help you the most as you get involved in someone else’s inner worlds.

**First, use the counseling opportunity as a way to check your own heart and life.** Most of the time you will encounter incorrect attitudes, habits, and speech that you (and/or your spouse) have exhibited or, more painful yet, are currently struggling with. It may be to a lesser degree, but there’s a good chance it could still be there, under the surface. In fact, you may have become more sophisticated at masking the conflict, using your spiritual activities, leadership position, and/or Christian lingo to hide the real tension between man and wife. This couple in crisis may actually be exhibiting greater courage (and faith) than you in their marriage by coming to someone for help.

As an antidote, I suggest taking a half-step back, swallowing hard, and prayerfully reflecting on Matthew 7:3-5 (NIV), “*Why do you look at the speck of sawdust in your brother’s eye and **pay no attention** to the plank in your own eye? How can you say to your brother, ‘Let me take the speck out of your eye,’ when all the time there is a plank in your own eye? You hypocrite, first take the plank out of your own eye, and then you will see clearly to remove the speck from your brother’s eye.*”

Here are some things to avoid in the counseling process:

**Don’t try to live their marriage for them.** They made the commitment to each other, even if it was out of partial ignorance about the gut-wrenching challenges of marriage. The way they do, or don’t, respond to each other is not primarily your responsibility. You are not the Holy Spirit, nor should you try to be. I love the passage in Galatians 6 that says, “*carry one another’s burdens...but each one should carry his (or her) own load.*” Carry their burden (by providing wise, warm, and empathetic counsel), but don’t take on their load of living their relationship for them. The closer you are to the couple, the harder it is to strike this balance.

*“For a marriage to have any chance, every day at least six things should go unsaid.”*

- Unknown



**Don't try to tackle every issue they are facing at once.** No doubt they are somewhat confused (and frustrated) with their problems and all their issues seem to be inextricably interlaced. Peel the layers of the onion one at a time. That's part of why they are seeking your input; they intuitively want some expert help on where the root of their problems might be. Help them understand Rome was not built in a day, nor do you restore a home all at once.

*"Try praising your wife, even if it does frighten her at first."*

*- Billy Sunday*

**Don't be afraid to put limitations on the length and scope of your counseling.** I've learned the hard way on this one, thinking I would lose my ability to display compassion by putting firmer time limits on the sessions. I've actually been more successful when giving the couples a *start* and *end point* to the actual session. If we are approaching 10 minutes remaining, I'll provide a kind, but firm, reminder that we have 10 minutes left and that some of the issues that don't come out immediately may need to be deferred to the next time. You can also provide assignments for in-between sessions that will help them clarify issues before getting together again. With most couples in crisis, I will now commit to three, or at most, four sessions together. That way expectations are clear up front and I don't lock myself into a long-term, indefinite arrangement (your individual gifting and/or church staff arrangement may dictate greater or lesser time commitment).

**Don't be afraid to face your own limitations.** You undoubtedly have something to offer them, but there may be more gifted/experienced people in your congregation who could do a better job with counseling them. They may need to be referred to a professional counselor outside your local church or ministry. In many cases, it may be best to include your spouse in the process (this will vary based on the needs of the couple, the availability and motivation of your spouse, and the relationship you have with the couple). Use discernment. Sometimes when I'm not sure, I will simply ask my wife and the couple if they think it will help, then I go from there. One woman who has benefited greatly from our counsel over the years mentioned that while I was adept at communicating the scriptural basis and truth for her decision-making, my wife was excellent at providing the pragmatic application and implementation of those truths. She said that her life and marriage were better for having both perspectives in counseling.

Here are some pro-active things you can do to increase your effectiveness as a counselor:

**Put spiritual accountability into place.** I typically take a first session with a couple in crisis to empathetically listen to their concerns. The emphasis is on warmth, empathy, and respect. Affirm them as people and help them realize they are not the only ones experiencing those tensions. Determine a course of action and a scope/ sequence to your counseling. Help them take ownership of their life transformation by asking for a commitment to personal Bible study, prayer, and completing whatever assignments you might give to aid the counseling.

One pastor I know has developed a 30-day quiet time calendar that he gives to couples he's counseling. If they don't make an honest attempt at the discipline of encountering God, he won't continue long-term counseling. Don't expect perfection, but neither shy away from expecting commitment. They need changes, and only God can bring about the change they ultimately need. You are a supplement to the Holy Spirit's work in their life. Set them (and you) up for success by involving the Holy Spirit as much as possible.

***“Let the wife make her husband glad to come home and let him make her sorry to see him leave.”***

***- Martin Luther***

**Major on the majors.** I have found most conflict in marriage sooner or later revolves around the issue of the husband loving, cherishing, and understanding his wife, and the wife respecting/trusting her husband. That is the primary emphasis in Scripture. You can be simple without being simplistic. Most issues of internal change are not complicated, just difficult. I also put more emphasis in most situations on the husband. He is the God-ordained spiritual leader and needs to take responsibility, though, obviously, it doesn't give the wife license to do what's wrong. More often than not, I have eventually seen a wife respond to a loving, Spirit-led, accountable husband. Don't be afraid to tell the guy to “Play the man!”

**Do some follow-up.** You may not be able to provide consistent, long-term counseling. If this is the case, set up one follow-up time a month or two down the road. This will help the couple know you care and you can provide some fine-tuning if need be. If they are making progress or receiving help from someone else, you can learn a lot through what they have learned.

**Utilize outside resources.** Here are some that I've found helpful: Bill Hybel's *“Fit to be Tied,”* Neil Clark Warren's *“Finding the Love of Your Life,”* Willard Harley's *“His Needs, Her Needs,”* Larry Crabb's *“Men and Women; Enjoying the Difference,”* Jack and Carol Mayhall's *“Marriage Takes More Than Love,”* and *“Opposites Attack,”* and John Gray's *“Men Are From Mars, Women Are From Venus.”* I have also enjoyed giving people the DISC test [offered as the Personal Profile System by Carlson Learning Company] as a very practical way of helping them understand the internal wiring of the other person.

**Celebrate the victories; give the defeats to God.** When you see change, recognize where it really comes from, and thank God that He gave you the opportunity to be part of it. You will earn that couple's trust and they will, in some measure, be thankful God brought you into their lives. When the relationship explodes, no doubt you may think you've wasted your time. Your labor in the Lord is never in vain. Learn from it and trust God for the results. One couple that I thought would never make it (and thought had not benefited from my counsel), eventually experienced a breakthrough. I met the husband two years later at a Promise Keepers conference; he was a changed man and he had a totally renewed marriage. Though I planted, someone else watered, and God caused the growth.

Counseling couples in crisis is a mighty task. Go for it!





BUILDING STRONG MARRIAGES IN THE CHURCH

Exercise

1. What was the main lesson you learned from this reading?

Having a healthy marriage -- or a healthy relationship of any kind, for that matter -- requires a power to change the heart that we do not naturally have within us apart from God. Only the Holy Spirit can empower us to build the kind of marriages or relationships that will honor the Lord. We also need to be especially mindful of setting and sticking with healthy safeguards, not letting our pride/stubbornness get in the way and thereby lead ourselves or perhaps others into bondage. (A personal, strong conviction I have is to NEVER be alone behind closed doors with anyone of the opposite sex, excluding my mother or perhaps another close female relative.)

Three horizontal lines for writing.

2. Evaluate the health of your marriage. What is the greatest strength of your marriage? What is the greatest weakness?

Five horizontal lines for writing.

3. Have your spouse evaluate your marriage. According to your spouse, what is the greatest strength? What is the greatest weakness?

Five horizontal lines for writing.

BUILDING STRONG MARRIAGES IN THE CHURCH**Exercise**

4. What practical steps can you take to build your marriage? What steps can the church take to help you in your marriage?

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5. Evaluate the health of the marriages in your church. What are the overall strengths and weaknesses? Devise a plan (including a calendar of events and an overall church schedule), which (to your satisfaction) would build strong marriages in your church.

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GREAT COMMISSION LEADERSHIP INSTITUTE

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## **Divorce and Remarriage**

In working with churches throughout the United States, I (John Hopler) have been asked many questions on the issue of divorce and remarriage. There are many attending the church who have gone through, or are going through, a painful divorce. What is permissible in such situations? Can a divorced person be remarried? This article was written to answer the many questions that are raised on this issue of divorce and remarriage.





## Divorce and Remarriage

Pastor John Hopley · Columbus, OH

### 1. What does the Bible say about marriage?

The best place to start is in the Book of Genesis with the account of the very first marriage:

*“The LORD God fashioned into a woman the rib which He had taken from the man, and brought her to the man. The man said, ‘This is now bone of my bones, and flesh of my flesh; she shall be called Woman, because she was taken out of Man. For this reason a man shall leave his father and his mother, and be joined to his wife; and they shall become one flesh” (Genesis 2:22-24).*

A few lessons to learn from this passage:

First, marriage was invented by God. **Marriage is not a product of the civil government or of our culture.** Rather, it was God who brought about the first marriage and He is the One who determines the rules related to marriage.

Second, **marriage is a joining of two people.** A “oneness” occurs that is holy and wonderful in the eyes of God. Marriage is not merely a contractual arrangement between two consenting adults. There is a union that occurs to the point where God says that the man and the woman “*become one flesh*” (Genesis 2:24).

This union is one that God intended to be for a lifetime. Jesus referred to the passage in Genesis in describing the nature of this union:

*“Some Pharisees came to Jesus, testing Him and asking, ‘Is it lawful for a man to divorce his wife for any reason at all?’ And He answered and said, ‘Have you not read that He who created them from the beginning MADE THEM MALE AND FEMALE, and said, FOR THIS REASON A MAN SHALL LEAVE HIS FATHER AND MOTHER AND BE JOINED TO HIS WIFE, AND THE TWO SHALL BECOME ONE FLESH? So they are no longer two, but one flesh. What therefore God has joined together, let no man separate.’ They said to Him, ‘Why then did Moses command to GIVE HER A CERTIFICATE OF DIVORCE AND SEND HER AWAY?’ He said to them, ‘Because of your hardness of heart Moses permitted you to divorce your wives; but from the beginning it has not been this way. And I say to you, whoever divorces his wife, except for immorality, and marries another woman commits adultery” (Matthew 19:3-9).*

As the above passage shows, Jesus was very strong on this point: Marriage is meant to be for a lifetime. In Jesus’ words, “from the beginning,” it was God’s intention that there be no divorce. “From the beginning” God’s plan was that a man and a woman would be married and stay married as long as they lived.

*“I’ve never met a couple yet who, when they were walking down the aisle, said, ‘What we want is three years of happiness, two years of [torment], a messy divorce and 15 years of fighting over custody of the kids.”*

*- Wade F. Horn,  
assistant secretary at the  
Department of Health and  
Human Services*



This is confirmed in other passages from the Scriptures. One of the clearest is found in the last book of the Old Testament:

*“Take heed then to your spirit, and let no one deal treacherously against the wife of your youth. For I hate divorce,” says the LORD, the God of Israel” (Malachi 2:15-16).*

A few lessons from this passage:

First, God hates divorce. (Could this be stated any stronger?) Second, God views marriage as a covenant relationship. That is, each person in a marriage covenant is responsible to God and to his/her spouse to fulfill their covenant responsibilities, regardless of the circumstances or the actions of that person’s spouse. **Marriage is a commitment, not only to the marriage partner, but also to God, to honor Him and to be a model to the world of our relationship with Christ.** Thus Paul compares marriage to the relationship between Christ and His church (Ephesians 5:22-33).

*“Marriage is far more important than most of us realize. It affects God’s reputation on this planet. That’s why He hates divorce. And that’s why it’s essential for you to set Jesus Christ apart as the Builder of your home.”*

*- Dennis Rainey*

## **2. If it is clear from Scripture that God intended that marriage be for a lifetime, what do Christians teach as to divorce and remarriage?**

The question on the freedom to divorce and remarry is an issue that Christians have debated for centuries. There are some Christians (such as Bill Gothard and John Piper) who would not allow for divorce, even in the case of adultery. Others would have a much looser policy. For example, Willow Creek Community Church has a divorce policy that allows for divorce and remarriage in certain cases involving immorality or desertion. (See “Participating Membership Manual,” Willow Creek Community Church, p.125, 1995).

From the above examples, one can see that there is quite a disagreement among devoted Christians on this topic. It is difficult at times to speak on this subject without it reflecting negatively on other Christians that we honor and love. But it is important for each of us to examine the Scriptures ourselves and develop our own convictions on this very important topic, regardless of whether our convictions differ with godly Christians we admire.

Further, as a leader in Great Commission Churches, I thought it important to express the following views on this topic for the sake of the association. In the GCC Core Values paper, the following statement was written:

*We aspire to provide compassionate ministry to those who are divorced while at the same time teaching that God hates divorce and wants couples to stay married. Churches in our association (with some exceptions) generally teach that God permits remarriage after divorce in two instances—marital infidelity or if an unbeliever leaves a believing spouse (Matthew 5:32; 1 Corinthians 7:15).*

As the above statement indicates, this is the general view of pastors in our association. I do not maintain that everyone in GCC agrees with every one of the following points or that no one in GCC disagrees with the major claims in this paper. Still, it is my opinion that this paper is representative of most of the pastors in GCC. As a result of this paper, it is my hope that it will encourage further dialogue and

studying of the Scripture so that each leader and believer will develop his/her own convictions on what God says as to divorce and remarriage.

### 3. What do we learn from the Old Testament as to God's view of divorce?

We already looked at the passages in Genesis 2 and Malachi 2, which show clearly that God intends marriage to be for a lifetime and that He hates divorce. Some other significant passages are the following:

*“When a man takes a wife and marries her, and it happens that she finds no favor in his eyes because he has found some indecency in her, and he writes her a certificate of divorce and puts it in her hand and sends her out from his house, and she leaves his house and goes and becomes another man's wife, and if the latter husband turns against her and writes her a certificate of divorce and puts it in her hand and sends her out of his house, or if the latter husband dies who took her to be his wife, then her former husband who sent her away is not allowed to take her again to be his wife, since she has been defiled; for that is an abomination before the LORD, and you shall not bring sin on the land which the LORD your God gives you as an inheritance” (Deuteronomy 24:1-4).*

This passage might imply that divorce was an option for the man living under the Jewish law who “found some indecency” in his wife. Jesus, however, states very clearly in Matthew 19:8 that this was allowed because of the Jews’ “hardness of heart.” That is, God realized that the Jews would divorce their wives. This passage in Deuteronomy was written not to validate divorce, but to put some restrictions on those who have been divorced and then have subsequently remarried. The rule laid down by God was that a divorced woman who was remarried could not remarry the original husband. In summation, when pairing this with Jesus’ words in Matthew 19, Deuteronomy 24 does not give any freedom for God’s people to divorce.

Another passage that deals with marriage and divorce is found in Leviticus:

*“If there is a man who commits adultery with another man's wife, one who commits adultery with his friend's wife, the adulterer and the adulteress shall surely be put to death” (Leviticus 20:10).*

The point to make from this verse is simply this: If a person committed adultery under the Law, that person was to be put to death. Therefore, if a person’s marriage partner was put to death for adultery, needless to say, that person—as a widow or widower—was free to remarry. So, under the Mosaic Law, adultery was, in essence, a basis for the offended marriage partner to be free to marry another.

A final Old Testament passage is in Ezra 10. In this passage, the men of Israel had taken foreign wives—women who were not followers of the true God. Here was the response by God’s leader to this situation:

*“Then Ezra the priest stood up and said to them, ‘You have been unfaithful and have married foreign wives adding to the guilt of Israel. Now therefore, make confession to the LORD God of your fathers and do His will; and separate yourselves from the peoples of the land and from the foreign wives.’ Then all the assembly replied with a loud voice, That’s right! As you have said, so it is our duty to do” (Ezra 10:10-12).*

***“Enter marriage with your eyes wide open and put on the blinders after saying I do!”***

***- James Dobson***

The point to make from this passage is that the rules on marriage changed when there were “mixed marriages.” That is, in the case of the people of Israel during Ezra’s day, as to a marriage between a believer and a non-believer, divorce was not merely allowed--divorce was commanded! At issue with the people in Ezra 10 was their obedience to God. The lesson we learn here is that the Lordship of God and Jesus Christ is primary, even to the marriage relationship.

*“Many marriages would be better if the husband and wife clearly understood they are on the same side.”*

*- Zig Ziglar*

#### 4. What did Jesus teach on the subject of divorce?

The most famous passage on this topic is found in Matthew 5:32:

*“...but I say to you that everyone who divorces his wife, except for the reason of unchastity, makes her commit adultery; and whoever marries a divorced woman commits adultery.”*

This statement is repeated with similar words in Matthew 19:9, Mark 10:11, and Luke 16:18.

A few points about this verse:

First, the thrust of this passage is that there should be no divorce. The purpose for Jesus saying this, in the context, was to preserve the sanctity of marriage, and to condemn divorce. His purpose was not primarily to detail when divorce was permissible.

Second, it is clear that divorce is permissible when there is “unchastity” or “immorality” (Matthew 19:9). The word here is “*porneia*” which means “illicit sexual intercourse” [Expository Dictionary of New Testament Words, W.E. Vine, Vol. II, p. 125, Revell Press, (1966)].

There has been much debate on the meaning of this term “*porneia*.” Some would argue that the term does not include adultery since it is a different word than adultery (“*moichao*”) used in the same verse. Further, the argument is made that it refers to other type of immoralities, such as sexual intercourse with another person after the marriage vows were made, but before the marriage was consummated. For example, in Jesus’ day, Mary and Joseph were betrothed and considered “married” (see Matthew 1:18-19), but had not consummated the marriage. In John 8:41, the word “*porneia*” is used to imply that Jesus was born of “fornication” (i.e., from immorality before the marriage between Mary and Joseph was consummated). The net of all this is that there are those who argue that Matthew 5:32 does not give a person whose spouse committed adultery liberty to divorce his/her spouse.

I respectfully disagree with this view for the following reasons:

First, I would point to the Old Testament Law, which was still in operation at the time Jesus spoke the words recorded in Matthew 5:32. Under the Law, the offended person would not have needed to divorce his/her adulterous spouse because that adulterous spouse would have been put to death! To argue that adultery is not part of the exception given in Matthew 5:32 does not square with God’s view of adultery in the Old Testament.

Second, the argument that “*porneia*” does not include adultery because it is a different word than is used for adultery is weak in my opinion. The word “*porneia*”, according to most commentators that I have read (including W.E. Vine), is a general word for immorality (including incest, fornication, homosexuality, as well as adultery), whereas the word “*moicheia*” is more specific to adultery. That is, the

***“Between a man and his wife nothing ought to rule but love.”***

***- William Penn***

word “*porneia*” was chosen by Jesus because there were other forms of immorality other than adultery (such as homosexuality or bestiality) that would be grounds for divorce.

This is not to say that God would automatically want a couple to divorce if adultery has occurred. There are numerous instances when a couple has been restored despite the unfaithfulness of one of the partners. My only point is that, according to Matthew 5:32, there is, in the eyes of God, liberty to divorce a spouse who has committed adultery or some other form of immorality.

## **5. What does the rest of the New Testament say about divorce?**

The definitive passage in the Bible on the subject of divorce and remarriage for our culture today is 1 Corinthians 7. I say this for several reasons:

First, 1 Corinthians 7 is dealing with Gentiles who were not brought up under the Law. They were recent converts to Christ who had not been previously part of a God-fearing society/culture.

Second, as we shall see, the Apostle Paul is answering specific questions on the subject of marriage and divorce to these new Christians. How Paul answers these questions is the best indicator of how we are to answer the same questions here in the 21st century.

Third, Paul was writing after Moses and Jesus taught on divorce and remarriage. Therefore, his answers are built upon the foundation of what had been communicated by God earlier, and are shared through the lens of the gospel of grace to these new believers in Christ.

For these reasons, the next section of this paper will be a study of 1 Corinthians 7 in order to understand God’s attitude towards divorce and remarriage.

### **1st Corinthians 7: 1-16**

*“Now concerning the things about which you wrote, it is good for a man not to touch a woman. But because of immoralities, each man is to have his own wife, and each woman is to have her own husband. The husband must fulfill his duty to his wife, and likewise also the wife to her husband. The wife does not have authority over her own body, but the husband does; and likewise also the husband does not have authority over his own body, but the wife does. Stop depriving one another, except by agreement for a time, so that you may devote yourselves to prayer, and come together again so that Satan will not tempt you because of your lack of self-control. But this I say by way of concession, not of command” (vv. 1-6).*

The main point to be made here is that Paul was evidently asked some questions related to marriage. This letter was written to answer those questions. In verses 1-6, Paul is affirming the goodness of being married and of each spouse fulfilling his/her marital responsibilities.

*“Yet I wish that all men were even as I myself am. However, each man has his own gift from God, one in this manner, and another in that. But I say to the unmarried and to widows that it is good for them if they remain even as I. But if they do not have self-control, let them marry; for it is better to marry than to burn with passion” (vv. 6-9).*

In these verses, Paul is urging the Corinthian “unmarried” and “widows” to remain single unless they do not have self-control. I would maintain that the “unmarried” in these verses refer to those who are divorced. My reasons are as follows:

1. There are two types of people: Married and those not married. For those that are not married, there are two types of people: Those who have been married before and those who have never been married (virgins). For those who have been married before but are not married now, there are two types of people: Those whose spouse is living (divorced), and those whose spouse is dead (widows.) These, then, are the four categories of people:

*Married*

*Virgins*

*Divorced*

*Widows*

So, who is the “unmarried” referring to in verses 6-9 above? It cannot be the “married” person (obviously). Nor can it be the widow since “unmarried” is paired with “widow” in verse 8. It also cannot refer to a virgin since “unmarried” is paired with “virgin” in verse 34. By the process of elimination, “unmarried” refers to someone who has been married before and whose spouse is still alive—that is, a divorced person.

2. The overall outline of the chapter (as we shall see) confirms this. The chapter can be best outlined this way:

*Verses 6-9: Widows and unmarried (divorced)*

*Verses 10-24: Married*

*Verses 25-38: Virgins*

3. Later in verse 11, Paul refers to someone who divorces her husband and says, “...if she does leave, let her remain unmarried.” This would confirm that “unmarried” is used to describe a divorced person.
4. Others would argue that the word “unmarried” would be a more general term used of anyone who is not married—divorced, widow, or virgin. This may very well be the case. Even so, it would include a person who is divorced.

So, it is important to understand that “unmarried” either refers to a divorced person or, alternatively, included those who are divorced. In light of this, look at verses 8-9 again:

*“But I say to the unmarried [i.e., divorced or including those who are divorced] and to widows that it is good for them if they remain even as I. But if they do not have self-control, let them marry; for it is better to marry than to burn with passion.”*

Why is this so important that we understand that “unmarried” means “divorced?” For this reason, look at verses 8-9 yet again:

***“The happiest people don’t necessarily have the best of everything. They just make the best of everything.”***

*- Unknown*



*“But I say to the unmarried [i.e., divorced] and to widows that it is good for them if they remain even as I. But if they do not have self-control, let them marry; for it is better to marry than to burn with passion.”*

Do you see what Paul is saying to the Corinthians? He is saying to the divorced people, “Let them marry!” That is, to these Corinthians who came from all sorts of messed up situations from their “before Christ” days, Paul is saying to them, “You can get married.” He is putting no restrictions on them. Rather, he is saying that if you have been divorced, you are free to be married. [Note: Later on he puts a restriction on one type of divorced person—a believer who is divorced from another believer. But in general, Paul gives liberty for divorced people to remarry.]

*“But to the married I give instructions, not I, but the Lord, that the wife should not leave her husband (but if she does leave, she must remain unmarried, or else be reconciled to her husband), and that the husband should not divorce his wife” (verses 10-11).*

A few points from these two verses:

1. Paul is now talking to married people, rather than to widows and to those who are divorced.
2. Paul says, “*I give instructions, not I, but the Lord...*” In other words, Paul is referring to the words that the Lord Jesus said about marriage. At this point, the verses in Matthew 5:32 and 19:1-10 would apply to what Paul is saying.
3. As we shall see when we look at verses 12-16, Paul is dealing with divorce and remarriage for believers. Paul affirms Jesus’ directives that a believer—one who is part of the people of God—should not divorce his/her Christian spouse.
4. Paul also states that if someone does leave (divorce) his/her spouse, remarriage is not an option (“*she must remain unmarried, or else be reconciled to her husband*”). This is consistent with Jesus’ teaching that a believer divorcing his/ her spouse and remarrying is committing adultery.

*But to the rest, I say, not the Lord, that if any brother has a wife who is an unbeliever, and she consents to live with him, he must not divorce her. And a woman who has an unbelieving husband, and he consents to live with her, she must not send her husband away. For the unbelieving husband is sanctified through his wife, and the unbelieving wife is sanctified through her believing husband; for otherwise your children are unclean, but now they are holy. Yet if the unbelieving one leaves, let him leave; the brother or the sister is not under bondage in such cases, but God has called us to peace. For how do you know, O wife, whether you will save your husband? Or how do you know, O husband, whether you will save your wife” (verses 12-16)?*

Some insights from these verses:

1. In contrast with verses 10-11, which was instruction given by the Lord, Paul is giving instruction on matters that the Lord never dealt with (“*To the rest I say, not the Lord...*” verse 12).
2. Unlike in verses 10-11, Paul is dealing with a situation where the believer is married to an unbeliever.
3. Unlike in Ezra, where the believer was commanded to divorce the unbeliever, Paul urges the believer to remain married to the unbeliever if the unbeliever consents to live with the be-

***“The most important thing a father can do for his children is to love their mother.”***

***- Theodore Hesburgh***

liever. Implied in this is that the believer (be it the man or the woman) is setting the pace spiritually in the home, and that the unbeliever agrees to live with the believer under those terms.

4. If the unbeliever decides to leave, the believer is to let him/her leave. Remarriage for this divorced believer seems to be an option for three reasons:

First, God has called us to peace. This would imply that remarriage would be allowed.

Second, unlike the case of the two believers who are divorced (vv. 10-11), no directive is given to the person divorced from an unbeliever to “remain unmarried.” This would imply that remarriage is permissible.

Third, the general permission by Paul to the “unmarried” to get married (v. 9), would certainly apply to someone who was married at one time to an unbeliever.

*“Love is one long sweet dream, and marriage is the alarm clock.”*  
 - Unknown

**The Two Rules and the Two Exceptions**

I have found that, in order to understand the biblical teaching on divorce, it is best to describe it in terms of two general rules and two general exceptions. The following chart will explain what I mean:

	<u>Speaking to Whom?</u>	<u>General Rule</u>	<u>Exception</u>
<i>Jesus</i>	A believing couple who has been brought up in a God-honoring culture	Divorce is not permitted. Remarriage after divorce is adultery (Matt. 5:32).	Divorce is permitted for the cause of immorality (Matt.5:32).
<i>Paul</i>	A new Christian who was brought up in a secular culture	Remarriage is permitted for those who have divorced (1 Cor. 7:8-9).	Remarriage is not permitted for divorced believers (1 Cor. 7:10-11).

Jesus gave a general rule to the God-fearing Jews: No divorce and no remarriage after divorce —with an exception. Similarly, Paul gave a general rule to those who had been saved from the cesspool of the world where there was polygamy, slave trading (where husbands and wives were separated), and gross abuses and immoralities: New Christians who have been divorced in the past can be remarried—with an exception.

Jesus gave an exception to the general rule of believers not divorcing, which is that divorce is permissible if there is immorality committed. Similarly, Paul gave an exception to the general rule that divorced Christians can remarry: A Christian divorced from another Christian cannot remarry.

Having laid a general outline based upon Matthew 5:32 and 1 Corinthians 7, let’s address some of the common questions related to divorce and remarriage.

## Questions and Answers on Divorce and Remarriage

### 1. In general, how are we to counsel people who have been divorced?

Divorce is a traumatic experience. In many ways, divorce is more devastating than the death of a spouse, because the divorced person experiences not only the loss of the spouse, but a painful sense of rejection from the one person they expected would be a source of affirmation and love.

In helping those who have gone through a divorce, I think of how Jesus was “full of grace and truth” (John 1:14). As believers who are called to minister to the hurting of this world, it is important that we be both gracious and kind, as well as bold with the truth. Empathetic listening must be combined with the clear teaching of the Word of God to truly minister to the divorced in your church.

*“Divorce is not a solution, but an exchange of problems.”*

*- Armand Nicholi III,  
Harvard sociologist*

### 2. There have been glorious testimonies of a spouse who committed adultery and then, because of the grace and forgiveness extended by the other spouse, the marriage was preserved. Isn't this what God would want?

Certainly that would be ideal. God is glorified when there is forgiveness and grace. And where there is adultery, I would certainly pray, give counsel, and do all I could in hopes that there would be repentance by the transgressor and forgiveness by the offended spouse. But that is not the issue in this paper. The issue is not “what is ideal,” but what is permissible. There are those that would say that the offended spouse would not have the option to divorce in the case of adultery. I disagree with that stand. Marriage is a covenantal relationship, built upon mutual trust. Adultery is a breach of that covenant and trust. The Scriptures do not require a spouse to entrust himself or herself to a spouse once that spouse has committed adultery. One further point on this: Because the offended spouse is not required to take back the transgressing spouse, any grace and forgiveness offered will be that much more powerful in bringing restoration.

### 3. Concerning your interpretation in 1 Corinthians 7:8-9 that Paul is giving general permission for divorced people to remarry, isn't this a contradiction to Jesus' statements in the Gospels that divorce and remarriage is not permissible?

What is at issue here is the significant impact that the gospel has on our lives. Consider the following passage:

*“And you were dead in your trespasses and sins, in which you formerly walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, of the spirit that is now working in the sons of disobedience. Among them we too all formerly lived in the lusts of our flesh, indulging the desires of the flesh and of the mind, and were by nature children of wrath, even as the rest”*  
(Ephesians 2:1-3).

According to these verses, before a person comes to Christ, that person is dead, influenced by Satan and living in their lusts. The person who was married and then divorced, while dead in sin, I believe, is free to re-marry once he or she is born again as a new creation in Christ. This was Paul's perspective in 1 Corinthians 7:8-9 in his letter to these new believers.



Further, believers who get married are different than non-believers who get married. The believers understand that their marriage is a vow to God and is meant to be a reflection of our relationship with Christ (Ephesians 5:22-33) as part of our testimony to the world. The marriage of those who do not embrace Christ (obviously) is not intended by them to be a testimony of Christ. Thus, the prohibitions against believers getting divorced and remarried makes sense (1 Corinthians 7:10-11).

**4. But wouldn't God be glorified if the new Christian went back and remarried his/her divorced spouse (particularly if the Christian was more in the wrong than the unbeliever)?**

Certainly, I would agree that the Christian needs to go back and confess sin and share what Christ has done in his/her life with the former spouse. And certainly, it would be a glory to God if the spouse would also receive Christ and the two were re-married. May God have more stories like this! However, again, the issue is what is permissible and what is not. For example, the new Christian who is divorced on the day he receives Christ is not married. He is divorced. Yes, as a new believer, the first thing may be for him to make amends and restitution with his former spouse. But this does not mean he should marry her. As a divorced (unmarried) person, he is free to remarry in the Lord according to 1 Corinthians 7:8-9, 39. This is also confirmed in another portion of 1 Corinthians 7:

*“Are you bound to a wife? Do not seek to be released. Are you released from a wife? Do not seek a wife. But if you marry, you have not sinned” (vs. 27-28).*

Paul is clear: If you are released from your wife and then marry again, you have not sinned. For believers who get married, they are not released and, therefore, to re-marry would be sin. They must reconcile as witnesses of the gospel of Jesus Christ. But an unbeliever who is divorced is released and is free to marry.

One final very important point. It is true that the Christian who is divorced before receiving Christ has liberty to remarry. It is also true that the new Christian is prohibited to marry his former spouse if he/she is an unbeliever (1 Corinthians 7:39 and 2 Corinthians 6:14). This points out that the main issue is the lordship of Jesus Christ and following Him, not restoring a “before Christ” godless marriage relationship. If a believer was mainly in the wrong in divorcing his wife before she was saved and she has not remarried, it certainly would be a glory to God if he confessed his wrongs to her and his wife came to Christ and they remarried. And if they had children, it would also be a glory to God if he provided for them financially. But if he and his former wife are already divorced, I would argue that he should not remarry her if she is not a believer. Some might argue that if a man is the primary one at fault in divorcing his wife and then later he becomes a Christian, that he should remarry his unbelieving wife because of what Paul instructs in verses 12-16 (concerning a believing spouse remaining married to an unbelieving spouse). Although I see the logic of this position, I would still be inclined to urge the believer to not remarry the unbelieving spouse because of the prohibition in verse 39.

What about the following situations?

*“In cultures where divorce becomes commonplace or large numbers of men and women choose to live together or copulate without bothering to marry, untold millions of kids are caught in the chaos.”*

*- James Dobson*

***“Divorce causes a decrease in wealth that is larger than just splitting a couple’s assets in half. By the same token, married people see an increase in wealth that is more than just adding the assets of two single people. On the other hand, divorce can devastate your wealth. Divorce drops a person’s wealth by an average of 77%. ... If you really want to increase your wealth, get married and stay married.”***

*- Jay Zagorsky, Ohio State, Journal of Sociology, Jan. 2006*

*A man is divorced against his will before he is saved.*

*A man commits adultery while unsaved, and then after being divorced by his wife, he becomes a Christian.*

*A man abandons his wife before he is saved, and after she divorces him, he becomes a Christian.*

In each of these situations, 1 Corinthians 7:8, 9 indicates that the man has freedom to re-marry.

### **5. Won’t this view of 1 Corinthians 7 bring down the sanctity of the marriage relationship?**

Not at all. The marriage relationship is held in high honor in the Christian marriages that are founded upon the gospel of Jesus Christ. The gospel is what is most important. In this regard, what is unfortunate about more restrictive views is that man-made guilt is placed upon individuals. I recall counseling one Christian who had been divorced before receiving Christ and then re-married after being a Christian. Later on, this individual believed a more restrictive teaching of divorce, and came to the conclusion that it was sin to have re-married. This was an unfortunate and unnecessary burden for this individual (and his spouse) to carry. The words of Paul are strong: Let them marry (v. 9). That is a command, just like the command “Do not commit adultery.” We are not to commit adultery—in obedience to God—and we are to “let divorced people re-marry” in obedience to God as well, as long as the divorce did not involve two Christians.

### **7. Why does Paul tell believers to stay married, but then he seems to allow for ones to leave in v.10, 11?**

Paul is not conceding that believers get divorced. Rather he is being pragmatic. He realizes that some will not heed his instructions to stay together. For those who do get divorced, Paul is simply saying, “You have taken a step in the wrong direction by getting divorced. Don’t take another step in the wrong direction by getting re-married. You must remain unmarried or else be reconciled.”

### **8. What if there is an abusive Christian husband? Doesn’t the wife have the liberty to divorce him?**

Not if the man is truly a believer. In situations like this, a temporary separation may be called for, while help from family and from the pastors can be obtained.

If the husband continues to be abusive and unrepentant, it is possible that his Christian faith would be in question. My opinion is that if that is the case and the church subjects him to a church judgment that the verses dealing with marriage to an unbeliever (vv.12-16) would apply. In my opinion, an unbeliever consenting to live with a believer means living in a peaceful manner where there is a respect for the believer to live in a way that honors God. Note that vs. 13 says that “a woman who has an unbelieving husband who consents to live with her...” is not to send him away. The point is, she is the one deciding

whether he is being sent away or not. As a believer who is seated with Christ in authority over all the universe, she is to decide whether he is to stay. If he consents to live in a way that allows her to live out her Christian faith, then she is not to send him away. An abusive husband clearly would not fall into this category, and although he may “consent to live with her” in one sense, he really is just taking advantage of her and is not truly consenting to live with her. He is to live with her, not against her.

*“Research has shown a child who sees his mother mistreated is more damaged than if the child himself is abused.”*

*- Steven Stosny*

### **9. If a Christian is married to another Christian and then gets divorced, would there ever be a situation where remarriage to another person would be permissible?**

There would be three possibilities:

- a. If the Christian spouse dies.
- b. If the Christian spouse re-marries. In the case of remarriage, in essence the Christian spouse would have violated the command in 1 Corinthians 7:11 to remain unmarried or to be reconciled, and would be committing adultery according to Matthew 5:32. Thus, the partner who was waiting for reconciliation would have the liberty to remarry, since his or her partner has committed adultery.
- c. If the “Christian” spouse is deemed by the elders of the church as only a “so-called” Christian. In such a case, the church, including the former spouse, would treat that person as an unbeliever (Matthew 18:15-17; 1 Corinthians 5:9-11). Then the passage dealing with marriage to unbelievers would apply (1 Corinthians 7:12-15), and the Christian spouse would be free to remarry.

### **10. Can a person become an elder if he has been divorced?**

In 1st Timothy 3:2, Paul lays down the requirement that an overseer/elder be “the husband of one wife.” This literally means a “one-woman kind of man.” In other words, the key issue is that the man is one who is faithful to his marriage partner. If he is faithful to his wife, then he meets this qualification. If a man has been divorced and has remarried in a way consistent with the freedoms given in the Scriptures, this would not disqualify him for holding the office of elder in the church.

### **Conclusion**

After completing this paper, I was reminded by my son of the story of John the Baptist who was executed because he rebuked Herod for an unlawful marriage. This is a sobering story. To think that a man of God would lose his life because he took a bold stand on the issue of divorce and remarriage! Although it is unlikely that you or I will die for our convictions on divorce and remarriage, it is nonetheless probable that our courage will be tested as we counsel people as to the biblical standards on divorce and remarriage. May God grant you wisdom, grace, and boldness in days to come as you speak the truth in love, helping to make the marriages in your church a glory to God!



DIVORCE AND REMARRIAGE

**Exercise**

1. Did you agree with everything in this paper? If not, with what points would you disagree?

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2. How would you counsel a wife whose husband is beating her?

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3. Are there any situations in your church, involving divorce and remarriage, that you would want to discuss with this mentor group? If so (without mentioning names), what are they?

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DIVORCE AND REMARRIAGE**Exercise**

4. What steps would you take if two non-believers asked you to perform a marriage ceremony for them?

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5. How would you counsel someone who is married to an unbeliever? Be specific.

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GREAT COMMISSION LEADERSHIP INSTITUTE

RAISING GODLY FAMILIES / THE DOCTRINE OF MAN AND SIN

## **Building Strong Families in the Church**

As pastors, we are called to build the families in our churches. In part, this means doing all we can to help parents with the training of their children. The following articles are written for the expressed purpose of helping your church be successful in the building up of the families in your church.





BUILDING STRONG FAMILIES IN THE CHURCH

## The Importance of Pastors Modeling a Strong Family in the Church

Pastor Rick Whitney · Manhattan, KS

Our families are on display for good or ill. We all recognize the pressure this brings, but my prayer is that we will see the opportunity we have to display a pattern--a model--for our people to follow. They will seldom go further than the example we set with our own families.

So what should our example look like? And how do we get there? Here are a few thoughts from some of my correspondence over the last few years.

I talk to many pastors in this region in the course of a month. I hear a lot of guys talk about their home life. And I also interact with a number of pastors across the country on these topics of our marriages and our families.

In every case, our families are our first priority. They are, rightly, more important than our ministries. We know that any victories won outside the home ring hollow if we are not winning with our children.

When things get ragged in our families, we need to strengthen our resolve. This is also one of the fundamental answers we need to share with the families in our churches. Families and fathers need more resolve, more heart.

When a young couple feels frustrated and tells me that they have attempted to apply Proverbs, but to no avail—I can't help but inwardly smile. I know that they have not applied it as we have. They need more heart and more gumption. The Scriptures do not lie; they are effective.

Brothers and fellow leaders, are we confident that we are turning out a quality product?

Can our boys compete in this world and win? There are many voices that tell us that competition is bad. With salvation, we receive an eternal identity that is found in what Christ did for us. We are secure because we didn't earn our salvation. But we must compete to get ahead in this world. There is much good self-identity found in a difficult job done well. Are our kids learning this?

We smile when a group of six year olds sing before the church. We do not really care whether they hit the notes or not. But, it is an entirely different matter with a sixteen year old. It is not enough to try, they have to win, compete, so to speak.

Do our boys know that the path to success is through hard work? Talent is not the issue. Talent is often found and wasted in this world. Hard workers however, are rare. Charm and a smile are easily learned and used by our girls, and yet they will not pass as real currency. Our girls need more. Hard work will make the difference.

*"I believe the family was established long before the church, and my duty is to my family first. I am not to neglect my family."*

- D. L. Moody



“The best gift we can give our children is the appreciation for hard work. Give them this gift.” I don’t know who said this, but I sure appreciate the thought.

Sometimes, in judging our own life and ministries, we are not as objective as we must be. In this area of training our teens, we could benefit from the opinion and judgment of a trusted fellow dad. I would encourage each of you men to avail yourself of this kind of counsel. *How am I doing as a father? How are my kids doing?* These are the real questions.

We cannot afford to be “barn-blind.” A barn-blind shepherd thinks that his sheep are perfect and he fails to see their faults clearly. He surely loves his sheep, but he must also know his sheep and be able to “judge” them, so to speak.

Brothers, if I could summarize my concern and counsel, I would as graciously as possible implore each of us to be strong, firm, and clear-eyed in the evaluation of our sons’ and daughters’ progress toward adulthood.

Wanting to protect our children from the world is a righteous desire. But the world is only one of our problems. Often it seems to me that parents get all worked up in striving against just one of our spiritual opponents, when the Bible tells us that we have three.

The world, the flesh, and the Devil are all out to derail our kids. All three have specific methods to harm them. All three need to be recognized as our enemy.

If I concentrate on recognizing the false philosophies of this world, I do well. The world does have an arrogant, godless agenda. But, if I believe that all my trials and all of my family’s trials are caused by this world’s system, I am naive. My flesh is also very active and the Devil is continually lying and working. If I think that the world is my only opponent, I can drift toward an isolationist, retreatist mentality. One problem with running away from the world is that everywhere I go I still have to take my flesh with me. And it seems like no matter where I hide, the Devil shows up.

If I work to overcome my flesh, I do well. My flesh is always trying to drag me down. I need to discipline and train my kids for the purpose of godliness. There is this constant struggle between our flesh and our new spirit. But the flesh is only one of our opponents; I still have two others. If I concentrate only on the flesh, I can become legalistic.

If I work at resisting the Devil, I do well. But if I throw all my effort into fighting him, I still have my old flesh to deal with. If I just concentrate on the Devil, I can easily become superstitious.

I’m sure you understand that we need to be vigilant on all fronts, with all three opponents. We need to be circumspect, which means that we need to see in all directions. This is a vigilant, Christian parent.

But I am really not that concerned about the world or the Devil, when it comes to preparing my kids for adulthood. I’m not naive. I know that we live in a hostile society, **but I am convinced that the first opponent to my child becoming an able adult is their flesh.** Laziness and a lack of sustained effort will trip up more of our youth in their education more than any other foe. Even the youngest officer knows to concentrate his forces where the fight is the hardest. I believe that our most serious challenge

*“The family is God’s  
smallest battle formation  
for the soul of a nation.”*

*- Dennis Rainey*

*"If Christ is in your house, your neighbors will soon know it."*

*- D. L. Moody*

in educating our children comes from the flesh, ours as the teacher and theirs as the student.

None of us are as disciplined as we need to be. I am well aware of the serious discipline problems that occur at times in many public high school classes. And I recognize that some classes, because of weakness in the teacher, wind up a total waste. But there is an education to be found there, in every one of our high schools, if our kids work for it. The world is big and I believe that our kids can win "out there" in a big world, if we prepare them. I believe that they can shine in every way, even when competing with the secular lost.

The problem is not "those other kids." It never is. The problem is not certain teachers, certain classes, or certain high schools. We need to be careful about blaming. It seems to me that most, if not all, of the difficulties Neva and I have run into in raising our children are self-inflicted. We need to stop blaming and quit being afraid of the world. What we need to be training into our youth is a stronger, internal, self-controlled, personal discipline.

On another note, we believe that to eventually have our teens see someone saved is evidence of a kind of balance in their Christian life. And if this is true, are our teens seeing an occasional friend saved? Not every week or even every month, but are they seeing their classmates come to Christ?

This gospel business relates to a teenager's spiritual maturity and whether they then speak for their Savior. Not clubbing their friends over the head with the gospel,

but winning them to their faith through grace and patience. We know that there are always areas where our youth are needy and still growing in Christ, but when we see them sharing their faith, we can be rightly reassured.

And rightly troubled if there is no speech coming out of their mouth toward their friends, as relates to the gospel and their faith.

Here are a few things to chew on, in the raising of our sons and daughters. If our teens are growing in grace, then they will be more secure. And if they are secure in their position in Christ, they will speak. Speaking the gospel is one mark of a teen's spiritual health. In many areas, this holds true.

For instance:

- If they are speaking for Christ, they are probably learning to discipline their emotions. They will be winning the "moody" battle.
- If they are speaking for Christ, they will be required to learn how to put on Christ. This usually just means that they know how to smile.
- If they are speaking for Christ, maybe not every day, but often, they are probably having a daily walk with God.
- If they are speaking for Christ, they probably have a good relationship with Mom and Dad.
- If they are speaking for Christ, I venture that their academics are good.
- And if they are speaking for Christ, even their discipline in sports, music, or whatever, will increase.

I know this is true, brothers. If we are speaking for our Savior, He tends to take care of His spokesmen. You can't be a spokesman for God and continue in a "Pity Party" or "Have an Attitude."

Most any of our teens can speak to other Christian teens. That's the easy part. Like we all know, Christians are an incredibly tolerant lot, even many teenage Christians.

But can our sons and daughters win the lost?

When children are younger, we mostly deal with behavior. When they become teens, it seems that we are mostly dealing with attitude. But this is critical to remember. **Good behavior leads to good attitude.**

What good behaviors are our teens showing, day-in and day-out, in their Christian walk? It follows that their habits in following the Lord will lead to a concern for the lost and the salvation of some.

I have mentioned many stories in the past with you men of the classmates who have come to Christ through my teens. Probably every one of you men have similar stories. My point is to encourage each of us to first have the stories. Then share your stories to encourage your church and your families to greater efforts in the gospel.

We must continue to work until we hear the gospel on the lips of our teens. If it is not there, it is not in their hearts. And if it is not in their hearts, then we know where our work must begin.

Most all of us are concerned about the impact of the world and the high school culture on our youth. Let me say, once again, that the only way to make sure that they will be wise and have the ability to keep their head on straight, and to be salty in their high school, is to give them a cause to live for.

*"Our children are either missionaries or mission fields." - Herschel Martindale.*

This is so true. This is forgotten by many Christian educators and sadly lacking in many parenting curriculums. After talking to literally hundreds of couples in the last few months, I am more convinced than I have ever been, that our kids need more **discipline**, more **instruction**, and more **affection** than we ever imagined. Most of what I usually offer parents is encouragement along these lines.

I'm just a fellow dad, but guys, trust me in this: **We need more discipline, more instruction, and more affection in our parenting.**

First, **discipline**. What do I mean by discipline? "No!" is what I mean. There is power in "No." There is wisdom and strength in believing in the "No's." The Bible is filled with "No's." They are general, simple, and easily understood. And God gives them to us in big doses, page after page. Eight out of the Ten Commandments are "No." From the first chapter to the last, God's Word is filled with all kinds of "No's." God is simple and strong in this way of helping us. He is repetitive in teaching us over and over, what not to do.

Often, we might think that the "No's" of the Bible are just not that helpful anymore. If we are tempted to think this, then we are the ones in error. The first thing we teach our children always involves the concept of "No," and I dare say that much of our work as they get older, still involves discipline and the discipline of "No."

*"The thing that impresses me most about America is the way parents obey their children."*

*- Duke of Windsor*

*“You have only always to do what is right. It will become easier by practice, and you will enjoy in the midst of your trials the pleasure of an approving conscience. That will be worth everything else.”*

*- Robert E. Lee  
to his son*

Have you ever wondered whether too many “No’s” will hurt our self-image? God doesn’t seem to worry about it. When we disregard the “No’s” in life that is when we are hurt. It is rebellion against rule and law that damages us. And why are we always so concerned about a healthy self-image anyway? An obedient Christian is the first step in gaining any kind of healthy self-image. God gives us this kind of peace. And only God can give us a right self-image.

Our prisons are filled with men who have strong self-images. In Colorado, a study done by a university found that some of the strongest self-image scores within the state were found at Canyon City State Penitentiary! So, obviously, the world has little to offer. God is the one who gives us strength of mind.

One of the biggest “No’s” we will be tested in with our youth is whether we will release them to their peers when we should not. I don’t know how many times I have talked to parents who somehow wish they could draw their kids back from their peer relationships, but are now at their wits end as to how to do it. Still, it is paramount that they reclaim their teen’s loyalties.

My personal bottom line when it comes to the discipline I am bringing to my children is this: Does what I am attempting to do in my standards of discipline impress fellow Christians and impress this world I am attempting to reach? Is my discipline healthy and right and filled with common sense and is it attractive to the lost? This doesn’t mean that the world will agree with my methods but, do they want what I have? Does the discipline that I seek to instill in my kids lead to accomplishment and is it attractive for the gospel?

Secondly, we need more **instruction**. Please don’t say to yourself, “They know it already. They know the answers; they already know what I am trying to tell them, Rick.” **They don’t know it, if they don’t do it!** And, if they aren’t practicing what you are talking about as a part of their habit in life, then they don’t really know the instruction. It is not part of their makeup.

If your neighbor said, “I know that already,” but they had not shown much, if any fruit, you wouldn’t necessarily believe that they really knew what you were talking about. You would keep trying to gently instruct them as long as they would listen. Usually with neighbors, we lose the audience. But, if they continued to come back for instruction, we would keep speaking, as winsomely as possible, but we would keep speaking.

With our children, we have the opportunity to keep speaking. I would encourage all of us to keep instructing, teaching, speaking, reading to, and helping them until we see the fruit we are looking for. Our kids don’t really have it until they speak it, until it is on their lips. If they aren’t patient, they just aren’t patient, and they don’t really know what the Bible has to say about the subject. If they can’t put on Christ and smile with their countenance, they really don’t know what the Bible has to say about being filled with His Spirit. We need to keep instructing.

In the movie, *The Horse Whisperer*, the daughter was fighting the mom and the mom was hesitant to impose her will. Should she pursue or back off? In an important scene, our cowboy hero, Tom Booker, turns to the mother and instructs her. Even though the daughter was fighting her mom, Booker tells the mom, “Don’t let her turn you away.” Don’t let them turn us away, brothers.

We can't just throw it out and say to ourselves, "Well, at least I told them what to do." We need to tell them what to do, until they do it! And not rest until they receive it, accept it in their heart, and in their actions. In most instruction, there is usually some element of discipline woven in, but that's okay. Keep instructing them and telling them what to do and what not to do, over and over, until they do it on their own.

Again, my bottom line in evaluating my instruction is: Would my instruction prove attractive to the lost?

Lastly, we need more **affection**. After reading these thoughts on discipline and instruction, do you believe that I'm just throwing this in? That I really don't appreciate affection? I do! **Every day with every child.**

Don't let our sons and daughters grow up and begin to grow apart from our affection. I was reminded of this and blessed by Dennis Clark when we were doing a parenting seminar together a few years back. He taught, "**Every day - a look, a word, a touch.**"

We have practiced this kind of daily affection every day in our family. Just as easily as we naturally hugged them when they were two years old, we need to wrap our arms around them when they are 12 and 16 and 22.

Although I am reserved in public, believe me on this—we are very affectionate in our home. It is a shame when dads are estranged from sons and daughters and the child estranged from us. Moms need to keep hugging sons and daughters and we must as well.

Once again, our society has a hard time understanding and thinking we can couple discipline, instruction, *and* affection. They caricaturize Christian men as either dour, black-robed, stern, prophets *or* easy-going, hip, "I'm okay, you're okay," modern dads who are soft, but never both.

God demands that fathers be both. Our families need it. Black and white at times, strong yet fun-loving, stern as well as playful; able to "Read them the Riot Act!" and kiss them good night.

Many parents are not affectionate enough. Often I have observed that when one or both parents have trouble expressing affection, they then usually compensate, often unconsciously, by being too lenient and allowing the pendulum to swing too far the other way.

The wise dad asks and prays for his child's heart. But the even wiser dad, reaches out and grabs it!

Our affection as parents will be very attractive to the lost. Here they will be drawn to our methods as well as our fruit. If you want to impact this world, then bring the world into our homes and show them our affection.

*"Among the thousands of prisoners I have met, not one of them genuinely loved his dad."*

*- Bill Glass,  
evangelist who counseled  
almost every weekend for  
twenty-five years with men  
who were incarcerated.*



BUILDING STRONG FAMILIES IN THE CHURCH

## The Church as the Extended Family

Pastor John Hopler · Columbus, OH

I have noticed over the years the value of an extended family. The extended family is a support group for the basic family unit and a source of relational stability and protection against divorce and to help children mature and develop.

Jesus said that the church is our extended family:

*“Anyone who does the will of my Father in heaven is my brother and sister and mother” (Matthew 12:50, NLT).*

Although I recognize that parents are ultimately responsible for the training of their children, it certainly does make a big difference when church members step in as “spiritual uncles and aunts” to help parents in the training of their children. The effect that an older Christian—other than a parent—has in the life of a child is immense. Just like uncles and aunts who take an interest in the lives of their nephews and nieces, I have sought input from others in the church to be godly influences upon my children. I mean more than simply “taking my children to church.” It is important that my children have a deeper relationship with godly believers in the church who will be good role models for them.

Here are a few practical ways this has worked out in my life:

1. Having believers share their testimonies. Any time that I have a Christian spend the night, I will make it a point to have that individual share his/her testimony with my children. My children have been brought up in a Christian atmosphere and this is one way to expose them to how God is saving people in this world. I also ask them to share life-changing moments in their Christian walk. This has helped create in my children an awareness that God does special things at certain points in our lives—and to expect Him to move similarly in their lives.
2. Including my children in the discussions with adults during fellowship times. It has been a positive experience for children to be a part of the fellowship when believers are visiting our home. Allowing them to listen to our interaction as adult believers and then to partake in that discussion has been critical for their upbringing.
3. Taking trips with my children and adult believers. There is something about getting in a car and going somewhere with another person. Discussions are deeper and the heart is revealed more as we spend that time driving in the car together. Relationships are more strongly developed between my children and their spiritual uncles and aunts when we take trips together.
4. Being open with my brothers in Christ concerning my children. I confess that I have been prone to keep to myself what is going on with my family, largely because of the sense of responsibility that I (rightly) have as a father. But, more and more, I realize that I need others to help me. One

*“I knew the gospel from year one, through assembly meetings, Sunday school, and the reading of Scripture every day at home.”*

- Paul Little



thing that helps in this regard is that I have a weekly time where I am able to “spill it all out” to some men who love me and who will support me as a husband and a father. As I share what is going on with my children, my brothers in the Lord are able to more powerfully pray for me and to give wise counsel related to my children.

5. Bringing in the uncles/aunts to talk to your child. Are you having a tough time breaking through to your child in an area of his/her life? Or are you going through a crisis with your child? Have you considered having a talk with your child with another brother in Christ there to help you and your child through this difficulty? This may seem too “heavy” to some, but I really believe that this is a missing element in some situations. Bringing in an outside person who really loves the child and is looked upon as an uncle or aunt in the Lord—this can really get the point across to your child that a change is needed. I would recommend not surprising the child by having his/ her uncle/aunt (in the Lord) simply show up at a meeting. Respect the child by warning him/her ahead of time. By including the child’s spiritual aunt or uncle, that person can be a support to that child in the change desired by encouraging and praying for your child over the weeks following that meeting.

Regardless of how this works out practically, the main point to be made is that God has designed us to need each other (1 Corinthians 12:14-26). If I need others for my own spiritual growth, certainly I need others for my growth as a parent and to help me in my parenting. Therefore, get the brothers and sisters in your life more actively involved in your parenting. Be involved as well with the spiritual nephews and nieces in your life. In this way the entire body—fathers, mothers, husbands, wives, grandparents, grandchildren, brothers, sisters, sons, daughters, and other spiritual family members—will build itself up in love to the glory of Jesus Christ.

***“To educate a child in the mind and not in morals is to educate a menace to society.”***

***- Theodore Roosevelt***



## BUILDING STRONG FAMILIES IN THE CHURCH

### Focusing on Families

Pastor Harry Poindexter · Overland Park, KS

Part of our vision for Cornerstone Community Church reads as follows:

#### Cornerstone As a Light for Family Life

We envision our church as a bright light that illumines and illustrates the patterns for family living outlined in the Word of God. Recognizing that the family unit is the basic building block of society and the church, and that it is under pressure and assault as at no other time in our nation's history, we are burdened with the need to minister to families. Our vision is to strengthen and equip the families in our church to follow the patterns for the family set forth by God in His Word and to reach out with grace to the multitudes of hurting and broken families around us.

We have a ministry for the youth of our church. Our vision is not to have a “successful youth ministry.” Our vision is to have successful families. The youth ministry will aim to assist parents in their goals and desires for their children. It will seek to strengthen the family and glorify God by teaching youth to work together with their families, and with one another, as servants of Christ for His purposes. We have pursued the vision of building strong families by equipping and involving parents and children in different ministry opportunities. We have strong family relationships in our church, but we also believe that we have much to learn---especially in reaching, serving, and winning lost people to Christ. With that in mind, here are some things that we have done which have enhanced our ministry to parents and children.

1. **Parenting Seminars.** One of our pastors has developed some excellent materials about parenting. Each year, we conduct a seminar on child- raising starting with infants through the toddler years. Succeeding seminars cover different parenting issues that appear as children get older.
2. **Fathering Classes.** We are also developing some special sessions focused on building fathering skills.
3. **Rock Quarry.** Our children's Sunday School is called the Rock Quarry. It is modeled after what some might call a children's church with a number of variations. All children from ages 4 to 14 are together in one room. They meet for a time of learning songs, memorizing verses, and a host family provides adult oversight and puts on a skit illustrating a biblical truth or a passage in the Bible. Our teens provide the leadership and oversight for the children. The children are divided into teams, and the teens keep them in order during the time and then take them off to craft sessions when the assembly time is over. The benefit to this is that the teens can serve younger children and they also provide positive role models for the younger ones to look up to.

*“Some families think church is like a convention where you send a delegate—and it's usually Mother.”*

- Unknown



Teens serve voluntarily and need to have good character. They rotate serving so they are not down with the children every week.

4. **CYM.** Cornerstone Youth Ministry is designed to minister to our teenage youth. It meets twice per month and consists of worship, sharing verses, a teaching time, and refreshments. We try to cover key issues of pursuing an authentic relationship with God, fruitful relationships between parents and children, peer relationships, and outreach. This has started relatively recently and is still not fully developed. One thing that we want to see instituted is small accountability groups.
5. **High School LT.** We have sent a number of our teens to High School LT for practice in outreach as well as the excellent challenges they receive there to live a life of devotion to Jesus Christ. Many of our teens return with a greater vision for how God might use them.
6. **Missions Trips.** We encourage both families and teens to participate in international outreaches. We have seen a good number participate in our Germany outreach. This can be an excellent way to minister and to build vision for both parents and their children. In addition, we have seen a number of our children go out on mission trips without parents and this can also be very stimulating to the youth.

*“The concern for world evangelization is not something tacked on to a man’s personal Christianity, which he may take or leave as he chooses. It is rooted in the character of the God who has come to us in Christ Jesus. Thus, it can never be the province of a few enthusiasts, a sideline or a specialty of those who happen to have a bent that way. It is the distinctive mark of being a Christian.”*

*- James S. Stewart*



BUILDING STRONG FAMILIES IN THE CHURCH

## Reaching a Community Through Children's Ministry

Pastors Terry Lewis · Lewis Center, OH

It was spring of 2000 and our church plant team was preparing for and dreaming about our launch as a new church in the fall of 2000. We met weekly and with a buzz of excitement we talked about things like a church name, a meeting location, how we would be organized and focus on how we could best connect to Lewis Center's un-churched Larry and Mary. The demographics told us they were mostly upper middle class with a large mortgage. Many of them picked the area because of a great school district and the small town feel. They liked the idea of building a new home in a growing community. But how could we really get at what they worry about? What fears and desires do they have? Finally, someone suggested a focus group. So, we paid for two groups of 10 individuals that identified themselves as non church attenders that would be willing to get paid \$50 to come and give some opinions about church. The facilitator identified himself as not associated with any church, but was simply a discussion starter and the participants could feel free to give whatever opinions they wanted.

The night arrived and several of us from the church plant team sat behind a mirrored wall blocked from the participants view. The discussion began with people's church experience. Some had never attended except for the occasional wedding. Some attended as a child and then left. Others had been involved as an adult, but had some poor experience or just lost interest. "What would bring you back to church?" This is where things got interesting. Maybe some other time, I'll write about all their responses, but one response made us all sit back in shock. Several un-churched parents started a conversation that their children were not receiving any moral education anywhere. The schools stay far away from saying whether something is "right" or "wrong" – tolerance being the value of the day. As people who don't study religion or go to church, the parents themselves didn't feel prepared to answer some of the moral questions their children were asking like why is there so much evil in the world like school shootings. One parent said, "The only place I know that offers moral education is the church. We might go to church for that reason." Many others agreed.

The facilitator went with the flow of the conversation and asked, "What would you look for in a children's program at church?" After a moment, one man spoke up and said, "I don't know for sure, but I know the first two questions I'd ask them when I picked them up: 1) Did you have fun? and 2) Did you learn anything?" We learned a great deal listening to those two focus groups. But the greatest lesson was that un-churched Lewis Center's Larry and Mary wanted their children to learn moral truth, but felt unequipped to do it themselves and that no else in the community offered it but the church. We also learned that if we wanted them to return, it better be enjoyable and have a solid biblical lesson. Boy, did the creative juices start flowing then!

*- After one of his services, D.L. Moody told his friend that two and one-half were saved. His friend asked, "Two adults and one child?" Moody replied, "No, two children and one adult. An adult has half of his life left to give to the Lord. A child has his whole life left to give to Him."*

We knew we would be renting a school and decided then and there to spend the money to rent the gym instead of a few classrooms. Every Sunday, we transformed that gym. We dreamt, designed, and built large backdrops and props to make the room feel like a camp with a lodge for a lesson, a lake with a boat for small group discussion, a mess hall for snacks, and a camp store to spend camp dollars. It was a ton of work to set and tear down every Sunday, but, my goodness, how it drew families! The feedback from the new visitors was that they liked the adult service okay (thanks a lot!), but the kids demanded they come back. Many invited their friends just to see how their very own elementary school was transformed to a camp every Sunday.

Is it important to give special attention to children's ministry to reach your community? Our experience would cause us to answer with an amazing YES!

*"But Jesus said, 'Let the children alone, and do not hinder them from coming to Me; for the kingdom of heaven belongs to such as these.'"*

*- Matthew 19:14*

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For additional information on the un-churched, visit the Barna Institute website. [www.barna.org](http://www.barna.org)



BUILDING STRONG FAMILIES IN THE CHURCH

## Getting Your Kids Involved in the Great Commission

Pastor Mark Darling · Minneapolis, MN

I was 23, newly married with our first child on the way, when a neighbor girl asked to interview my wife, Kathy, and myself. She was taking a class on child development and we were part of her project. One of her questions was regarding what we would want to teach our soon-to-be-born child. My answer was that the number one priority would be to be kind (to make oneself useful) to people and to love the human race for which Christ paid so much. Children need to be incubated in an environment where they are taught and shown by example how to love people. It is so important that both Mom and Dad show their children how to win others to Christ by serving and loving others as themselves.

*“What a father says to his sons is not heard by the world, but it will be heard by posterity.”*

*- Jean Paul Richter*

Over 20 years later, these convictions remain vital in our parenting of our children. Our kids have grown up in an environment that says Christ died for people and we need to love those same people to win them to Christ. This can be done in hundreds of small ways by showing acts of kindness to your neighbors. Recently, we bought our first home. Behind us is a lake and swamp type area. I’m going out to pick out trash that was blown in by a wind storm we had this week. It’s a small thing, but all of our neighbors’ back yards look out on that area. By picking up the trash, I’m ensuring it will be beautiful—it’s a small act of kindness to my neighbors.

When our first two children were small (ages 3 & 4), we lived in a trailer court. It was run down and had an overgrown, vacant lot. I was working 70 hours a week, but I started to mow that lot, voluntarily. My family and I pulled weeds, planted flowers in front of our trailer, and did other things to show that life had moved into that trailer court. Kathy would send cookies over to the neighbors with the kids, and the kids would kindly ask to play with the neighbor’s kittens. The couple was living together. When they got married, they had the kids in their wedding. Eventually, they came to Christ. They said primarily it was because of our kids. Servant evangelism was modeled to our kids and they, in turn, modeled it to others.

Our first seven years of having children, I was not a pastor. But my kids still watched dad have a passion to care for others. Not just church people either, but non-church people as well. We **must** serve the non-church people—it is vital. This is where, I believe, many parents are missing the mark. Many parents are very involved in the good work of serving the saved. But, they often forget that God wants us involved with the lost as well and, therefore, neglect this critical area of service. Let’s not forget what Jesus said.

*“...just as the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life a ransom for many” (Matthew 20:28).*

*“What man among you, if he has a hundred sheep and **has lost one of them**, does not leave the ninety-nine in the open pasture, and go after the one which is lost, until he finds it” (Luke 15:4—emphasis added)?*

Jesus wants us to go after the lost sheep. While training His disciples, He sent them out on mission trips. While they were gone, He was busy healing and serving the lost. He is our example.

In the early years when I was involved with Great Commission churches, the only means of evangelism that we participated in was to go door-to-door taking surveys and sharing the Five Absolutes tract. This is “cold turkey” evangelism. But there was no relationship. We were subtly communicating that if you have no response to us “talking” the gospel, then we’ll just leave. Jesus did not model this in the Scriptures. He didn’t just talk—He was a man of service.

*“Let your light shine before men in such a way that they may see your **good works**, and glorify your Father who is in heaven” (Matthew 5:16—emphasis added).*

I think that we often interpret this as “good words” instead of “good works.” We need to continue to learn to marry the two—words and works—together in our evangelism, in our churches, and in our lives.

The Apostle Paul had this mind-set:

*“...Run in such a way that you may win. Therefore I run in such a way, as not without aim; I box in such a way, as not beating the air; but I buffet my body and make it my slave...” (1 Corinthians 9:24, 26-27).*

*“For though I am free from all men, I have made myself a slave to all, that I might win the more” (1 Corinthians 9:19).*

Paul lived with an Olympic mind-set to win others to Christ. Mom, Dad—are you living that way? If you are not, it’s bogus to think that you will pass such a mind-set on to your children. It will not happen.

As a pastor, I took my kids with me to conferences. I could have flown, but often chose to drive, just so they could go with me and hear me preach about the Great Commission, loving, and serving others to bring them to Christ. They heard it a lot, but they also saw it in my life. Now, my two oldest lead small groups, sing specials, and are deeply immersed in serving in The Rock. My 15-year old is in a teen group, involved in The Rock, and is reaching friends. We must create in our churches and in our homes a culture where this servant lifestyle is modeled and taught to our kids. Some parents tell me that they are afraid that their kids will be corrupted by the world. I don’t agree. Not if the kids are in a loving, accountable environment at home. Keep visiting with them, talking to them, guiding them. If you are afraid of a situation, then protect them. But guide them into the world, so that they can reach out and bring Christ to the world.

If our lives reflect lives of servant lifestyles, then the fruit will come naturally. I don’t look at my kids and think the friends they have brought to Christ are their notches on some belt. No, I see them

*“In the process of raising kids, it is very easy to feel like you are just laying bricks. In reality you are building a cathedral, a child whom God has given you to train up to carry on in the next generation. There is no greater privilege in life.”*

*- Dennis Rainey*

***“You don’t raise heroes, you raise sons. And if you treat them like sons, they’ll turn out to be heroes, even if it’s just in your own eyes.”***

***- Walter M. Schirra, Sr.***

teamed up with others leading others to Christ. That is what is important. And when they are teamed up with others like this, it will become a way of life, to go on throughout their lives.

Pastors and churches, we need to be providing evangelism leadership. The kids in your church need to see the pastor model evangelism; they need to hear the pastor tell stories of successes or failures. Many kids only come on Sunday mornings. At The Rock, we have a midweek meeting, a weekend meeting, small groups through the week, as well as compassion projects and “Winning Ways” seminars. My wife reaches out to neighbors, babysits for people, teaches a children’s class during the mid-week service. Our kids have been involved in the Leadership Training (LT) programs and been on mission trips. We need to make it easy for them to become more involved and trained in evangelism. But we have to model it first!

At the LT times, I took my kids with me to listen to me when they were too young to attend. Then, when they were old enough, they attended and went out witnessing on the beaches. They heard more teachings and put what they heard into practice. LT is a fantastic program for your kids to attend.

As I have shared at the LT times, I have told the kids attending to prepare to spend the rest of their lives planting churches. Many have failed to pass on a strong view to our kids of what it means to practically be involved in the Great Commission when they get older. I tell them that, whether as teens or as moms and dads, they need to give the rest of their lives to evangelism. Planting churches is what our association is about; anyone can do it, too. You can get a new job and move to a new city, helping to plant a new church. We move with teams of people while working full-time. This is a vital involvement in the Great Commission. I have been planting these seeds of thought into my own kids for the past 20 years.

They need to be thinking in these terms now, as young people and while they have the time, to prepare to be useful in church plants. I share that they need to focus on specific areas:

1. Get training in evangelism; be committed to a church.
2. Focus on learning a musical instrument (piano, bass, guitar, drums).
3. Technical training (lights, sound systems)
4. Administrative training (computers, web pages, finances)
5. Foreign language training
6. Training in childcare/child education to share the gospel in a kids program

I have used bedtime in our household to instill these thoughts into my kids. I pray for them and with them. They know that I am talking to God about them, and saying neat things about them to God. They know I think that it’s neat to be their dad and that I’m glad that God has plans for their lives. I am gone from them a lot, but I explain why I am gone. I do all I can to win my kids’ hearts, to let them know that I am gone because people are important, but not more important than they are.

Jesus said in Mark 10:29-30, *“Truly I say to you, there is no one who has left house or brothers or sisters or mother or father or children or farms, for My sake and for the gospel’s sake, but that he shall receive a hundred times as much now in the present age...; and in the age to come, eternal life.”* Believe that God

means that. Peter and the other apostles didn't live like others. We don't either. We need to focus on living for others to win them to Christ.

To conclude, I want to emphasize the importance of two things:

1. A lot of families don't realize that just going to church won't give their kids a view of evangelism. Many churches fail at this. Our kids don't see effective means in winning lost people at church on Sunday mornings.
2. Our kids must, must, must see the parents living it out (evangelism lifestyle of serving, loving others). We have to love lost people and bring our kids into the process. They must see us be fruitful and how that occurs before they will know how to practically live that out and be fruitful themselves. We must give our kids a mission to live for or we will lose them to the world. I've seen it happen and I'm sure that you have, too. It is heartbreaking for all involved when it does happen—but it doesn't have to be that way! Have a plan built upon your convictions and DO IT. Only then will our kids become involved in a lifetime of following Christ and obeying the Great Commission.

***“Our families are  
either a mission  
station or a  
mission field.”***

*- Unknown*





BUILDING STRONG FAMILIES IN THE CHURCH

## Biblical Values for Teen Ministry

Pastor John Hopler · Columbus, OH

Since the 1990s, Great Commission churches have increasingly focused on building their ministry to teens. During this time, a variety of teen ministry models have been used in the churches.

As a movement that has been devoted to multiplying Great Commission churches, we have historically been committed to multiplying young leaders for Jesus Christ. In addition, we have had a strong core value of encouraging fathers to be strong in raising godly families in our churches. How are these values to be practically lived out in the local church's teen ministry?

Although there are a variety of ways in which churches might do teen ministry, we believe that it is important that every church practice certain biblical values in ministering to teens. Those values are the subject of this GCLI paper.

*“One father is more than a hundred schoolmasters.”*

*- George Herbert*

### I. General Values—The Great Commission Church

In general, we believe that the Great Commission is our mission (Matthew 28:19-20) and that the local church is God's primary vehicle for fulfilling that mission (1 Timothy 3:15). Therefore, any teen ministry based in a local church that is winning people to Christ, building them in the faith, and raising up leaders is good.

At the same time, we believe that the more we live out biblical values, the more God-honoring and more fruitful that teen ministry will be.

### II. The Value of Strong Parents (Particularly Strong Fathers)

*“Fathers, do not provoke your children to anger, but bring them up in the discipline and instruction of the Lord” (Ephesians 6:4).*

The clear command and emphasis in the Bible is that parents—and particularly fathers—have the primary responsibility in training and discipling their children. Therefore, in building a teen ministry, we urge that every church consider the following:

- A. In order to build Great Commission teens, it is vital that each parent (particularly the father) be a good model of a Great Commission Christian. As contrasted with those who make their work or hobbies an idol, God's desire is that every father and mother wholeheartedly love and serve Jesus Christ. The value of a parent being a Christ-like example to a teen is incalculable. (Remember: a fire is caught, not taught!)



- B. It is a tendency of every man since Adam to be passive in his leadership role within the family. This has been particularly so in America in recent years. As a result, each father must be strongly encouraged and equipped to be following Christ and teaching his teen to follow Christ.
- C. Christian parents are to model and teach their teens to follow the whole counsel of God. Three foundational practices that we recommend are:
1. Have a daily quiet time and journal.
  2. Serve in the church.
  3. Pray and reach out with the gospel to lost friends.
- D. Dads and moms should be actively involved (at some level) in the corporate teen ministry of the church. This might include:
1. Serving in the teen ministry (through teaching or physical service)
  2. Participating in conferences (Faithwalkers, HSLT, regional teen conferences, and mission trips)
  3. Giving guidance and counsel to the corporate teen ministry.
- E. A father or mother should avoid abdicating the parental responsibility to disciple their teen to the pastors or a teen worker in the church.
- F. A parent needs to recognize (like Hannah did in 1 Samuel 1) that God is the owner of each child and that parents are merely stewards. God is the One who will transform the heart of each teen, using not only parents, but others in the church (pastors, other parents, other teens, and teen workers) to build that teen into Christ's image.
- G. While maintaining their responsibility to disciple their teens, parents should utilize others in the local church to reinforce their training and equipping of that teen to be more like Christ. In particular, parents should recognize the valuable ministry of a godly teen worker. Typically, a person in the teen years is learning to develop his/her own faith in Christ as an individual rather than just relying on the faith of the parents. During those years, a teen worker who relates to that teen can oftentimes have a significant influence on that teen to follow Christ.

*“The most powerful impact upon a child’s ethical, moral and spiritual development is the relationship with the parents. It is 300 times greater than the church.”*

*- Josh McDowell*

### III. The Value of Strong Teen Workers

*“The harvest is plentiful but the workers are few. Therefore, beseech the Lord of the harvest to send out workers into His harvest” (Matthew 9:37-38).*

We know that Jesus Christ wants to multiply workers for His harvest. We also have seen that teens can be especially receptive to the gospel. For this reason, multiplying workers to affect teens for Christ is strategic for the fulfilling of the Great Commission. Therefore, in establishing a teen ministry, we urge that every church consider the following:

- A. It is vital that we encourage and respect mature, obedient teen workers—volunteers and those on staff—who have a heart to reach teens for Christ.

*“Let no one look down on your youthfulness, but rather in speech, conduct, love, faith and purity, show yourself an example of those who believe” (1 Timothy 4:12).*

God has many times in the past raised up spiritual leaders when they were young. The Twelve chosen by Jesus were very likely young men. And most of those who began the Great Commission Church movement were in their twenties. Our hope and prayer is that God will raise up an army of young leaders today who will carry the gospel message into the future.

- B. Young teen workers can be greatly effective in evangelism and discipleship because they can relate to other teens.
- C. Generally, teen workers are to be a support to the parent’s training of a teen. Here are some practical recommendations for a teen worker who is ministering to a teen who is actively being disciplined by his father:
1. Communicate straightforwardly to the father and the teen that he is a support, not a substitute, to the parents.
  2. Wherever possible, develop an open relationship with the father before having a deep involvement with the teen.
  3. Be sensitive to not encourage passivity in the father by taking on responsibilities that should be fulfilled by the father.
  4. Cooperate with the pastors to equip and motivate the father to be active in discipling his teen.
  5. Ask the father about his discipleship goals for his teen and how the worker can help the fathers achieve them.
  6. Make a good faith effort to have teens be totally open and confidential with their parents.
  7. In general, encourage teens to use their time to have a closer, relationship with their parents.

#### **IV. The Value of Strong Elders**

*“And He gave some as apostles, and some as prophets, and some as evangelists, and some as pastors and teachers for the equipping of the saints for the work of service, to the building up of the body of Christ” (Ephesians 4:11-12).*

*“Therefore, I exhort the elders among you as your fellow elder and witness of the sufferings of Christ, and a partaker also of the glory that is to be revealed, shepherd the flock of God among you...” (1 Peter 5:1-2).*

God has entrusted to the elders of the church the responsibility to pastor the flock and to advance the Kingdom through evangelism. This includes overseeing the ministry to teens in the church and the ministry to unsaved teens in the community. Therefore, in establishing a teen ministry, we urge elders to consider the following:

***“Whenever I have assigned youth a great task, I have never been disappointed.”***

***- John R. Mott***

- A. As a first step, the elders should focus on ministering to the teens in the church rather than teens outside of the church.
- “So then, while we have opportunity, let us do good to all people, and especially to those who are in the household of the faith” (Galatians 6:10).*
- B. For teens that have parents in the church, it is a wise strategy for the elders to prioritize the equipping of the men to be strong fathers.
- C. It is important that elders seek to multiply young godly gospel workers that reach teens in their community.
- D. In general, the goal of elders is to develop a corporate teen ministry that both builds strong parents, as well as strong young leaders.
- E. It is important that the church have, not just a “youth group,” but a teen ministry that is actively serving and reaching people for Christ.
- F. Finally, we recommend that elders instruct parents and teen workers to live according to the biblical values that are outlined in this paper.

***“Young people who develop a low tolerance for boredom will be unable to practice the disciplines necessary to grow in the Christian life. Prayer, Bible study, fellowship, witnessing, fasting and solitude, are all disciplines that have at their very heart the facing of our own boredom and restlessness.”***

***- Mark Devries***

## **V. Conclusion**

As a movement, we desire churches that are having a powerful effect for the gospel. And we desire that the teens in our churches and our communities be passionate for Jesus Christ. To accomplish this, we need strong elders, strong parents (and strong fathers in particular) and strong young workers, serving Christ together in a way where each respects and supports the other. As this is done, God will continue to raise up Great Commission churches and families that are truly exhibiting “New Testament Christianity in Action Today.”



BUILDING STRONG FAMILIES IN THE CHURCH

## New Testament Families / New Testament Men

Pastor Rick Whitney · Manhattan, KS

*[The following is a transcript of a teaching from the 2004 Pastors Conference.]*

I am honored to speak before you men. And I will be honest – a little intimidated. But I am encouraged by Paul’s testimony where he wrote that he, “*did not shrink from declaring to you . . . the whole purpose of God.*” And I will not shrink, but be as honest as I can.

I am a father and the role of a father is what we are talking about this morning.

My topic was the New Testament Family. That’s what was assigned to me. But together we are hard-pressed to find many examples in the New Testament, (or throughout the Bible) of a sane, committed, believing family.

Often, when the wife and child are mentioned in Scripture, it is because of problems. Usually the wife and child are not mentioned. There is little record of what their families or marriages were like.

So I decided to change my focus. Because there are no New Testament Families apart from New Testament men, I want to speak this morning to you men as fathers, and about your role within your own families.

First off, I admit that I am sometimes torn between two judgments on the state of our families. On just how we are doing as pastors with our own kids and with our own youth: It is either, “We are failing far too often! With too many of our sons and daughters. It is an epidemic!” or “No Rick, it is not an epidemic. We are just going through normal trials with our teens and we will weather it.”

Some of you men are going to “check out” at this point because you either do not have children, or your kids are so young that you cannot imagine being anxious about their future. My request is that you would not.

And I don’t want to burden any of you men. We are growing up as a movement and growing older, and some of the trials we are experiencing are part of this aging.

But here is my heart and my honest opinion: I truly believe we are caught up in a terrible epidemic with our youth.

If the trials and sins and attitudes we are experiencing with our youth, all resulted in our teens getting cancer, we would be galvanized and jolted out of any doubt as to the severity of our present condition. We would take action.

My prayer is that we will take action.

***“If there is anything in my thoughts or style to commend, the credit is due to my parents for instilling in me an early love of the Scriptures.”***

***- Daniel Webster***

Within this movement of churches, our marriages and families are under terrible attack. These attacks will only increase. It's our job to respond and defend.

Twenty years ago, we would never have dreamed about the kind of challenges we are now experiencing with our own youth. I am concerned about how we are raising this next generation that lives right in our own homes. There are serious needs in our families, brothers.

The world does not help us. There are precious few, first rate examples out there of good fathers. All our culture has to offer us are silly examples like Raymond from *Everybody Loves Raymond* or Homer Simpson.

Raymond seems to do only three things well:

1. He cowers before his mom.
2. He whines for sex.
3. He complains...a lot!

Thinking of Raymond, I sometimes wonder whether we too are often just that same kind of nice guy. We whine a little, but we often don't take action. Not the kind of action that is needed.

Nice Christian guys often say things like, "I can't . . . I won't . . . It's pretty hard . . . My son just doesn't seem to . . . My girl just doesn't want to . . . I've tried everything."

Sounds like just so much whining - doesn't it?

Recently a pastor wrote me before I spoke at his church. This is what he said:

*Dear Rick,*

*I thought it might be helpful to share with you several patterns that I see in the dads of our church. Your material probably covers these issues, but if not, it would be helpful to address them.*

*The first thing I see is that many of our dads are passive in their approach to marriage and raising their kids. They have given the primary responsibility to the moms and to the church. Because of this we have a number of homes where there are men who refuse to lead and women who now won't let them. They have been in this pattern for so long it is hard to break.*

*The second thing I see is that men are not as involved as they need to be in the area of discipline and character development in their children. Numerous parents seem to be clueless in this area and unwilling to pay the price necessary to be successful.*

*The third thing I see is that Dads do not know how to impart a vision to their children to live for something bigger than themselves and the "American Dream."*

*As long as they can get them through the teen years without a major blowout (sex, alcohol, drugs) and graduate with decent grades, they feel they have done their job.*

***"Whatever merit there is in anything that I have written is simply due to the fact that when I was a child my mother daily read me a part of the Bible and daily made me learn a part of it by heart."***

***- John Ruskin***

***“I talk and talk and talk, and I haven’t taught people in fifty years what my father taught by example in one week.”***

***- Mario Cuomo***

*Too few kids are owning their own faith, growing up to serve the Lord, impacting their generation with the gospel.*

*Too many are getting sucked up into the public school culture and turning into prodigal sons and daughters.*

*Rick, I’ve been addressing these issues through the pulpit, marriage and family counseling, and through marriage focused small groups. I guess what I’m trying to say is that I don’t believe we are at a place where moms and dads need just a little tweaking in their approach. They need an overhaul.*

*Thanks for being a part of the mission that we have to see dramatic change and fruitfulness in the marriages and families at our church.*

*Sincerely. . .*

Brothers. The families that we are reaching out to in our churches are coming to us for answers and help. Real answers. Real help. And they are looking for examples.

But often we might carry around our own hidden fears. Fears that we will be found out as fathers. That others might know that we are often not getting it done.

We come home. We walk in the door. And right off the bat we are dealing with sin in our families. Moodiness, sullenness, closed doors, painful quiet, disrespect, the list goes on. And so we start dealing with it. But day after day we are dealing with it.

Let me tell you something brothers. If we are dealing with bad attitude within our teens, day after day, – **we are not really dealing with it!**

We have not changed things. We are just involved in this painful back and forth. Almost guerrilla warfare. So eventually we will lose heart and “check out.”

*“The mass of men lead lives of quiet desperation.” -Henry David Thoreau*

I am concerned that many of us are desperate. Maybe more of us should be. But then repent, change our minds, roll up our sleeves and get at it.

*“Eighty-eight percent of the children raised in evangelical homes leave church at the age of 18 - never to return.” - Southern Baptist Council on Family Life, 2002*

We need to ask, “Why do so many of our own kids, pastors’ kids, go through such hard times and make these hard mistakes?” Why do they?

Two simple reasons. Because Satan is not unintelligent. And because we are involved in a serious, serious spiritual battle. We better buckle up, brothers.

All our world seems to offer our youth is **vanity** and **trivia**. You hear it in their speech: “Oh, my gosh! Is that a pimple?” “Don’t you think I need braces?” “I just have to have that pair of Sketchers.” “Don’t touch my hair. It’s perfect.” “Leave me alone, I’m playing Halo.” “I’m gonna be first in line to see Spider-man!” “Man, I’ve seen The Lord of the Rings eight times!”

Our boys get inoculated from ever accomplishing anything significant - by instead gaining silly satisfaction from endless, mindless games and constant, ramped up, expensive entertainment. Our whole society is always preening before mirrors and worried about our appearance. "Makeovers" are everywhere.

Just so much vanity and trivia.

Brothers, we must be training our youth and judging this world severely.

Do you know what a "Mamone" is? Fifty percent of all the men who live in Rome, ages 20 – 40, live at home with their mothers. And studies say that most of them have a mistress. That's almost 300,000 males! This is a mamone - selfish, weak, immoral. Rome already went through this 2,000 years ago. We are imitating this weakness now here in the U.S.A. with our own young men.

The Masai of Africa are today probably urbanized, like everyone else, touristy and weak. They probably buy the same designer jeans and shoes we do. I am sure they all carry a cell phone. But Eldredge caught our attention, when he wrote, "In the Masai tribe, a man is not allowed to court a woman until he has first killed a lion."

Where have we given **our** son his chance to kill his lion? To grow up and be disciplined and steady and strong and not frivolous. It all starts in our home with the training of our sons and daughters.

Here are a few questions to help us understand where we are and where we need to be: (Obviously these are leading questions.)

**1. Are we a Great Commission family? Are we really a Great Commission family? One worthy of respect and emulation?**

**2. As fathers do we believe that our kids are the best thing we will ever do and the only thing that will give us peace in our later life? Do we believe this? Don't give your life to many, many battles men, and miss this one.**

**3. If I cannot reach my own kids, the youth that I live with 24/7, how can I really hope to reach anyone else? Listen, my heart is not to judge or disqualify. But we have to first take stock, if we are ever going to change things.**

**4. Are we tempted to feel discouraged, embarrassed or ashamed? Let's not be ashamed, brothers. Instead, let's address things.**

*"This I say for your own benefit; not to put a restraint upon you, but to promote what is seemly"*  
(1 Corinthians 7:35).

If we are always wondering about whether we are "winning with our kids," we are at best distracted and worried, and have probably already lost the day.

***"My father gave me the greatest gift anyone could give another person. He believed in me."***

*- Jim Valvano*



*“It may be hard on some fathers not to have a son, but it is much harder on a boy not to have a father.”*

- S.D. Gilbert

When it comes to this struggle in training our youth, many of us are naïve. We are surprised at the cost.

You remember that scene where Henry V is talking to his troops? What he was saying, over and over, is that there is a glory here. And there is a glory in working hard at training our youth. But it is going to be bloody. It is going to cost us. The training of our youth will always cost us. Our time, our focus, our best energy.

Being a father is the role we have. It requires from every one of us a strong level of leadership. I am not talking about whether we are gifted as a leader. Some of us are, some of us are not. But **every one of us** has the duty and the role of every day showing up as a leader/father in our own home.

Yogi Berra said, when he was asked, “Yogi, don’t you know anything?” He responded, “I don’t even suspect anything.”

And, “Slump? It ain’t no slump. I just ain’t hitting.”

Yogi Berra also said, “We may be lost, but we’re making good time.” Men, we can not afford to be a group of Yogi Berras. Too much is at stake.

**5. Does it surprise us, dads, that we cannot just be watchers of our youth? That we have to train them instead?**

Our own fathers could do almost anything. They were trained by their dads. Have we passed this on to our sons and daughters? We own big houses, big yards, and yet our kids are often holed up in their rooms in front of a computer, hour-after-hour, day-after-day.

Men, none of us had perfect fathers. Did you have a hard dad? I had one. Did you have an uninvolved dad? Or one who was pretty caught up in his work? I had one.

But who cares! I will not be permissive with my kids now as a pendulum reaction to my own father being pretty hard. I cannot pendulum swing in reaction to my father’s failings.

I will give an account for my own work, with my own family.

	Low Limits	High Limits
Low Love	<b>Uninvolved Ineffectual</b>	<b>Authoritarian</b>
High Love	<b>Permissive</b>	<b>Authoritative</b>

**Authoritative:** Refers to a person who supports a position or a principle. This person deserves our acceptance and our obedience. A Christian man, pastor, father, must be authoritative.



God wants us as husbands and fathers to become more authoritative, with high levels of love and high limits - as we lead and shepherd our families.

“Train up a child in the way he should go; even when he is old he will not depart from it.” - Proverbs.

I can react to this Scripture in two ways. I can say that it is not true; that it does not always work. Or I can respond in a different way.

If they do depart, then possibly I need to admit that I have not trained them in something; that I need to do better.

*“Great men have wills,  
weak men only wishes.”*

- Unknown

## **6. Have we admitted that we are in a very great way – we are responsible for the character of our youth?**

The answer to this question requires strength and honesty.

The Christian man is not soft. I believe we are all too feminine in our parenting here in America. The Apostle Paul knew that we needed to appreciate not only what a mother brings, but also what a father brings - his strength.

*“But we proved to be gentle among you, as a nursing mother tenderly cares for her own children. Having thus a fond affection for you, we were well-pleased to impart to you not only the gospel of God but also our own lives, because you had become very dear to us . . . You are witnesses, and so is God, how devoutly and uprightly and blamelessly we behaved toward you believers; just as you know how we were exhorting and encouraging and imploring each one of you as a **father** would his own children” (1 Thessalonians 2:7,11).*

God asks for a stubborn faith from Christian men, Christian fathers, Christian pastors. We, dads, bring a strength and a perspective that needs to be there.

## **7. Brothers, are we still stubbornly believing for our families? Or maybe have we secretly thrown in the towel?**

I know that there are other good voices beside our own. There are others that have a role in speaking into our own sons' and daughters' lives. Here is an observation of mine:

- Many times, a youth worker communicates with our teenagers like two people, each with a can up against his ear, connected by a string.
- A mom often communicates with her boy or girl more like a walkie-talkie.
- **A dad communicates with his teen, just as clearly as a direct phone line.**

Whether we have sons or daughters, we, fathers, must communicate with both. And train them. I remember my daughter once declaring, when she was going through a hard time and hearing conflicting counsel from lots of people, she said, “I do not care what anyone says. I will listen to dad.”

We hold a big place in their hearts, brothers.

A leader said this, “Great men have wills, weak men only wishes.” The following may be the hardest question of all.

**8. Do we honestly think we can impose our will on our child and still build a healthy, creative, spirited soul? Do we really believe we can overcome our teen’s flesh and yet still build a strong, young adult?**

I do.

**9. Are we tempted to think that a Christian leader/father is just a cold drill sergeant? Do you think that successful fathers are only interested in the “No’s?” The rules? Do you think that’s all I care about?**

Then you do not know me, brother.

We need relationship with and authority over our kids. We need affection and discipline. Incredible amounts of both. Lots of hugs and lots of affection and lots of “No’s.”

By the way, this two part message helps keep our youth confused, which might be a good thing.

Remember, “When dealing with our children, we keep one thing in mind, we are bigger than they are, and it is our house.” - Jean Kerr, *Please Don’t Eat the Daisies*

New Testament men fail. So what! We make mistakes, but we get up. And we set our minds to win. Nice guys seem to only “try.” A nice guy just keeps whining. That is about the sum of it.

However, a Christian man will repent, change his mind, and then begin a better course of action. Maybe over and over, but he begins anew. And he will not accept defeat – not when it comes to his family.

Proverbs 12:7 says that, “*The children of the godly stand firm.*”

**10. In leading our youth, do we men understand that, “All discipline for the moment seems not to be joyful, but sorrowful; yet to those who have been trained by it, afterwards it yields the peaceful fruit of righteousness” (Hebrews 12:11).**

Are there results? Is there fruit? Do we see change and godly character growing in their lives? Character that stands up in the end?

Here are the questions. This is what I am trying to share with you, men.

- Are they saved?
- Are they involved in the King’s business?
- Are they involved in our business?

To put it another way:

- Have they our faith? Have they our heart?

*“Children can withstand a lot of pressure and trial from the outside if the home inside is held steady by parents whose character is steady.”*

- Stuart Briscoe

- Have they ever said, “I just want to do what you’re doing, Dad?”

If not, why? Many lost youth have grown up wanting to be “Just like their old man.” Even this phrase now sounds odd today, doesn’t it? Kind of old fashioned. It should not.

- Do our teens want to be like us? We have to be honest here. If we are only raising intelligent, moral young people, who want to do their own thing – this was not all we dreamed of, was it?

We dreamt of more.

Brothers, we cannot be weak. We cannot be passive. Remember Aslan from C.S. Lewis’ *Chronicles of Narnia*.

“Aslan? Is he a man?” asked Lucy.

“Aslan, a man? Certainly not. I tell you that He is the King of the Wood and the Son of the Great Emperor-Beyond-the-Sea. Aslan is a lion - the Great Lion.”

“Oh, I thought he was a man.” She asked, “Is he safe?”

“Safe? Who said anything about safe. Course He isn’t safe. But He’s good.”

This is what we aspire to, is it not? We Christian fathers are not safe at all times. Sometimes we unnerve our brood. But we must always strive to be good. And our kids will respect us and love us for it.

Nehemiah 4:14 records, “*When I saw their fear, I rose and spoke to them. ‘Do not be afraid. Remember the Lord who is great and awesome and fight for your brothers, your sons, your daughters, your wives.’*”

A Christian man is energized to do good and to fight for his people. Whatever it takes!

In my parenting seminars, I often receive questions.

During the first hour, men come up and ask, “I can’t get my three year old to eat his breakfast.” During the next few hours, the questions usually sound like this, “I don’t know what to do with their temper tantrums. Or their attitude.”

And sometimes later in the day, with our older teens we wonder, “I just seem to have lost them. I have lost their heart. Do you have any ideas, Rick?”

But over the last few months, increasingly I have had men come up to me, when we have deferred their questions till later in the seminar, and they have apologized and said things like, “I am sorry I even asked that question earlier Rick - about eating their breakfast...Rick, I can deal with their attitude. You don’t need to answer that.” And, “Don’t worry, I am going to recapture their heart – or die trying. I now know what you’re talking about, brother.”

These dads caught it. They regained their will.

We are going to need tremendous levels of courage - proactive, big-hearted courage. Not a small, controlling attitude or spirit. Big courage, men.

***“Only be strong and very courageous.”***

***- Joshua 1:7***

***“Never, never,  
never give up.”***

***- Winston Churchill***

Could I illustrate the kind of courage we fathers might need, from one of my favorite authors, Larry McMurtry? Here is the story:

Our heroes, Gus and Call, are very young men, boys really, just recently recruited to the Texas Rangers. The year is about 1840 and the place is the wastelands of west Texas. Their ranks are being decimated by the Comanche.

Their job is to escort a British Lady across these lands to eastern Texas and civilization. She needed their help.

Here is the passage (pg. 443, *Dead Man’s Walk*) and the lesson:

*In the vastness of the desert each reduction of the group made them realize how small they were, how puny, in relation to the space they were traveling through.*

*“We’re back where it’s wild again,” Call said.*

*Lady Carey happened to overhear the remark. she drew rein for a moment, looking toward a faint outline of mountains in the east.*

*“Yes, it’s wild, isn’t it,” she said. “It’s like a smell. I smelled it in Africa and now I smell it here.”*

*“It means we have to be careful,” Call said.*

*Lady Carey looked again at the distant mountains.*

*“Quite the contrary, Corporal Call,” she said. “It means we have to be wild, like the wild men.”*

*She turned her head toward him and sat watching him for a moment.*

*(Brothers, our women are watching us.)*

*Call couldn’t see her eyes through the several dark veils, but he knew she was watching him. Although she had been always polite, Call felt nervous, knowing that her hidden eyes were fixed on him.*

*“Are you wild enough, Corporal Call?” Lady Carey asked. “I have a feeling you are.”*

*“I guess we’ll see, ma’am,” Call said.*

Brothers, are we courageous enough to win back our teenager’s heart? I believe we are.

I love you men. I hope we take the time necessary to evaluate how you are doing with your own troops, in your own homes.

This really is not about the kids or our teens. It’s about us, brothers!

I have not given you three easy keys and then you just turn the lock. This is a heart challenge, men.

Resolve. Agree with me that we will not give up. That we will fight for their hearts.





BUILDING STRONG FAMILIES IN THE CHURCH

**Exercise**

1. What was the main lesson you learned from this reading?

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2. For those who are parents, evaluate the health of your family. What is its greatest strength? What is its greatest weakness? According to your spouse, evaluate your family. What is the greatest strength? What is the greatest weakness?

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3. For those who are parents, what practical steps can you take to build your family? What steps can the church take to help you in your family?

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BUILDING STRONG FAMILIES IN THE CHURCH**Exercise**

4. Evaluate the health of the families in your church. What are the overall strengths and weaknesses? Devise a plan (including a calendar of events and an overall church schedule) which (to your satisfaction) would build strong families in your church.

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5. Referring to John Hopley's article on the church being an extended family, how have others in the church been spiritual "uncles and aunts" to your child(ren)? Having read the article, what steps would you like to take in the future to insure that your child has a strong extended family through the church?

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RAISING GODLY FAMILIES / THE DOCTRINE OF MAN AND SIN

## **Sanctification**

In dealing with the topic of sin, a key issue is: How does the believer become sanctified? Dave Bovenmyer's excellent article focuses on the very important topic of sanctification.







## Sanctification

Pastor Dave Bovenmyer · Ames, IA

### What is sanctification and why should we study it?

The English word “sanctification” is derived from the Latin *sānctus*, which means to consecrate or set apart. The New Testament Greek word is *hagiasmos* and has the same meaning as the Latin word to be set apart or consecrate. The Greek word family associated with this word is most often translated “sanctify, holy, consecrated, and saint.” In this paper, we will look at the sanctification process the process by which God’s elect are set apart from the perversion and corruption of sin and set apart to God, to become His pure and spotless people.

Understanding the subject of sanctification is obviously of utmost importance, since God’s number one goal for believers is to make them holy and like Christ in character. Gaining an accurate understanding of sanctification is important not only for our own personal growth, but also for our effectiveness in shepherding and building others.

A correct understanding of sanctification will also help protect us from being led astray by various winds and waves of doctrine (Ephesians 4:14). There are fairly significant differences in Christianity concerning how the sanctification process works and what degree of sanctification can be achieved in this life. Some Bible teachers would view Paul’s description of his experience of bondage to the flesh in Romans chapter seven as fairly normative for the Christian life. Others would vehemently contradict this pessimistic view and would even go so far as to claim that a Christian can gain a state of “entire sanctification,” where he does not sin any longer. There are also differences in understanding as to how much of the sanctification process is up to God and how much is up to us. Some teachers almost exclusively emphasize man’s part in the process and others teach that any effort on man’s part is close to inconsequential and perhaps even harmful. One goal of this paper is to address these and other issues that relate to sanctification.

### What are the stages of sanctification?

Sanctification occurs in steps or stages. First of all, we are sanctified or set apart to God at the point of faith and salvation.

*Paul writes: “But you were washed, you were sanctified, you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and by the Spirit of our God” (1 Corinthians 6:11, emphasis added).*

And the writer to the Hebrews says:

*Above all, cultivate your own spirit. A word spoken by you when your conscience is clear and your heart full of God’s Spirit, is worth 10,000 words spoken in unbelief and sin.”*

*- Robert Murray McCheyne*

*“And by that will, we have been made holy through the sacrifice of the body of Jesus Christ once for all” (Hebrews 10:10, emphasis added).*

So, a believer is, in his core identity, a “saint” (set apart one) a person belonging to God and called to be set apart to God and to be set apart from sin and impurity a person destined for Christ-likeness. (The New Testament writers most often refer to believers as “saints” or holy ones calling them “Christians” three times, “the Way” five times, “believers” twelve times, “brothers” about 18 times, but “saints” 61 times!)

The second stage of sanctification is the process where the saints live out their calling by becoming increasingly holy in thought and life. Paul writes:

*“... Just as you used to offer the parts of your body in slavery to impurity and to ever-increasing wickedness, so now offer them in slavery to righteousness leading to holiness” (Romans 6:19, emphasis added).*

And in Ephesians he commands his readers:

*“...to put off your old self, which is being corrupted by its deceitful desires; to be made new in the attitude of your minds; and to put on the new self, created to be like God in true righteousness and holiness” (Ephesians 4:22-24, emphasis added).*

Paul goes on in this passage to describe the types of things we are to put off and put on: put off lying, put on truth telling; put off unwholesome speech, put on edifying speech; put off stealing, put on working and giving, etc. This second stage of sanctification, this process of becoming practically holy and Christ-like, is the stage of sanctification that we will be addressing in this paper. The third stage of sanctification is the final stage, that of glorification. When Christ returns, believers will be totally and completely sanctified, set apart from sin and set apart to God. Paul writes:

*“Now may the God of peace Himself sanctify you entirely; and may your spirit and soul and body be preserved complete, without blame at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ” (1 Thessalonians 5:23).*

These three stages of sanctification can be found in a single verse in Philippians 1:6 (NLT): “And I am sure that God, who began the good work within you, will continue his work until it is finally finished on that day when Christ Jesus comes back again.”

### **What is the difference between justification and sanctification?**

Justification means to be “declared righteous” and is the act of God in pardoning or acquitting the believer from all his sins. Justification differs from sanctification in several ways. Justification is an instantaneous occurrence, complete in one moment, whereas sanctification is a process requiring a lifetime for completion. Also, there is a difference between the two in degree. A person is either justified or not, whereas we may be more or less sanctified. Justification is a legal or declarative matter, while sanctification is an actual transformation of the character and condition of the person.

***“When wealth is lost,  
nothing is lost; when  
health is lost, something  
is lost; when character  
is lost, all is lost.”***

***- Billy Graham***

***"I know a man who knows how to mortify the flesh. I do believe he will do great things for God."***

***- John Wesley,  
on George Whitefield***

### **How difficult is sanctification?**

Gaining mastery over sin is a tremendously difficult task. Hartley, in *Essays on Man*, says, "It is the most difficult of all things to convert men from vicious habits to virtuous ones, as every one may judge from what he feels in himself, as well as from what he sees in others." And Cornelius Plantinga, in his excellent book, *Not the Way It's Supposed to Be, A Breviary of Sin*, says, "...the main human trouble is desperately difficult to fix, even for God, and sin is the longest-running of human emergencies."

In the ancient world, no task was more difficult than conquering a well-fortified city. Often, the conquering of a city would take years and an unbelievable investment of manpower and resources. Yet Solomon states, "*He who is slow to anger is better than the mighty, and he who rules his spirit, than he who captures a city*" (Proverbs 16:32). Solomon understood that ruling our own spirit is the most difficult task of all. After conquering the world, Alexander the Great, in a fit of rage, struck and accidentally killed his right-hand general and best friend. He exclaimed, "I have conquered the world, but I cannot conquer my own soul."

Speaking for God, the prophet Jeremiah reveals God's own amazement with the stubbornness and intransigence of His own chosen people, "*Can the Ethiopian change his skin or the leopard its spots? Neither can you do good who are accustomed to doing evil*" (Jeremiah 13:23). If learning to do good is so difficult, how then can it happen? The Apostle Paul realized that genuine change and growth in character is utterly impossible by human effort alone. That is why he relied upon the "*power of God*" and the "*weapons of righteousness for the right hand and the left*" (2 Corinthians 6:7). And in 2 Corinthians 10:4 he says, "*for the weapons of our warfare are not of the flesh, but divinely powerful for the destruction of fortresses*." The problem of sin and disobedience in people's lives is unconquerable without divinely powerful weapons. All throughout, the Scriptures reveal that human beings need powerful outside intervention to control and eventually conquer their faults.

Because of the difficulty of the task, gaining mastery over sin may require extreme effort, not only by the individual, but also by those who are mentoring and instructing him. Paul says to the Galatians, "*My dear children, for whom I am again in the pains of childbirth until Christ is formed in you*" (Galatians 4:19). Discipleship of others involves work, suffering, and distress similar to the intense labor that women experience in childbirth.

### **Why is forsaking sin and living righteously such a difficult thing?**

One reason that forsaking sin is so difficult is that sin is so very addicting. Jesus declared, "*...everyone who sins is a slave to sin*" (John 8:34). Sin tends to multiply and deceive. When we give in to one temptation, others follow hard on its footsteps. And, sometimes, the embracing of one sin can open a virtual Pandora's box of folly and corruption. In Romans chapter one, we see that the sins of pride, ungratefulness, and thanklessness lead to other sins: idol worship, sexual immorality, and, eventually, all kinds of vileness. So, it appears that one of the most devastating consequences of sin is more sin. We are given over to ever-increasing wickedness until we reap in our own persons the due penalty of our error.

Pastors, counselors, attorneys, and law enforcement officers, those who work with people and their problems, constantly encounter the addictive nature of sin. People become addicted not just to alcohol

and other substances, but to all kinds of sin. Sexual sin, eating disorders, outbursts of anger, deception, jealousy; the list goes on and on. Sin can get its grip on our lives and just won't let go, no matter how many resolutions we make to change, or how much we weep or plead with God, or how much effort we make to reform.

Additionally, our sin tends to deceive and corrupt not only ourselves, but others as well. The sins of the parents are passed down to the children. Dysfunction and abuse create a cycle in families that can often be traced for generations. Our sin not only causes pain and misery and addiction in ourselves, it damages and seduces others as well. This grand accumulation of the individual sins of a culture is what the Bible calls the "world." It is a whole set of sinful behavior and thought patterns that are all around us, pressuring and seducing us toward evil and away from God.

And then we have the flesh and its lust; the sinful propensity that dwells in our mortal bodies that has been passed on to us as a result of the fall of Man. And, on top of all this, there is the Devil, our adversary, who looks for opportunities and situations to tempt and seduce us toward evil and away from God.

Add all this together and we see that sin is an extremely difficult thing to conquer. In Romans six, Paul speaks of sin as a cruel taskmaster that conquers and enslaves us. And in chapter seven, Paul powerfully describes his own experience of bondage to sin, specifically to the sin of covetousness. His words describe the experience of millions who have found themselves frustrated, enslaved, and unable to change their behavior despite an earnest desire for change. Romans 7:

*"For what I want to do I do not do, but what I hate I do" (vs. 15)... "For what I do is not the good I want to do; no, the evil I do not want to do—this I keep on doing" (vs. 19)... "For in my inner being I delight in God's law; but I see another law at work in the members of my body, waging war against the law of my mind and making me a prisoner of the law of sin at work within my members. What a wretched man I am! Who will rescue me from this body of death" (vs. 22-24)?*

Paul came to a realization that we all must come to if we hope to walk in victory over sin. We must realize that we are in bondage, that we desperately need someone to rescue us. For on our own, we are totally incapable of living the life of love, righteousness, and holiness that we long for and that God calls us to.

### **What is the basis and foundation for our sanctification?**

Thankfully, we do have a Savior, and He has not only saved us from the penalty of sin, He has also saved us from the power of sin. Just as Jesus Christ is the source of our justification, He is also the source of our sanctification. Jesus is the "author," "captain," or "pioneer" of our salvation (Hebrews 2:10; 12:2). As the Hero of Faith (greater than any of the previously listed heroes of faith), He has endured the cross, despising its shame, and has now been seated at God's right hand. He is the first and only fully sanctified person. Jesus Christ is the only person to have lived a life of perfect obedience and sanctification, and He is the only adequate resource we have for the development of holiness in our lives. On the basis of our union and relationship with Him, we have come to share His resources. He has "become for us" sanctification, just as He is also our wisdom, righteousness, and redemption (1 Corinthians 1:30).

*"I have more trouble with D.L. Moody, than with any other man I've met."*

*- D.L. Moody*

***“A Christian man is the most free lord of all, and subject to none; a Christian man is the most dutiful servant of all, and subject to everyone.”***

***- Martin Luther***

Thus, our sanctification cannot be based simply on psychological techniques, moral will power, relational support, or emotional experiences. We must base it solidly on the person of Christ and upon His resources, available to us through our union with Him.

### **How has Christ set us free from sin?**

The Scripture clearly states that believers in Christ have been set free from the enslaving power of sin. And that freedom is based upon our union with Christ. In his writings, and most notably in Romans chapter six, Paul refers to the fact that believers have been united with Christ (baptized into or placed into Christ), and so share in His death and resurrection. Let’s look for a moment at Romans six and its context.

Prior to Romans 6, Paul has just finished arguing that what was forfeited in Adam and his sin has been regained in Jesus Christ and His obedience. He then powerfully emphasizes the extent of God’s grace and the freedom of His gift of forgiveness and life by saying, “... *where sin increased, grace increased all the more*” (Romans 5:20b). The more people sinned, the more God poured out His grace. Now to this there is an obvious objection: “*Shall we go on sinning so that grace may increase*” (Romans 6:1)? Paul replies emphatically, “*By no means*” (Romans 6:2, NIV)! Such a response is an incredible misunderstanding of the gospel, because forgiveness of sins is not received in a vacuum, but in union with Christ. Paul’s logic in chapters five and six is as follows:

1. We receive forgiveness of sins freely through faith in Christ.
2. This reception involves being united with (baptized or placed into) Christ.
3. The Christ, to Whom we are united, died to sin.
4. Since we are united to Him, we also have died to sin.
5. If we have died to sin, we cannot continue living in it.
6. Therefore, we cannot continue in sin that grace may increase.

Paul then comes to the climax of his argument and summarizes this awesome change that has happened to us in Christ. “*The death he died, he died to sin once for all; but the life he lives, he lives to God*” (Romans 6:10). In the same way, count yourselves dead to sin, but alive to God in Christ Jesus.

Since we are now united with Christ, we must view ourselves in a totally different way. And viewing ourselves in this way is absolutely foundational to our sanctification. We must view ourselves as having died with Christ, having resurrected with Christ and having been made alive to God with Christ.

Ask yourself, “What is Christ’s relationship to sin today?” Why, He has nothing to do with it whatsoever! It’s been taken care of once for all! He will never have to die for sin again or deal with it again. Any claim sin ever had on Him has been totally abolished.

And what is Christ’s relationship to God today? It is perfect! It is pure and unhindered by any problem whatsoever! He enjoys the full blessing of God. There is nothing but love, affirmation, acceptance, respect, security, and appreciation in the relationship that Jesus and the Father share with each other.



The point that Paul is making here is that since we have been united with Christ, we have the same relationship to sin that Christ does and the same relationship to God that Christ does! Being united to Christ brings about a radical change. We've died. We've been resurrected. We are now in perfect relationship with God and union with Christ. This is how we must view ourselves not because we are trying to psyche ourselves up, but because this is what truly has happened. Surely such a person, united with Christ, could never continue in sin. *"For sin shall not be your master, because you are not under law, but under grace"* (Romans 6:14). What we have received through the new covenant of grace is so incredibly more powerful than what people had under the old covenant of law that it is now impossible for sin to be our master any longer. For we have not simply been forgiven, we have become united with Christ. The old person we once were has died. We have been born again (1 Peter 1:23) and have become new creatures (2 Corinthians 5:17). And we should expect our lives to be as vastly changed as if we had actually died and then been raised from the dead, ready to start a new life.

***"For you have died  
and your life is hidden  
with Christ in God."***

***- Colossians 3:3***

If we have died to sin, does that mean we are totally free from its presence and influence altogether? Paul's teaching that we have been united with Christ in His death and resurrection and have "died to sin" is so clear and compelling that, at first glance, we might think that believers have, or can, become completely separated from and dead to sin and temptation altogether. But let's look more closely at Romans 6:6-7:

*"For we know that our old self was crucified with him so that the body of sin might be done away with, that we should no longer be slaves to sin— because anyone who has died has been freed from sin."*

First of all, the word translated in the NIV "done away with" (Greek *katargeo*) does not necessarily mean to cease to exist, but most often means to nullify or to bring something to nothing. Rather than the body of sin being annihilated or removed completely, it has been nullified, or rendered ineffective. Indeed, Paul seems to explain what he means by "done away with" when he says, "that we should no longer be slaves to sin" and that we have been "freed" from sin. Paul seems to be stating that we have died to sin, not in the sense of dying to its presence or dying to all temptation, but in the sense of dying to sin as a master.

Indeed, this slavery analogy is present throughout the entire passage as Paul views sin as a personified power. Sin reigns as king (5:21; 6:12) and makes people serve it as master (6:14) so that they are sin's slaves (6:17, 20). Sin is a warring general who uses people's bodies as his weapons (6:13). In light of this analogy, it would appear that having died to sin would refer to having died to sin as our master, rather than having been completely cut off from any possibility of sin or completely cut off from its influence.

Paul goes on in the chapter to specifically state that evil desires are still present. He exhorts his readers, *"...do not let sin reign in your mortal body so that you obey its evil desires"* (6:12). This exhortation would be meaningless if "dead to sin" meant that Christians are dead to the very existence and inclination to sin. And, his exhortation clearly states that the "evil desires" of the "mortal body" are still present and demanding to be obeyed.

But what is the "body of sin" that has been nullified, or brought to no effect? Does sin have a body of some type? Or is Paul referring to our physical bodies? A study of the word "body" (*soma*) body:

- Romans 6:6 in Romans strongly suggests that Paul is referring to the physical
- Romans 6:12 that the body of sin might be done away with
- Romans 7:24 don't let sin reign in your mortal body so that you obey its (the body's) lusts.
- Romans 8:10 who will rescue me from the body of this death?
- Romans 8:11 your body is dead because of sin.
- Romans 8:13 God will give life to your mortal bodies.
- Romans 8:23 through the Spirit putting to death the misdeeds of the body. we groan, waiting eagerly the redemption of our bodies.

If indeed the term “body of sin” in Romans 6:6 is referring to the physical body, then clearly, the phrase “done away with” must mean “nullified” rather than “cease to exist,” for certainly our physical bodies have not ceased to exist.

Rather, the sinful desires (Romans 6:12 lusts and Romans 8:13 misdeeds) of the body have been nullified or rendered ineffective or brought to nothing. So, Paul is not arguing that we have died to sin in the sense that we have been totally freed from the presence of sin, or even that we have been totally freed from the power and influence of sin. Rather, we have been freed from our bondage and slavery to sin. We have died to sin as our master.

### **How intense should we expect our struggle for holiness to be?**

If we have been delivered from slavery and bondage to sin, it would seem that we should experience little struggle with it. Yes, sin and fleshly desires are still present, but if we have died to sin and the “body of sin” has been nullified, why do so many Christians experience such an intense struggle with sin?

Although the believer has been united with Christ and, therefore, is dead to sin, alive to God, and seated with Christ in the heavenly places, still the Bible consistently paints the life of the saint as a life of difficulty, struggle, conflict, and self-denial. Paul “encouraged” the believers in the Galatian churches by reminding them, “*We must go through many hardships to enter the kingdom of God*” (Acts 14:22). What is the source of our struggles and conflict?

Conflict comes as an inevitable result of what God has called us to and of who God has made us to be. In fact, it is precisely because we are new creatures and “saints” that we experience conflict with the world, the Devil, and the flesh. Take the world, for example. As we become more and more sanctified, our new life-style in Christ is bound to put us on a collision course with the lifestyle of a fallen and corrupt world. The goals, motives, and energies of our lives now stand in complete contrast to the world around us. That radical difference makes tension, conflict, and stress inevitable. Jesus warns that the world will hate us (John 15:19). In 2 Timothy 3:1-11, after describing the depraved condition of the world around us, Paul concludes that all who desire to live godly lives in Christ will be persecuted (2 Timothy 3:12). Paul states that we are at odds with the goals and values of the world, which is trying to “conform” us to its “pattern” (Romans 12:2).

In addition, we are now in conflict with Satan and the spiritual forces of evil. Before we came to Christ, we were held under the sway of the Devil, the “spirit who is now at work in those who are disobedient”

*“God saved us to make us holy, not happy. Some experiences may not contribute to our happiness, but all can be made to contribute to our holiness.”*

- Vance Havner



(Ephesians 2:2). We, like the rest of the world, were “under the control of the evil one” (1 John 5:19). But now, God has “delivered us from the domain of darkness, and transferred us to the kingdom of His beloved Son” (Colossians 1:13). Through Christ and His work, the Devil has been defeated and disarmed (Colossians 2:15) and we have been freed from his power over us. Yet, the Devil and the domain of darkness are still very much present and active. Although Christ has rendered the Devil “powerless” (Hebrews 2:14, where the same verb appears as in Romans 6:6, *katargeo*, to nullify), Christians are still in danger of being “led astray” by his “cunning” (2 Corinthians 11:3). We are exhorted to stand firm in battle against him and his dark spiritual forces, having armed ourselves with God’s weapons of warfare (Ephesians 6:10-17). And Peter admonishes us to resist our “adversary,” the Devil, remaining firm in our faith, since he prowls around “like a roaring lion looking for someone to devour” (1 Peter 5:8-9). In our union with Christ, we have been “seated with Christ in the heavenly realms” (Ephesians 2:6). And as a result, we have now joined the battle against the “spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms” (Ephesians 6:12). Amazingly, our daily lives involve the skirmishes of the cosmic war of the end times. But our conflict is not simply external, with the world and the Devil. It is internal as well—a conflict with the desires of the flesh. As we have seen, Romans 6 teaches that we have been delivered from slavery to sin and that the “body of sin” has been nullified. Yet, Paul says in Galatians that a battle remains between the flesh and the Spirit:

*“For the sinful nature (flesh) desires what is contrary to the Spirit, and the Spirit what is contrary to the sinful nature (flesh). They are in conflict with each other, so that you do not do what you want” (Galatians 5:17, parenthesis and emphasis added).*

Romans 6:12 says that saints still have “mortal” bodies with “evil desires” that are still demanding to be obeyed. And Romans 8:13 says that by the Spirit we must put to death the “misdeeds of the body” (of course, not all bodily desires are intrinsically evil. Our desires for food, sleep, security, etc. are God-given and good, when they are kept in balance and are subject to the law of love. Yet, since the fall, the physical bodily desires have become inordinately strong, perverse, and self-centered, leading us into the types of activities described by Paul in his list of the “deeds of the flesh” in Galatians 5:19-21).

In his excellent article, *The Reformed View (of Sanctification)*, Sinclair B. Ferguson seeks to explain the tension between those scriptures that so strongly state that we have been freed from sin and those that depict an intense and continuing battle. “All that is true for me in Christ has not yet been accomplished in me by the Spirit. I live in the Spirit, but I also continue to live in the flesh (though no longer dominated by it, nor a debtor to it). But as I have been delivered from bondage to the flesh, I continue to live my life with a body and mind marred by sin, and in a world and community which have been dominated by the flesh. Although I have been delivered from addiction to sin, its presence remains. I experience withdrawal symptoms and remain weakened by its devastating impact on my life. The desires of the flesh and the desires of the spirit are contrary to one another... In microcosm, I experience a reflection of the conflict between the kingdom of God and the kingdoms of this world. Because

I am destined for the glory of Christ, so long as I am in the body, I groan, longing for the day when my life as a child of God will be brought to its final consummation (Romans 8:23).”

***“The devil is perfectly content to see you become pure and brave and disciplined, just as long as you are proud about it.”***

**- C.S. Lewis**

***“A man must completely despair of himself in order to become fit to obtain the grace of Christ.”***

***- Martin Luther***

### **How does the Holy Spirit help us in our battle with the lusts of the flesh, the world, and the Devil?**

In Romans, chapter seven, Paul describes his experience and frustration with the sin of covetousness. In his intense struggle to do right and to obey God's law, he finds himself doing the very things he hates. There has been much argument among Bible interpreters as to whether Paul is describing an experience he had while he was a non-Christian living under the law, or while he was a Christian. We will not look at the issue here, but one point needs to be made. Whether Paul's experience happened when he was a believer or a non-believer, he did find deliverance from his struggle. After so powerfully describing his own experience of bondage, Paul breaks out in thanksgiving to God:

*“Thanks be to God through Jesus Christ our Lord!...because through Christ Jesus the law of the Spirit of life set me free from the law of sin and death. For what the law was powerless to do in that it was weakened by the sinful nature, God did by sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful man to be a sin offering. And so he condemned sin in sinful man, in order that the righteous requirements of the law might be fully met in us, who do not live according to the sinful nature but according to the Spirit”* (Romans 7:25-8:4, emphasis added).

Paul joyfully announces that the law (here Paul is using the word “law” in the sense of an unchanging principle) of the Spirit of life has set him free from the law (unchanging principle) of sin and death. He is overjoyed that the Spirit of life has set him free from the bondage and frustration he described in chapter seven. What the law could not do, God did in Christ. Now, through the new way of the Spirit (not the old way of human effort) the law's requirements (which are summarized in the word love) can be fully met in those who live according to the Spirit.

Paul continues in the following verses of chapter eight to show that the working of the Spirit is our source of power to live a life of holiness. Here are some of his points:

- All who belong to Christ have the Spirit (vs. 9).
- Those controlled by the flesh reap death but those controlled by the Spirit reap life and peace (vs. 6).
- Those controlled by the flesh cannot please God (implying that those controlled by the Spirit do please God) (vs. 8).
- By the Spirit, we can put to death the misdeeds of the body, resulting in life (vs. 13).
- The Spirit leads us (vs. 14).
- The Spirit testifies that we are children of God.
- The Spirit intercedes for us.

In Galatians 5:16, Paul again points to the work of the Spirit as the means of sanctification and victory over the flesh, “*So I say, live by the Spirit, and you will not gratify the desires of the sinful nature (flesh).*” And verses 22-23 show the results of living in the Spirit, “*But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control. Against such things there is no law.*”

As we have already seen, sanctification is achieved through a believer's union with Christ. And part of what it means to be united with Christ is to have the Holy Spirit indwelling us. Here are a few of the verses that describe the Holy Spirit's work in our lives:

- Our bodies are now temples of the Holy Spirit (1 Corinthians 6:19).
- The Spirit has been sealed in us until the day of redemption (Ephesians 4:30).
- The Spirit is a river of living water, springing up from within the believer (John 7:38-39).
- The Spirit strengthens us in the inner man to comprehend God's love and to fill us to the measure of the fullness of God (become like God in our character: Ephesians 3:16-19).
- The Spirit gives us power to be witnesses (Acts 1:8).
- The love of God has been poured out in our hearts through the Spirit (Romans 5:5).
- The Spirit helps us to pray and to worship (Ephesians 6:18, Jude 1:20, Philippians 3:3)
- The Spirit reveals God's thoughts to us and gives us the mind of Christ (1 Corinthians 2:11-16).
- The Spirit gives us spiritual gifts to build up the body of Christ (1 Corinthians 12:4-7).
- The Spirit transforms us into God's likeness with ever-increasing glory (2 Corinthians 3:17-18).
- The Spirit is our helper, companion, and counselor (John 14:16-18).

*"God creates out of nothing. Therefore, a man must become "nothing" before God can transform him and use him."*

*- Martin Luther*

We are better off to have the Spirit as our companion and helper than the disciples were to have Jesus Himself as their companion and guide (John 16:7). In the Holy Spirit, the believer has an incredibly close companion and helper. In John 14:16, Jesus refers to Him using the word *parakletos*, a difficult word to translate into English. It literally means "one called alongside to help." The New American Standard translates it "helper." The New Living and New International use "counselor." The King James uses "comforter." The word has all these meanings and more. It is sometimes translated "advocate" and "intercessor." It can have the meaning of "encourager, companion, and guide." Jesus goes on in verse 18 of this passage to state, "I will not leave you as orphans, I will come to you." The Holy Spirit is as helpful and necessary to us as a parent is to a child. Without Him, we would be orphans.

It is obvious from all these verses that the Holy Spirit's presence and work in our lives is the key to our sanctification. If we wish to grow in holiness, we must learn to live in the Spirit and to be filled with the Spirit.

### **How do we walk in the Spirit?**

Christians seem to have a tendency to try to reduce the sanctification process to a few simple rules or steps to follow. It would be nice in some ways if we could follow a simple formula every day that would lead to our sanctification. Perhaps it would be reading so much of the Bible each day, or praying for a certain period of time every day, or simply asking God to fill us with the Spirit each day. Although these are obviously good things to do and may help us immensely to walk in the Spirit, I am convinced that the sanctification process cannot be reduced to a simple formula or series of steps to follow. Why

*“When you’re through changing, you’re through.”*

*- Bruce Barton*

is that? It is because the Spirit is not a force to be manipulated, like electricity or magnetism. The Spirit is a person. And, as with any person, if we want to walk with them, we must walk in relationship. Relationships cannot be reduced to simple formulas. I cannot reduce my relationship with my wife to a few simple rules like take out the garbage, kiss her every morning, and bring flowers home every night. Those things may be good to do, but maintaining a relationship is much more difficult and complex than that. Relationships do have rules, but they cannot be reduced to rules.

Following a few resolutions and performing a few duties will not cut it in walking with God. Following Him requires the commitment, energy, and interest of a devoted relationship. But really, isn’t that actually wonderful? We have not been united to rules and duties, but to a wonderful Person, the most wonderful Person imaginable, a Person who is able to meet our every need.

### **Where does Scripture bring out the idea of a relationship with God as key to sanctification?**

Romans 6:11 says, *“In the same way, count yourselves dead to sin but alive to God in Christ Jesus.”* We have talked at length about what it means to be dead to sin, but the really exciting part of this verse is that we are alive to God. We are in relationship with God. In fact, our relationship with Him is as close and wonderful as Christ’s relationship with God, since we have been united with Christ.

Romans 7:4 brings out this same thought, *“So, my brothers, you also died to the law through the body of Christ, that you might belong to another, to him who was raised from the dead, in order that we might bear fruit to God.”* Part of the good news of the gospel is that we are no longer under the law, as Romans seven clearly states. But there is even better news. We now belong to another, or literally have been “joined to another,” to Jesus Christ. We have a relationship not to a set of rules and laws, but to a fantastic Person.

Romans 8:14-15 also stresses this new relationship, *“...because those who are led by the Spirit of God are sons of God. For you did not receive a spirit that makes you a slave again to fear, but you received the Spirit of sonship. And by him we cry, ‘Abba, Father.’”* We have a relationship to God, not as insignificant peons or lowly slaves, but as sons, with all the rights and privileges of sons!

Our union with Christ is not simply some theoretical, judicial union: it is a union of persons. It is the same type of union that a loving father shares with his respectful and obedient son. It is the same type of union that a man and wife share in marriage. In fact, one of the purposes of marriage is to be a picture of the union that believers have with Christ (Ephesians 5:23-32). It is the same type of closeness and union that a branch has to the vine (John 15:1-10). It is the same type of closeness and union that the head has to the body (Ephesians 1:22-21). It is the same type of closeness and union that God the Father shares with God the Son (John 17:21-23).

Relationships cannot be reduced to simple formulas. There are too many factors involved: affection, respect, admiration, obedience, love, kindness, patience, trust, humility, honesty, listening, openness, selflessness, forgiveness, courage, and time spent together. Sometimes we have a tendency to focus all our energy on one aspect of the relationship, say prayer. We might say, “Prayer is the key to a relationship with God.” Well, it is certainly one essential ingredient. But if it is prayer without admiration, or prayer without obedience, or prayer without love, or prayer without trust, it may not further the rela-

tionship and may even hinder it (it's hard to have a relationship with someone who talks all the time and never stops to listen or interact). Why do you think the greatest commandment is to love the Lord with all your heart, soul, mind, and strength? Why does He command us to do this? It is because He wants a relationship with us. He desires our love. He desires our love so much that he becomes intensely jealous whenever we give our affections to any other god or idol (James 4:4-5).

Perhaps sanctification can be best summarized as the process of learning to love God with all our being. It is learning to enjoy Him and obey Him and know Him and experience Him. It is developing a relationship with Him.

### **What practices can assist our relationship with God?**

Although relationships do not consist in rules, there are rules that we can follow that can help us improve our relationships. Part of loving someone is desiring to know them better. Trust is vital to a relationship, and trust is enhanced by knowledge of a person's personality and character. So, it stands to reason that we can learn to love God more as we know Him better. Thus, we desire to read His Word, His clearest and most complete revelation of Himself to us. Part of loving someone is desiring to please them and make them happy. So, we study the Word of God to find out what is pleasing to God and what makes Him happy. Part of loving someone is telling him how wonderful he is. So, we praise and worship God, both privately and in public worship.

Part of loving someone is openly communicating with them, telling them our hopes and fears and desires, asking their advice, soliciting their help. So we pray to God and pour out our hearts to Him. Part of loving someone is to love those they love. So we love our fellow men and watch out for their interests. Our relationship with God at this point in human history is similar to a long-distance relationship between two humans. Although the Holy Spirit actually indwells our bodies and can get no closer physically to us than He already is, our communication with God is not yet "face to face." Presently, we see but a poor reflection, as in a mirror (1 Corinthians 13:12). Our relationship with God is, in some ways, similar to two lovers separated from one another in different cities and only able to correspond by letter. Our answers to prayer are often not immediate. Wisdom from God may not come instantly, upon our first request. We do not always know God's agenda and what He is doing. Yet, in a coming day, we will see Him face to face and we shall know things fully, just as we are fully known (1 Corinthians 13:12).

But at present, our relationship is similar to a long-distance relationship and such a relationship takes special patience and trust. There is less opportunity for affirmation and reassurance in a long distance relationship. In such a relationship, lovers will cling to those love letters, even memorizing certain parts, to reassure themselves of the love of the other. The Bible is our love letter from God, reassuring us of His love, and guiding us into His Will and instructing us how to please Him. The importance of the Bible in the process of sanctification can hardly be overemphasized.

It is the "truth" that sanctifies and "Thy word is truth" (John 17:17).

*"I am the vine; you are the branches. He who abides in Me bears much fruit. For apart from Me you can do nothing."*

*- John 15:5*



***“We must alter our lives in order to alter our hearts, for it is impossible to live one way and pray another.”***

***- William Law***

Our lives are “transformed” (*metamorphoo*) as our minds are renewed by God’s truth (Romans 12:2 & Ephesians 4:22-24).

The Word of God is the “sword of the Spirit” (Ephesians 6:17); without the Word, the Spirit has no sword to fight with.

The Word of God is “pure spiritual milk,” that causes you to “grow up in your salvation.”

The promises of God and the knowledge of God are what allow us to escape the corruption of the world and become participants in the divine nature (2 Peter 1:3-4).

The Word of God is what thoroughly equips us for every good work (2 Timothy 3:16-17). Our souls are revived by the Word of God (Psalm 119:7).

Victory over the Devil and the “spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms” (Ephesians 6:12) comes from knowing and holding to the truth of God. In fact, all the armor of God relates to knowing or holding to the truth.

<i>Belt</i>	Truth
<i>Breastplate</i>	Righteousness (truth in practice)
<i>Shoes</i>	Gospel of peace (holding to and sharing the truth of the gospel)
<i>Helmet</i>	Salvation (hope in the promise and truth of future salvation)
<i>Sword</i>	The Word of God (which is truth)

The entire armor relates to knowing, believing, speaking, or practicing the truth. And no wonder, for the Scripture makes it clear that the Devil’s primary, if not exclusive, power toward a believer is the power of deception (2 Corinthians 11:3).

### **How much is our part and how much is God’s part in the process of sanctification?**

Christians sometimes debate about sanctification and specifically about the question of who does what in sanctification. How much of it is our part and how much is God’s part? Many Christians, and even whole churches and denominations, see sanctification primarily as man’s responsibility. They emphasize obedience to God, self-denial, and striving for holiness. Certainly the Scripture teaches these things, yet if that is all that is taught or emphasized, it will lead to a moralistic and legalistic approach to sanctification. Everything in the Christian life will be seen as an attempt to live up to the standards of God by our own efforts. If we just tough it out and obey, everything will be all right. And, yet, obedience apart from trust and reliance upon the enablement of the Spirit will lead to the same experience of frustrating bondage that Paul wrote about in Romans seven. Even after we are born again, we are still incapable of pleasing God or obeying Him apart from the working of the Spirit. And, whether Paul experienced the bondage of Romans seven while he was a Christian or an unbeliever, every Christian has at one time or another experienced the same feelings of frustration. Why do we experience this? It is an indication that we are not filled with the Spirit. We are trying to obey God in the flesh under our own power and are not walking in relationship with and dependence upon the Holy Spirit.

Paul addresses the Galatians as “foolish” because they were doing this very thing in Galatians 3:2-5: “I would like to learn just one thing from you: Did you receive the Spirit by observing the law, or by believing

*what you heard? Are you so foolish? After beginning with the Spirit, are you now trying to attain your goal by human effort? ... Does God give you his Spirit and work miracles among you because you observe the law, or because you believe what you heard?"*

The Galatians were returning to the Law and to a system of self-effort to maintain acceptance with God and to grow in holiness. Paul reminds them of how foolish this is. Their human effort to keep the law was not what justified them, gave them the Spirit, or worked miracles. No, it was hearing the gospel and believing it. Justification began with hearing and believing and sanctification continues with hearing and believing. An attitude of faith in the power of God at work in our lives and an attitude of humility (a despair of our own ability to produce righteousness on our own), are as necessary in sanctification as they are in justification. We cannot bear fruit apart from a relationship of trust and faith in Christ.

Part of the reason the self-effort-apart-from-God approach is so common in Christianity is that the good news of freedom from sin through union with Christ and the good news of the Spirit's enablement are often not adequately preached. As Bob George points out in his book, *Classic Christianity*, "Christians today are, by and large, only preaching half a gospel. We preach forgiveness of sins and eternal life as a free gift, but we neglect to preach our union with Christ and all the resources we have available to us in Christ. People are not adequately told of the power available to them in the person of the Holy Spirit and how to avail themselves of that power. So they approach sanctification as though it was all up to them. They only see their part of the sanctification process."

If we expect people to grow in holiness, we must be careful to adequately preach the entire gospel, including our union with Christ and the enabling power of the Spirit activated through faith. But, sometimes when people begin to comprehend the power of God that is at their disposal and start to realize what they have been missing, they swing the pendulum the other way. Again, whole churches and denominations can follow this path. They emphasize God's part almost exclusively and neglect to mention our part in sanctification. To them, everything is up to God; we need do nothing but trust. Any exhortation or encouragement to obedience is seen as legalistic and putting people under the Law. The analogy of the vine and the branches is used to show that we need make no effort, just as a branch makes no effort to bear fruit, other than to abide in the vine (this is a great example of taking a parable or analogy too far and stretching it beyond its main and intended point). Efforts to obey are sometimes actually seen as counterproductive to sanctification. But a thorough study of the Scripture's teaching on sanctification clearly shows that neither extreme is correct. Rather, a partnership between God and man is taught in Scripture. In Colossians 1:28-29, Paul speaks of his own experience working with God in furthering the gospel:

*"We proclaim him, admonishing and teaching everyone with all wisdom, so that we may present everyone perfect in Christ. To this end I labor, struggling with all his energy, which so powerfully works in me."*

***"We are half-hearted creatures, fooling about with drink and sex and ambition when infinite joy is offered us, like an ignorant child who wants to go on making mud pies in a slum because he cannot imagine what is meant by the offer of a holiday at the sea. We are far too easily pleased."***

**- C.S. Lewis**

***“The main thing that burns out spiritual passion is ‘faking it.’”***

***- Jack Graham***

Paul says, “I labor” (*kopiaio* labor, toil, be wearied), “struggling” (*agonizomai* fight, labor fervently, strive). Clearly, Paul was making great effort in his walk with God. And yet his struggle was not in his own strength only. He strove with all God’s energy, which powerfully worked within him. We see the same partnership in 1 Corinthians 15:10, where Paul writes:

*“But by the grace of God I am what I am, and his grace to me was not without effect. No, I worked harder than all of them yet not I, but the grace of God that was with me.”*

It was not just Paul working; God’s grace and power were also working. But it was not just God working, Paul worked harder than them all (harder than the other Apostles). Again, the same partnership is taught in Philippians 2:12-13:

*“Therefore, my dear friends, as you have always obeyed—not only in my presence, but now much more in my absence—continue to work out your salvation with fear and trembling, for it is God who works in you to will and to act according to his good purpose.”*

We are exhorted to “work out our salvation,” but at the same time we are told that God is at work in us “to will and to act.” (The term “salvation” in this context appears to refer to the sanctification process and a practical day-by-day salvation from sin.) God is leading and persuading and we are working and striving even with fear and trembling. It is an all-out effort on both parts a cooperative effort. Charles Hodge, in an article entitled *Holy Living*, describes the cooperation between the work of God and the work of man like this:

“The doctrine that the Holy Spirit works in the people of God both to will and to do according to his own good pleasure, is not inconsistent with the diligent use of all rational and scriptural means, on our part, to grow in grace and in the knowledge of God. For though the mode of the Spirit’s influence is inscrutable (difficult to fathom or understand), it is described as an enlightening, teaching, persuading process, all which terms suppose a rational subject rationally affected. The indwelling of the Spirit, therefore, in the people of God, does not supersede their own agency. He acts by leading them to act. Thus we are commanded to do, and in fact must do, what he is said to do for us.

“We believe, though faith is of the operation of God; we repent, though repentance is the gift of Christ; we love, though love, gentleness, goodness, and all other graces, are the fruits of the Spirit. The work of sanctification is carried on by our being thus led under this Divine influence to exercise right dispositions and feelings” (parenthesis added).”

Sanctification is a partnership with both God and man involved. We must avoid the two extremes of:

1. *Quietism*: It is all up to God. We need make no effort to obey, in fact any effort to obey is seen as “works” and as thwarting the process.
2. *Legalism*: It is all up to us. God’s part or efforts to change us are unnecessary or insignificant. We are on our own and must gut it out, do our duty, and pull ourselves up by the bootstraps.

**Does sanctification involve breaking habits and changing patterns of behavior?**



A habit is a recurrent, often unconscious pattern of behavior that is ingrained in us through our previous choices and experiences. In Romans 6:19, Paul talks about the effect that our behavior has in developing subsequent patterns of behavior, “...*Just as you used to offer the parts of your body in slavery to impurity and to ever-increasing wickedness, so now offer them in slavery to righteousness leading to holiness.*”

Paul is stating that the process of holiness is, in some ways, similar to the process of corruption. As an unbeliever, you gave yourself to sin, leading to increasing wickedness and bondage to sin. Now that you are a believer, give yourself to righteousness, leading to holiness. Paul is saying that when we obey, it leads us to ever-increasing holiness. You might even say that as we obey we become addicted to holiness.

Clearly, this verse teaches that holiness is a process. Certainly, it is possible to be wholly devoted to God and walk in righteousness even as a new baby Christian. But there is also a growth process involved where we become increasingly consistent in holiness. Part of this process involves discovering patterns of thought and behavior that are unrighteous and replacing them with thoughts and behavior that are righteous. This is the process of putting off the “old self” and putting on the “new self” that Paul lays out in Ephesians 4:22-32. It involves laying aside old habits and patterns of thinking and behaving (like stealing, lying, foul language, and resentment) and replacing them with new patterns of thinking and behaving (like giving, truth telling, edifying speech, and forgiveness).

Sometimes our thought patterns and attitudes may be unconscious. We may be unaware or in denial that they even exist. All we may see is the problems they are causing us. Some patterns of thinking may have been initiated by the sin of others’ abuse or neglect as children, assault, slander, and violence. The sins of others may produce a natural (though sinful) response on our part, or the patterns of sinful thinking may have originated solely from our own wrong choices. Whatever the cause, part of the sanctification process involves uncovering assumptions, attitudes, and thought patterns that are sinful, acknowledging them and repenting of them. Sometimes this can be a painful and purifying process that often requires great humility and honesty.

### **To what degree can sanctification be achieved in this life?**

As we have seen, Christians have died with Christ and died to sin and have been united with Christ in relationship to God. Yet the Scriptures also clearly teach that believers still have an intense battle with the world, the flesh, and the Devil. Only by the power and grace of God can the battle be won.

Some of the driving force behind those who teach that a Christian can gain “entire sanctification” in this life is a desire not to compromise with sin. And that desire is a good and right desire. Too often we give up too quickly. We fail to believe in the resources of God at our disposal and avail ourselves of them. In 1 John 2:1, the apostle John wrote: “*My dear children, I write this to you so that you will not sin. But if anybody does sin, we have one who speaks to the Father in our defense, Jesus Christ, the Righteous One*” (emphasis added).

*“What our will is set to do is what really matters at last. Feeling is the play of emotion over the will, a kind of musical accompaniment to the business of living; and while it is indeed most enjoyable to have the band play as we march to Zion it is by no means indispensable. We can work and walk without music and if we have true faith, we can walk with God without feeling.”*

*-A.W.Tozer*

***“Whatever weakens your reason, whatever impairs the tenderness of your conscience, whatever obscures your sense of God, whatever increases the authority of your body over your mind, whatever takes away your relish for spiritual things... that to you is sin, no matter how innocent it is in itself.”***

*- Susannah Wesley*

John’s hope and desire was that they wouldn’t sin. He obviously felt that “not sinning” was possible, and he even anticipated that they would not sin. There are many other great promises that show that we need not sin. One is in 1 Corinthians 10:13: “No temptation has seized you except what is common to man. And God is faithful; he will not let you be tempted beyond what you can bear. But when you are tempted, he will also provide a way out so that you can stand up under it.”

God will provide a way of escape. Sin is no longer inevitable. We can get victory over it. And until and unless we believe this, we won’t get victory over it. We will give up too quickly without a fight. So we must believe that we can be victorious through the power of the Spirit. Yet, the battle raging around us and within us is incredibly strong. Although we need not sin, we don’t always take advantage of the resources available. We don’t always take the way of escape. And certainly we will never in this life get to a point where we are incapable of sin. Even the Apostle Paul, toward the end of his life said that he had not yet been made “perfect,” but was striving with all his might toward that goal. And even when we are not consciously sinning, we are still in need of growth in holiness as we continue to discover thought patterns and behavior patterns in our lives that are not pleasing to God and that call for repentance.

### **How can we be filled with the Spirit?**

Sanctification involves the work of God in the person of the Holy Spirit. As Paul states in Romans 8, it is the law of the Spirit of life that has set us free from the law of sin and of death. Since the Holy Spirit is our primary resource for sanctification, I’d like to conclude with some thoughts on how a person can be filled with the Holy Spirit. Ephesians 5:18 tells us: *“Do not get drunk on wine, which leads to debauchery. Instead, be filled with the Spirit.”* Let’s look at several things in this verse:

To be filled means to be saturated, influenced, even overwhelmed. Just as wine in those who are drunk saturates, influences, and overwhelms, so we should be with the Spirit. He should influence all of our being and all of our thoughts.

“Debauchery” means dissipation, wastefulness, or moral corruption. It is like putting water in a container filled with holes. What you pour in is dissipated, scattered, and wasted. Drunkenness liberates us from the constraints of reason and morality that bind our lower nature, leading to debauchery. Drunkenness overcomes our better judgment and loosens us to do things that we later regret. So the filling of the Spirit will cause us to do (righteous) things that we would never do otherwise on our own (and which we will never regret). Drunkenness is being “under the influence.” Those who are drunk have another factor controlling them, a force outside of themselves. Similarly, being filled with the Spirit is being “under the influence,” being controlled by another force, the Holy Spirit.

“Be filled” is in the present tense, which can have a continual sense. The wine comparison would also suggest this. People don’t just get drunk once and it affects them perpetually. They must be repeatedly filled with wine to remain drunk. So it is with the Spirit. We must be filled over and over again. “Be filled” is in the passive voice, implying it is not something we actively do, but something we allow to be done to us. We can’t control or manipulate the Spirit or wrest power from Him through anything

we do. Prayer does not manipulate God. Claiming promises doesn't manipulate God. He can and will work in His way and His timing.

"Be filled" is in the imperative mood. It is a command. We are commanded to allow something to happen to us. This implies that God constantly desires to fill us with the Spirit. We must simply yield ourselves to Him and allow Him to do so. Being filled with the Spirit is allowing the Spirit to be the driver. It is yielding to His will, His commands, His desires, His agenda, His timing, His wisdom. It is allowing Him to have control of us. It is impossible to be filled with yourself and with the Spirit at the same time.

We can deduce from this that being filled with the Spirit involves faith and trust. We will never yield to someone we don't trust. Perhaps that is one reason that the Word of God is called the sword of the Spirit. The Word builds our confidence and trust in the wisdom, power, and love of God, allowing us to yield our lives joyfully to Him.

Paul's experience in Acts 20:22-23 teaches us something about how walking in the Spirit and faith interact: "*And now, compelled by the Spirit, I am going to Jerusalem, not knowing what will happen to me there. I only know that in every city the Holy Spirit warns me that prison and hardships are facing me*" (emphasis added).

We learn three things from this passage: 1) what the Spirit is leading us to do won't necessarily be what we want to do, 2) we won't always know what will happen, 3) there may be difficulty, persecution, and suffering. And to this we can add one more statement upon reading the outcome in Paul's journey, 4) God will always see us through.

As is evident in this passage, walking in the Spirit will often involve risk. It will often involve stepping out of our comfort zone. It will often be beyond what we could ever imagine doing in our own abilities and strengths. God has plans for each of us that could only be described as spectacular, even scary. Walking in the Spirit involves faith, because where the Spirit leads will often be way beyond our own abilities and beyond where we want to go.

I have one final thought on being filled with the Spirit and experiencing the power of God. Paul's experience, described in 2 Corinthians 12:7-10, shows that the power of God is released in our lives as we maintain and grow in humility. Paul writes:

*"To keep me from becoming conceited because of these surpassingly great revelations, there was given me a thorn in my flesh, a messenger of Satan, to torment me. Three times I pleaded with the Lord to take it away from me. But he said to me, 'My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness.' Therefore I will boast all the more gladly about my weaknesses, so that Christ's power may rest on me. That is why, for Christ's sake, I delight in weaknesses, in insults, in hardships, in persecutions, in difficulties. For when I am weak, then I am strong."*

Christ's power rests on us as we understand and acknowledge our weaknesses. God knew that one of Paul's greatest temptations would be pride, so He allowed increased difficulty in his life to keep him humble. Through Paul's increased humility and attitude of dependence, God's power was magnified and perfected. Paul repeats the same theme in 2 Corinthians 4:6-7: "*For God, who said, 'Let light shine*

***"You never become  
sinless but you will  
begin to sin less."***

***- Tommy Nelson***

**“90 percent of all Christians in America live defeated lives.”**

**- Billy Graham**

*out of darkness, made his light shine in our hearts to give us the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Christ. But we have this treasure in jars of clay to show that this all-surpassing power is from God and not from us.”*

God has left us with a mortal, decaying body, a jar of clay, just so that everyone can see that the power involved is not from ourselves, but from God. Our weaknesses highlight and magnify God’s power. Too often, our problem is not that we are too weak, but that we are too strong in our own estimation. We are too self-reliant. We have learned to trust in ourselves, in our families, in society, in our relationships, in our intelligence, in our economy, in our health. So when our health goes bad, we get upset. When people let us down, we get ticked off. When the government or businesses rip us off, we get angry because we’re trusting in ourselves, in human strength, rather than in God. We can’t walk in the Spirit until we realize, “I can’t do it without God’s help.” Often, God can’t work in us until we come to the end of ourselves. We don’t like to be there; we would rather be in control ourselves. But the place of utter helplessness is often where the power of God will rest upon you most strongly.

### **How would you summarize the sanctification process?**

When we believe in Christ, we are not only forgiven of our sins, but we are united with Christ. This unity is so real that we can rightly view ourselves as having died with Christ (and died to sin), been resurrected to a new life, been seated with Christ in Heaven, and made alive to God. We have been released from the Law and bound to another to Christ. We have been released from our bondage and slavery to sin, not by the eradication of sin, the flesh, the world, or the Devil, but by the addition of the Spirit and His power in our lives. We should expect there to be intense conflict and struggle in the battle with the flesh, the world, and the Devil. But no matter how difficult or stubborn the problem, the power of the Spirit is more than adequate for victory. We don’t ever have to sin as a Christian, but will never get to a place in this life where we cannot sin. The sanctification process cannot be reduced to a few simple principles, for it is a love relationship with God and, as with all relationships, it is complex and fluid. Study of the Word, faith, prayer, worship, and service all can enhance our relationship with God and lead to our sanctification. Sanctification is a partnership of both divine and human effort. We strive, but with the power of God at work. Part of sanctification includes the process of discovering sinful thought patterns, attitudes, and habits; acknowledging and repenting of them; and replacing them with God-exalting thoughts and attitudes. We walk in the Spirit by continually yielding our lives to God in confident trust and by maintaining an attitude of humility and dependence.

\*All Scripture quotations in this article are from the New International Version.

### **Resources**

Plantinga, Cornelius, Jr. Not the Way It's Supposed to Be, A Breviary of Sin, Eerdmans, Grand Rapids MI, p. 5.

The gender of "its" is neuter, corresponding to the word "body" (which is neuter in gender) and not to the word "sin" (which is feminine in gender).

The Reformed View, Sinclair B. Ferguson, Christian Spirituality, Five Views of Sanctification, Donald L. Alexander, editor, Inter-Varsity Press, Downers Grove, IL, p. 62.

Hodge, Charles Holy Living, [http://members.tripod.com/~Michael\\_Bremmer/holy-ch.htm](http://members.tripod.com/~Michael_Bremmer/holy-ch.htm)

SANCTIFICATION**Exercise**

1. What was the main lesson you learned from this reading?

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2. Read Romans 6. What does it mean that we have died with Christ? Explain it in your own words.

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3. In your own personal life, in what very practical way has God sanctified you? What steps did you take in the sanctification process?

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SANCTIFICATION**Exercise**

4. How does this topic of sanctification practically affect the ministry of your church? What practical steps should the church take to insure that true spiritual sanctification is taking place in the lives of people?

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5. If you were counseling someone with a besetting sin, what steps would you take to help that person gain victory?

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GREAT COMMISSION LEADERSHIP INSTITUTE

RAISING GODLY FAMILIES / THE DOCTRINE OF MAN AND SIN

## **God's Truth on Gender, Marriage, and Morality**

One of the most controversial issues in our society today is homosexuality. What about “same-sex marriage”? What about “gay rights”? How is the church to respond to these issues?

The following article addresses the general issue of gender, marriage and morality. At the outset, John Hopler gives a brief reminder that our focus is always to be on the gospel of Jesus Christ and to live out a life filled with grace and truth. He goes on to answer common ministry-related questions that pastors are asked in today's society. In particular, this article looks at what the Apostle Paul taught about gender, marriage and morality to the church in Corinth. If we are to be effective in ministering the gospel to people, it is vital that we know how to answer these questions.

As in all GCLI papers, the points made in this article and the way this article is written is not an “official” statement by Great Commission Churches. Rather, this writing represents the author and is intended to be a resource for discussion to equip GCLI participants in the matter of gender, marriage and morality. May God use this article in years to come to advance the gospel of Jesus Christ in our culture.







## God's Truth on Gender, Marriage, and Morality

Pastor John Hopley · Columbus, OH

### Introduction: Focusing on the Gospel of Jesus Christ

Consider the following stories from GCC churches:

- A college student who was a homosexual came to Christ as a result of some Christians in a GCC church preaching the gospel in front of a bar. Although he struggled with same-sex attraction after becoming a Christian, his life was transformed through a deeper understanding of the truth of God's grace through Christ.
- After living the gay lifestyle through her middle school and high school years, a young woman went to an event where she heard a testimony about Christ. Later on, while in college, she attended a GCC church where she experienced Christians who did not judge her but loved her. Eventually, she received Christ, abandoned the gay lifestyle and got married to a man in the church.
- A Christian husband confessed that he had secretly engaged in homosexuality. His wife and pastors modeled Christ's love to him, and his life was transformed by God's grace.
- A Great Commission church in a major city has actively supported a charitable event of special interest to gays: an AIDS Walk. This event is designed to raise funds for the fight against AIDS. The people associated with the fundraiser were extremely grateful for the care this church showed for those afflicted by AIDS in their community, noting that the church provides the most workers for the event each year.
- A GCC church is reaching out with the gospel of Jesus Christ to a community in which there are a large number of homosexuals. One former homosexual who came to faith in Jesus Christ told the pastor that this GCC church was looked upon positively by the gay community, because of the kind and respectful spirit exhibited by members of the church towards gays.

*"Do not let kindness and truth leave you; bind them around your neck, write them on the tablet of your heart. So you will find favor and good repute in the sight of God and man."*

*-Proverbs 3:3-4*

We all recognize that we live in a world that is more accepting of homosexuality. The media, the entertainment industry, and the government have all worked together in proclaiming the message that homosexuality is morally acceptable. We recognize that more and more people accept same-sex marriage, not because they are homosexuals themselves, but because they have a friend or a relative who is a homosexual. As a result, Christians are asking, "How should we respond?" The answer to this question is found in the person of Jesus Christ. Very simply, we, as Christians, are to live out the mission of Christ and the method of Christ.

The mission of Christ was to seek and to save those who are lost (Luke 19:10). Jesus said, “*Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I commanded you*” (Matthew 28:19-20). His mission was to bring people into a relationship with God and empower them to live godly lives.

***“I [Jesus] did not come to judge the world, but to save the world.”***

*-John 12:47*

What was the method of Christ? It was to live a life full of grace and truth (John 1:14). He healed the sick and taught God’s righteous standards. He fed the multitudes and reproved the Pharisees. He died on the cross and gave the Spirit of truth to His disciples. Jesus was full of grace and full of truth.

The Christians referred to above embraced the mission of Christ and the method of Christ. Their ultimate goal was not personal comfort, economic prosperity, or a particular political outcome, but rather, it was seeing people’s lives transformed by Jesus Christ. And they pursued this mission by following in the steps of Christ by leading with grace and truth.

These believers were both honoring and honest. They obeyed the command in 1 Peter 2:17 to “*Honor all people.*” They showed genuine concern and respect for both homosexuals and heterosexuals as fellow human beings because all people are made in the image of God and are ones for whom Christ died. In addition, they were honest by sharing the gospel about Jesus Christ and God’s truth about gender, marriage, and morality openly and straightforwardly with unbelievers.

In contrast, we as Christians can sometimes be “honoring,” but not honest; showing “grace,” but failing to present God’s truth in its fullness. Other times, we can be “honest,” but not honoring; sharing “truth” without being gracious in our attitudes and actions towards people. But we are called to be honoring and honest, full of grace and full of truth. We must recognize that grace without truth is not really grace, and truth without grace is not really truth.

But there is a subtler trap we can fall into. I confess that I can gravitate towards a “truth and grace” approach rather than a “grace and truth” approach. That is, although I may indeed be gracious, I do not always lead with grace but rather truth instead. This is not bad. It is always good to share the truth. But I must remember that God’s truth is demonstrated most powerfully in me when I “take up my cross” like Jesus did in His ministry and lay my life down for others. Rejecting hypocrisy and pursuing a selfless, sacrificial life marked by a genuine concern for people—this is what it means to “lead with grace.” It is the “grace and truth” approach that will win the world to Christ. And it is the “grace and truth” approach that will be most effective in winning modern day America—a country that is becoming increasingly receptive to homosexuality.

So, what does this mean? It means showing the kindness of Christ to everyone in our community, regardless of their beliefs on marriage and morality. It means being like the GCC church that encourages members to volunteer for the AIDS Walk. It means showing patience and understanding to homosexuals we talk with when they accuse Christians of being bigots, intolerant, and discriminatory. It means taking these steps of kindness while also courageously sharing the gospel of salvation through Jesus Christ, as well as God’s timeless truth on gender, marriage and morality.

We have a wonderful opportunity today to break through anti-Christian stereotypes to demonstrate to the world the radical grace and truth found in Jesus Christ. The life-transforming truth of the gospel

shared by Christians in the love of Christ is far more powerful than the media, the entertainment industry, or any political organization.

As homosexuality is promoted within our culture, my prayer is that Christians in GCC churches will model and proclaim the gospel of Jesus Christ with respect, civility, humility and understanding towards everyone. If this is done, God will be honored, people will come to Jesus Christ, and the world will be transformed by the powerful grace and truth of God found in Jesus Christ our Lord.

## Questions and Answers to Pastors about Gender, Marriage, and Morality

In the first century, the Apostle Paul and his team came to Corinth, a city filled with idols and sexual immorality. They shared the gospel of Jesus Christ and established a church. Christians in Corinth had a number of questions about how to live their lives in that promiscuous culture. Paul answered those questions in 1st and 2nd Corinthians. Today, pastors are being asked a number of questions regarding homosexuality and gay marriage. In my opinion, the first place to look for answers to these questions is Paul's letters to the church in Corinth. For this reason, I begin each answer below with a verse from 1st or 2nd Corinthians. My hope is that this article will inspire pastors and Christians to follow Paul's example and teaching in regard to gender, marriage and morality.

[Note: I want to give special thanks to Tom Short for his contribution to this article. Many of the questions and answers in this article are based upon a GCLI paper Tom wrote in 2000.]

### 1. Is same-sex marriage the most important issue to address in American society today?

**Answer:** *“For I determined to know nothing among you except Jesus Christ and Him crucified”* (1 Corinthians 2:2). The most important issue to address in America today is the gospel of Jesus Christ. Although a proper view of marriage is an important issue in our society, and I do applaud efforts by Christians to affect our government and culture, let's remember that our main responsibility as pastors is to proclaim the gospel to our culture and to build a holy church.

When the Apostle Paul came to Corinth, a city which had an “anything goes” approach to sexual activity, he made Jesus Christ and the gospel the main focus. So, while the issue of same-sex marriage is an important one, it must be addressed within the context of the more important issue, which is the gospel of God's kindness through Jesus Christ.

### 2. Does this mean we should avoid the issue of homosexuality?

**Answer:** *“I delivered to you as of first importance what I also received, that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures”* (1 Corinthians 15:3). We are to talk about sin—including the sin of homosexuality—as part of our gospel message of Jesus Christ and His death on the cross. Within the church, we need to equip members to have biblical convictions on marriage and morality. To those outside the church, we are to cooperate with the Holy Spirit who convicts the world of sin, righteousness, and

*“I think the Bible teaches that homosexuality in a sin. But the Bible also teaches that pride in a sin, jealousy in a sin, and hate is a sin. And so, I don't think that homosexuality should be chosen as the overwhelming sin that we're doing today.”*

*-Billy Graham*

judgment (John 16:8). The purpose of the Spirit's convicting work is to lead people to Jesus Christ to receive forgiveness by faith through His shed blood. Therefore, as Christian leaders, we are to view moral issues in our society primarily through the lens of evangelism. What moral issue should be addressed to convict individual unbelievers of their sin so that they believe in Christ for salvation? That moral issue may be homosexuality. But it could also be adultery, fornication (i.e., pre-marital sex by heterosexuals), pornography, worshiping a false god, idolatry, disrespect for parents, abortion or other forms of murder, stealing, lying, or any of the other moral violations listed in the Bible. What is most important is to recognize how the Holy Spirit is convicting an individual of his or her sin, and to take the opportunity to share with that individual Jesus Christ and Him crucified.

***“Flee immorality. Every other sin that a man commits is outside the body, but the immoral man sins against his own body.”***

***-1 Corinthians 6:18***

### **3. Apart from sharing the gospel, if we desire to instruct the world about biblical marriage, what is the first step we should take?**

**Answer:** *“Flee immorality”* (1 Corinthians 6:18). Our first responsibility as pastors is to teach the church to avoid hypocrisy and to practice what we preach. Peter wrote to the churches: *“For it is time for judgment to begin with the household of God”* (1 Peter 4:17). God's will is that Christ-followers repent from all sexual immorality including fornication, adultery, homosexuality, pornography and divorce, and then model Christian morality and marriages to the unbelieving world. The National Association of Evangelicals has done a study that shows, for example, that 25% of professing unmarried evangelicals had been sexually active in the prior 3 months. This is unacceptable to God who wants the church to be a holy and pure example to the world, and then to preach the gospel of God's grace to all mankind.

### **4. Why are you concerned about hypocrisy in regards to the church's dealing with gays?**

**Answer:** *“Therefore, let us celebrate the feast, not with old leaven, nor with the leaven of malice and wickedness, but with the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth”* (1 Corinthians 5:8). Jesus and the New Testament writers taught often on hypocrisy. Jesus said, *“Beware of the leaven of the Pharisees, which is hypocrisy”* (Luke 12:1). After condemning idolatry, homosexuality and many other sins in Romans 1, Paul then devotes Romans 2 to exposing the sin of hypocrisy: *“You who say that one should not commit adultery, do you commit adultery”* (Romans 2:22)?

I appreciate the point made by Jim Daly with Focus on the Family who said that there are two big messages in the New Testament: Believe in Jesus Christ for salvation and don't become a Pharisee. All of us have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, and all of us need God's mercy. Keeping this in mind will help us avoid self-righteousness and hypocrisy and make us more effective in reaching homosexuals with the grace of God in Jesus Christ.

### **5. How would you respond to a gay person who said that it is hypocritical for someone to condemn homosexuality but not fornication, divorce, adultery or viewing pornography?**

**Bill Graham was asked what he would do if he had a child who was homosexual. He responded, "I would love that child more than all the rest."**

**Answer:** *"It is actually reported that there is immorality among you, and immorality of such a kind as does not exist even among the Gentiles, that someone has his father's wife"* (1 Corinthians 5:1). Paul reproved the church for tolerating immoral behavior that would be criticized by non-believers. So, if there is immorality in the church of any kind and a gay person pointed this out, I would say, "You are right. Any deviation from God's purpose for marriage is wrong—whether that deviation is committed by a heterosexual or a homosexual. Therefore, to point out homosexuality while engaging in fornication is hypocrisy."

It is important that every Christian turn away from any sexual activity that is outside of the marriage relationship between one man and one woman. Based on Paul's instruction in 1 Corinthians 5, a church may even need to take disciplinary action out of love for church members who are unrepentant and are continually practicing sexual immorality. (See the article on "Church Judgments" in Book 2 of GCLI.)

At the same time, I would let a gay person know that he should not be preoccupied with what another Christian is doing. Instead, he should focus on our own life before God: *"So then each one of us shall give an account of himself to God"* (Romans 14:12).

## **6. What is the best way for Christians to reach out to gays?**

**Answer:** *"The greatest of these is love"* (1 Corinthians 13:13). In reaching out to gays, it is vital that we do so with love and humility, without any pride or a spirit of superiority. Jesus Christ wants us to be caring and compassionate: *"And seeing the multitudes, He felt compassion for them..."* (Matthew 9:36). Billy Graham was asked what he would do if he had a child who was a homosexual. He responded, "I would love that child more than all the rest."

Although Jesus never addressed a homosexual in the Gospels, He did reach out to prostitutes; He interacted with the immoral Samaritan woman in John 4; and He protected the adulterous woman in John 8. Each person experienced God's grace in a real way. While Jesus pointed out their sin, He did so in love in order to bring them to a true faith in Christ.

## **7. How would you respond to a gay person who claimed that you were using "hate speech"?**

**Answer:** *"Love is patient..."* (1 Corinthians 13:4). My first response would be: "Perhaps the Lord may be saying something to me through that person. Am I being kind and gracious in my speech? Am I being disrespectful? Am I truly exhibiting the grace of Jesus Christ?" Perhaps the claim by this person is unfair, but I would urge a Christian to evaluate his or her life and to not be defensive as a first reaction.

Second, it may be that God is using this person to show me that I am not truly preaching the gospel of God's grace in Jesus Christ. Is it possible that my focus is on winning a philosophical or political argument more than winning a person to Christ? Our message is that God loved us so much that He sent His Son to take our sins on the cross—our sins of sexual immorality and every other kind of sin. If this is a constant message, that is not hate speech. That's real love! At the same time, we must remember that Jesus and leaders in the New Testament such as Stephen (Acts 7) were opposed when they reprovved people. Therefore, we should not be surprised when people react negatively to us when



we point out their sin, whether related to an individual or the culture as a whole.

**8. How would you respond to the charge that you are being intolerant and unaccepting of homosexuals? How would you respond to the charge that you are being judgmental?**

**Answer:** “[Love] does not rejoice in unrighteousness but rejoices in the truth” (1 Corinthians 13:6). God honors and loves all people and He shows that by offering the gift of forgiveness and eternal life to all. We think it would be unloving for us to not tell an unbeliever the truth about Jesus Christ and the coming judgment on people who violate His standards—whether that person is a heterosexual committing fornication or engaged in pornography, or a homosexual, or any other person who is living in a way that is counter to the way God has called us to live.

*“For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine; but wanting to have their ears tickled, they will accumulate for themselves teachers in accordance with their own desires.”*

*-2 Timothy 4:3*

Jesus said He did not come to judge the world but to save the world (John 12:47). We aspire to follow in His steps. We do so by loving people as they are and telling them the truth about God, sin, Jesus Christ, His death, His resurrection, eternity, and the judgment to come. For those who do not believe in Christ, it is His word that will judge them on the last day (John 12:48).

**9. How would you respond to someone who says “Why do you put such a great emphasis on the Bible? Shouldn’t people be given the freedom to do what they want to do?”**

**Answer:** “...What matters is the keeping of the commandments of God” (1 Corinthians 7:19). Our view of God is the first and most important issue. If there is no God, then it makes total sense to advocate total freedom and to have an “anything goes” mentality as to marriage or sexuality. However, if we have been created by a personal and loving God, then it logically follows that we are to seek His will and to keep His commandments as we live our lives. This includes accepting God’s definition of marriage and obeying His commands regarding marriage and sexuality.

It is important to not react to the gay marriage issue, but to instead teach a proactive message concerning God’s view about gender, marriage and morality. Here is a summary of what I teach:

1. In determining what is good and right, we look to God and His word, not on our own wisdom, personal prejudices, family upbringing, logic, or the opinions of our culture.
2. We celebrate the beautiful diversity of masculinity and femininity in males and females, created by God as a reflection of His character.
3. We give thanks to God for the wonderful gift of marriage between one man and one woman for a lifetime, which is a picture of Christ’s eternal relationship to His bride, the Church. We celebrate the beauty of the sexual relationship as part of the marriage between one man and one woman, and the multiplication of life God intends to come through marriage.
4. Because God defines the word “marriage” as a lifetime relationship between one man and one woman, we reject any modern-day human attempt to redefine the word “marriage.” Also, any sexual activity outside of the biblical marriage between one man and one woman is a sin for which Christ died, and is harmful to individuals and to the society as a whole.

Here are key Scriptures concerning gender, marriage and morality:

- A. On the matter of gender, God created mankind, male and female to reflect His image and for the purpose of procreation, the multiplication of human beings throughout the earth: *“God created man in His own image, in the image of God He created him; male and female He created them. God blessed them; and God said to them, ‘Be fruitful and multiply, and fill the earth, and subdue it; and rule over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the sky and over every living thing that moves on the earth’”* (Genesis 1:27-28).
- B. On the matter of marriage, God created marriage as the union of one man and one woman: *“For this reason a man shall leave his father and his mother, and be joined to his wife; and they shall become one flesh”* (Genesis 2:24).

Jesus reaffirmed the sanctity of marriage between one man and one woman, as well as God’s intention that marriage be for a lifetime: *“Some Pharisees came to Jesus, testing Him and asking, ‘Is it lawful for a man to divorce his wife for any reason at all?’ And He answered and said, ‘Have you not read that He who created them from the beginning **made them male and female**, and said, ‘**For this reason a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh?**’ So they are no longer two, but one flesh. What therefore God has joined together, let no man separate”* (Matthew 19:3-6, emphasis mine).

In Ephesians 5:23-32, Paul states that marriage is a picture of a greater and heavenly reality, with the man representing Christ and the woman representing the bride of Christ: *“For the husband is the head of the wife, as Christ also is the head of the church, He Himself being the Savior of the body. But as the church is subject to Christ, so also the wives ought to be to their husbands in everything. Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ also loved the church and gave Himself up for her, so that He might sanctify her, having cleansed her by the washing of water with the word, that He might present to Himself the church in all her glory, having no spot or wrinkle or any such thing; but that she would be holy and blameless. So husbands ought also to love their own wives as their own bodies. He who loves his own wife loves himself; for no one ever hated his own flesh, but nourishes and cherishes it, just as Christ also does the church, because we are members of His body. **For this reason a man shall leave his father and mother and shall be joined to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh.** This mystery is great; but I am speaking with reference to Christ and the church”* (emphasis mine).

- C. On the matter of morality, God in the Old Testament is clear that sexual activity outside of a marriage between one man and one woman is sin: *“If there is a man who commits adultery with another man’s wife, one who commits adultery with his friend’s wife, the adulterer and the adulteress shall surely be put to death...If there is a man who lies with a male as those who lie with a woman, both of them have committed a detestable act; they shall surely be put to death. Their bloodguiltiness is upon them. If there is a man who lies with an animal, he shall surely be put to death”* (Leviticus 20:10,13,15).

In the New Testament, God confirms this same moral standard: *“Or do you not know that the unrighteous will not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived; neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor effeminate, nor homosexuals, nor thieves, nor the covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor swindlers, will inherit the kingdom of God. Such were some of you; but you were washed, but you were sanctified, but you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and in the Spirit of*

**“Our bodies have one fault: The more we cater to them, the more they want.”**

**-Teresa of Avila**



*our God*" (1 Corinthians 6:9-11). *"Marriage is to be held in honor among all, and the marriage bed is to be undefiled; for fornicators and adulterers God will judge"* (Hebrews 13:4).

**10. How would you respond to this argument: "The laws against adultery and homosexuality were found in the Old Testament. We are no longer under the Law. The Old Testament law also forbids wearing garments made of two fabrics or eating seafood. Aren't you being selective in which Old Testament laws you feel we should still follow?"**

**Answer:** *"Or do you not know that the unrighteous will not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived; neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor effeminate, nor homosexuals, nor thieves, nor the covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor swindlers, will inherit the kingdom of God. And such were some of you; but you were washed, you were sanctified, but you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, and in the Spirit of our God"* (1 Corinthians 6:9-11). The Old Testament Law was made up of moral laws, civil laws and ceremonial laws, which were given to point us to the future Messiah, Jesus Christ, who is the fulfillment of the Law. In general, the moral laws have been reaffirmed in the New Testament as is shown in the 1 Corinthians 6:9-11. According to these verses, those who are fornicators, adulterers or homosexuals who become true believers in Jesus Christ are washed and sanctified by God and His Spirit and will turn from their immorality. They may struggle with temptations to engage in immoral behavior—but they will confess it as wrong and take steps to resist the temptations.

**11. How would you answer this question: "Why are you opposed to homosexuality if Jesus never spoke against homosexuality?"**

**Answer:** *"But to the married I give instructions, not I, but the Lord, that the wife should not leave her husband"* (1 Corinthians 7:10). This verse refers to what Jesus taught concerning marriage during His ministry. He commanded believing husbands and wives to not get divorced (Matthew 5:32). In Matthew 19:4-5, Jesus defined marriage as *"from the beginning (God) created them male and female, and said, 'For this cause a man shall leave his father and mother and shall cleave to his wife; and the two shall become one flesh."* Obviously, this recognizes only heterosexual marriage. He also referred to the destruction of Sodom (Matthew 11:23), implying that they were in need of repentance and their failure to repent brought about the just judgment of God. Of course, we also believe in the deity of Jesus Christ, and that He, therefore, inspired the Old Testament Scriptures. He *"did not come to abolish the Law and the Prophets, ...but to fulfill [them]"* (Matthew 5:17). Although Jesus never talked about homosexuality, He also never spoke specifically against pedophilia, domestic violence, or a host of other sins either. But that does not mean that His silence condoned such behavior.

**12. How would you respond to the person who says, "I know homosexuals who claim that they were born gay, that God made them that way, and that they will never change"?**

*"When the State sanctions homosexual relationships and gives them its blessing, the younger generation becomes confused about sexual identity and quickly loses its understanding of lifelong commitments, emotional bonding, sexual purity, the role of children in a family, and from a spiritual perspective, the 'sanctity' of marriage."*

*-James Dobson*

**Answer:** *“Therefore if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creature; the old things passed away; behold, new things have come”* (2 Corinthians 5:17). I appreciate the following answer to this question from Pastor Mark Bowen in Evergreen Community Church in Minneapolis:

*While the pro-gay lobby favors a “from birth” explanation for homosexuality, the Bible teaches and the stories of homosexual recovery (like those from the church in Corinth) demonstrate that homosexual attraction is learned, and therefore can be un-learned. Homosexual attraction may feel convincingly “in-born,” particularly for persons whose earliest recollection of sexual desire was for the same sex. But there is research that shows that homosexuality is due to a combination of social, biological, and psychological factors. Two primary risk factors for homosexuality lead to a conclusion that homosexual attraction is learned, but not voluntary.*

*1. Fractured nurture. The family of origin experience most common to gay men and lesbian women is a failure to bond with their same-sex parent. No child chooses a painful mismatch between what they need and what they receive from their mom or dad. Yet the experience of rejection painfully imprints children with false beliefs that must be un-learned.*

*2. Fallen nature. All creation groans in decay and all fallen human beings are inclined toward passive indifference and active rebellion toward God. Sinfully, this includes the sexual victimization of others. A high percentage of gay men and lesbian women were victims of childhood sexual abuse.<sup>1</sup> No child chooses to be abused, yet sexual abuse traumatically imprints children with false lessons that must be un-learned.*

God created us in His image, but man sinned, bringing a deviation from God’s intent in many areas. The Bible makes clear that God’s purpose for sexuality is to unite one man and one woman in a lifelong relationship. Our sexual desires are very complex and are shaped by many factors. Lots of people in our over-sexualized society are caught in deep-seated sexual desires that are not directed as God intended. Yet, though those desires may seem “natural” and a part of who they are, it does not change God’s created purpose for sexuality. And it does not change the fact that He will judge any expression of our sexuality that misses His created purpose.

However, God’s grace is also extended to all of us in sexual and moral failure. Therefore, He sent Jesus Christ to forgive us and also to transform our desires. Jesus Christ is the great Life-Changer. Paul says to those in Corinth who had formerly been homosexuals, *“And such were some of you; but you were washed, you were sanctified, but you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, and in the Spirit of our God”* (1 Corinthians 6:11). This verse shows that Jesus Christ can and does transform people.

In addition, God is able to change a person’s sexual desires. Some homosexuals who become Christians will resist temptation and remain celibate. Others will develop heterosexual desires. While this may not occur quickly, it most certainly can happen and does happen as former homosexuals walk by the power of the Holy Spirit: *“For it is God who is at work in you, both to will and to work for His good pleasure”* (Philippians 2:13).

***“By this we know we love the children of God, when we love God and keep His commandments.”***

***-1 John 5:2***

### 13. What are some of the unique issues to be aware of in helping Christians who have engaged in homosexuality in their past?

**Answer:** *“Love is kind”* (1 Corinthians 13:4). It is so important to be a good listener, to hear the person’s story, to learn about his family and view of God, and how he was treated by society. A large percentage of homosexual men and women were victims of sexual abuse as children. Very few were brought up in homes where the parents were loving, Christ-centered role models. Being kind and helping an individual work through past issues and false beliefs is vital if we are going to help a person who has been engaged in homosexuality.

*“The Lord will never ask you to do something and not give you the grace to do it.”*

-George Verwer

It is also important to remember that, fundamentally, homosexuality is not unique. It is just one more pattern of sin that a human life can be caught in. *“Among them we too all formerly lived in the lusts of our flesh, indulging in the desires of the flesh and of the mind and were by nature children of wrath, even as the rest”* (Ephesians 2:3). All of us lived in patterns like that before we came to Christ, and many of our lives are still shaped by patterns of the flesh. Jesus came to save us from our sins, and we can all be humbly sympathetic with the entangling sins of others, for we have all known our own.

### 14. As parents, how are we to deal with a homosexual family member?

**Answer:** *“Love never fails”* (1 Corinthians 13:8). For parents who have children who confess to be gay, don’t lose heart. Be a missionary to your son or daughter. Pray, pray, pray. Double your efforts in loving and caring for your child. Listen with empathy. Bring Christ and His truth into your conversations. Depending on the situation, you may, in love, need to exercise some family disciplines on your son or daughter, in order to bring about repentance. Some parents have exercised this type of tough love, isolating their child from influencing the rest of the family. There are examples of children turning away from practicing homosexuality, following Christ and then marrying and becoming parents. Bottom line: Don’t stop believing God or loving your child.

What about parents whose adult sibling is a homosexual? Parents with young children must remember that their first priority is their child, not their siblings. Therefore, parents need to do whatever is needed in order to win their own children to Christ, to impart to them biblical convictions, to train them in godly living, and to equip them to share the gospel. Paul said, *“Bad company corrupts good morals”* (1 Corinthians 15:33). Therefore, at times (particularly when children are young), parents may choose to isolate their small children from family members who are modeling a lifestyle contrary to the Scriptures, whether that be adultery, fornication or homosexuality. But Paul also wrote in 1 Corinthians 9:19, *“I have made myself a slave to all, that I might win the more.”* Therefore, in some form or another, parents are to team with their children to pray for and reach for Christ those extended family members who are practicing immorality.

### 15. What is your response to these questions: “What’s wrong with gay marriage? Why can’t two people who love one another get married? It doesn’t hurt anybody else”?

**Answer:** *“For us, there is but one God, the Father, from whom are all things, and we exist for Him; and one Lord, Jesus Christ, through whom are all things, and we exist for Him”* (1 Corinthians 8:6). The key question is: Who is the Lord—God or mankind? Does God define marriage or does mankind define

*“You cannot sin as much as God can forgive. If it comes to a pitched battle between sin and grace, you shall not be as bad as God is good. We can only sin as a man, but God can forgive as a God.”*

*-Charles Spurgeon*

marriage? If mankind defines marriage, then we agree that mankind can define marriage as a union between two men, between two women, between a man and two women, or whatever else mankind considers acceptable. But when we accept the Lordship of Jesus Christ, God reveals to us that He created marriage as a union between one man and woman. God created marriage between a man and a woman as part of His plan for procreation and to establish families for the nurturing of children (Genesis 1:27-28; 2:24; Matthew 19:4-5).

As for “gay marriage,” it does affect people in our society, not just the two people who desire to be described as “married.” Christ-centered, loving marriages between one man and one woman who are committed to one another for life is the foundation for building healthy children and a healthy society. The sexual relationship between a husband and a wife reinforces the marriage relationship and marriage as an institution. To endorse a relationship as a “marriage” contrary to God’s overall plan for blessing society will, in the long run, hurt the family and society as a whole.

However, there is another reason why God is opposed to gay marriage: His genuine concern for gays. Some laws exist to protect us from ourselves (such as seat-belt laws). Jesus Christ loves gays so much that He would not want gay marriage to be

legal. Why? Because gay marriage is man’s way to meet certain needs that only Jesus Christ can fulfill. Gays want gay marriage laws because they want acceptance, equality, and respect. These are valid needs. But the question is: How can these needs truly be met? Answer: Only by coming to the God of love and acceptance, Jesus Christ. Therefore, although enacting gay marriage laws may seem like a loving act by society, in reality it will distract and hinder gays from coming to the true God of love, Jesus Christ.

#### **16. How would you answer this question: “Are you anti-gay?”**

**Answer:** *“We proclaim not ourselves but Christ Jesus as Lord and ourselves as your bondservants for Jesus’ sake”* (2 Corinthians 4:5). All are aware of the “word games” that are played today. Those who are “pro-life” are said to be “anti-abortion” and Christians are described as “anti-gay.” My appeal is that I be granted the respect to describe my own position rather than be mischaracterized by a label that I do not accept. Like Paul who proclaimed Jesus Christ and himself as a servant to others, I characterize myself, not as “anti-gay,” but pro-God and pro-mankind (whether they be gay or heterosexual). Those who are pro-God and truly pro-mankind will love people and promote the gospel of Jesus Christ and God’s view of marriage.

#### **17. Respond to this question: “Are you against the rights of gays to get married? Don’t you believe in equality? Aren’t you discriminating against gays?”**

**Answer:** *“For you have been bought with a price: therefore, glorify God in your body”* (1 Corinthians 6:20). It is not about “our rights,” but “what is right before God.” In His kindness, our heavenly Father sent His Son to die for us to make us right with God as a gift through faith in Christ. Having then received God’s grace, we receive the gift of God’s Spirit, Who empowers us to love God by living righteously, glorifying Him and obeying His commands. God’s gift of righteousness through Jesus Christ is far better than any “rights” offered by society.”

As for equality, God wants everyone—gay or heterosexual—to be treated with equal justice and equal grace, both eternally and in this life. Eternally, the Bible is clear that God's wrath is upon all, without distinction: *"For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God"* (Romans 3:23) and, *"For the wages of sin is death"* (Romans 6:23). The good news is that God's grace is offered to all without discrimination as well: *"...there is no distinction between Greek and Jew, circumcised and uncircumcised, barbarian, Scythians, slave and freeman, but Christ is all and in all"* (Colossians 3:11). His grace is available equally, without discrimination to all who humbly confess their sins and put their faith in Jesus Christ.

*"I will never do anything which I would be afraid to do if it were the last hour of my life."*

-Jonathan Edwards

As for the government, all people in society should be granted civil liberties (such as freedom of speech and freedom of religion) equally, without discrimination. At the same time, the government does recognize distinctions between human beings and, for the good of society as a whole, grants certain benefits and privileges based on those distinctions. These benefits may be given based on a person's age, sex or physical disabilities. This is not discrimination. It is simply the granting of benefits in recognition of natural distinctions between people.

The more a government honors biblical marriage, the greater blessing there will be upon the entire society. From a secular point of view, governments have realized the necessity of establishing families for the raising of children. The family unit, consisting of a husband and wife raising children has been the basis through which societies reproduce and civilize their offspring. For society to recognize the legitimacy of that family unit and hold them accountable to stay together and rear their children is necessary for the survival of any society. It is therefore appropriate for governments to confer economic benefits upon the family unit in order to help the family fulfill its responsibility of raising children.

For thousands of years, society has recognized the God-made distinction between men and women, and that marriage is a union between one man and woman. Marriage defined in this way is available to all, equally and without discrimination, and brings a blessing on the society. All that being said, governmental matters are secondary to eternal issues. Therefore, I would urge all people (including gays) to focus on getting right with God, more than getting rights from the government.

#### **18. How would you answer this: "Isn't your position a threat to the civil liberties of gays?"**

**Answer:** *"I do all things for the sake of the gospel"* (1 Corinthians 9:23). The main goal is the gospel of Jesus Christ. Rather than threaten the civil liberties of gays, I cherish and protect the civil liberties of all, regardless of their beliefs on gender, marriage and morality. I favor a society that protects civil liberties because this ensures that the gospel of Jesus Christ can spread freely.

As to the matter of "threats," the biggest threat is to the institution of marriage. The term "marriage" has been hijacked to mean something God never intended it to mean. Christians who aspire to advance the gospel share this truth about marriage, not to win a political or cultural argument but as part of our gospel message to believers and unbelievers.

I am concerned about another threat. Those in our society who promote gay marriage as a civil right could potentially threaten the civil liberties (including the freedom of speech and religious liberties) of Americans who have the sincerely held religious belief that marriage is defined as a union between



*“My eyes shed  
streams of water,  
because they do  
not keep Your law.”*

*-Psalm 119:136*

one man and one woman. My prayer is that those in America who seek to defend the civil liberties of homosexuals will be just as vigilant to defend the civil liberties of Christians to share the gospel, teach the Bible, and raise their families and run their private businesses according to their Christian beliefs.

**19. Is there any other church issue that affects standards on gender, marriage and morality?**

**Answer:** *“But I want you to understand that Christ is the head of every man, and the man is the head of a woman, and God is the head of Christ”* (1 Corinthians 11:3). A key issue is male leadership in the church. The church’s embracing of women pastors has contributed to gender confusion in our society today. Male

eldership not only sets an example for males to lead at home, but also reflects the picture of Christ leading His bride, the Church. The practice of godly male eldership is part of God’s plan for building a biblical worldview on gender, marriage and morality, and for strengthening families and churches so that that gospel of Jesus Christ will advance throughout the world. (See the article written by John Piper and Wayne Grudem, in GCLI Book 2.)

**20. Some Christians are surprised and shocked by America’s acceptance of homosexuality and same-sex marriage. What do you think?**

**Answer:** *“For a natural man does not accept the things of the Spirit of God; for they are foolishness to him”*(1 Corinthians 2:14). There are many shocking developments in American culture: the murder of millions of unborn children, increased sexual promiscuity, the acceptance of gay marriage, uncontrolled debt by individuals and governments, the threat of terrorism, and the increased hostility towards Christians. The percentage of children born to unwed mothers increased from 5% in 1960 to 41% in 2010. America’s turning away from God is indeed alarming. But these developments should not be a total surprise to Christians. The world considers God’s ways foolishness and worships different gods than the God of the Bible. Although some have described America as a “Christian nation,” in reality, America has worshiped another god: freedom. The “religion” of America has been the freedom of individuals to do what they want. Under this “religion” of freedom, Americans accept the freedom of people to commit adultery and fornication. So we should not be surprised that America has accepted homosexuality and same-sex marriage. Recent developments have merely revealed the underlying belief-system of America.

**21. Some Christians in America have lost hope because of America’s acceptance of homosexuality. What do you think?**

**Answer:** *“Thanks be to God who always leads us in His triumph in Christ”* (2 Corinthians 2:14). As Christians, we should never lose hope. We are walking in His triumph, every day of our lives. There are two reasons why we as Christians are optimistic. First, our hope is in eternity, not in this world: *“Fix your hope completely on the grace to be brought to you at the revelation of Jesus Christ”* (1 Peter 1:13). Jesus is on His throne, building His eternal church (Mathew 16:18). Christians have no reason to fear because we are citizens of a heavenly kingdom that will not be shaken (Philippians 3:20; Hebrews 12:28).

Second, we believe in the power of the gospel of Christ to transform lives: *“The word of the cross is foolishness to those who are perishing but to us who are being saved, it is the power of God”* (1 Corinthians 1:18). The gospel is far more powerful than the media, the entertainment industry or political lobbies. As the gospel grows in the hearts of people, lives change, families change, churches change and societies change, year by year and generation after generation.

The church in Corinth was in a city filled with sexual immorality—and yet, Paul was optimistic. *“Thanks be to God who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ”* (1 Corinthians 15:57). After encouraging the church to focus on Christ’s return, Paul writes, *“Therefore my beloved brethren, be steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, knowing that your toil is not in vain in the Lord”* (1 Corinthians 15:58). So, let’s keep our eyes on our eternal hope—and let’s continue to share the gospel of Jesus Christ to people in our world.

***“[Love] does not rejoice in unrighteousness but rejoices in the truth.”***

***-1 Corinthians 13:6***

## Endnotes

<sup>1</sup>L.S. Doll et al., “Self-Reported Childhood and Adolescent Sexual Abuse Among Adult Homosexual/Bisexual Men,” *Child Abuse and Neglect* 16, no. 6 (1992), pp. 855-64

## Resources

[www.probe.org](http://www.probe.org)

[http://www.answersingenesis.org/articles/2013/01/29/pro-gay-theology#fnMark\\_1\\_14\\_1](http://www.answersingenesis.org/articles/2013/01/29/pro-gay-theology#fnMark_1_14_1)

NAE study on sexual activity by evangelicals:

<http://www.nae.net/resources/news/850-press-release-most-unmarried-evangelical-millennials-have-never-had-sex>

The Focus on the Family website offering a wide range of excellent articles can be found at:

[www.pureintimacy.org/homosexuality/](http://www.pureintimacy.org/homosexuality/)

Article by Dr. Jeffrey Satinover, “How Might Homosexuality Develop?” can be found at:

<http://www.pureintimacy.org/piArticles/A000000454.cfm>



GOD'S TRUTH ON GENDER, MARRIAGE, AND MORALITY

## **Addendum: Statement on Homosexuality**

National Association of Evangelicals, 2004

The Scriptures declare that God created us male and female. Furthermore, the biblical record shows that sexual union was established exclusively within the context of a male-female relationship (Genesis 2:24), and was formalized in the institution of marriage. The partner for man was woman. Together they were to become one flesh. In the New Testament, the oneness of male and female in marriage pictures the relationship between Christ and His Church (Ephesians 5:22-33). Everywhere in Scripture the sexual relationship between man and woman within the bonds of marriage is viewed as something natural and beautiful.

Homosexual activity, like adulterous relationships, is clearly condemned in the Scriptures. In Leviticus 18:22 God declares the practice of homosexuality an abomination in His sight. In Romans 1:26-27 the practice of homosexuality is described as a degrading and unnatural passion. First Corinthians 6:9-10 identifies the practice of homosexuality as a sin that, if persisted in, brings grave consequences in this life and excludes one from the Kingdom of God.

The Apostle Paul, strong in his condemnation of the practice of homosexuality, also testifies that those once engaged in homosexuality were among those who were forgiven and changed in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ (1 Corinthians 6:11). This declaration offers hope both for forgiveness and for healing. Individual Christians, ministers, and congregations need to maintain the belief that all human beings have sinned, and that all Christians have received God's mercy while helpless, ungodly, and hostile to God. In the name of Christ we proclaim forgiveness, cleansing, restoration and power for godly living for all who repent and believe the gospel.

We believe that homosexuality is not an inherited condition in the same category as race, gender, or national origin, all of which are free from moral implication. We believe that homosexuality is a deviation from the Creator's plan for human sexuality. While homosexuals as individuals are entitled to civil rights, including equal protection of the law, the NAE opposes legislation which would extend special consideration to such individuals based on their "sexual orientation." Such legislation inevitably is perceived as legitimatizing the practice of homosexuality and elevates that practice to a level of an accepted moral standard. While maintaining our opposition to proposed so-called "Gay Rights" legislation, where such legislation has been enacted into law, NAE strongly urges that churches and religious organizations be exempted from compliance by amendment to the law. The position and practice of such organizations regarding homosexuality are determined by their religious convictions. This we hold to be a grave matter of religious freedom.

Individual Christians, ministers, and congregations should compassionately proclaim the Good News of forgiveness and encourage those involved homosexual practices to cease those practices, accept forgiveness, and pray for deliverance, as nothing is impossible with God. Further, we should accept them into fellowship upon confession of faith and repentance, as we would any other forgiven sinner (1 Corinthians 6:11).



We further call upon pastors and theologians, along with medical and sociological specialists with the Christian community to expand research on the factors which give rise to homosexuality and to develop therapy, pastoral care and congregational support leading to complete restoration.



GOD'S TRUTH ON GENDER, MARRIAGE, AND MORALITY

**Exercise**

1. What was the main lesson you learned from this reading?

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2. What do you think about statement in the introductory section of the article about taking a “grace and truth” approach? Evaluate your own life and the church’s ministry according to this approach.

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3. How would you respond to a person who claims to be “a born-again Christian”; claims that Christ died for his sins and is assured that he will go to heaven when he dies (answering the “diagnostic questions” properly), and yet, he is involved in an adulterous relationship or a homosexual relationship and doesn’t believe that to be wrong? In fact, he believes God led him into this relationship. Be specific in how you would interact with him and the specific verses you would use.

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GOD'S TRUTH ON GENDER, MARRIAGE, AND MORALITY

**Exercise**

4. How would you respond to someone who asked you what you think about gay marriage?

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5. How would you counsel a parent whose adult sibling is committing immorality and the sibling has offered to babysit the parent's child?

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RAISING GODLY FAMILIES / THE DOCTRINE ON MAN AND SIN

## **Parent-Led Education**

One of the most important decisions parents will make is how to educate their children. For this reason, it is vital that pastors serve parents by helping them make decisions that will lead to their children be lifetime followers of Christ. This next article addresses the very important topic of parent-led education.





## Parent-Led Education

Pastor John Hopler · Columbus, OH

### Why this paper?

As followers of Jesus Christ, our mission is to fulfill His Great Commission:

*“All authority in heaven and earth has been given to Me. Go therefore, and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and the Son and the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age” (Matthew 28:18-20).*

We are called to make disciples who believe and love Jesus Christ, to baptize them, and to teach them obey His commands from the heart. For most people, their first disciples are their own children. Parents (fathers in particular) are exhorted to “bring their children up in the discipline and instruction of the Lord” (Ephesians 6:4). Therefore, parents are to fulfill the Great Commission first by training the children in their own families.

A major part of training children involves their education. The educational method chosen by parents will have a life-long impact on their son or daughter.

For this reason, I thought it would be good to write this paper to pastors and leaders in Great Commission Churches. In this paper, I make five statements about education. The first two statements are two key principles by which to live. The last three are practices that I ask pastors and leaders to consider.

I ask that each pastor and leader in Great Commission Churches prayerfully consider these statements as he develops his own convictions before the Lord and forms his own practices on the matter of education.

### Principle #1: The Priority of Godly Parenting

The most important factor in training a child is the personal engagement of godly parents (particularly the father) in the life of the child. Although the schooling option parents choose can either greatly enable or hinder the effectiveness of their parenting, the parents’ faith, love, example, relationship and teaching of the child has more impact than the educational option chosen.

The overall goal of educating our children is that a child be brought up to glorify God, to learn, believe, and obey the Scriptures, to become a mature follower of Jesus Christ, equipped and skilled to live a productive life in this world, devoted to fulfill the Great Commission of Jesus Christ.

In Ephesians 6:1-4, the Apostle Paul writes:

*“What will be the legacy for your family and this nation as a result of the choices you make for the education of your children? It is one of the most important choices any parent will ever make.”*

*-Michael Farris*

*“Children, obey your parents in the Lord, for this is right. Honor your father and your mother (which is the first commandment with a promise), so that it may be well with you, and that you may live long on the earth. Fathers, do not provoke your children to anger, but bring them up in the discipline and instruction of the Lord.”*

Based on this passage, I believe, first and foremost, the best results occur where children have a close heart relationship with parents who are themselves Great Commission Christians. Children who love and respect their parents, combined with parents who are relationally imparting a love for Christ and the Great Commission—that is a winning combination, regardless of the educational method chosen.

### **Principle #2: The Importance of Parent-Led Education**

Education must be parent-led. Regardless of the educational option chosen, it is important that parents not abdicate their role in being the God-designated leaders to educate their children.

A child’s spiritual development is God’s work, through the power of His word and the ministry of the Holy Spirit. It is a work of God, not man. However, God works through human beings to train children.

From Ephesians 6:4 (quoted above), parents (and especially fathers) are the primary human beings God has entrusted with the responsibility to develop and train the child to love Jesus Christ and to do His will. God also uses family, the church, and the unbelieving world to train each child. But God has entrusted parents alone—not the church or the government—with the ultimate responsibility to train and educate children.

Parents are responsible to train their children in the ways of Christ—and to select an educational option towards that end. Irrespective of the educational option chosen, parents are never to abdicate to another person or institution their ultimate responsibility of training and educating their child for Christ. Teachers in a Christian or public school need to be seen as servants to the parents, who have the ultimate responsibility for training their children.

In light of this responsibility, I advocate “parent-led” education. Parents are to take the lead in educating their children, whether those children are educated exclusively at home, or they put them into a public or Christian school.

### **Practice #1: Pastors Supporting Parents in their Educational Choices**

I believe that elders should be actively pastoring the church by supporting, counseling and equipping all parents as they make educational choices for their children.

In 1 Peter 5:1-3, elders are exhorted to shepherd the flock:

*“The family should be a closely knit group. The home should be a self-contained shelter of security; a kind of school where life’s basic lessons are taught; and a kind of church where God is honored; a place where wholesome recreation and simple pleasures are enjoyed.”*

*- Billy Graham*

***“Education without values, as useful as it is, seems rather to make man a more clever devil.”***

***-C.S. Lewis***

*“Therefore, I exhort the elders among you, as {your} fellow elder and witness of the sufferings of Christ, and a partaker also of the glory that is to be revealed, shepherd the flock of God among you, exercising oversight not under compulsion, but voluntarily, according to {the will of} God; and not for sordid gain, but with eagerness; nor yet as lording it over those allotted to your charge, but proving to be examples to the flock.”*

How can pastors shepherd parents as they seek to educate their children? In general, I recommend that pastors in Great Commission churches actively support parent-led education. And I urge pastors to provide both personal and ministry support to all parents in this very personal choice of their child’s education.

The educational option chosen by parents is not the most important issue in their lives. The gospel, Christ’s Lordship, and reading and obeying the Scriptures are more important topics for most parents in the church. However, educational options are important to address.

As pastors, we need to begin by publicly teaching the biblical perspective found in Ephesians 6:4 that parents, especially fathers, need to lead—and to lead strongly. Second, I urge pastors to provide information on the various options of education, either on Sunday morning or in a special seminar. Many parents, in effect, make no decision as to their child’s education by simply doing what the crowd does. That crowd may be the people in the church or the people in the community. But parents are to diligently consider every option before making a decision. Third, I recommend that pastors give one-on-one counseling to parents who are making educational choices, asking the question, “Is this educational option yielding the spiritual, character, and academic results you want for your child?”

Finally, I urge pastors to consider taking steps to provide specific ministries to support parents in their educational choices. For parents of public school students, pastors might consider:

1. Starting a Moms In Touch ministry in the church.
2. Doing an evangelistic outreach to the schools to support children from the church who want to reach their classmates.
3. Urging church members to participate in school functions.
4. Mobilizing members for servant evangelism projects in the school.

For parents of students in a Christian school, pastors might consider:

1. Establishing a partnership to promote the school.
2. Teaching classes at the school.
3. Giving financial assistance to needy parents at the school.
4. Offering the school to use the church building.

For parents who home educate their children, see Practice #3 below.

Overall, I urge pastors to shepherd their church by giving counsel, grace and support to parents as they lead out in educating their children, in whatever option they choose.



## Practice #2: The Home School Option

As to parents who are: committed to Christ-centered, parent-led education; who are willing and able to do any option; and who seek my counsel as a pastor on what educational option to use, I usually encourage them to consider home schooling their children, particularly during the early school years.

I believe that God has sovereignly entrusted parents with the education of their children. Therefore, my practice is to support parents in whatever option they choose. That being understood, in the case of those parents who are willing to do whatever it takes to train their children for Christ, I generally encourage them to home school their children, particularly if their children are younger.

I see three main benefits to home schooling:

1. Opportunity for godly training. Home schooling gives parents flexibility as to what is taught, spiritually and academically. In particular, home education is an option where parents can exalt Jesus Christ and teach the Bible 24/7 without hindrance. As stated in Deuteronomy 6:6-7, immersing children in the Bible is a parent's first priority:

*“These words, which I am commanding you today, shall be on your heart. You shall teach them diligently to your sons and you shall talk of them when you sit down and when you walk by the way and when you lie down and when you rise up.”*

In a home schooling environment, there is an opportunity to train a child in godly character during the 6-7 hours of the school day. Parents are able to set the agenda—particularly, the agenda of Christ's Word—in the entire education process.

2. Parental protection from ungodly influences. Parents are to train their children to resist the influences of the world, first, and then to influence the world for Christ. Home education protects naïve children from the negative effects of the unbelieving world: “The companion of fools suffers harm” (Proverbs 13:20). This is particularly important when they are younger and are the most easily influenced.
3. Building the relationship between parents and children. Based on Ephesians 6:1-4, the most important human relationship a child has is with his or her parents. The home schooling option enables that relationship to develop and grow more intimate as parents imprint their values on the life of the child.

I recognize that home schooling is not the best option for everyone. I do not think home schooling parents are “better” than those who do not home school. And I realize that there are many real-life factors that hinder godly parents from effectively home schooling their children. Nonetheless, the benefits of home schooling are so significant that I think it is an option worth considering by parents who aspire to train their children to follow Christ.

Therefore, for Christian parents who ask my counsel as a pastor, my practice is to encourage them to prayerfully consider home schooling their children, particularly during the early school years.

*“The first priority of my life is to be holy, and the second goal of my life is to be a scholar.”*

*- John Wesley*

*"I am much afraid that the schools will prove the very gates of hell, unless they diligently labor in explaining the Holy Scriptures, and engraving them in the hearts of youth. I advise no one to place his child where the scriptures do not reign paramount. Every institution in which means are not unceasingly occupied with the Word of God must be corrupt."*

*-Martin Luther*

### **Practice #3: A Church Strategy for the Future**

As we look to lead churches into the future, I think it is a good strategy and practice for Great Commission church pastors to build a culture, structure, and systems that support home schooling.

As pastors, we counsel people, along with providing leadership by anticipating needs and preparing to meet those needs. Practice #3 is not about counseling people. It is about pastors taking leadership for the future by building churches that enable parents to effectively disciple their children.

I have concerns about the U.S. educational system as it stands today. And I have concerns about where it is headed in the future.

We all realize that public schools vary from city to city. For example, some Great Commission church families in the "Bible Belt" have had different experiences than those in communities where the Christian influence is weak. Also, in some public schools, Christian teachers have had a powerful ministry, reaching lost students for Christ and building up students from Christian homes.

Nevertheless, we all recognize that public schools do not teach a Christian worldview. My opinion is that too many Christian children have been negatively influenced in the government school system. In my dialogue with Great Commission pastors, a large number of them have said that they were naive as to the negative effect that public schools had on their children and on the children of church members. Although it is true that some Christian parents have seen their child's faith strengthened through being tested in the public school setting, many others have regretted putting their children in a public school.

In addition, in many parts of the country, schools are becoming increasingly antagonistic to Christians. As a result, some leaders are sounding the alarm and warning Christians to take heed. (See Attachment #1.) They see the Christian student in the public schools as the proverbial "frog in the kettle."

My personal opinion is that these warnings have merit. In light of this, how do we as pastors of Great Commission churches prepare for the future?

Some (like the Southern Baptists) would say, "Start more Christian schools." Although I see many positives about this approach, I question the economic feasibility of Christian schools for the future. Most Christian parents are unable to afford a Christian school, and most Great Commission churches do not have the financial resources to underwrite a Christian school. Instead, I recommend that Great Commission churches build a strong culture, structure, and systems that helps parents home school their children.

Many parents would like to home school their children, but do not have the confidence that they can do so. They need support and help. Consequently, I encourage pastors to take two approaches. First, as I stated in Practice #1, I encourage them to support all parents, regardless of their educational option. Second, I recommend that we make a special effort to build in our churches support structures that will strengthen home schoolers. We can do this by:

1. Developing home school support groups
2. Communicating with young parents, young couples and singles about the advantages of home schooling, as well as factors to consider before home schooling your children. (See Attachment #2)
3. Orienting home school parents on how to supplement their teaching with classes at a home school co-op, local college or Christian or public school
4. Developing a church-based home school co-op with group classes
5. Promoting examples of successful home schooling parents as mentors
6. Helping parents work through some of the obstacles of home schooling
7. Asking empty nesters who home-schooled their children or who taught in public or Christian schools to have a ministry of tutoring the children of parents who both need to work in order to survive financially.
8. Provide whatever is needed to help people home school their children.

***“It is a fact that unless children are brought up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord, they, and the society which they constitute or control, will go to destruction. Consequently, when a state resolves that religious instruction shall be banished from the schools and other literary institutions, it virtually resolves on self-destruction.”***

***-Charles Hodge***

Again, this is my personal opinion. As leaders in Great Commission churches who are committed to building passionate disciples for Christ, I think we need to support all parents in their educational choices, while also building a culture, structure and system that supports home schoolers. I believe that this practice and strategy will yield the most fruit in our churches in years to come.

## **Conclusion**

God has entrusted parents with a great responsibility to train their children to love and obey Jesus Christ. A child’s education is a key aspect of that training. As pastors, God wants us to support all parents, whether they home school, or send their children to a Christian school or public school.

In Great Commission churches, home schooling has been a common method used by church members for over 30 years. In a recent survey, it was discovered that 90% of Great Commission church pastors have used the home education option, at least during the early years of their child’s schooling. I believe that home schooling has been a gift from God to our movement. We have seen marvelous fruit from this educational approach. Although it is not a fool-proof method, and there are many sacrifices involved in home schooling, the benefits of this option make it worth considering by parents in Great Commission churches, particularly for younger children. I think it is a good leadership strategy for Great Commission church pastors to take practical steps to provide special support to home schooling parents.

That being said, it is vital that pastors put the primary emphasis, not on educational methods, but on the simple biblical value of parents actively leading their children. For this reason, I want to make it

clear that I consider the first two points to be the most important statements of this paper, and therefore, would like to re-state them in conclusion:

1. The most important factor in training a child is the personal engagement of godly parents (particularly the father) in the life of the child. Although the schooling option parents choose can either greatly enable or hinder the effectiveness of their parenting, the parents' faith, love, example, relationship and teaching of the child has more impact than the educational option chosen.
2. Education must be parent-led. Regardless of the educational option chosen, it is important that parents not abdicate their role in being the God-designated leaders to educate their children.

***“Such fathers, as commit their sons to tutors and teachers and themselves never witness or overhear their instructions, deserve rebuke, for they fall far short of their obligation. They ought themselves to undertake examination of their children and not place their trust in the disposition of a wage earner; even the latter will bestow greater care on the children if they know that they will periodically be called to account.”***

***-Plutarch***

**Addendum: Christian Leaders' Concerns with Public Schools**

More and more Christian leaders are expressing concerns about the public school system. Here are some examples:

1. James Dobson has advocated that Christians remove their children from the public schools in certain states, which advocate a pro-homosexual agenda. (<http://www.christianitytoday.com/ct/2002/julyweb-only/22.0a.html>)
2. Over the last few years, some segments of the Southern Baptists have asked for the Convention to pass a resolution calling for parents in their churches to educate their children at home or send them to a Christian school. So far, the Convention has not passed this resolution. However, one leading Southern Baptist, Albert Mohler, has written "I believe that now is the time for responsible Southern Baptists to develop an exit strategy from the public schools." [http://www.albertmohler.com/commentary\\_read.php?cdate=2005-06-17](http://www.albertmohler.com/commentary_read.php?cdate=2005-06-17))
3. In 2002, the Southern Baptist Convention's Council on Family Life reported that roughly 88 percent of evangelical children are leaving the church shortly after they graduate from high school. This means that only 12% will continue in the church after high school. <http://www.sbcannual-meeting.net/sbc02/newsroom/newspage.asp?ID=261>

In contrast, The National Home Education Research Institute claims from their findings that after high school, 94% of Christian children educated at home keep the faith and 93% of home educated children continue to attend church. (<http://www.exploringhomeschooling.com>.)

Although ones might dispute the exactness of these two statistics (12% of all students from Christian homes versus 93% of home schoolers), the wide gap between these two statistics is difficult to dismiss. Some have also argued that the home schooling statistics simply indicate that children will continue in the faith if their parents are actively imparting their values in a relational setting. Others have countered by saying that home schooling is the most effective and practical way for serious minded parents to impart their values to their children.

**PARENT-LED EDUCATION****Home-Schooling: Advantages and Factors to Consider****Advantages of Home-Schooling**

1. Parents have the freedom to teach the Word of God unhindered (Deuteronomy 6:6-7).
2. Parents can filter the negative influences and false teachings of the world (Proverbs 13:20).
3. The bond between parent and child is strengthened (Ephesians 6:1-4).
4. The physical safety of the child can be overseen throughout the day.
5. Parents can tailor the academics to the need of the child (Ephesians 4:29).
6. Parents can focus on the character of the child more diligently (Proverbs 22:6).
7. The child's schooling is not interrupted by a parent's job change or move.
8. A child's schooling can be supplemented by group classes via a home school co-op, college, or Christian or public school.
9. Society is more accepting of home schooling. It is legal in the U.S., and colleges accept home schooling as a legitimate form of education.
10. Home schooling provides maximum flexibility. After each annual evaluation, parents always have the option of enrolling a child in a school .

**Factors to Consider Before Home-Schooling**

1. Are you convinced that training a child to believe and obey the Scriptures is more important than academic training?
2. For married couples, do both parents agree that home schooling is the best option for your child?
3. Are you prepared to prioritize and work through character issues with your child—especially the child's teachability and respect for you as a parent?
4. Will you make the financial sacrifices needed in order to home school?
5. Are you ready to give the needed structure and discipline to train your child in qualities such as punctuality, responsibility, faithfulness, and hard work?
6. The purpose of education is not isolation but rather to train children to influence the world for Christ. Are you prepared to work with your child to train him/her socially for relating to the unbelieving world?
7. Are you able to provide the desired academic and skill training through home schooling or through supplemental classes to your home schooling?
8. Husbands, are you prepared to oversee the home schooling of your family?
9. Do you have the needed support (from the husband, grandparents, your church or a home school support group) in order to home school?
10. Do you have some outside accountability that will help you evaluate the effectiveness of your home schooling?
11. Are you "mixing educational systems?" (Some find it difficult to home school one child while overseeing a child in the public or Christian school.)





PARENT-LED EDUCATION

**Exercise**

1. What was the main lesson you learned from this article?

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2. What in your opinion are the key factors for a parent to consider in raising their children to follow Christ?

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3. What is your opinion of home schooling? Christian schools? Public schools?

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PARENT-LED EDUCATION**Exercise**

4. What are some ways that your church can better help parents with the education of their children?

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5. In light of where education is headed in the future, do you agree with the point made in the paper that churches should be especially ready to help home-schooling parents in your church? Why or why not?

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GREAT COMMISSION LEADERSHIP INSTITUTE

RAISING GODLY FAMILIES / THE DOCTRINE OF MAN AND SIN

## **2020 Plan for Reaching the Next Generation**

God calls the church to share the gospel and make disciples of the next generation. In response, Great Commission Churches has asked each church to develop a “2020 Plan” for reaching the next generation. This paper addresses this very important initiative.





## 2020 Plan for Reaching the Next Generation

Pastor John Hopley · Columbus, OH

At the 2011 GCC Pastors Conference, we presented our “2020 Vision” for reaching the next generation for Jesus Christ. Our prayer is that every Great Commission church will be effective over the next decade with young people—both inside the church and outside the church—by leading them to Jesus Christ and discipling them to obey all that Christ commanded.

The goal of this article is to unite GCC churches around the 2020 Vision, and to encourage each other to fulfill this vision. I will focus on four points:

- I. The vision to reach the next generation for Jesus Christ
- II. The need in the USA today
- III. The biblical strategy for reaching the next generation
- IV. Action plan in fulfilling the 2020 Vision

### I. The Vision to Reach the Next Generation for Jesus Christ

God’s heart has always been to advance His glory to every nation and to every generation:

*And Jesus came up and spoke to them, saying, “All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth. “Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age” (Matthew 28:18-20).*

*“Listen, O my people, to my instruction; incline your ears to the words of my mouth. I will open my mouth in a parable; I will utter dark sayings of old, which we have heard and known, and our fathers have told us. We will not conceal them from their children, but tell to the generation to come the praises of the LORD, and His strength and His wondrous works that He has done. For He established a testimony in Jacob and appointed a law in Israel, which He commanded our fathers that they should teach them to their children, that the generation to come might know, even the children yet to be born, that they may arise and tell them to their children, that they should put their confidence in God and not forget the works of God, but keep His commandments” (Psalm 78:1-7).*

*“To Him be the glory in the church and in Christ Jesus to all generations forever and ever. Amen” (Ephesians 3:21).*

For this reason, at the first sharing of the gospel in Acts 2, Peter proclaimed to the people in Jerusalem that the promise of forgiveness and salvation was for them, “and their children and for all who are far off, as many as the Lord our God will call to Himself” (Acts 2:39). God’s intention and desire is to

***“The church is one generation away from extinction.”***

***- George Carey***

save our children and all people who are near or far off. The goal is that God is glorified throughout the world and throughout all time, in every location and in every generation.

## II. The Great Need Today

In America today, there is a great need to reach the next generation for Jesus Christ, both within the church and outside the church. Consider the following statistics:

- In 2002, the Southern Baptist Convention on Family Life reported 88% of evangelical children are leaving the church shortly after they graduate from high school.
- In *Family Driven Faith*, author Voddie Baucham writes, “It takes two Christian families in one generation to get a single Christian into the next generation... At this rate, our current evangelistic strategies amount to little more than pouring water into a bucket with a giant hole in the bottom. The only way for the church to remain even is to reach three lost people for every one Christian. There is just one problem – the best we can muster right now is reaching one lost person for every forty or more Christians. In short, if things do not change, the church in America will continue to decline precipitously over the next few generations.”
- According to his research and standards for a biblical worldview, George Barna states that only 9% of adults and only 19% of born again Christians have a Christian worldview. Less than half of 1% of people between the ages of 19 and 23 have a biblical worldview. <http://www.barna.org/barna-update/article/21-transformation/252-barna-survey-examines-changes-in-worldview-among-christians-over-the-past-13-years>
- In contrast, GCC elders were surveyed in 2010. Of the 344 children who are 19 or over, 91% were believers, actively involved in an evangelical church, and 72% were actively involved in their parent’s church or another GCC church.

We ask every GCC pastor to wake-up to the great need that exists in churches and in our communities to reach and disciple the next generation for Christ.

## III. Biblical Strategy for Reaching the Next Generation for Jesus Christ

In Great Commission Churches, we have seen fruit as we follow two biblical strategies for reaching the next generation for Jesus Christ.

**First Strategy: To reach the next generation within the church, we prioritize building godly Great Commission families by equipping and supporting parents, especially fathers.**

In both the Old Testament and the New Testament, the family is God’s “Plan A” for training children in the faith:

*Let no Christian parents fall into the delusion that Sunday School is intended to ease them of their personal duties. The first and most natural condition of things is for Christian parents to train up their own children in the nurture and admonition of the Lord.”*

*-Charles H. Spurgeon*

*“Hear, O Israel! The LORD is our God, the LORD is one! You shall love the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your might. These words, which I am commanding you today, shall be on your heart. You shall teach them diligently to your sons and shall talk of them when you sit in your house and when you walk by the way and when you lie down and when you rise up” (Deuteronomy 6:4-7).*

*“Fathers, do not provoke your children to anger, but bring them up in the discipline and instruction of the Lord” (Ephesians 6:4).*

In his book, *Revolutionary Parenting*, George Barna discovered:

1. Churches had little spiritual impact on children compared to the influence of parents.
2. Most parents tend to allow paid professionals to give spiritual training to their children.
3. Parents of godly children spent 600% more time daily in dialogue with their children.
4. Parents who raised spiritual champions made their children’s spiritual and character development their primary focus during their parenting years.
5. Parents of godly children tend to focus on spiritual matters as a family unit rather than merely as individuals.
6. Less than 20% of the parents believed that they were doing a good job at building godly character and spiritual values into their children.

Despite these statistics, many churches have naively and unwittingly adopted methods for training the youth from the world, rather than the Scriptures.

1. The world separates parents and children, as Pharaoh sought to with Moses and people of Israel:

*“Moses said, “We shall go with our young and our old; with our sons and our daughters, with our flocks and our herds we shall go, for we must hold a feast to the LORD. Then he [Pharaoh] said to them, “Thus may the LORD be with you if ever I let you and your little ones go” (Exodus 10:9-10)!*

2. Systems are not neutral. Churches are to build the “system” of the family where parents disciple children and children respect parents. The world tends to build large organizational systems where parents abdicate their roles and children have a greater respect for people other than their parents. Samuel warned against this in 1 Samuel 8:10-11:

*“So Samuel spoke all the words of the LORD to the people who had asked of him a king. He said, “This will be the procedure of the king who will reign over you: he will take your sons and place them for himself in his chariots and among his horsemen and they will run before his chariots.”*

Therefore, under this first strategy, we urge pastors to do the following:

***“I do verily believe that if parents did their duty as they ought, the Word publicly preached would not be the ordinary means of regeneration in the church, but only without the church, among practical heathens and infidels.”***

*-Richard Baxter*

1. In reaching the next generation, prioritize the equipping of the parents. Have it as a goal that every father and mother will be a Christ-filled discipler of their children.
2. Be careful what church systems you build. Make it your goal that every young person will see their parents (not the pastors or a youth leader) as their primary spiritual leaders. Youth ministries are to be a supplement, not a substitute, to parental discipleship.
3. Encourage family members to be actively teaming together in the gospel for their lifetime.
4. Focus on the heart. Pray that parents and children would have a heart for their heavenly Father and that God would restore the hearts of parents and children towards each other (Malachi 4:6).

*In his book "Tortured for Christ" Richard Wurmbbrand states that the secret police told him that he could have a congregation of 35 people but no more....and that the youth must keep away from the church (Pages 49-50). The opponents of Christianity will always want to separate the youth from older Christians.*

**Second Strategy: For the next generation outside the church, we prioritize having a long-term commitment to building intergenerational churches that are effectively relating to and reaching next generation unbelievers with the gospel of Jesus Christ.**

In the New Testament, we see that churches were both intergenerational with older men, younger men, older women and younger women being together:

*"Do not sharply rebuke an older man, but rather appeal to him as a father, to the younger men as brothers, the older women as mothers, and the younger women as sisters, in all purity." (1 Timothy 5:1-2).*

*"Older men are to be temperate...Older women likewise are to be reverent...so that they may encourage the young women...Likewise urge the young men to be sensible..." (Titus 2:1-6).*

At the same time, churches were exhorted to relate to the culture they were trying to reach:

*"For though I am free from all men, I have made myself a slave to all, so that I may win more. To the Jews I became as a Jew, so that I might win Jews; to those who are under the Law, as under the Law though not being myself under the Law, so that I might win those who are under the Law; to those who are without law, as without law, though not being without the law of God but under the law of Christ, so that I might win those who are without law. To the weak I became weak, that I might win the weak; I have become all things to all men, so that I may by all means save some" (1 Corinthians 9:19-22).*

The Great Commission church movement began on college campuses in the 1970s. For over 40 years, GCC churches have been effective at reaching young people through youth-relevant outreach and ministry. We continue to affirm this strategy. We also value churches that are intergenerational, according to the New Testament pattern where older believers are able to mentor the youth. Therefore, we ask GCC pastors to avoid the two extremes of "next gen only" ministry and "next generation-irrelevant" ministry. Some ways that is worked out today in GCC are:

1. Start in-house campus and next generation ministries that reach unbelievers.
2. Adapt the main worship service to relate to the next generation (music and dress, style and content of preaching, etc.).
3. Start next generation congregations and churches for young adults or college students that remain connected to an intergenerational church or region. Under this approach, older leaders focus on discipling and mentoring young leaders who are building churches that will become more intergenerational over time.
4. The pastors follow the Lord's unique plan for their church, in reaching and discipling next generation unbelievers in an intergenerational way.
5. The main goal is love: Parents loving children, children loving parents, older believers and younger believers loving each other, and all church members loving unbelievers, young and old, by adapting the church to reach them with the gospel of Jesus Christ.

*"One generation shall praise Your works to another, and shall declare Your mighty acts."*

*- Ps. 145:4*

(For more information about this strategy, listen to the 2011 Pastors Conference teachings on "Reaching the Next Generation for Christ" [<http://gccweb.org/media-resources/media>].

#### **IV. 2020 Action Plans:**

We are asking each GCC church to develop its own 2020 Vision plan:

##### **I. Families on Mission: Building families on mission for Jesus Christ by equipping Great Commission parents, particularly fathers.**

In building Families on Mission, here are some ideas to consider:

1. Inspiring the parents, especially fathers, to be devoted to the Great Commission Some examples are: giving fathers the teachings of the 2011 Pastors Conference, promote the "Courageous" movie, have a fathers' retreat, and encourage fathers to attend GCLI regionals.
2. Prioritize one-on-one pastoring of parents (e.g., visiting their homes).
3. Training times for fathers and mothers (e.g., a monthly dads' meeting)
4. Promote family house churches/home groups with fathers leading spiritually and reaching out with his family through house church outreach activities.
5. Promote parent-led education (especially home schooling).
6. Encourage parents to lead out in teen ministries and to go to HSLT.
7. Organize mission trips/outreaches for whole families to work together.
8. Encourage parents to attend Faithwalkers and other conferences with their teens and college-age children.



9. In general, encourage families to be teamed together for the gospel for life—whether living in different cities or living together in the same city.

## **II. Churches on Mission: Building an intergenerational church that is effectively reaching next generation unbelievers for Christ.**

In building “Churches on Mission,” here are some ideas to consider:

1. Start up an in-house, college-age ministry.
2. Mobilize empty nesters for ministry with the next generation.
3. Promote regional HSLTs and Faithwalkers.
4. Make church services next gen friendly (dress, music, preaching styles, message content).
5. Start an in-house summer training program in churches.
6. Start an in-house, church-based intern program for the youth.
7. Equip young people with discipleship materials (Life Now studies, Truth Project, etc.).
8. Train young people in evangelism (Outreach Program, Way of the Master, etc.).
9. Participate with the GCC National Campus Ministry in reaching college campuses in the U.S..

*“And all this is one of God’s merciful arrangements. He gives your children a mind that will receive impressions like moist clay. He gives them a disposition at the starting-point of life to believe what you tell them, and to take for granted what you advise them, and to trust your word rather than a stranger’s. He gives you, in short, a golden opportunity of doing them good. See that you do not neglect such an opportunity.”*

*-J. C Ryle*

**Write out your church’s 2020 plan for reaching the next generation for Jesus Christ:**

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.
- 5.
- 6.
- 7.



2020 PLAN FOR REACHING THE NEXT GENERATION

**Exercise**

1. What was the main lesson you learned from this GCLI teaching?

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2. Jesus said, “*A blind man cannot guide a blind man, can he? Will they not both fall into a pit? A pupil is not above his teacher; but everyone, after he has been fully trained, will be like his teacher*” (Luke 6:39-40). Therefore, a father’s discipling of his children will only be effective to the extent that he is a disciple. How is the church doing in helping fathers becoming disciples themselves?

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3. How are the fathers in your church doing in discipling their children?

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2020 PLAN FOR REACHING THE NEXT GENERATION

**Exercise**

4. What is the church doing to equip parents in discipling their children? What added steps can be taken to equip parents?

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5. At times a youth leader unwittingly and unintentionally takes on an influencing role that results in fathers being displaced or disrespected in the home. Have you seen this take place in your church? How can your church avoid this from occurring in your church?

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6. How effective is your church in reaching the next generation outside of the church? What steps can be taken to improve outreach to next generation unbelievers?

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## **Session VI: Grace / The Doctrine of the Scriptures**

### OVERVIEW

This session's topics are Grace and The Scriptures. You must grow deeper in the knowledge of what God's grace really means to you and be well grounded in His Word to be able to lead and teach your church. As a leader, you will not be able to help others understand God's grace for them or help them study and learn from the Scriptures if you don't have it in your life first. These are vital issues for you, as a leader, and for your church.

There are six homework exercises:

#### ***1. Discussion from the Teachings***

In this exercise, you will reflect upon the lessons you learned from the teachings.

#### ***2. Grace***

Grace is the foundation of God's love for us. It is the power of salvation for those seeking God, as well as the power of healing and growth for Christians. These articles explore a variety of ways that God's grace can transform your own life and your church.

#### ***3. Grace, Works, and Lordship***

In this article by David Bovenmyer, several questions are answered in regard to works versus grace, and the Lordship of Jesus Christ. Aren't our works important? Can Jesus be Savior first and recognized as Lord later?

#### ***4. The Inerrancy of the Scriptures***

In this article, Doug Brown asks the question, "Can the Bible be trusted?" The answer is a resounding "Yes!" This paper will encourage your faith in the Scripture; that God's Word is wholly without error, and worthy of our absolute trust.

#### ***5. Old Testament Survey***

Written by Jonathan Williams, this survey will give you a solid overview of the Old Testament. The survey is accompanied by a test, to be passed out to you by the GCLI mentor.

#### ***6. New Testament Survey***

Also written by Jonathan Williams, this New Testament survey will equip you to gain a "big picture" view of the New Testament. As with the Old Testament survey, you will be tested on the material by your GCLI mentor.



GCLI TEACHING

**Grace**

Pastor Herschel Martindale · Columbia, MD

*“You then, my son, be strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus” (2 Timothy 2:1).*

The Apostle Paul loved his young son in the faith, Timothy, and desired the very best for his life. Paul probably wrote this letter from prison, knowing that his time was very limited. In some ways, this letter is his last will and testament to Timothy. What better challenge for a successful life could he give than to exhort him to experience the strength and power that comes from a life lived in the grace of the living God?

### **A. God is a Gracious God.**

Our perception of God determines our responses to Him. Some picture God as an impersonal force somewhere in the universe. Some picture Him as a cosmic dictator imposing His will upon mankind. Others see Him as a judge who is waiting to mete out punishment to those who break His laws and commands. The Apostle John tells us, *“The Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us. We have seen his glory, the glory of the One and Only, who came from the Father, full of grace and truth,”* (John 1:14). We cannot fully comprehend this, but we can believe it. It is really only at the cross that we begin to *“grasp how wide and long and high and deep is the love of Christ, and to know this love that surpasses knowledge...”* (Ephesians 3:18- 19). As we believe and dwell upon His love, our response to each of our needs is faith, resulting in grace and His unlimited power.

*“The Lord is compassionate and gracious, slow to anger, abounding in love... For as high as the heavens are above the earth, so great is his love for those who fear him... But from everlasting to everlasting the Lord’s love is with those who fear him...”* (Psalms 103:8,11,17). This IS what God is like. It makes no difference what our perception has been in the past. He IS compassionate and gracious. How much does He love us? The psalmist could think of no greater comparison of the infinity in his mind than the earth to Heaven. How enduring is His love? From everlasting to everlasting!

Fredrick Lehman put it into song. *“Could we with ink the ocean fill, and were the skies of parchment made, were every stalk on earth a quill, and every man a scribe by trade. To write the love of God above would drain the ocean dry, nor could the scroll contain the whole, though stretched from sky to sky.”*

*Q. What were some perceptions of God that you had before you were saved?*

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### **B. Grace is God’s Love in Action.**

The standard theological definition of grace is “unmerited favor.” This is surely true. His love, grace, and favor is undeserved in every situation. I prefer the definition, “God’s love in action.” *“But God*

*demonstrates his own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us*" (Romans 5:8). This is grace. In spite of all our weaknesses and failures, God reaches out, loves, and blesses us.

We often hear messages on how gracious we should be to one another. This is surely true. One brochure advertises small groups having a "grace filled atmosphere." We surely should be understanding, kind, patient, and loving towards one another rather than judging, critical, and legalistic.

There are 122 verses in the New Testament mentioning "grace." Only three of these refer to being gracious to one another, the rest all refer to God's love and grace to us. This paper will primarily deal with God's grace and its implication for our lives.

### **C. The Grace of God is Connected With His Power and Strength.**

- *"But he said to me, 'My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness.' Therefore, I will boast all the more gladly about my weaknesses, so that Christ's power may rest on me"* (2 Corinthians 12:9). Power here is associated with grace. When God lovingly works in and through us, it is grace.
- *"And God is able to make all grace abound to you so that in all things at all times, having all that you need, you will abound in every good work"* (2 Corinthians 9:8). All grace equals "all that you need." God's grace enables us to do all that we need to do, and all God wants to do. It is of utmost importance that we learn how the grace of God operates.
- *"Let us then approach the throne of grace with confidence, so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help us in our time of need"* (Hebrews 4:16). Again, God gives us the grace we need in our times of need.
- *"Now Stephen, a man full of God's grace and power, did great wonders and miraculous signs among the people"* (Acts 6:8).<sup>1</sup>

Q. *Do our weaknesses disqualify us from the grace and power of God?* \_\_\_\_\_

Q. *How much grace does God want to give us?* \_\_\_\_\_

### **D. Salvation Is by Grace Through Faith, and So Is the Christian Life.**

- *"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). Salvation is always by grace through faith, in both the Old Testament and the New Testament. The sacrifices of the O.T. were simply actions of faith and obedience.
- *"So then, just as you received Christ Jesus as Lord, continue to live in him, rooted and built up in him, strengthened in the faith as you were taught..."* (Colossians 2:6-7).
- *"...through whom we have gained access by faith into this grace in which we now stand. And we rejoice in the hope of the glory of God"* (Romans 5:2). The Christian life is a life of faith and trusting God for His grace and power.

Q. *If grace is the loving provision of God, what is faith?* \_\_\_\_\_

Q. *What does it mean to rejoice in the hope of the glory of God?* \_\_\_\_\_

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### E. We Are Liberated from the Dominion of Sin By the Power and Grace of God.

- “For sin shall not be your master, because you are not under law, but under grace” (Romans 6:14). The Law of the Old Testament simply told us what was right or wrong. It had no power. The grace of God gives us the strength and power to resist sin and love God.
- “So I say, live by the Spirit, and you will not gratify the desires of the sinful nature” (Galatians 5:16). We will still experience these desires, but through God’s grace, we will have the power to resist them.
- “For you know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though He was rich, yet for your sakes He became poor, so that you through His poverty might become rich” (2 Corinthians 8:9).

Q. The yet unredeemed part of us called “the flesh” is still with us after we receive Jesus as Savior. How can we have victory over the desires of the flesh? \_\_\_\_\_

### F. What is God’s Formula for Obtaining Grace?

- “Young men, in the same way be submissive to those who are older. All of you clothe yourselves with humility towards one another, because, ‘God opposes the proud, but gives grace to the humble.’ Humble yourselves, therefore, under God’s mighty hand, that he may lift you up in due time” (1 Peter 5:5-6).
- “But he gives us more grace. That is why Scripture says, ‘God opposes the proud but gives grace to the humble’” (James 4:6).

Q. Does God stop loving us when we are proud? \_\_\_\_\_

Q. Does God withhold His grace and blessing when we are proud? \_\_\_\_\_

Q. What is the most important character quality to develop if we want God’s blessing? \_\_\_\_\_

Q. Is humility a permanent quality or a daily commitment? \_\_\_\_\_

### G. God Wants to Give Us His Grace.

- “Yet the Lord longs to be gracious to you; He rises to show you compassion” (Isaiah 30:18). Many think that we must agonize before God and persuade Him to bless us. The truth is that He longs to be gracious and help us.
- “Keep your lives free from the love of money and be content with what you have, because God has said. ‘Never will I leave you; never will I forsake you.’ So we say with confidence, ‘The Lord is my helper; I will not be afraid. What can man do to me?’” (Hebrews 13:5-6).

Q. How should I approach God daily? \_\_\_\_\_



#### **H. What Happens When We Are Proud and Do Not Humble Ourselves For God's Grace?**

- “*See to it that no one misses the grace of God and that no bitter roots grow up to cause trouble and defile many*” (Hebrews 12:15). The result is clear: Miss the grace of God--bitter roots grow-- trouble--defile many.
- “*You who are trying to be justified by law have been alienated from Christ; you have fallen away from grace*” (Galatians 5:4). This doesn't mean a loss of salvation. When we seek to be saved by keeping the law, we can no longer be saved by grace through faith.

#### **I. We Need to Regularly Grow In Our Comprehension of God's Love and Grace.**

- “*Grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ*” (2 Peter 3:18). God's love doesn't increase, but our understanding and faith increases.

Q. *What are some ways that we can grow in grace and faith?* \_\_\_\_\_

#### **J. God Is the God of All Grace and Will Make Us Adequate As Servants of Jesus Christ.**

- “*And the God of all grace, who called you to his eternal glory in Christ, after you have suffered a little while, will himself restore you and make you strong, firm and steadfast. To him be the power for ever and ever. Amen*” (1 Peter 5:10-11).



GCLI TEACHING

## Studying the Scriptures

Pastor John Hopler · Columbus, OH

### I. What are some guidelines to be an effective student of God's Word?

- A. Study to be both \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_ ( \_\_\_\_\_ by a book; \_\_\_\_\_ in the heart by Christ Himself).

*"When they saw the courage of Peter and John and realized that they were unschooled, ordinary men, they were astonished and they took note that these men had been with Jesus" (Acts 4:13, NIV).*

*"The Bible was written in tears and to tears it will yield its best results. God has nothing to say to the frivolous man." - A.W. Tozer*

- B. Study the Word in \_\_\_\_\_, \_\_\_\_\_ in God's grace to give you understanding.

*"...which things we also speak, not in words taught by human wisdom, but in those taught by the Spirit, combining spiritual thoughts with spiritual words" (1 Corinthians 2:14).*

- C. Study while being involved in active \_\_\_\_\_.

*"...and [we] will give our attention to prayer and the \_\_\_\_\_ of the word" (Acts 6:4, NIV).*

*"No great work can be satisfactorily administered from an office chair. We must appear on the battlefield." -John Mott*

- D. Study topics that will build \_\_\_\_\_ rather than \_\_\_\_\_.

*"But avoid foolish controversies and genealogies and arguments and quarrels about the law, because these are unprofitable and useless" (Titus 3:9, NIV).*

- E. Study the Word first in order to \_\_\_\_\_ it.

*"Do not merely listen to the word, and so deceive yourselves. Do what it says" (James 1:22, NIV).*

*"If you cannot always get the right explanation for some scripture, be sure you don't miss the application of it." - Vance Havner*

- F. Study the Word with input from a \_\_\_\_\_ of leaders and believers.

*"Do not let anyone who delights in false humility and the worship of angels disqualify you for the prize. Such a person goes into great detail about what he has seen, and his unspiritual mind puffs him up with idle notions. He has lost connection with the Head, from whom the whole body, supported and held together by its ligaments and sinews, grows as God causes it to grow" (Colossians 2:18-19, NIV).*

A leader is more likely to embrace false doctrine if that leader is a loner. As stewards of God's Church, it is imperative that we be accountable to other godly leaders in the body of Christ. (This is one reason why we meet in GCLI regionals.)

## II. How much time should you be studying the Word?

Key questions to answer for yourself:

A. Can you \_\_\_\_\_ your church/GCC statement of faith?

*"He must hold firmly to the trustworthy message as it has been taught, so that he can encourage others by sound doctrine and refute those who oppose it" (Titus 1:9, NIV).*

If you have mastered the material in the GCLI-Foundations and the GCC Doctrine Test you would meet the Titus 1:9 qualification according to GCC standards.

B. What is the nature of your \_\_\_\_\_?

For example, a Sunday morning communicator would need to know the Scriptures better than an executive pastor.

C. What is expected of you from your \_\_\_\_\_?

*"Though I am free and belong to no man, I make myself a slave to everyone, to win as many as possible. To the Jews I became like a Jew, to win the Jews. To those under the law I became like one under the law (though I myself am not under the law), so as to win those under the law" (1 Corinthians 9:19-20, NIV).*

There is more expectation on a leader to be familiar with the Bible in America than in other cultures. Familiarity with the books of the Bible is required more in a culture where there is more Bible education.

D. What is the best use of your \_\_\_\_\_?

In GCC community churches, usually only staff and singles have been able to devote large amounts of time to Bible study. In general, the priority is "on the job" training in character and ministry.

E. What \_\_\_\_\_ of your ministry-life are you in now?

It is common for leaders to be more heavily involved in studying the Scriptures early on in their ministry-life, as an orientation for a lifetime of ministry.

### III. What options for study exist for the leader who wants to be a student of the Word?

#### A. *Self-study*

Pros: Flexibility

Cons: No structure and accountability; no outside accreditation given

#### B. *Correspondence programs*

Pros: Flexibility with some restrictions

Cons: Limited structure and accountability

#### C. *An “in church” institute*

Pros: Done within the church context

Cons: Need a large church to “pull this off”; no outside accreditation

#### D. *Seminary/Bible School classes in your city*

Pros: Structure and accountability. Credentials provided.

Cons: High cost, both in time and money required. Also, different values may be taught than what is taught in your church.

### IV. Is it important to actually get a degree from a Bible school or seminary, rather than merely auditing classes or taking classes according to need?

#### Positives:

It may open some doors (For example, with certain church cultures or in a very educated society. It may also be important in order to minister overseas. Finally, it may be helpful in raising support from the general body of Christ.).

It could be a good discipline for some leaders’ character. It might build in them faithfulness and diligence in completing a course of study.

#### Possible Drawbacks:

It may not be a good use of time and resources in light of the work that needs to be done. We have limited time—Ephesians 5:16. A certificate from a school may be adequate rather than a degree. Also, the Natural Church Development finding was that the churches that were the least healthy and grew the least were those whose pastors had the most seminary training.

Giving a high profile to a seminary degree has the potential of undercutting the value of “every member is a minister” and of the truth that God raises up leaders from within the Church. (Baptists versus Congregationalists—the higher the educational requirements the slower the spread of the gospel.)

#### Conclusion:

A seminary degree might be a useful tool. But never make it a hurdle for leadership and always make sure that we hold to the standard in 1 Timothy 3:1-7 and Titus 1:5-9; namely, that character is the qualification for leadership. Realize that the option chosen is not an “end in itself.” The end result is being a “student of the Word” in order to be an effective teacher of the Word.

**V. What is the recommended approach for GCC pastors, and future pastors, to be effective students of the Word?**

We generally recommend:

1. A life of self-study and obedience to the Word with an emphasis on character and personal devotion to the Lord.
2. Studying and obeying the Scriptures while reaching out in the gospel within the ministry of a local church.
3. Each leader developing a personalized study plan (depending on that individual's culture, needs, and ministry).
4. Growing in the Word within a community of elders who can sharpen and "test" one another in their convictions.



GCLI TEACHINGS

**Exercise**

1. What was the main lesson you learned from the teaching given at the GCLI regional?

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2. In the Great Commission Churches, eight core values have been identified, one of which is “grace.” Why do you think that this is such an important core value for a church and for a movement of churches?

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3. Are you known as a leader who is “strong in grace?” Please explain. Is your church a church that has a reputation of being “strong in grace?” Please explain.

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GCLI TEACHINGS

**Exercise**

4. What is your personal plan for becoming a student of the Scriptures?

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5. In your opinion, how important is it for pastors to receive theological training outside of the local churches?

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6. Share some common misconceptions of grace in our culture. How would you describe what grace is not (e.g. tolerance)?

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GRACE / THE DOCTRINE OF THE SCRIPTURES

**Grace**

Grace is defined as the “unmerited favor of God.” As you read these articles, you will gain a greater understanding of God’s grace to us and how we can create an environment of grace in our churches.







GRACE

## Our Greatest Pastoring Tool - Jesus Christ and His Gospel of Grace

Pastor John Hopley · Columbus, OH

The following are some of the events that have had a significant impact on my life:

- In 1973, I heard for the first time the gospel message; that Jesus Christ died for my sins, that salvation is a gift, and that all those who believe in Him have eternal life.
- Later in 1973, I heard for the first time that Jesus Christ will be returning to the earth in the future, that He will rapture His Church, and that He will establish His Kingdom on this earth. Later that month, I made a decision to follow Jesus Christ.
- In 1975, in reading the Word, I came to a startling conclusion that Jesus is God. This was a revelation that had a major impact in my life.
- In 1975, as I got involved with the church and began reading the Scriptures, I came to understand all of the gifts I received when I put my faith in Christ. I understood that I am in Christ, that I own all things, that I am washed in His blood, and that I have His very own righteousness. This had a significant effect, not only on my self-esteem, but also on my respect for, and relationships with, other believers.
- In 1976, I heard the message, “God Really Loves You” by Jim McCotter, which showed me a new aspect of God’s character, how He is very enthusiastic and emotional in His love for me in Christ. This also had a dynamic impact on my overall view of life.
- In 1977, our church went to a conference where Jim McCotter shared a fresh and exciting view on God’s forgiveness. It was a message that transformed our church that year.
- In 1977, I worked with a Christian attorney who talked to me about God’s sovereignty; how we have been elected by God through His grace. This truth also transformed my life, causing me to be more at rest in my faith in Him.
- In 1979, as I was faced with many disappointments in ministry, the Lord refocused me upon my eternal hope (“Fix your hope completely on the grace to be brought to you at the revelation of Jesus Christ” 1 Peter 1:13). My hope in His Second Coming gave me the perspective I needed for my daily living.
- In 1980, I went through a crisis of conflict with my fellow elders and national leaders, as I had developed some doctrinal convictions that were different than the ones they had. The truth that God had placed His Spirit in them and in me, and that He would see to it that there would be unity of

*“Amazing grace! How sweet the sound,  
that saved a wretch like me! I once was lost, but now am found, was blind, but now I see.”*

- John Newton

mind and heart through the power of the Spirit, was what encouraged me to persevere in pursuing the unity that God eventually gave to us.

- In 1981, I made a terrible mistake in my law practice, leading to quite a few problems for my client, my boss, and myself. Through this ordeal, God taught me in a very practical way the lesson of grace and mercy, that God loves to bless the one who is aware of his sin. And bless me He did, as He, in a very wonderful way, cleaned up the whole mess I got myself into.
- Throughout the early 1980s, God continually refreshed me as each morning, and then throughout the day, I would meditate on some aspect of the gospel of Jesus Christ—His coming, His death on the cross, our forgiveness, the Holy Spirit's work, His grace, etc.
- In the late 1980s and the early 1990s, the Lord led us, as a movement, to a greater focus on the Holy Spirit. He did this by stressing the ministry of each member according to his or her unique spiritual gifts; by emphasizing the freedom we have as Christians (“*Where the Spirit of the Lord is there is liberty.*”); and by having more of a bottom-up approach and a “releasing to ministry” approach in the leading of the church and the nation of churches.
- Also in the late 1980s and early 1990s, there was a greater awareness of the spiritual battle, and a greater understanding of Christ's once-for-all victory over Satan at the cross.
- During the last few years, countless believers in Great Commission have meditated on the truths of this position in Christ (the “Who We Are in Christ” card). This new outlook has radically changed people's view of themselves in Christ.

*“Grace isn't a little prayer you chant before receiving a meal. It's a way to live. The law tells me how crooked I am. Grace comes along and straightens me out.”*

- D. L. Moody

### **What is my point?**

It's simply this: WHAT CHANGES LIVES IS THE GRACE THAT COMES FROM THE MULTIFACETED GOSPEL OF JESUS CHRIST. By “multifaceted gospel” I mean:

The message of Jesus Christ:

- Who He is (the Christ, God, Man, Savior, King, Lord, Servant, Judge), - what He did (His ministry on earth, His death and resurrection, our forgiveness, our position in Christ)
- What He is presently doing (the work of the Holy Spirit, His gifts to us today, the work of His body, the Church)
- What He will do in the future (the Second Coming, Judgment, Heaven and Hell)
- Together with the practical ramifications of that message (primarily loving people, believers and unbelievers, preaching this message to them).

### **Why is this important?**

This is important because it is so easy to take our limited time and energy and major on the minors and minor on the majors. If we understand that the gospel is what transforms, we will FOCUS our minds,

*“When the Law was given 3000 were put to death (Exodus 32:28). When the Gospel of grace was given 3000 were made alive (Acts 2: 41).”*

*- Unknown*

our energy, and our efforts to study the gospel, practice the gospel, and teach the gospel, so that the gospel will transform our own lives, and the lives of others who come to Christ.

### **Ourselves**

For years, I have practiced meditating each morning on gospel truths. I have done this by taking some aspect of this multifaceted gospel about which God has been speaking to me and meditating on verses and thoughts from those verses that speak to that aspect of truth (God’s love for me, my position in Christ, the Holy Spirit’s work, the Second Coming, etc.) combined with verses dealing with the practical working out of those truths (faith, repentance, love, prayer, etc.). I consider this to be the most important activity of my day. I get encouraged, I get empowered, I become renewed, I become transformed by the gospel which is THE power of God. (No one is more powerful than God and nothing is more powerful than THE power of God.) If everyone in our churches had this habit, it would transform their lives, and our churches, more than anything else we could do.

But you might say, so many people do this already. That’s true for some, but my experience is that people either aren’t meditating at all or they are meditating on the Law or on the practicals of the Christian life exclusively. Our spiritual eyes need to be refocused daily and moment by moment upon Jesus and His gospel so that we will be transformed from glory to glory (2 Corinthians 3:18).

### **Others**

Paul, I believe, was the master at motivating people. In his letters to the churches, he is constantly flooding their minds with the truth of the gospel. Every page of his writings is focused on Jesus Christ. (In fact, take some time some day and count how often he mentions “Jesus” or “Christ.”) Paul, in his letters to the Romans and Ephesians, spends the first half of those letters overwhelming the believers with the multifaceted gospel and then exhorts them to live in accordance with it. To the Corinthians, he says that the word of the cross is the power of God—not to those who aren’t saved, but to those who are BEING saved (1 Corinthians 1:18). He points out to the Colossians that the gospel has been increasing in THEM (Colossians 1:6) and tells them to allow the word of Christ (the gospel) to richly dwell within them (3:16). The point is that the gospel is for believers; for our introduction into this relationship with God and our continued growth in that relationship.

### **Two Big Pitfalls**

#### **Pitfall # 1**

In saying all of this, I think it is important to recognize that there are pitfalls into which Christians fall. The first pitfall is one Paul warned against: legalism. Like the Galatians, we as believers can fall into the trap of focusing on the Law rather than the gospel. We do this by having an overemphasis on the Old Testament or we take on responsibilities as believers without understanding God’s grace and power first. We look at ourselves first without looking at God and His grace.

## Pitfall #2

Oftentimes, other things become “the gospel” to Christians. These things may be good things, such as:

1. Our church service
2. Our church’s vision
3. Our church’s distinctive ministry
4. Our personal vision
5. Our small group
6. A new Christian book we’re reading
7. Our pet doctrine

*A young man was asked “How did you get saved?” His answer was, “God did His part, and I did my part. God’s part was the saving, and my part was the sinning.”*

*-A.W.Tozer*

A telltale sign that these other things have become the gospel is when we’re talking about these things more than Jesus Christ and His gospel. (“*[The] mouth speaks from that which fills [the] heart,*” (Luke 6:45).) When we’re excited about Jesus Christ and His gospel supremely and uniquely, it is only then that the gospel transforms our lives. When people “cut” us and we “bleed” Jesus Christ and His gospel, only then does the gospel do its work in us. (And, by the way, only then will we ever be truly effective in winning souls to Christ.)

### **So where does this lead us?**

In my opinion, this leads us to the following conclusions. To be the most effective in ministry, we need to:

1. Have each believer in our churches focused on the multifaceted gospel of grace in their personal lives. Everyone will be growing if they are thinking on the gospel, living the gospel, and speaking the gospel.
2. Make it a priority in our teaching (Sunday services, seminars, one-on-one) to share the gospel of Jesus Christ and then to share practical ramifications of the gospel in our daily lives.



GRACE

## How Grace Affects a Church

Pastor Mark Darling · Minneapolis, MN

Grace is the major theme of the New Testament. It is critical that we talk about it. The Bible shows that the gospel equals the grace of God. In Romans, Paul says that grace equals power. That is often the opposite of how we think God would deal with us. Why would God deal with sinners, people who can't reach His standard, in such a loving way, instead of just blasting us for our sin? This "unearned favor" (grace) doesn't seem powerful, but it is the most life-changing concept Christians and non-Christians alike can grasp. It brings strength and courage, along with favor and blessing in spite of sin and failing on our part.

We know in studying Christ's life that He is God. As we read in the Gospels, we see that God (in Jesus) associated with sinners, prostitutes, etc. Sinners were comfortable with God. He made the religious people uncomfortable. In His presence, sinners were accepted and knew that they mattered to Him. Many whom He healed never became His disciples, but He healed them anyway. Seeing how God (Jesus) lived among the sinners and showed them His grace and mercy, shows us the way God wants us to see holiness. Often we have a wrong concept of holiness.

I lived by the Mall of America for several years (one of the largest malls in the US). People poured in and out of that place each day. Preaching there would not have done any good; nobody would have listened. The purpose of the Church is to reach out to the lost people in the marketplace. Try to do this with a neighbor or your co-workers. Take them to lunch, minister to their needs. Establish friendship and credibility. Then, they will listen to what you have to say about Jesus.

Evergreen has tried to recreate the marketplace, make our own "mall" to attract people to us. Churches have messed up as God's ambassadors, being overbearing, intolerant, and judgmental of people who walk in their doors. We need to accept people as they are right now as they come in search of God. Grace is the miracle of the power of growth, the power of salvation to unbelievers. The grace of God is what teaches us to say no to ungodliness (Titus 2:12). Evergreen is designed to accept and extend grace to people as they are, no matter their dress or speech. By this, we say to them that we relate to them as God does; come and be yourself. If many of them walked into "regular" churches, there would be stares and comments. They would think God thinks this way of them too.

Our small groups extend grace to brothers and sisters, as well as the non-believers. This generation is the most dysfunctional group of young people ever. Baby boomers are the worst parents; the most selfish parents, in America. Baby boomer parents have killed 33 million GenXer's, deserted their kids, lied about their commitment to marriage-all offered up on the altar of career and achievement. Those who are 30 and under have no moral compass, no parenting to guide them in decision making. Our

*"Grace is given to heal the spiritually sick, not to decorate spiritual heroes."*

*- Martin Luther*

small groups try to provide some of that guidance, especially in pointing people to God (the best guide of all!).

While God was on this planet, His heart was not stirred with righteous indignation (we think this is how God is), but was moved to pity and compassion. He viewed us as sheep without a shepherd and saw how our problems weighed us down (Matthew 9:36). This is a very different view than maintained by today's churches, or even many pastors.

Paul's life and his teachings showed that he tried to be all things to all men. Today, this refers to movies, clothing, and use of questionable phrases. All this is done (following Paul's effort to be all things to all men) so that many who don't know Christ will come into our churches. Many of these people have denominational backgrounds and have experienced condemnation in that setting. As they visit us here at Evergreen, our prayer is that they walk out of here feeling love in a good environment. It's only in this kind of a situation (one of love and acceptance), that the hard truths can be spoken. We all love our kids and when we share hard things with them, things that they don't always want to hear, but in their hearts know are right, they can take it from us. Why? Because they know that it is said in love and concern for their well being, that the love won't stop. It's the same with many of the people who come to Evergreen.

As Christians, we live in Christ as justified and forgiven people. We live in liberation. In the Bible, if sacrifices could have cleansed the worshippers, Jesus Christ's blood wouldn't have been needed. But it was needed. Jesus Christ's blood cleanses, sacrifices don't. We are no longer guilty. Guilt is the number one reason for nervous breakdowns and discouragement. Many feel this way and no longer want to be a Christian. The message of justification and forgiveness breaks the back of Satan. What can he do if he doesn't have anything to hang over our heads?

Babies are demanding as they crawl, walk, make messes, and fall down. We don't condemn them for their actions. And it doesn't make them feel guilty. It's just a natural part of growth and development. But many Christians do feel guilty and give up. They need love and encouragement. When you do something wrong, you know it in your heart, don't you? Well, most of them know they've done wrong things. Often we overemphasize the "talk" part of wrong-doing. God says, "Get up! Let's go! I'll help you."

It's imperative that pastors create a climate within their churches with a grace environment. It has to start at the top and move down. Our people need to hear stories of the pastor's struggles (personal, marital, spiritual). People then will get a proper understanding that will shatter their false pretenses of what it means to be a Christian. This must be a pastor's number one priority. Growth depends on the soil having fertilizer, sun, and rain. Shattering false pretenses and a grace environment will promote growth. In Ephesians 3, Paul shares what it means to let your roots go down deep into the fertile soil of God's love. This is only done through the grace aspect of love. We pastors must bring rich soil (the grace of God) into our churches. If we have a desert atmosphere, there will be no growth. *"May your roots go down deep into the soil of God's marvelous love. And may you have the power to understand, as all God's people should, how wide, how long, how high, and how deep his love really is. May you experi-*

***"Abounding sin is the terror of the world, but abounding grace is the hope of mankind."***

***-A.W.Tozer***

***“The gospel is so simple that small children can understand it, and it is so profound that studies by the wisest theologians will never exhaust its riches.”***

***- Charles Hodge***

*ence the love of Christ, though it is so great you will never fully understand it. Then you will be filled with the fullness of life and power that comes from God” (Ephesians 3: 1 7b-19, NLT).*





GRACE

## Acting in Love (Grace in Action)

Pastor Herschel Martindale · Columbia, MD

### A. Biblical Passage: Romans 14

*“If your brother is distressed because of what you eat, you are no longer acting in love” (14:15).*

Romans 14 focuses on the multitude of personal convictions, desires, and preferences that are not clear biblical commands or instructions, but dramatically affecting our attitudes and actions toward one another. At that time, it involved eating meat that had been sacrificed to idols and observing certain days, such as the Sabbath. Some common issues today are music, dress codes, hair and cosmetics, jewelry, musical instruments, philosophy of church and ministry, teaching styles, advertisements, doctrinal emphases, prophecy, head coverings for women, Communion practices, ways to baptize, different translations of the Scriptures, and leadership practices. Each of these will probably have different verses of Scripture that we feel relate, but are not conclusive on the subject.

Romans 14:1-3 says, *“Accept him whose faith is weak, without passing judgment on disputable matters. One man’s faith allows him to eat everything, but another man, whose faith is weak, eats only vegetables. The one who eats everything **must not look** down on him who does not, and the man who does not eat everything **must not condemn** the man who does, for God has accepted him”* (emphasis added).

Attitudes and actions are the issue here:

1. Must not look down
2. Must not condemn

Those who feel more liberty will be tempted to look down on (think less of) those who do not. Those who feel less liberty will tend to judge and condemn those who do. The Apostle Paul makes it very clear that both of these attitudes are wrong and should not be indulged. The real issue is not the preference, but the wrong attitude. It is not an attitude of love and grace. Judging and criticism is one of the most prevalent sins of many Christians today. These attitudes are often even considered spiritual and justified by those who hold them.

- B. *“Who are you to judge someone else’s servant? To his own master he stands or falls”* (Romans 14:4). Judging others in disputable issues and especially the motives of men’s hearts is just not our responsibility or right. We take the place of God when we do this. James reminds us, *“There is only one Lawgiver and Judge, the one who is able to save and to destroy. But who are you to judge your neighbor”* (James 4:12)? Paul further reminds us that each of us is responsible to our Lord. *“For this very reason Christ died and returned to life so that He might be the Lord of both the dead and the*

*“The longer I live the larger allowances I make for human weakness.”*

*- John Wesley*

*living. You, then, why do you judge your brother? Or why do you look down on your brother? For we will all stand before God's judgment seat. So then, each of us will give an account of himself to God*" (Romans 14:9-12). What an awesome thought! We really have a great challenge keeping our own lives pleasing to our righteous and holy Lord and God. As He deals with us in grace, so we should "act in love" and grace toward one another.

***"There but for the  
grace of God go I."***

***- John Bradford***

C. What actions should we take in these disputable areas of concern?

1. *"Each one should be fully convinced in his own mind"* (Romans 14:5). We need to come to our own personal convictions so we can walk in faith.
2. *"He who regards one day as special, does so to the Lord. He who eats meat, eats to the Lord, for he gives thanks to God; and he who abstains, does so to the Lord and gives thanks to God"* (Romans 14:6). Whatever we do, we should do it as unto the Lord and to please Him. This takes away pride and the tendency to think of ourselves more highly than we should and to judge others.
3. *"Make up your mind not to put any stumbling block or obstacle in your brother's way"* (Romans 14:13). Love builds up and encourages one another. All of us have difficulties, trials, distresses, discouragements, and failures in our lives from time to time. Oh, how we need the love, encouragement, and fellowship of one another! It is impossible to really love and encourage when we are judging, critical, and condemning one another in our hearts. So many churches have split, families have divided, and Christians have forsaken friendships over these disputable matters.

D. *"The kingdom of God is not a matter of eating and drinking, but of righteousness, peace and joy in the Holy Spirit, because anyone who serves Christ in this way is pleasing to God and approved by men"* (Romans 14:17-18). What a statement! Do I want to serve Christ in a way that is pleasing to God and approved by men? Who wouldn't? It's simple. Pursue righteousness, peace, and unity with all and walk in the Spirit! I'll be pleasing to God and my brothers and sisters. If I fill my life with these goals, I won't have time to judge and criticize others and God will be pleased. The Kingdom of God is NOT \_\_\_\_\_ (please fill in anything disputable that divides you in heart from another Christian).

E. *"Let us therefore make every effort to do what leads to peace and mutual edification"* (Romans 14:19). The language here in this verse is of great importance. *"Therefore"* (in the light of the exhortation given in the preceding verses) make every effort. I must ask myself, "What efforts am I taking to guard my heart from these wrong attitudes?" Are there attitudes that I have or actions toward others that may be grieving to the Holy Spirit in these disputable areas? I must remember that my thought life is the first place to start in correcting these attitudes. Read over the list of common areas today in Section A, and see if any apply. What efforts do I take to pursue peace and practical unity with my fellow believers and especially leaders? How important is it to me to take initiatives regularly to "build up" and encourage my brothers and sisters in the Church?

*"Blessed is the man who does not condemn himself with what he approves"* (Romans 14:22). May each of us walk daily in love and grace toward one another.



GRACE

## Grace in Dealing with Criticism

Pastor Dave Bovenmyer · Ames, IA

In December of 1989, during a prayer and planning meeting of the national leaders of Great Commission Churches, the conversation turned to ideas about how to handle the many and persistent criticisms and accusations that our association was receiving. As we talked about the different accusations, it seemed to us that many, if not most of them were unfounded or dealt with fairly isolated incidents or things that had been corrected years ago. Some criticisms were outright falsehoods and some accusers appeared to us to be overtly malicious. Yet, as we discussed and prayed and considered our past, we agreed that we had made mistakes, exhibited weaknesses and committed sins that in many cases were the source of the criticism. We decided to write a statement summarizing our perception of errors in our past.

In July, 1991, after several vigorous discussions, much prayer, some deep soul searching, and many revisions, the national leaders developed a *Statement Recognizing Early Errors and Weaknesses in the Development of the of the Great Commission Association of Churches*. The statement was sent to our pastors for feedback, and after additional revisions, was ratified by the association's pastors on July 19, 1991 in a near-unanimous vote. (This paper can be found following this article.)

The statement acknowledged errors and weaknesses in two areas—a prideful attitude, and a misunderstanding or misinterpretation of the Scriptures.

Our prideful attitude resulted in:

- an improper and overly defensive response to criticism;
- an elitist attitude.

Our misunderstandings or misinterpretations of scripture resulted in:

- a failing to distinguish between commands, principles, and preferences
- authoritarian or insensitive leadership;
- overly visionary leadership with inadequate planning and management improper application of church discipline in some cases;
- a lack of emphasis on formal education;
- a belief that every man should become an elder.

Having been personally involved in the many hours of difficult discussion and the hours of prayer that went into this statement, I can testify that our effort to acknowledge our errors and weaknesses

*A man warned George Whitefield of criticism by others. Whitefield replied, "I thank you sir, for watching over my soul. As for what they say, I know worse things of myself than what they say concerning me."*

***“Never let the sense of failure corrupt your new action.”***

*- Oswald Chambers*

arose not from an attempt to simply deflect criticism, but from a sincere desire to acknowledge wrong and seek reconciliation with those who had been harmed by our errors. Copies of the final statement were sent to our pastors to be given to all the leaders in each church and to be made available to anyone interested. We encouraged our leaders to ask God to bring to mind individuals who were critical or were estranged from our churches through our errors and to send them the weakness statement.

Happily, this process resulted in hundreds of instances of reconciliation with people who had been hurt by our failures. Several meetings were arranged with some of our staunchest critics in an attempt to listen and confess our errors. We tried to take the approach that even if the problem seemed to us to be 90% the fault of the other party, still we should seek forgiveness for the 10% that seemed in our eyes to be our fault. Before we can see clearly, we must take out anything that is in our own eye. And, as our Lord said so graphically, what is in our own eye is often a log.

Sadly, our efforts did not result in full reconciliation in every instance. But even where there were still disagreements and opposing perspectives, the process resulted in greater understanding and opportunities for future communication.

At the same time, we opened up our ministry to Christians outside our circles and sought their counsel and input. Many leaders of other Christian movements commended us for our attempt to honestly acknowledge our faults and seek reconciliation with those who had been hurt by them.

Anyone who leads God’s people knows that criticism comes as part of the territory. Sometimes criticism is right on the mark, sometimes it is an exaggeration of an actual weakness, and sometime it is totally off the wall. The prophet Nathan confronted King David concerning His actual and horrible sins of adultery and murder. On the other extreme, Shimei cursed David for his alleged bloody destruction of Saul and his family. Shimei’s accusation must have really stung, since David had extended such incredible grace and mercy to Saul, his family, and those who served him. And, yet, in spite of the vicious and hurtful nature of the accusations, David, true to his character, extends mercy to Shimei and doesn’t allow his men to kill him.

How we respond to criticism reflects our mettle and forges our character perhaps more than any other thing. Do we faithfully go to the Lord, seeking His wisdom concerning the truthfulness of the criticism? Do we humbly acknowledge anything that rings true and seek forgiveness? And are we able to extend grace even when unjustly criticized or when the criticism is painfully exaggerated? Our Lord suffered for things he didn’t commit—should we not expect to do the same?

The grace of God teaches us that we can acknowledge our genuine errors and still find acceptance and compassion. Also, His grace teaches us that we must extend grace and mercy, even when we have been brutally and painfully injured by others, as our Lord did when he asked His Father to forgive the very ones who had driven the nails through His flesh. Our hope is that our efforts to acknowledge our errors and respond in grace to some instances of baseless criticism has demonstrated the grace of our Lord and in a small way allowed us to walk in His footsteps.



GRACE

**Errors and Weaknesses Paper**

A STATEMENT RECOGNIZING EARLY ERRORS AND WEAKNESSES IN THE  
DEVELOPMENT OF THE GREAT COMMISSION ASSOCIATION OF CHURCHES

July, 1991

**Introduction**

The Great Commission Association of Churches (GCAC), formerly Great Commission International (GCI), is an association of evangelical Christian churches in the United States, Canada, Latin America, and Asia. Most of these churches are less than twenty years old and originated with a group of Christians at Southern Colorado University who set out to preach the Gospel and so fulfill the Great Commission, the last command of the Lord Jesus Christ to “Go . . . and make disciples of all the nations.” From Colorado, they reached out to other campuses across the country, so that there were fifteen loosely affiliated student fellowships by 1973, thirty-two campus or community churches by 1981, and seventy-six churches at the present time. The goal of those few men, and of the men and women who eventually chose to labor with them, was to “reach the world” with the Gospel of Jesus Christ in their generation and in doing so, glorify Him. To reach that goal, they modeled their churches as nearly as possible after the New Testament church, and took literally the Lord’s command to “Go.” As the name of our association suggests, it is and has been our constant goal and desire to help fulfill the Great Commission, and consequently, the churches in the Association have always been characterized by a strong commitment to witnessing and evangelism.

Over the years, our churches have been used by God to see thousands of people come to know Christ, grow in their love for Him, and go on to faithfully serve Him. But just as a young person growing up will make many mistakes on the road to maturity, so our churches, in the process of growing up in the Lord, made mistakes, exhibited weaknesses, and allowed a prideful attitude to develop, in part, as a result of our immaturity. In addition, the churches experienced a number of problems inherent in starting a new church or association of churches. These problems were exacerbated by our youth, our focus on evangelism and a failure to adequately recognize other spiritual gifts, and the fact that even very early on we had many churches and no clear organizational structure to formalize their relationships with one another. Some of the problems were minor while others were more serious in nature. Some of the problems were a result of the actions of local church leaders and so were isolated both in time and place. Others were a consequence of mistakes by leaders who had influence in many of the churches, and so were widespread. Many of the problems were resolved years ago, others were resolved more recently, and some are currently being addressed. And because we realize that our churches and leaders, while doing our best to follow the Lord’s leading, will make mistakes in the future, we are in the process of developing a Book of Government to formalize procedures on how to approach and respond to those mistakes and grievances.

We, the local pastors and national leaders of the Great Commission Association of Churches, are preparing this statement with the hope that we might accomplish three goals. First, it is intended to be a clear statement of the mistakes we believe we have made and the steps we have taken, and will continue to take, to rectify them. Secondly, the statement is a confession and a request for forgiveness from those who have been hurt by our errors. Finally, we have prepared this statement with the hope that it will be an important part of our plan for reconciliation, where possible, with former members, leaders, and others who, for various reasons are now estranged from us.

The mistakes made, weaknesses exhibited, and problems experienced by our churches can be roughly grouped into two categories: (I) Those that were caused by a prideful attitude; and, (II) Those that were a result of a misapplication or misinterpretation of Scripture. The balance of this statement will address the specific problems that fall within each of these two categories.

## **I. Prideful Attitude**

We confess that, especially in our early years, we had a prideful attitude about the ways we believed that our churches were distinctive from others in the body of Christ. And while, to the best of our knowledge, it was never expressly taught that we were better than other churches, it was very much implied by our too narrow view of how God accomplishes His purposes through the church. For many years, we believed that because we were committed to reaching the world with the Gospel in the way we believed was mandated by the Scriptures and that had been virtually abandoned by most Christians since the first century, that God would use our churches in a special way. This allowed a prideful attitude to develop toward other churches, para-churches, and organizations, a sinful attitude we deeply regret. It is difficult to know just how pervasive this attitude was, but we believe it was common, especially during the early years of our history. Our pride manifested itself in a variety of ways, which we now turn to.

### 1. Improper response to criticism.

The problem. A commitment to responding to criticism with patience, understanding, and a desire to learn is a mark of spiritual maturity. And while parties with different points of view might finally have to “agree to disagree,” it is important that they first make a concerted effort to discuss and, if possible, resolve their differences. We confess that we have too often responded defensively to those both within and outside of our churches who questioned or criticized us, and at times exhibited an unwillingness to listen to their perspective. Instead of too quickly concluding that these individuals were acting divisively or irresponsibly, we should have made a greater effort to carefully consider and respond to their views. Moreover, we should have made more of an effort to pursue those individuals who had voiced various concerns about our doctrine or practices, and aggressively pursued reconciliation with former leaders and members.

Steps taken to correct. We are grieved by the rift that has developed between our churches and a number of former leaders and church members who have believed, in part because of our unwillingness to listen to them, that reconciliation was impossible. We apologize for failing to listen to their concerns and for failing at times to obey our Lord’s command to be reconciled. We ask that anyone who has a concern about, or complaint against, a Great Commission church or leader to contact that church or leader. If that does not satisfactorily resolve the issue, please write to David Bovenmyer at the address noted on page 13.



Many of the most serious grievances that former leaders and members had might have been resolved many years ago if we would have had a formalized, written policy on handling complaints, addressing divergent views, and resolving grievances. That is why we are developing, as previously noted, a Book of Government that will provide that needed formality. Of course, even the best policy will be ineffective if both parties to a dispute fail to approach the dispute with love and humility. For our part, we apologize to each former leader or member who we did not respond to in a spirit of love and humility, and express our commitment to excel in this in the future.

## 2. An elitist attitude.

The problem. It is a truism that when one chooses something, whether a home, automobile, job, or spouse, it is usually because that person believes his choice to be the best one. It is no different with a church. Most people choose to become members of a church because that church, for a variety of reasons, most closely reflects what the person perceives to be the “ideal” church. There is nothing wrong with that. The problem arises when one makes the subtle shift from believing that “this is the best church for me” to a conviction that “this is the best church, period.” We confess that this latter belief, though never, to the best of our knowledge, publicly taught and probably only rarely expressed, infected our churches for some time. There is no simple explanation for how or why this happened, but there are a number of factors we believe were, in some way, responsible.

Perhaps the most important factor responsible for our elitist attitude was our strong conviction that God’s plan to accomplish the Great Commission relied upon New Testament churches following the geographical progression described in Acts 1:8, and our belief that our churches were unique in their commitment to pursue that plan. We acknowledged that God could and did use other instruments and methods to accomplish His purposes, including para-churches, mission boards, Bible Schools, seminaries, and individuals with a particular vision. We had much respect for these individuals and organizations, often spoke highly of them, and indeed were both influenced by them and, in the case of some Billy Graham crusades and Campus Crusade outreaches, were active and enthusiastic participants with them. Nevertheless, we confess that we as leaders believed, and at times expressed, that these individuals and organizations were not necessarily doing “God’s best” like we were. For our lack of humility, we apologize.

Another factor concerns the fact that in the early days of our movement, most of the men and women involved were quite young, the majority in their early twenties. Few of us were married, had children, owned homes, or had many other “worldly” responsibilities to distract us from our commitment to sharing the Gospel. Consequently, we had much time and energy to devote to our local church, and we tried to closely follow the example of the New Testament Church described in Acts 2:42 (NIV):

*“They devoted themselves to the apostle’s teaching and to the fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer.”*

There was a very active church life, and members were encouraged to actively pursue witnessing and evangelism.

The positive effects of living in and with a devoted, Christian community were many. Individual believers developed a closer relationship with the Lord, many non-Christians were born again, and ultimately, God received glory. But, because of our immaturity, there were negative effects as well.

One was a tendency to believe that our approach to the Christian life was not merely a “good” one, but the “best” or “only scriptural” approach. We considered those who we thought were not as zealous as we were to be “lukewarm.” Instead, we should have believed and clearly taught that, “this is the way the Lord has shown us. God can and does lead differently.” Another was the expectation that all believers be as actively involved as we were in sharing the Gospel and the conclusion that if they were not, they were not obeying God’s perfect will for their lives. This expectation was partially a result of our pride and partially a result of our youth and ignorance of the added responsibilities that age and a family can bring.

One very negative effect concerned members who chose to leave our churches. Because of our conviction that God’s plan to accomplish the Great Commission relied upon New Testament churches following the geographical progression described in Acts 1:8, and because we believed that our churches were unique in their commitment to pursuing that plan, there was a concern that a person leaving would miss out on God’s will for their life. Our overemphasis on the things that we believed distinguished our churches from other churches and organizations and our failure to recognize that God might desire to use those individuals outside of our association of churches made it difficult for some to leave without feeling guilty and inadequate, or believing that God could use them for His purposes in another church. It also caused some of those who remained to view those who left as choosing something that might be good, but wasn’t what was best. We deeply regret this, and express our sincere apology to those who suffered because of our pride and insensitivity.

Steps taken to correct. In the last five years, as we have come to better understand and appreciate our niche in the larger body of Christ, the elitism of our early years has, for the most part, disappeared. Still, our association of churches is committed to preventing an elitist attitude from again infecting the churches. Individuals and churches who seek to be most devoted to the Lord would seem to be, paradoxically, those most likely to be tempted to be proud and to have an elitist view. Since it is our goal individually and as churches to be devoted to the Lord, and because pride is a sin common to all people, we will need to continually be on guard against elitist attitudes.

We have committed ourselves to communicate, especially when discussing convictions or preferences that distinguish us from other Christian churches and organizations, our appreciation for those churches and organizations and for their different convictions, strategies, and methods. In addition, we are eager to learn from other Christian churches and organizations, to work with them on projects within our local communities, and to attend church management seminars, church growth seminars, and other programs and seminars sponsored by other churches and organizations.

Concerning a member who wishes to leave a church that is part of our association, we are committed to expressing our appreciation, both verbally and in a letter, for that individual’s service to the Lord while part of the church, as well as the hope that God will continue to use them in the future. In addition we will do all we can to make their departure and transition a comfortable one.

## **II. Misapplication or Misinterpretation of Scripture**

God’s Word, as He has revealed it to us in the Bible, is and has been the “Constitution” that our churches have been guided by since their inception. Overall, we believe we have properly interpreted and applied the Word in developing our convictions about the purpose, goals, and day-to-day



operation of the church. However, we have at times in the past misapplied or misinterpreted certain verses, over and under emphasized certain principles, and failed to live up to the high standards of conduct the Scriptures command. In this section, we will address these failings.

### 1. Failing to distinguish between a command, a principle, and a preference.

The problem. In the past, we did not always clearly communicate the difference between a scriptural command, a scriptural principle, and a personal preference. And while it is not always easy to determine those differences, it is important to do so in order to allow individuals in the church to hold and express biblically-based convictions that are different than those of their leaders. This will promote tolerance and acceptance of alternative viewpoints and allow church members to fill their unique place in the body of Christ.

Our failure in the past to clearly distinguish between a command and a principle or preference manifested itself in a variety of ways. One example of this failure concerns our view of Acts 1:8. That verse says:

*“But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth” (NIV).*

We have believed and continue to believe that this verse is an example of the geographic progression that the New Testament church followed in their effort to take the Gospel to all nations. Moreover, we have derived from this example a principle that we try to apply, i.e., in pursuing the Great Commission, it is wise to begin by influencing one’s city for Christ (Jerusalem), then moving out geographically to one’s state and nation (Judea and Samaria), and finally to other nations (the ends of the earth). Because we failed to distinguish between a command and a principle, and because we emphasized our view so strongly, we effectively elevated a strategic principle to the level of a scriptural command. The effect of this error was that we tended to view those who had a different conviction on how individual Christians were to pursue the Great Commission as not fully obeying God’s perfect will for them.

Similarly, our convictions concerning the centrality of the local church as God’s vehicle for evangelism and discipleship were communicated in such a way as to cause Bible schools, seminaries, and para-church organizations to be viewed as “unscriptural.” We now believe that God’s plan for reaching the nations is more complex than that, and that He employs and commissions Christian churches, para-churches, missions organizations, Bible schools, seminaries, and individuals in a multitude of ways to accomplish His purposes.

A third example of our failure to clearly distinguish between commands and principles concerns the area of dating. Many of us in the early years of our churches encouraged young men and women to refrain from dating until they had a fairly strong conviction that God was leading them toward marriage to a particular individual. This had some very positive results including the lack of many problems that casual dating can cause (temptation to immorality, trauma and strife because of romantic breakups, distraction from a devotion to holiness and service to the Lord) and contributed to the formation of many, many strong marriages. However, it also had negative results including alienating believers who did not share our preference and causing some who did to develop a bad attitude toward Christians who dated. It is our present understanding that discouraging casual dating was a preference of many of us leaders and not a command or even a principle of Scripture,

although there are many principles that may be used to support the preference. We believe that individuals are free to have different preferences as to how serious they want to be before they begin dating someone. Pastors may suggest or encourage their own personal preference concerning dating, as well as their reasons for that preference, but they should be careful to clearly communicate that it is simply their preference, and that others may be equally valid.

Finally, failing to properly distinguish a command from a principle or preference resulted at times in legalism. An individual who had a conviction contrary to that of the pastors was sometimes considered rebellious, even though that conviction was one permitted by the Word. The result was that a person might be forced to choose between violating his or her conscience or remaining “rebellious.”

Steps taken to correct. Scripture instructs us in Romans 14 to express tolerance and acceptance of other believers and their convictions and preferences. For this reason, it is essential for church leaders to clearly distinguish in their public teaching and private counsel whether the point they are communicating is a scriptural command, scriptural principle, or personal preference. Failing to communicate this distinction may create an atmosphere of intolerance of alternative views and cause individuals with those views to feel restricted or judged for having that alternative point of view.

We are truly sorry for the difficulties we caused by this failure, and apologize to everyone who felt a lack of acceptance or intolerance on our part toward them. We are committed to accepting and appreciating those with different convictions, opinions, and preferences, and insuring that our teaching, counsel, and informal communication clearly and accurately differentiates between commands, principles, and preferences.

## 2. Authoritarian or insensitive leadership.

The problem. We acknowledge that there were instances where some of us in our immaturity tended to lead more by coercion and compulsion than by inspiration and example. Some men, especially in the early years of our movement, were appointed as pastors, or assumed the responsibility of a pastor, before they fully met the qualifications set forth in the Scriptures, and so were unable to consistently lead in a God honoring way. Others who were properly recognized as pastors acted in some cases in an authoritarian and insensitive manner. At times, we were overly directive in the personal affairs of church members and were not always sufficiently sensitive to the Holy Spirit’s leading in the person’s life. When giving counsel, we at times advised church members to make decisions in their life based almost wholly on the goal of “reaching the world” with the Gospel. And as noted earlier, we did not always distinguish between a command and a principle and so may have treated a scriptural principle as a command. The consequence was that a person who had received counsel in some area might feel compelled to act in what he believed was obedience to a scriptural command when, in fact, the area was one where they were free to choose how a scriptural principle applied.

Steps taken to correct. It is a great responsibility to be a leader of God’s people, and we take very seriously the warning that pastors will one day “give an account” for the lives of those in their local church. We regret that some were given pastoral authority before they were qualified and apologize for instances where we acted in an authoritarian or insensitive manner. We are committed to being sensitive to the working of the Holy Spirit in the lives of individuals, and sensitive to the impact that we, because of our position and influence as church leaders, can have on the lives of church members. It is our desire and prayer that individuals will develop personal convictions based on God’s Word, not simply their pastor’s opinion.

In order to rectify these problems, we have addressed the issue of the proper use by church leaders of their influence and authority at our annual, leader's conference, and at our regional leader's conferences as well. At these conferences, we have addressed many issues relevant to the question of a leader's authority including the importance of distinguishing between a scriptural command, principle, and preference. In addition, our pastors have, in recent years, benefitted from their efforts to interact with other evangelical churches and organizations in their area. This not only provides the pastors with new ideas and fresh perspectives on how to more effectively oversee their church, but also prevents local churches from becoming or remaining isolated from other churches in the area.

### 3. Direction, planning, and management.

**The problem.** Through the years, we have zealously pursued the Great Commission. However, our enthusiasm was not always tempered with knowledge, proper preparation, or strategic, long-term planning. A major problem was our lack of the necessary sophistication to enable us to manage a rapidly growing group of churches that were spread out across the country. Also, in the early years of our movement especially, our attitude toward church management, church growth, and the Christian life generally was, "just do it." And while we still believe there is much merit to that approach, and indeed, that it may even be a necessary approach in the early years of a new church if that church is going to be successful, we now realize that as a church grows, the leadership must begin to develop a proper balance between "planning" and "doing." Our failure at times to preface our actions with careful planning and preparation can be attributed to our youth and our desire, at times even impatience, to accomplish our goal of reaching the world. A lack of proper planning caused a number of the projects we undertook to fail, resulting in people being hurt.

**Steps taken to correct.** We regret that our lack of adequate planning prevented us from achieving certain ministry objectives we set, and apologize to those whose life or ministry was adversely affected. As we grow, we are learning to recognize the importance of careful planning and the value of a certain degree of stability in our member churches. In our attempt to retain the vision, zeal, and spontaneity of our early years while at the same time managing our churches in a competent and Godly manner, we continue to seek input from books, seminars, and the counsel of other Christian leaders. We are learning much in the area of long-term planning and are striving for an orderly, Spirit-controlled growth.

### 4. Church discipline.

**The problem.** Early on, some of us had an incorrect understanding of church discipline. In some cases, this resulted in some individuals being placed under church discipline for actions that were not, according to scriptural standards, sufficient to merit it. In other cases, we demonstrated a lack of patience and too quickly administered discipline without affording the individual adequate time for private correction.

**Steps taken to correct.** Church discipline is the most serious action that a church can take against one of its members, and it should only be imposed for offenses mandated, and according to procedures described, in the Scriptures. The realization that our churches did, in a number of cases, improperly exercise church discipline is, therefore, a very unhappy one. We sincerely apologize to those who were treated wrongly, and express our commitment to clear up such cases, even if they occurred in the very early days of our movement. Because many of our churches were only loosely affiliated for many years, we are unaware of the exact number of times that church discipline was

improperly imposed, and consequently, are unaware of the specific circumstances of each of those cases. We have made and will continue to make attempts to resolve cases of improper church discipline, and request anyone who believes that they were improperly disciplined by a Great Commission church, or who is aware of someone who was, to contact David Bovenmyer at the address noted on page 13.

To guard against future problems in this area, the Association is preparing a Book of Government that includes clear procedures that our churches must follow in exercising church discipline as well as other church judgments, including an appeal process. To insure that those procedures will be followed, the Association has developed a policy that no church discipline may be instituted without first consulting one of the Association's national leaders.

#### 5. Lack of emphasis on formal education.

The problem. Until the mid-to-late seventies, our zeal for evangelism and tendency as young people to live in the present and be shortsighted about the future resulted in a lack of emphasis on the value of a college education. We believed that because most of the Lord's disciples were uneducated, yet effective in spreading the Gospel, that we could do the same. Many of us had a lack of appreciation for the value of a college education as a building block to a successful career and life. And because we had few "worldly" responsibilities and could afford to live on a shoestring, we didn't appreciate the value of a college degree to help meet the added financial responsibilities that marriage and a family would bring. In most cases, this lack of emphasis on education resulted in a failure by church leaders to stress to students the importance of committing their time and effort to excelling in their studies, and the resulting belief that involvement with church activities was more important than schoolwork. In some cases, students at some of our churches were encouraged to leave school so they would be more free to "serve the Lord."

Our failure to stress to college students the value of pursuing their education was also, in some cases, a failure on our part to help those students honor the parents who had sent them to college. Overall, we tried to strongly encourage students to love and respect their parents, and to view their parents as God's authorities in their lives. However, by not actively supporting the commitment the parents had made to a college education for their child, we implicitly encouraged some students to choose to leave college, contrary to the wishes of their parents. This undoubtedly caused some strife within those families and contributed to strained relationships between students and their parents. For this we apologize.

Steps taken to correct. We began to address this problem in our churches in the mid-to-late seventies, and currently there is, in our churches located in college communities, a strong emphasis on pursuing a college education and the importance of excelling in that pursuit. Indeed, our mission organization, Great Commission Ministries, requires that those who wish to minister on campus as staff members have a college degree.

Concerning a student's relationship to his or her parents, Great Commission Ministries staff persons are encouraged to help students learn to honor and respect their parents and to publicly teach the Bible's clear instruction on the subject. In addition, our staff personnel manual provides information on how student leaders can help students to love and respect their parents in practical ways. Finally, seminars on the subject are given at staff training conferences.

We realize that a number of individuals made poor decisions concerning their education and career partially because of our encouragement or because of the examples they saw in our churches. To these people, we offer our sincere apology and regret that our mistakes contributed to career decisions that caused problems, financial or otherwise.

#### 6. A belief that every man should become an elder.

The problem. For many years, our churches taught that every man should aspire to become a full-time pastor/elder. Our conviction was based in part on 1 Timothy 3:1 which says:

*“Here is a trustworthy saying: If anyone sets his heart on being an overseer, he desires a noble task” (NIV).*

Because of this verse; because of other verses exhorting every Christian to seek the character qualities a pastor is required to have; and because of the large number of leaders that our churches would need to fulfill the Great Commission, we encouraged every man in our churches to aspire to become a pastor. In doing so, we mistakenly failed to emphasize the diversity of gifts that members of the body have been given, and frustrated many men by suggesting that unless their goal was to become a full-time pastor, they would never become fully mature.

Steps taken to correct. Our present position is that, while any man is free to aspire to become a pastor, and that it is indeed a very good thing to aspire to, he is not required to do so, nor is every man even encouraged to do so. The clear implication of the verse is that some will not choose to become pastors. We encourage men in our churches to consider whether the Lord would have them aspire to the work of a pastor and encourage them to develop the character qualities described in 1 Timothy 3. However, we no longer communicate, either expressly or implicitly, that the work of a pastor is God’s desire for every man.

We regret that this incorrect teaching applied pressure on individuals to aspire to become something that God did not intend, and apologize to those who suffered because of our error.

#### **Conclusion**

In preparing this statement acknowledging our early errors and weaknesses we have sought input from supporters and critics outside our association of churches, as well as perspective and feedback from leaders within. We have tried to present a balanced treatment that focuses on accurately conveying our failings while, at the same time, providing context and some sense of the many good things God was accomplishing through us. No doubt, some critics will believe that we haven’t gone far enough while some of our church leaders and members, especially those who are involved with local churches that have experienced few of these problems, may believe we went too far. It is not easy preparing a statement of this kind and we do not expect that it will satisfy everyone. However, we believe it to be a fairly comprehensive attempt to document problems we experienced in our formative years, and the steps we have taken to remedy those problems.

In the interests of clarity and brevity, we have just touched on a number of important and complex issues, e.g., the authority of a pastor, dating and marriage, church discipline, etc. The position papers that we are currently developing will address these issues in greater detail.

If anyone has questions or concerns about this statement, or about any of the issues addressed in it, please contact a pastor at your local Great Commission church or write to:

David Bovenmyer  
3611 Eisenhower Avenue  
Ames, Iowa 50010

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This statement was ratified by the pastors and national leaders of the Great Commission Association of churches on July 19, 1991.



David Bovenmyer, Secretary



GRACE

## Giving Grace to Pastors

Pastor Rick Whitney · Manhattan, KS

The word “grace” is defined as, “Unmerited, divine assistance given man for his regeneration or sanctification.”

Pretty straightforward language. At the very first, while lost, our God gave us what we did not deserve. And now when we remember His actions and thoughts towards each of us, this love will always bring us back to a posture of thankfulness.

Now as Christians, He just keeps on giving us what we don’t merit.

If we are going to imitate this kind of grace in our speech with other pastors, other leaders, we have a tall order to fill. But I am convinced that God wants us to copy Him and increase in grace, in both our conversation and actions towards our fellow leaders.

We all know that “gracious speech” is a foundational requirement for any pastor that hopes to persevere in the ministry. When I sat down to write this, I was much aware that you men already believe the importance of this scripture, “*Let your speech always be with grace, seasoned, as it were with salt*” (Colossians 4:6, NASB).

But in these GCLI papers, we hope to give you a little more “grist for the mill.” When you meet in your GCLI leaders small groups, we hope that these short essays spark conversation and good discussion.

So what could I add that would instruct and maybe inspire you to increase in the grace we need to show toward each other? I turned to my cards.

I have a fair collection of quotations, written on 3 x 5 cards, that I have kept in a drawer in my desk. Thumbing through them, I pulled the following on this topic of “Showing grace to each other through our attitude and through our speech.”

Here are the best ones that I found:

***“God is no faultfinder,  
always looking for  
things to condemn  
in us. He estimates  
us at our best,  
not our worst.”***

***- Unknown***



**“We have met the enemy and they is us.” -Pogo, a comic strip figure.**

I always need to first examine my own heart and spirit. Either before the phone call or meeting or just by routinely examining my heart every morning. First, I need to heal myself.

**“You will not become a saint through knowing about other people’s sins.”**

**-Anton Chekhov**

A gracious man doesn’t want to know some things.

**“I have more trouble with D.L. Moody, than with any other man I’ve met.”**

**-D. L. Moody**

So brothers, unless we think that we are that much more spiritual than Mr. Moody, maybe we should also begin with ourselves and work on our own walk.

**“We evaluate others with a godlike justice, but we want them to evaluate us with a godlike compassion.” -Sydney Harris**

Always remember that love speaks first with humility and always with hope.

**“How rarely we weigh our neighbor in the same balance in which we weigh ourself.”**

**-Thomas A. Kempis.**

We need to realize when we are being harsh in our spirit, because our spirit will affect our speech.

**“See everything. Overlook a great deal. Improve a little.” -Pope John XXIII**

We need to always remember how dangerous our criticisms can be. Often our words lack balance, and they are easily tainted by our personal emotions and reactions. Bee careful of too many words, words that can wear others out.

**“You cannot sin as much as God can forgive. If it comes to a pitched battle between sin and grace, you shall not be as bad as God is good. We can only sin as a man, but God can forgive as a God.”**

**-Charles Spurgeon**

Even when there are specific things we see in each other’s life, we need to remember these words.

**“Pride grows in the human heart, like lard on a pig.” -Solzhenitzyn**

This one makes me laugh and keeps me a little more careful about my own tendency to think that I can always understand a particular issue, as well as understand my brother’s heart. “My, what arrogance, Rick!”

**“If anyone would like to acquire humility, I can, I think, tell him the first step. The first step to humility is to realize that one is proud. And a big step that is.” -C.S. Lewis**

Humility is always required, if we ever hope to grow in gentle, gracious speech.

**“On the whole, God’s love for us is a much safer subject to think about than our love for Him.”**

**-C.S. Lewis**

I include this to remind us again to always search our heart first, before we speak to our brother, our brother who has God also in his heart.

**“The longer I live, the larger allowances I make for human weaknesses.” -John Wesley**

We are always called to be patient in our dealings with each other. And this patience needs to be shown through our speech.

*“The glory of  
Christianity is  
to conquer by  
forgiveness.”*

*- William Blake*



**“ ... gods fade, but God abides and in man’s heart... speaks with the clear, unconquerable cry ... of energies and hopes that cannot die.”**  
-English sonnet

**“He who trusts men will make fewer mistakes than he who distrusts them.”** -Anonymous

While we do know each other better and better as the years mount up, I would challenge you to never become pessimistic in your belief in your fellow elder and his progress and growth in the Lord. “He is completing what He has begun.”

**“No Christian pastor can be a pessimist, for Christianity is a symbol of radical optimism.”** -G.K. Chesterton

**“When you say a situation or person is hopeless, you are slamming the door in the face of God.”**  
-Charles Allen

**“If the preacher is angry, he soon puts the congregation under bondage.”** -Charles Stanley

**“It will not do for us to be all united together by yielding to one another’s mistakes.”**  
-Charles Spurgeon

This important truth forms the hub of our dilemma. What if someone is wrong? Then what? How can we practice grace and still speak truth? We need to stand for truth, but we need to stand carefully and very graciously.

**“Being a minister is just reminding people over and over, and then reminding them again, of what is most important in life.”** -Clifford Peale

As pastors, as men of God, let’s make sure that we are reminding each other about what is eternal and not talking so often about the petty, the mundane, or the trivial - those things that wait for us every Monday morning.

**“There is one sin which I believe I have never committed. I think that I have never been afraid of any of you.”** - Charles Spurgeon (speaking to his church family)

If we are afraid, we will be out of the Spirit and then always out of balance in our speech and our behavior towards each other and towards our flock.

**“I do not expect to live long...therefore I speak very plainly.”** -Robert Murray McCheyne  
Keep it simple and get to the point. This, too, can also be a mark of graciousness.

Brothers, please chew on these great words from great men. I hope they challenge you as they have continually challenged my heart for many years.

*“The grace of the Spirit comes only from heaven, and lights up the whole bodily presence.”*

*- Charles Haddon Spurgeon*



GRACE  
**Exercise**

1. What was the main lesson you learned from these articles?

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2. How do you, as a leader, personally stay strong in grace? What practical steps do you take?

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3. In what way would you like to see your family grow in the area of grace? What practical steps can you take to see this become a reality?

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GRACE  
**Exercise**

4. Dave Bovenmyer wrote about a time when GCC took some steps to confess wrongs and weaknesses to members and former members of the movement. Is there anything in the history of your church that might lead the church leadership to take a similar step of humility toward members and former members?

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5. In what way can your church grow in the area of grace? What practical steps can you and the other leaders in the GCLI program take to see this become a reality?

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GRACE / THE DOCTRINE OF THE SCRIPTURES

**Grace, Works, and Lordship**

We are saved by grace, not by works. But what part do our works have in this life we live before God? Dave Bovenmyer explores this critical issue of grace, works, and Lordship of Jesus Christ.





## Grace, Works, and Lordship

Pastor Dave Bovenmyer · Ames, IA

### 1. What verses teach that salvation is by grace and not by works?

The GCC statement of faith says: “Men and women are freed from the penalty for their sins not as a result, in whole or in part, of their own works, goodness or religious ceremony, but by the undeserved favor of God alone. God declares righteous all who put their faith in Christ alone for their salvation.”

The truth that we are reconciled to God by the grace and mercy of God and not by our good works is taught all throughout the New Testament--in the Gospels, the Book of Acts and in the Epistles.

In the Gospels, we see that, surprisingly, Jesus’ chief enemies were not flagrant sinners, but those who claimed to be righteous. By and large, the Pharisees did demonstrate a greater zeal for God and for righteousness than the average Jew, yet they were not saved. On the other hand, many of Jesus’ closest friends were tax collectors, former prostitutes, and other sinners. Jesus demonstrated an incredible acceptance of repentant sinners. For example, He defended and forgave a woman caught in the very act of adultery (John 8:2-11). And He welcomed a woman who had a sinful life and let her wash His feet with her tears, kiss them, and wipe them with her hair (Luke 7:36-39). He won Zacchaeus through His acceptance in spite of the sinful, greedy life Zacchaeus had led. And He chose Levi, a former tax collector as one of his apostles. Certainly, none of these folks were saved by their own righteousness.

Jesus’ teaching agreed with His practice. In response to accusations that He was hanging out with undesirable types, He said that it is not the healthy who need a doctor, but the sick. He said that He had not come to call the righteous, but sinners (Matthew 9:13). He told the story of two men who came to pray, one a Pharisee and the other a tax collector. The Pharisee thanked God that he was not like other men- robbers, evildoers, adulterers. But the tax collector would not even lift up his eyes to Heaven, but beat his breast and said, “*God, have mercy on me, a sinner.*” Jesus concluded His story with the statement, “*I tell you that this man, rather than the other, went home justified before God. For everyone who exalts himself will be humbled, and he who humbles himself will be exalted*” (Luke 18:10-14). And in Luke 15, again in response to accusations that He welcomed sinners, Jesus gave us perhaps the most powerful statement in the scripture of God’s grace and forgiving attitude toward sinners-the parables of the lost sheep, the lost coin, and the lost son.

The Book of Acts also teaches that salvation is by grace through faith, not by works of righteousness or works of the law.

*“Jesus Christ never died for our good works. They were not worth dying for. But He gave Himself for our sins, according to the Scriptures.”*

*- Martin Luther*

*“Therefore, my brothers, I want you to know that through Jesus the forgiveness of sins is proclaimed to you. Through him everyone who believes is justified from everything you could not be justified from by the law of Moses” (Acts 13:38-39).*

*“God, who knows the heart, showed that he accepted them (the first Gentiles to be saved) by giving the Holy Spirit to them, just as he did to us. He made no distinction between us and them, for he purified their hearts by faith. Now then, why do you try to test God by putting on the necks of the disciples a yoke (the Law of Moses) that neither we nor our fathers have been able to bear? No! We believe it is through the grace of our Lord Jesus that we are saved, just as they are” (Acts 15:8- 11).*

*“All the prophets testify about him that everyone who believes in him receives forgiveness of sins through his name” (Acts 10:43).*

*“He then brought them out and asked, ‘Sirs, what must I do to be saved?’ They replied, ‘Believe in the Lord Jesus, and you will be saved-you and your household’” (Acts 16:30-31).*

The epistles, as well, clearly and powerfully teach that salvation is by grace, through faith, not by works of righteousness. The following verses are a sampling of verses in the Epistles that teach salvation by grace through faith. They are extremely clear, so I will not comment upon them, other than to highlight some phrases.

*“At one time we too were foolish, disobedient, deceived, and enslaved by all kinds of passions and pleasures. We lived in malice and envy, being hated and hating one another. 4But when the kindness and love of God our Savior appeared, 5he saved us, not because of righteous things we had done, but because of his mercy. He saved us through the washing of rebirth and renewal by the Holy Spirit, 6whom he poured out on us generously through Jesus Christ our Savior, 7so that, having been justified by his grace, we might become heirs having the hope of eternal life” (Titus 3:3- 7).*

*“But because of his great love for us, God, who is rich in mercy, made us alive with Christ even when we were dead in transgressions-it is by grace you have been saved. . . And God raised us up with Christ and seated us with him in the heavenly realms in Christ Jesus, in order that in the coming ages he might show the incomparable riches of his grace, expressed in his kindness to us in Christ Jesus. 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 2:4-9).*

*“Therefore no one will be declared righteous in his sight by observing the law; rather, through the law we become conscious of sin. But now a righteousness from God, apart from law, has been made known, to which the Law and the Prophets testify. This righteousness from God comes through faith in Jesus Christ to all who believe. There is no difference, for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, and are justified freely by his grace through the redemption that came by Christ Jesus. God presented him as a sacrifice of atonement, through faith in his blood” (Romans 3:20-25).*

***“Grace is the good pleasure of God that inclines Him to bestow benefits upon the undeserving.... Its use to us sinful men is to save us and make us sit together in heavenly places to demonstrate to the ages the exceeding riches of God’s kindness to us in Christ Jesus.”***

***-A.W.Tozer***

***“For grace is given not because we have done good works, but in order that we may be able to do them.”***

***- Augustine***

*“What then shall we say that Abraham, our forefather, discovered in this matter? If, in fact, Abraham was justified by works, he had something to boast about- but not before God. What does the Scripture say? ‘Abraham believed God, and it was credited to him as righteousness.’ Now when a man works, his wages are not credited to him as a gift, but as an obligation. However, to the man who does not work but trusts God who justifies the wicked, his faith is credited as righteousness” (Romans 4:1-5).*

*“Therefore, the promise comes by faith, so that it may be by grace and may be guaranteed to all Abraham’s offspring-not only to those who are of the law but also to those who are of the faith of Abraham. He is the father of us all” (Romans 4:16).*

*“For if, by the trespass of the one man (Adam), death reigned through that one man, how much more will those who receive God’s abundant provision of grace and of the gift of righteousness reign in life through the one man, Jesus Christ” (Romans 5:17).*

*“It [God’s salvation] does not, therefore, depend on man’s desire or effort, but on God’s mercy” (Romans 9:16).*

*“What then shall we say? That the Gentiles, who did not pursue righteousness, have obtained it, a righteousness that is by faith; but Israel, who pursued a law of righteousness, has not attained it. Why not? Because they pursued it not by faith but as if it were by works. They stumbled over the ‘stumbling stone.’ As it is written: ‘See, I lay in Zion a stone that causes men to stumble and a rock that makes them fall, and the one who trusts in him will never be put to shame.’ Brothers, my heart’s desire and prayer to God for the Israelites is that they may be saved. For I can testify about them that they are zealous for God, but their zeal is not based on knowledge. Since they did not know the righteousness that comes from God and sought to establish their own, they did not submit to God’s righteousness. Christ is the end of the law so that there may be righteousness for everyone who believes” (Romans 9:30-10:4).*

From the Epistles, many other verses teaching salvation by grace through faith apart from works could be added to these—from Colossians, Hebrews, 1 Peter, and almost the entire book of Galatians.

## **2. Certainly the Scriptures teach that we are saved by faith. But surely some good works couldn’t hurt?**

Is not salvation a combination of faith and works?

By definition, grace is unmerited favor. As we have seen in so many verses, salvation is an unmerited gift, received by faith. If conditions other than faith are required, then salvation is no longer free. Paul states this clearly in Romans 11:6, *“And if by grace, then it is no longer by works; if it were, grace would no longer be grace.”*

## **3. But doesn’t James 2 teach that we are justified by works and not faith alone? How can this be reconciled with the many verses that teach salvation by faith alone?**

Like most words the Greek word translated “work” has various meanings. In the context of the verses just quoted from several of Paul’s letters, it is used in the sense of works of the law or works of righ-



teousness. In these verses, the term is referring to deeds done by a person in an effort to establish his own self-righteousness or to achieve salvation. The term is not referring to any and every act or decision that a human being could make. This is clear because the term is contrasted with the word “faith” or “believe.” Yet believing is something that a person does. Faith is an act, a choice, made by a person. Yet it is not a “work” in the sense that Paul is using the term—an attempt to establish our own goodness or self-righteousness or to gain salvation through our own merit. Rather, faith is just the opposite. It is an abandonment of any trust in our own self-righteousness and self-effort and a trust in the work of Christ as the sole means of justification. Yet faith is still something that we do.

James, in chapter two of his epistle uses the same word “works” as Paul, yet he is using it in a different sense than Paul was in the verses quoted above. Let’s look at what James wrote:

*“What good is it, my brothers, if a man claims to have faith but has no deeds? Can such faith save him? Suppose a brother or sister is without clothes and daily food. If one of you says to him, ‘Go, I wish you well; keep warm and well fed,’ but does nothing about his physical needs, what good is it? In the same way, faith by itself, if it is not accompanied by action, is dead. But someone will say, ‘You have faith; I have deeds. Show me your faith without deeds, and I will show you my faith by what I do.’ You believe that there is one God. Good! Even the demons believe that—and shudder. You foolish man, do you want evidence that faith without deeds is useless? Was not our ancestor Abraham considered righteous for what he did when he offered his son Isaac on the altar? You see that his faith and his actions were working together, and his faith was made complete by what he did. And the scripture was fulfilled that says, ‘Abraham believed God, and it was credited to him as righteousness,’ and he was called God’s friend. You see that a person is justified by what he does and not by faith alone” (James 2:14-24).*

Right off the bat, we see that the issue in James’ mind was the genuineness of faith - “*If a man claims to have faith.*” James is talking about deeds (throughout the passage he uses the same word “works” that Paul used) that are an evidence of faith, not about works of righteousness done to obtain salvation through self effort. He is saying that faith, without any accompanying deeds, is not true faith at all, “*Can such faith save him?*” Notice that the examples of Abraham and Rahab that James points to are not works that were done in an effort to achieve self-righteousness or to gain justification through good works. Abraham was commended for being willing to kill his own son, hardly a work of self-righteousness. Rather, Abraham’s “work” was an action that was a direct result of faith—a work of faith.

Rahab lied and deceived and was disloyal to her countrymen, again hardly the kind of deeds someone would do in an attempt to become more righteous or to be justified before God through personal righteousness. Certainly Rahab was not justified by her upstanding moral life (she was a prostitute), but by her faith. And hiding the spies was an action that was a direct result of her faith. James’ conclusion is that “a person is justified by what he does and not by faith alone,” must be understood in the context of his argument. His whole point is that genuine faith will result in deeds that evidence that faith. He is not arguing that our own works or deeds achieve or help achieve our salvation or that we should trust in them as a basis for our salvation. Rather, they are evidences that our faith is genuine. Salvation is

***“What is said in the passage [James 2:14 ff.] is like a two coupon train or bus ticket. One coupon says, ‘Not good if detached’ and the other says, ‘Not good for passage.’ Works are not good for passage; but faith detached from works is not saving faith.”***

***- Charles C. Ryrie***

*"I charge you by the concern we bear for one another's souls and by the love of God that you warn and exhort me with patience if you see in me those turnings back of heart that I do not perceive in the blindness of my flesh."*

*- Jim Elliot*

by faith alone, yet God is the only one who knows with absolute certainty whether a person has truly believed. To the rest of us, our actions demonstrate whether our faith is genuine or not.

Other New Testament writers agree with James. In Acts 26:20, Paul stated: *"First to those in Damascus, then to those in Jerusalem and in all Judea, and to the Gentiles also, I preached that they should repent and turn to God and prove their repentance by their deeds."* John the Baptist challenged his listeners to, *"Produce fruit in keeping with repentance"* (Matthew 3:8). And Jesus stated, *"By their fruit you will recognize them"* (Matthew 7:16). Many other verses teach this same truth.

**4. Salvation is by grace through faith apart from works. Yet deeds of faith are necessary evidences of genuine faith. How do we keep these two issues straight when preaching the gospel? In particular, what about the contemporary issue of "Lordship Salvation?" Must we emphasize the Lordship of Christ?**

The remainder of this article is a paper I wrote several years ago in an attempt to help reconcile differences within our movement on the issue of "Lordship Salvation." It was written after much input and interaction from the movement's pastors.

**Lordship Salvation.** When discussing "Lordship Salvation" and "Easy Believism," several issues come to mind - 1) Does a person have to acknowledge Jesus as his personal Lord, or can he first accept Jesus as Savior and later as Lord? 2) Is it necessary to "repent" to be saved? 3) What works are necessary to evidence salvation? 4) What place does the law have in evangelism? 5) Should we preach the "discipleship" verses in our evangelism?

Jesus as Lord. The issue behind the first question is not simply, "must we acknowledge Jesus as Lord," but also "must we acknowledge that God is our Lord?" Obedience to Christ and obedience to God the Father are synonymous, since the Son never does anything on His own initiative or apart from the Father (John 8:28). So there is a broader question that I believe is the real issue: Must a person acknowledge that God is Lord and that he is responsible to submit to Him as Lord?

I believe that the answer is an emphatic "Yes!" It is impossible for someone to truly accept Christ as Savior and not as Lord.

1. God our creator is "The only Sovereign" and "Lord of all." If a person does not accept and believe that God has the right to command his personal obedience, he does not believe in the true God, but a lesser God of his own invention who does not require such accountability.
2. If someone does not believe that God is to be obeyed as Lord, he does not understand or believe in sin, since sin, at its root, is disobedience to the commands of God.
3. If someone does not believe in sin, he does not believe that there will be judgment for sin. Neither will he believe in salvation, nor see any need for it.

Needless to say, a person who does not believe in the true God, does not believe in sin, does not believe in judgment, and does not believe he needs salvation cannot be saved until these beliefs are changed. He may say a prayer to ask Jesus into his life, but he cannot be saved without understanding, believing, and accepting that God and Christ are Lord, that he has rebelled against that Lordship by disobeying

God, that God will judge him for his disobedience, and that Christ took this judgment in his place.

So it seems obvious that for us to accept Christ as Savior, we must first acknowledge and accept that He is Lord. Otherwise what are we being saved from? If God and Christ are not Lord, then we need no Savior. Accepting Christ as Savior predisposes accepting God and Christ as Lord and as our Lord. Accepting that God and Christ are Lord is a prerequisite to accepting Him as Savior. If, however, we change the question from “must a person acknowledge Christ as Lord” to “must a person make Christ his Lord”-and by this we mean that a person must stop sinning or clean up his life or become more righteous before God will accept him-then the answer is an emphatic “no.” Christ did not come to call the righteous, but sinners (Matthew 9:13). God credits righteousness, not to the man who works, but to the man who “*does not work, but trusts God who justifies the wicked*” (Romans 4:5, NIV). We must be careful not to add any conditions to God’s grace; otherwise we will nullify God’s grace (Romans 11:6).

Must a person desire or want God and Christ to be his Lord? It would seem that he must, in the sense of accepting and yielding to the fact that God and Christ are Lord and his personal Lord. However, in some cases, people may do so reluctantly or even grudgingly at first. To be born again, a person need not comprehend the full extent of His lordship, or yield to His lordship in “all areas of life.” In reality, it is impossible to yield to Christ’s lordship in all areas of life at any particular point in time. Such yielding can only occur at the points in life where obedience is required. Submission to Christ is not a once-for-all experience, but a lifelong activity. The Lordship of Christ is something that is not discovered and yielded to once, but thousands of times. It must be renewed every day in many acts of trust and obedience.

Often a believer will come to a point in life where he comes under deep conviction in certain areas of life and decides to surrender himself “totally” to the Lord. All of us, as we grow in our faith, discover areas in which the Lord is asking for obedience that prior to that time we had no idea He would demand. Or we find ourselves resisting God even in a familiar command and must again decide to yield to His Lordship. Such yielding can produce a peace and fruit beyond anything we had previously known. But a fuller understanding and fuller yielding to Christ’s lordship does not necessarily mean that Christ was not our Lord prior to that point, no matter how dramatic it may be. It is wrong to conclude that we first accepted Christ as Savior and then later as Lord-as we have seen, that is impossible. Rather, we came to more fully comprehend the extent of His Lordship and yielded to that Lordship in a greater way than we ever had before.

**Repentance.** If repentance, at its root, means a change of mind and a turning from an old way of thinking (and resultant actions) to a new way of thinking (and resultant actions), then it is impossible to be saved without it. Believing in Christ always involves a change of mind. In some cases, people will need to repent of worshipping idols rather than the true God, as Paul exhorted the Athenians to do in Acts 17. In Acts 2, Peter exhorted the first-century Jews to repent of their rejecting and crucifying the Messiah.

*“Cheap grace is the idea that ‘grace’ did it all for me so I do not need to change my lifestyle. The believer who accepts the idea of ‘cheap grace’ thinks he can continue to live like the rest of the world. Instead of following Christ in a radical way, the Christian lost in cheap grace thinks he can simply enjoy the consolations of his grace.”*

*- Dietrich Bonhoeffer*

***“People who are crucified with Christ have three distinct marks:  
1. They are facing only one direction,  
2. They can never turn back, and  
3. They no longer have plans of their own.”***

*-A.W. Tozer*

It would seem that a primary work of the evangelist would be to discern what it is for which a person needs to repent and exhort them to do so. In some cases, they may need to repent about their false concept of God. In other cases people may already understand that God and Christ are Lord and that they have violated that Lordship, but the area in which they need to repent is trusting in their own works for salvation, rather than in the finished work of Christ. Many Jews and Pharisees were in this category. They acknowledged the Lordship of God, but they needed to repent of their self-righteousness and of trusting in their own works for salvation and needed to trust in Christ, God’s provision for their sin.

We need to be skilled in ascertaining in what area a person needs to repent. It would seem that at some point, everyone must repent of their attitude of rebellion and disobedience to God. Yet in some cases, the evangelist will find that a person has already repented of his sinful disobedience, and in fact is sick and tired of sin and desperately wants to be free from sin. Take for example Martin Luther or John Wesley. Both detested their sin and were desperate for change. The area that they needed to repent in was trusting in their own efforts instead of Christ’s.

Repentance is a broader concept than is commonly supposed and it is the job of the evangelist to ascertain where a person needs repentance and to exhort him to repent (change his mind) in that area.

When sharing the gospel, if we use the word “repentance,” we should be careful to define it, especially since some might view repentance as a cleansing of our life from sin prior to salvation.

**Evidence of salvation.** Genuine faith and repentance will always result in a change of life and a change of actions. John the Baptist warned the Pharisees and Sadducees that their repentance was not genuine, since it had not produced fruit, saying, “*bring forth fruit in keeping with repentance*” (Matthew 3:8, KJV).

In Matthew 7:15-23, Jesus gave us instruction on how to discern a true prophet from a false one, and that instruction had to do with the fruit of the person’s life. Then He went on to give us a means of confirming our own salvation. Many will think they are right with God, but only those who do the “will of the Father” and are not “evildoers” are truly right with God.

The Apostle John gives much instruction about how we can know that we ourselves and others are truly born of God. These include:

- Obeying His commands (I John 2:3)
- Obeying His word (I John 2:5)
- Walking as Jesus walked (I John 2:6)
- Loving our brothers and not hating them (I John 2:9-11)
- Not continuing to sin (I John 3:5-10)
- Doing what is right (I John 3:10)
- Loving our brother (I John 4:7-8)

Doing these things does not gain salvation for anyone, but they are given by John as evidences of salvation.

Paul also teaches that deeds are a result and evidence of genuine faith:

*“The acts of the sinful nature are obvious: sexual immorality, impurity and debauchery; idolatry and witchcraft; hatred, discord, jealousy, fits of rage, selfish ambition, dissensions, factions and envy; drunkenness, orgies, and the like. I warn you, as I did before, that those who live like this will not inherit the kingdom of God. But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control. Against such things there is no law. Those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the sinful nature with its passions and desires” (Galatians 5:19-24).*

*“For of this you can be sure: No immoral, impure or greedy person—such a man is an idolater—has an inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and God. Let no one deceive you with empty words, for because of such things God’s wrath comes on those who are disobedient. Therefore do not be partners with them. For you were once darkness, but now you are light in the Lord. Live as children of light (for the fruit of the light consists in all goodness, righteousness and truth) and find out what pleases the Lord” (Ephesians 5:5-10, NIV).*

*“Do YOU not know that the wicked will not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived: Neither the sexually immoral nor idolaters nor adulterers nor male prostitutes nor homosexual offenders nor thieves nor the greedy nor drunkards nor slanderers nor swindlers will inherit the kingdom of God. And that is what some of you were. But you were washed, you were sanctified, you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and by the Spirit of our God” (1 Corinthians 6:9-11, NIV).*

The question arises, “How much fruit must a person display before we can be certain he has believed?” In Matthew 13:23, Jesus said that some who believed would produce more fruit than others, “*He produces a crop, yielding a hundred, sixty or thirty times what was sown.*”

But we cannot necessarily conclude that someone who claims to be a believer is not really born again simply because they sin a lot. The Corinthian church was filled with all kinds of worldliness, jealousy, arguments, immorality, self-exaltation, etc. Some were weak and sick and some had even died because they were partaking of the Lord’s supper with drunkenness, selfishness, and strife. Yet, Paul saw this as the Lord’s discipline upon believers and said that those who had died had “fallen asleep”—his term for the death of a believer.

Yet, in 2 Corinthians, Paul was concerned that some of the Corinthians had perhaps not yet repented of their “quarreling, jealousy, outbursts of anger, factions, slander, gossip, arrogance and disorder.” He then exhorts them: “*Examine yourselves to see whether you are in the faith; test yourselves. Do you not realize that Christ Jesus is in you—unless, of course, you fail the test*” (2 Corinthians 13:5)? With a continued lack of change, Paul was beginning to have doubts about whether some of them were really born again.

***“That is why He warned people to ‘count the cost’ before becoming Christians. ‘Make no mistake,’ He says, ‘if you let me, I will make you perfect. The moment you put yourself in My hands, that is what you are in for. Nothing less, or other than that.’”***

***- C.S. Lewis***



Perhaps our conclusion should be that the more fruit someone demonstrates, the more confident we can be that their faith is genuine. If someone is flagrantly sinning and demonstrates little fruit of righteousness, we would certainly have reason to doubt their salvation. And if they continue to sin for a long period of time or if they do not demonstrate a love for God or His people, we could legitimately conclude that they most likely were never born again.

**The place of the law in evangelism.** The law has a valuable function in evangelism:

- “...through the law we become conscious of sin” (Romans 3:20).
- “...I would not have known what sin was except through the law” (Romans 7:7).
- “[The law came] that sin might be recognized as sin” (Romans 7:13).
- “...Law has become our tutor to lead us to Christ” (Galatians 3:24).
- The law, used properly, is for the “ungodly and sinful. . .” (I Timothy 1:8-11).

So the law is of great use in this ungodly generation to bring people to the knowledge that they have sinned against a loving and holy God. Perhaps if we used the law more with “secularists,” we would have a larger number of genuine conversions.

**Discipleship verses.** As we have seen, all believers must believe in and accept God and Christ as their Lord. This would certainly make them a disciple (student) of Christ. As such, they should give their lives to Him and make it their ambition to love, serve, and follow Him with all their might. If someone consistently refused to do so, to whatever degree that is, there would be question that he is truly born of God. There seems to be no hard and fast delineation between salvation and discipleship in the teaching and ministry of Jesus, since some of the discipleship verses refer to the salvation of the soul.

But the question I would like to address is whether we should emphasize the discipleship verses initially in our evangelism—from the start confronting people with the need to forsake all and take up a cross (in the first-century society the cross was their electric chair). Perhaps we should take a look at what the Lord did in His evangelism, since He was, no doubt, the greatest evangelist ever.

Our Lord’s message, was “good news.” Concerning what He preached, Jesus said:

*“The Spirit of the Lord is on me, because he has anointed me to preach good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim freedom for the prisoners and recovery of sight for the blind, release to the oppressed, to proclaim the year of the Lord’s favor”* (Luke 4:18-19). He came *“not to condemn the world, but to save the world”* (John 3:17). His message was extremely attractive; in fact it was wildly intoxicating to those who believed it. He preached, *“Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand”* (Matthew 4:17). This Kingdom is what the Jewish nation had been anticipating for centuries. His message offered the crowds *“rest,”* an *“easy yoke,”* and a *“light burden”* (Matthew 11:28-30). He offered *“living water”* that would cause people to never thirst again (John 4:10-13, 7:37). He promised, as the *“bread of life,”* to satisfy their innermost needs and desires. He said, *“I am the light of the world”* (John 8:12). He promised salvation and life abundantly (John 10:7-9). He promised eternal life and eternal security—*“they shall never perish”* (John 10:28).

*“Grace will save a man... but it will not save him and his idol.”*

—A.W.Tozer

But His message was not only attractive, it was also backed up with incredible supernatural power. Imagine what it would be like if someone came to your city, went to a hospital, and healed everyone he laid hands on. Then he went on to the next hospital and did the same... and then to the next and the next. It would be the biggest news of the century. NBC, CBS, ABC, and every other news outlet would be there. So would every sick person who could possibly come. This is exactly what was happening with Jesus (Matthew 4:23-24, 8:16, 9:35, 15:30-31, 19:2, 21:14). The multitudes were filled with excitement and euphoria.

*"The law detects, grace alone conquers sin."*

- Augustine

At times, Jesus made efforts to calm the euphoria. He told people to keep quiet about their healing (Luke 8:56). When He realized that they intended to come and make him king by force, He withdrew to a place where they couldn't find Him (John 6:15). And, at least twice, He publicly preached a "discipleship" message, urging people to count the cost of following Him. (The first time is recorded in Matthew 16:24, Mark 8:34-38, and Luke 9:23. The second is in Luke 14:25-33.) But He preached these messages to crowds that, apparently, had already professed to believe and had decided to follow along with Him as He traveled.

At times, Jesus did clearly challenge some men to discipleship right from the start - i.e. the rich young ruler in Matthew 19:16-30 and some others in Luke 9:57-62. Yet, usually, He asked people to follow Him with little or no initial mention of the costs of discipleship. This was true with Andrew and another disciple, to whom He simply said "*Follow me*" (John 1:43). Then again to Andrew and Peter, James and John, He said, "*Come, follow me, and I will make you fishers of men*" (Matthew 4:19). The same for Levi: "*Follow Me*" (Matthew 9:9). It seems that even His initial call to His most loyal followers did not include a message to forsake all or take up a cross, although following Him did include leaving their business. But leaving a business does not seem hard to ones who think that in a very short time, they will be reigning with the Messiah in His Kingdom. It appears that He did not share with them the "discipleship" verses until later in His ministry, after He had modeled a life of discipleship and had given them a taste of discipleship and ministry for themselves. Then, shortly before His death, He told them what was going to happen to Him and laid out the cost of discipleship if they were to continue following Him (Matthew 16:24-26).

In summary, it seems that, usually, Jesus' message did not initially include a call to forsake all or to take up an electric chair. Rather, He seemed to approach people with words of salvation, rest, forgiveness, healing, freedom, favor, and the coming of the Kingdom of God. Of course, He did also preach repeatedly about sin, righteousness, repentance, and the coming judgment, all in an effort to bring people to a point of repentance and faith.

Jesus was wildly popular with tens of thousands of "seekers." He spoke and ministered to all kinds of undevoted, undedicated people. Twice that we know of, He spoke to the crowds in such a way that many of them left. Yet at most times it did not seem to bother Him that there were huge crowds of people with all kinds of levels of commitment, from curiosity seekers and antagonists to loyal followers. His strategy seemed to be to train a core of loyal followers as He ministered to the crowds of the less committed. Yet even these loyal followers did not understand discipleship, but had their minds set on the things of man, rather than the things of God (Matthew 16:23). At the end of His life, there were none, apart from a few women, who stood with Him. And even after the resurrection, there were only 120 disciples in the upper room. Yet, this lack of commitment on the part of the crowds did not stop

our Lord from ministering to the crowds, nor did it discourage Him. His hope was rightly placed in His disciples, to whom He entrusted the task of taking the gospel to the ends of the earth.

I don't think it is wise to try to weed out all insincere people by initially overemphasizing the difficulties of following Christ. Neither do I believe it is proper to criticize Christian leaders who at times have a large following of uncommitted people, or to assume that their message is errant or soft. Certainly we err if we compromise any truth because of a desire to attract or hold a crowd. And it would be a mistake of strategy to make the crowds a priority over training loyal disciples. Yet we must be careful to really find out what is going on in a particular ministry before assuming that there has been compromise or a defection from the gospel, or a lack of training fully committed disciples.

*"If you believe what you like in the Gospel, and reject what you don't like, it is not the Gospel you believe, but yourself."*

*- Augustine*

### **Conclusions:**

1. It is impossible to receive Jesus as Savior and later receive Him as Lord.
2. Repentance (a change of mind) is necessary for salvation, but the idea of repentance is broader than is commonly thought. It is the job of the evangelist to ascertain where an individual needs to repent.
3. Works of faith will always accompany true faith. We can know if a person has genuinely believed by his fruit.
4. The law is very helpful in evangelism and will point out a person's sin and need of salvation.
5. Although discipleship was a part of Jesus' message, He did not normally preach the "discipleship" verses initially when He preached the good news, but preached them later to those who had already professed to believe.







GRACE, WORKS, AND LORDSHIP

**Exercise**

1. What was the main lesson you learned from these articles?

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2. Reflect back on when you were saved. Is what Dave Bovenmyer says about the necessity of recognizing Jesus as Lord and the necessity for repentance in order to be saved consistent with what happened in your salvation experience? Please explain.

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3. Evaluate your gospel message. Based on this article, do you share adequately “the law” with those you desire to see come to Christ? What hinders you from being bold in proclaiming the law as well as the cross of Christ?

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GRACE, WORKS, AND LORDSHIP**Exercise**

4. Suppose you see a person in the church who is continually sinning. If you were to approach that person and urge him/her to obey the Lord, would you in the course of the conversation question that person's salvation? Why or why not?

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5. Do you believe the gospel presentation given publicly in church (on Sunday morning or at other meetings) have been (based on this article) accurate and effective presentations of the gospel message? Please explain.

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GRACE / THE DOCTRINE OF THE SCRIPTURES

## **The Inerrancy of the Scriptures**

In this article, Doug Brown addresses a very important issue: the inerrancy of the Scriptures. This truth - that the Scriptures are without error - is vital to know and to believe as a leader of God's church in the 21st century.





## The Inerrancy of the Scriptures

Pastor Doug Brown · Lee's Summit, MO

### 1. The Issue: *Can the Bible be trusted?*

Can I trust the Bible? This is a primary question for all ages, especially for the postmodern world. We live in an age where everything is said to be relative. We are told, "There is no truth." The Bible has been relegated to merely a reference book among many books instead of being acknowledged as the Word of God.

Postmodern man no longer accepts the statement, "The Bible says," as authoritative. In fact, he asks the question, "Why should I trust or believe the Bible?" or, "How do you know the Bible is correct since it was written by men?" "What right does the Bible have to tell me what I can or can't do?" "How do you know that the Bible is not full of errors?" "Hasn't science disproved the Bible?" "Since the Bible has been translated so many times, how can you be sure that the Bible is without error and that it won't lead you astray?"

These questions are not just being asked by the "secular" world, but also by some evangelical Christians. There are some that believe in limited inerrancy – that the Bible is inerrant in matters related to salvation and doctrine, but either has, or may have, errors in issues of science, history, or geography. The reason for this is not that there have been new discoveries to discredit the Bible, but from attempts to harmonize the Bible with modern science and intellectualism.

If the Bible is errant then how could it be God's revelation? How could it be reliable, authoritative, and trustworthy? The ultimate question goes to the very heart and character of God—has He spoken and can He be trusted?

In Genesis 3:1, the Serpent posed this very question to Eve: "*Indeed has God said...?*" Then the Serpent went on to call God a liar who could not be trusted. He caused Eve to doubt what God had said and as a result, she bit into his lie hook, line, and sinker. In the confrontation with Jesus, the Devil subtly tries to get Jesus to doubt God's Word as well. What were the last words which Jesus heard from the Father before He was led into the wilderness? It was at Jesus' baptism when the Lord said, "*This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased*" (Matthew 3:17). Then, when Jesus faced Satan, what did the Devil say? He did not say, "Since you are the Son of God turn these stones into bread." Instead, he said, "*If you are the Son of God...*" (Matthew 4:3, emphasis mine).

*"If we compare the present state of the New Testament text with that of any other ancient writing, we must... declare it to be marvelously correct. Such has been the care with which the New Testament has been copied - a care which has doubtless grown out of true reverence for its holy words.... The New Testament is unrivaled among ancient writings in the purity of its text as actually transmitted and kept in use."*

- Benjamin Warfield

Again, we see the Devil casting doubt on the veracity of God and His Word. Yet, in contrast to Eve, Jesus does not buy into the lie. Rather, Jesus remains submitted to the authority of Scripture when He responds with, “*It is written...*”(Matthew 4:4).

“Can the Bible be trusted?” is not just an academic question. It is a matter of life and death. We would do well to follow in the footsteps of Jesus and remain submitted to the Word of God, trusting in the character of God and the truth of His Word. In this paper, we will look at the biblical basis for such a confidence that indeed God has spoken.

***“Be astounded that  
God should have  
written to us.”***

***- St. Antony of Egypt***

## **2. The Bible and its Authority: *Isn't the Bible just another reference book?***

If the Bible is the Word of God, then it must speak as the supreme authority. There are various evidences for believing the Bible to be God's Word. Although I do believe that the autographs (original biblical documents) were God breathed, it is not the scope of this paper to be an apologetic for the inspiration of the Word of God.

The Bible does not receive its authority from men, man's traditions, the Church, Church creeds, or any other source. Rather, the Bible stands on its own as the authoritative Word of God-sola scriptura. Having said this, I want to be very clear: We do not worship the Bible, but the Author of it. God has spoken and we should receive it with reverence, humility, and respond to what God says. The Bible supercedes all other books, for it is the very Word of God. It is one of God's great gifts to us. The Scripture is made up of 66 books: 39 Old Testament and 27 New Testament. In the Bible, God reveals Himself to mankind. He reveals His nature and character, His love and redemptive plan for all mankind. The Old Testament lays the foundation. The New builds on it. The Old expects the coming and promised Messiah. The New experiences Him. In the Old, paradise with God was lost. In the New, paradise is restored: “*for we shall see His face*” (Revelation 22:4).

The Bible is our light in a dark place. It is our guide—our moral and spiritual compass. Job said of God's Word, “*I treasured the words of His mouth more than my necessary food*” (Job 23:12b). The Psalmist declares the Word is a light to our path and a lamp to our feet (Psalm 119:105). Jesus claimed that, “*Man does not live on bread alone, but on every word that comes from the mouth of God*” (Matthew 4:4, NIV).

In this paper, I endeavor to take a closer look at Jesus' attitude toward the Scripture. Did Jesus believe the Scripture to be inspired by God? Did Jesus teach the Word of God to be authoritative and without error? Did Jesus say anything about the New Testament that was not written yet?

Why should we listen to the witness of Jesus? If anyone should know anything about the Scripture, Jesus is the one. He is the Word (John 1:1). He is God who became man and revealed God to us (John 1:1,14,18). He is the truth (John 14:6). Jesus is the central theme of the Scripture (John 5:39, Luke 24:44). If anyone can speak authoritatively about the Scripture, it is the Lord. There are scholarly critics today, just like in Jesus' day, who do not accept the authority of the Scriptures. Jesus refuted the critics of His day in their attempt to disavow the Word of God. For example, some Sadducees came up to Jesus to challenge Him and His understanding of Scripture. The Sadducees did not believe in resurrection. Jesus astounded and shut up His critics in His defense of the inspired Word of God, “*Have you not read*

***“The faith will totter if the authority of the Holy Scriptures loses its hold on men.”***

*- Augustine*

*what was spoken to you by God, saying I am the God of Abraham... God is not the God of the dead but of the living” (Matthew 22:31-32, emphasis mine).*

The fact of the resurrection is proved by Jesus from a present tense verb instead of a past tense. Jesus believed in the supreme authority and inspiration even to the very verb tenses.

### **3. The Bible and its Origin: *What is the origin of the Word of God?***

The Bible from Genesis to Revelation is the written revelation given by God. The Bible is not the result of human imagination or cleverly devised myths. The word “revelation” means that God has communicated to man what otherwise he would not know, nor could ever discover by himself. Because God has revealed Himself to us through creation, the Word of God, and Jesus Christ, we can know God. Jesus used the Scripture (i.e., the Old Testament) extensively and exclusively to teach us about God and His purposes. Without hesitation or doubt, Jesus taught the Scriptures as the very Word of God. In John 10:34-35, for example, He called Scripture the Word of God. In the wilderness temptation with the Devil, He relied on the Word for His own life and referred to it again as the Word of God (Matthew 4:4).

Jesus regularly identified the Old Testament as Scripture, the Word of God, or the Law. “By ‘the Word’ we are given to understand that Jesus accepted it as a communication from God. In his use of the term ‘Scripture’ we perceive that he approved it, in its written form, as intended, for common use. And when he called it ‘The Law’ he emphasized its authority as a trustworthy rule of life.”<sup>1</sup>

Jesus unequivocally taught the divine origin of Scripture. There are many passages in which Jesus teaches that the Scriptures originated from God. A couple of examples of such are:

Matthew 22:31-32: In answering the Sadducees in reference to their rejection of the resurrection, Jesus corrects their misunderstanding of the Scripture and in doing so demonstrates the origin of the Scripture. Jesus declares that the words that Moses wrote did not originate from him, but from God, “*But regarding the resurrection of the dead, have you not read what was spoken to you by God. . .*” (emphasis mine).

In Matthew 15:3-6, Jesus accuses the Pharisees of transgressing the “*commandment of God*” and invalidating the “word of God” for the sake of their traditions. Here, He equates the commandment of God with the Word of God.

In John 10:35, Jesus refers to Psalm 82 as the Word of God and calls it Scripture. Here, Jesus not only declares the origin of the Scripture as God’s Word, but also its authority and its permanence when He stated, “and the Scripture cannot be broken.” These verses and many others show Jesus clearly recognized and taught that Scripture is God’s revelation to mankind. Those who dispute the doctrine of inerrancy do not dispute that Jesus taught these very things. Jesus held the view that Scripture is infallible. Those who dispute say that, as a man, Jesus adopted the prevailing view of Scripture, but He was wrong.

In answer to His critics of old and today, Jesus indicated this, “*I do nothing on My own initiative, but I speak these things as the Father taught Me*” (John 8:28). As a man, Jesus was not omniscient, but He was



infallible because He was not only sinless, but He also only spoke that which He received from the Father.

***But what about the New Testament?***

Jesus not only placed His stamp of approval on every jot and tittle of the Old Testament, but He also guaranteed the authority and inspiration of the future New Testament. He assured the disciples that the Holy Spirit would lead them and guide them into the truth (John 16:13).

*“He looked back upon that which was already written as the inspired Word of God. He looked ahead and assured the writers of the New Testament of the same divine superintendence of the Holy Spirit as had guided the Old Testament writers, thus granting inspiration to their product. His position then was unique in that He pronounced upon the inspiration of the Old and promised inspiration for the New. Bruce shows clearly Christ’s relationship to the Old and New Testaments: ‘For it was the Old Testament Scriptures that constituted Christ’s Bible. . . Does this mean we receive the New Testament on lower authority than the Old? Not really; it only means that the impartation of Christ’s authority to the New is less immediately apparent. But when we look into the matter we find that He who accredited the Old Testament retrospectively accredited the New Testament prospectively”<sup>2</sup> (emphasis mine).*

***“I believe that the Bible is completely, entirely and verbally the word of God. I refuse to stand above and criticize it; I insist rather, on standing below it and letting it criticize me.”***

***- John Montgomery***

The New Testament is also referred to as Scripture. One example of this is with the Apostle Peter. He acknowledged the apostolic writings of Paul as Scripture also. He classifies Paul’s writings on the very same level as the Old Testament Scriptures.

As for the origin of Scripture, Peter leaves us with no doubt. Along with Jesus, Peter clearly indicates that Scripture, both Old and New, find their source in God. In 2 Peter 1:16-17, the Apostle writes:

*“For we did not follow cleverly devised tales when we made known to you the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, but we were eyewitnesses of His majesty. For when He received honor and glory from God the Father, such an utterance as this was made to Him by the Majestic Glory, ‘This is My beloved Son with whom I am well- pleased. . . .’”*

Neither Peter nor the other disciples made up stories that have no basis in historical fact. No, he says, we were eyewitnesses of His majesty. Peter saw with his own eyes the glory of the Lord Jesus Christ. Peter heard with his own ears the Father’s statement, *“This is My beloved Son with whom I am well- pleased; listen to Him”* (Matthew 17:5).

But Peter goes on to say, don’t just take my word for it or accept my experience. He says that we have the Word of God which is more sure than any of our experiences. Since we can be led astray by cleverly devised myths and we can be deceived by other’s experiences, we would do well to pay close attention to the prophetic word.

*“So we have the prophetic word made more sure, to which you do well to pay attention as to a lamp shining in a dark place”* (2 Peter 1:19).

***“Explain the Scriptures by the Scriptures.”***

***- Clement of Alexandria***

Peter says we have the word of the prophets which is more sure than even Peter’s eyewitness account of the transfiguration of Christ. Peter’s term, “the prophetic word,” refers to the entire Old Testament written by the prophets spoken to by God. This term also covers the apostolic writings, for in this very letter, Peter declares the Apostle Paul’s writings as Scripture as well (2 Peter 3:15-16).

Peter is telling us that since Scripture is more sure than our experience, we must be careful to evaluate our life and circumstances not by our experience, but through the Word. He says that the Word is “more sure,” or more reliable, more trustworthy, than even being an eyewitness of the glory of Christ.

***How can Peter be so sure?***

Because of the divine origin of the Word. Every word of God has been tested (Proverbs 30:5), indicating it is pure and without error. Can we say the same about our experience? Of course not!

*“But know this first of all, that no prophecy of Scripture is a matter of one’s own interpretation, for no prophecy was ever made by an act of human will, but men moved by the Holy Spirit spoke from God” (2 Peter 1:20-21).*

No Scripture has come about through a person’s own understanding or interpretation. God has seen to it that this is not a matter of someone’s own personal idea. Scripture is penned by men who were moved, or carried along, by the Holy Spirit. The word “move” is used of a ship that is carried along by the wind. The Prophets and Apostles were men who were so moved by the Holy Spirit that they wrote the Word of God. God tells Jeremiah the prophet, “... *I have put My words in your mouth*” (Jeremiah 1:9).

Jesus (in Matthew 22:43-44, NIV) refers to Psalm 110 when He says, “*David himself, speaking by the Holy Spirit, declared, ‘The Lord says to my lord: Sit at my right hand until I put my enemies under your feet . . .’*”

*“Because the Bible is the Word of God, it is utterly trustworthy and utterly authoritative for our lives – not just relatively so, as being the best source we have, but absolutely so, as being God’s pure word of address which stands for all eternity.”<sup>3</sup>*

Does the presence of the New Testament indicate that the Old Testament is less authoritative or that it is less truthful? No. Both Testaments have their origin with God. Therefore, both are authoritative and truthful. Jesus never questioned the authority or the lack of truthfulness of the Old Testament. Rather, He relied on the trustworthiness of the Old Testament for His very own life.

Jesus, however, indicated that God’s revelation is progressive. In other words, throughout the development of Scripture, God has revealed Himself and His redemptive purpose in greater and deeper ways. “That is what is meant by progressive revelation in this context, that the revelation within Scripture unfolds in an ever- deepening and broadening way.”<sup>4</sup>

Progressive revelation certainly does not mean that what was revealed prior contradicts new revelation. For example, the sacrificial system has been abolished not because it was in error, or contradictory to the New Testament, but it has now been superceded with the revelation of “*The sacrificial Lamb*” (Colossians 2:16-17).

### **What about the Apocrypha?**

The Apocrypha consists of 14 or 15 books that were written mostly after 200 B.C. – during the period between Malachi and Matthew. The Roman Catholic Church included these books in the canon (measuring rod; it came to refer to the list of books that the Church discerned or recognized to be divinely inspired) at the Council of Trent in 1546. However, Charles Ryrie makes the following point about the Apocrypha:

***“I prefer to believe those men who had their throats slit for what they wrote.”***

***- Pascal***

*“Our Lord had something to say about the extent of the Old Testament canon, His Bible. When condemning the leaders of the Jews for killing God’s messengers throughout history, He charged them with the guilt of shedding the blood of all the righteous from Abel to Zechariah (Matthew 23:35; Luke 11:51). Now the murder of Abel is recorded in Genesis 4 and the murder of Zechariah is found in 2 Chronicles 24, which in the arrangement of the Hebrew canon was the last book in order (as is Malachi in our arrangement). In other words, the Lord was saying in effect, ‘From the first to the last murder in the Bible.’ There were, of course, other murders recorded in the apocryphal books, but the Lord does not choose to include those He cites. Apparently, He did not consider those apocryphal books to be equal authority with the books from Genesis to 2 Chronicles. Thus in one statement He let every one know what He considered the canonical Old Testament Scriptures.”<sup>5</sup>*

This is a topic for another paper, but it is interesting to note that the 39 books that make up the Protestant Bible are the same books that Jesus confirmed as Scripture in Luke 24:44. In Jesus’ day, the canon of the Old Testament was complete—the Law, the Prophets, and the Psalms. These three major divisions include all of the same OT books we have today. Not once did Jesus ever refer to the Apocryphal books as Scripture. He quoted extensively throughout the Old Testament, but never from the Apocrypha.

#### **4. The Bible and Inerrancy: *Is the Bible really without error?***

“Inspiration answers the question, ‘How did God give the Bible?’ Inerrancy answers the question, ‘Did He give it with or without errors?’”<sup>6</sup>

Inerrancy means that the Bible tells the truth. Negatively speaking, it is without error in the original documents. However, there are those who flat out reject the inerrancy of the Bible, while there are others who accept the Bible as the Word of God, but not all of it. In the areas of salvation and doctrine, the Bible is inerrant, but in the areas of history, science, and geography there are errors in the Word. In his book, *The Battle for the Bible*, Harold Lindsell states,

*“Fundamentalists and evangelicals (both of whom have been traditionally committed to an infallible or inerrant Scripture) have long been noted for their propagation and defense of an infallible Bible. But more recently, among those who call themselves evangelicals, there has been a marked departure from the viewpoint held by them for so long. More and more organizations and individuals historically committed to an infallible Scripture have been embracing and propagating the view that the Bible has errors in it. This movement away from the historic standpoint has been most noticeable among those often labeled neo-evangelicals. This change of position with respect to the infallibility of the Bible is widespread and has occurred in evangelical denominations, Christian colleges, theological seminaries, publishing houses, and learned societies.”<sup>7</sup>*

***“There are more sure marks of authenticity in the Bible than in any profane history.”***

***- Sir Isaac Newton***

### ***How can we have an inerrant Bible when it is written by men?***

In other words, since the Bible has come down to us through men who make mistakes and errors, then how can we have a Bible without error? The argument rests on the well known saying, “to err is human.” Since we all know that all humans err, then it would be impossible for humans to have written an error free Bible.

However, “it does not follow that men always err or that error is necessary for humanity. If such were to be the case, then it would have been necessary for us to assert that Adam, before he fell, had to err or that he was not human. And we must also assert that in Heaven, in a state of glorification and perfected sanctification, we must continue to err if we are to continue to be human . . . Even apart from inspiration, it is not necessary for a human being to err in order to be human. So if it is possible for an uninspired person to speak the truth without error, how much more will be the case for the one who is under the influence of inspiration.”<sup>8</sup>

Inerrancy means that all that the biblical writers were moved by the Holy Spirit to write is true and trustworthy. It is not necessary for the limited knowledge of the human writers and man’s proclivity towards error to have introduced error into God’s Word. A finite mind does not necessarily mean a distortion of information, but a limited knowledge of information. Since the human writers of Scripture were under inspiration by God, Who is omniscient, there is no reason to believe that they could not write on subjects beyond their expertise or knowledge.

When referring to the Scripture being inspired and inerrant, we refer to the original documents or autographs. The International Council on Biblical Inerrancy makes this affirmation regarding inerrancy.

*“We affirm that inspiration, strictly speaking, applies only to the autographic text of Scripture, which in the providence of God can be ascertained from available manuscripts with great accuracy. We further affirm that copies and translations of Scripture are the Word of God to the extent that they faithfully represent the original. We deny that any essential element of the Christian faith is affected by the absence of the autographs. We further deny that this absence renders the assertion of biblical inerrancy invalid or irrelevant.”<sup>9</sup>*

It is evident that there are minor variations in manuscript copies of the Bible. Often times, the translation will offer a variant reading in the margin of the Bible where there is some variation or alternate reading. For example, in the NASB, Acts 8:37 is an additional verse that is only mentioned in the margin. Most of the manuscripts do not have such a verse. Also, consider Luke 12:27, some manuscripts omit the words “they grow” from the verse. These are two of the few examples of obvious copyist error.

Yet, in all the variations, not one major doctrine of God is affected or changed by the variations. According to textual criticism (the science of reconstructing the original text), in nearly ninety-nine percent of the cases, the original text can be reconstructed to a virtual certainty. But for all practical purposes, we have the Word of God as originally penned.

### ***Is the Bible infallible?***

The word infallible is very close to inerrancy in that it is without error. It also means that the Bible not only will not lead us into error, but that it is true and trustworthy in all matters it addresses.

*“Infallibility has to do with the question of ability or potential. That which is infallible is said to be unable to make mistakes or to err.”<sup>11</sup>*

Inerrancy has to do with an actual error. The Bible is not only inerrant in that it is without error in the autograph (as a result we can have confidence in the copies that they are virtually error free; see above), but that it is impossible for the Word of God to err. The very character of God is at stake on this issue, for if the Word of God is fallible, then it is possible for God to make mistakes or to err. If God can make mistakes or err, then He no longer is perfect.

It is very interesting that the Devil tried to tempt Jesus when He was in the wilderness to reject His Father’s will and guidance for His life. He tried to seduce Jesus to take matters in His own hands, to test God at His Word to see if it really could be trusted. The Devil offers words of doubt regarding the nature and character of God and the fallibility of Scripture. Jesus had nothing to do with the Devil’s subtle attacks.

He remained submitted to the written Word of God believing it to be the inspired, inerrant, infallible Word of God!

Inerrancy does not mean, however, that there aren’t different accounts of the same biblical event. It does not mean that the Bible speaks with absolute scientific precision. Inerrancy means that there are no errors of truth, no deceit, no lies, or no fraud. Inerrancy gives room for such things as rounding up numbers (e.g. when Jesus fed five thousand people, He may have actually fed four thousand nine hundred and ninety-nine).

The Bible uses normal literary forms to communicate truth truthfully.

*“Admittedly, the data of Scripture often includes approximations, free quotations, language of appearances, (language of appearance means a common way of saying something that could not be said scientifically, i.e., “I saw the set.”), and different accounts of the same occurrence. Can that data support a definition of inerrancy as “being without error?” Obviously, the data and the definition must harmonize if that is a correct definition of what the Bible teaches about its own inerrancy. Perhaps the tension would be erased if we defined inerrancy positively—the inerrancy of the Bible means simply that the Bible tells the truth”<sup>12</sup> (parenthesis mine).*

Here is one example of differing accounts of the same occurrence that some use to prove inerrancy: Matthew 20:29-34 with Mark 10:46-52 & Luke 18:35-43. Matthew speaks of two blind men crying out to the Lord to have mercy on them. Mark and Luke speak of one. Is this an example of an error or discrepancy? It would be if Mark and or Luke would have said there was “only one” blind man. Both statements can be harmonized when it is understood that Mark and Luke focus on one of the blind men, probably the most vocal of the two.

***“The Bible is the word of God. If granted, then it follows that what the Bible says, God says. That ends the matter.”***

***- Charles Hodge***



***“People reject the Bible, not because it contradicts itself, but because it contradicts them!”***

*- Unknown*

Another supposed example of inerrancy is 1 Corinthians 10:8. 1 Corinthians states that 23,000 died in one day. Whereas, Numbers 25:9 indicates that 24,000 died, but does not add “in one day.” Both are probable approximations of the number that died in one day and the total number that died over a period of days.

One more example is the mustard seed parable. Jesus told the parable of the mustard seed, saying it is the smallest of all others seeds. The critic cries, “Stop! This is not true. There are other seeds smaller than the mustard seed, so Jesus is incorrect.” There, the Scripture nor Jesus can be inerrant. It escapes their understanding that the use of the term “mustard seed” was a Hebrew idiomatic expression. It was hyperbole to describe something tiny, small, and insignificant that then grew into something quite large.<sup>13</sup>

### **5. The Bible and Supposed Errors: *How can you believe a Bible that is full of contradictions?***

The Bible claims to be uniquely inspired by God. If indeed the Bible is the Word of God, and God is a God of truth, then the Bible must be without error and infallible. However, there are passages in the Bible that are not only difficult to understand, but contain problems that lead many to suppose that the Bible is not inerrant. There are problems with differences of dates of passages, differences pertaining to numbers, parallel accounts, or scientific discoveries that seemingly contradict Scripture.

Josh McDowell and Don Stewart in their book, *Answers to Tough Questions that Skeptics Ask about the Christian Faith*, offer this advice when looking into supposed contradictions.

*“One of the things for which we appeal with regard to possible contradictions is fairness. We should not minimize or exaggerate the problem, and we must always begin by giving the author the benefit of the doubt. This is the rule in other literature, and we ask that it also be the rule here. We find so often that people want to employ a different set of rules when it comes to examining the Bible, and to this we immediately object.*

*“What constitutes a contradiction? The law of non-contradiction, which is the basis of all logical thinking, states that a thing cannot be both a and non-a at the same time. In other words, it cannot be both raining and not raining at the same time. For example, if the Bible said—which it does not—that Jesus died by crucifixion both at Jerusalem and at Nazareth at the same time, this would be a provable error.*

*“When facing possible contradictions, it is of highest importance to remember that two statements may differ from each other without being a contradiction. Some fail to make a distinction between contradiction and difference.”<sup>14</sup>*

Here are few examples of the supposed errors in the Old Testament:

#### **1. Two creation accounts (Genesis 1:11-12 and Genesis 2:5).**

Genesis chapter one records the appearance of vegetation on the third day and Genesis 2:5 seems to indicate that there was no vegetation until after Adam was created. These accounts are not contradictory. Genesis 1 gives the general introduction into the creation week while Genesis two focuses in on the creation of mankind and fills in the details. The shrubs and plants mentioned in Genesis 2 refer to

plants that require cultivation like on a farm or garden. The terms do not refer to all kinds of plants.

In Genesis 2:8, it states that God planted a garden and placed man there to tend it. It was there that God caused trees and plants to grow in the midst of the garden. So, on the third day, God created vegetation and when He created man, He put him in a garden and caused garden plants to grow for man to cultivate.

2. *Who caused David to number Israel (2 Samuel 24:1 and 1 Chronicles 21:1)?*

In the Samuel passage, God is said to have moved David to number Israel, while in 1 Chronicles, it says that Satan stirred David. Could not both have been involved? Neither passages states that it was only God or only Satan. Could not the Lord have used Satan to move David to number the people? In the life of Paul, the Lord sent a messenger of Satan to keep Paul from exalting himself.

3. *David's choice of punishment (2 Samuel 24:13 and 1 Chronicles 21:12).*

As a result of numbering the people – a display of David's pride – God offers David a choice of punishment. One of the options was seven years of famine (2 Samuel 24:13). However, 1 Chronicles 21:12 says the period of time was three years. This is an example of a scribal or copyist error. Although there were very stringent rules for a scribe to copy the Scripture, there were still errors made in copying. The original is not in error, but some of the copies are. This is an example of the type of error found in copies. As stated earlier, ninety-nine percent of the Bible we have without discrepancy and where they are found, they do not affect anything doctrinally.

Some examples of supposed errors in the New Testament:

1. *The two genealogies of Christ (Matthew 1 and Luke 3).*

Both genealogies are tracing the family line of Jesus, but they differ in many aspects. In Matthew, Jacob is said to be Joseph's father while in Luke, Heli is the father of Joseph. The best explanation for the supposed discrepancy is that Matthew follows Joseph's family line showing that Jesus is not only Jewish, but that He comes through the line of David and Solomon, and thus has the right to the throne.

Luke, on the other hand, details Mary's genealogy showing that she, too, is Jewish, but her genealogy comes through Nathan, not Solomon, and goes all the way back to Adam. Luke is showing the manhood of Christ and that he was a flesh and blood descendant of David.

2. *Did Judas hang himself or fall headlong and burst open?*

In Matthew 27:5, Judas hung himself. Acts 1:18 states that Judas fell headlong and burst open in the middle. Both are correct. Each author is emphasizing different aspects of the way Judas died. Here is the probable scenario. Judas went out and hung himself. For Judas to hang himself, he would have climbed a tree, tied a rope around a branch and his neck. Then, jumping out of the tree, he hung himself which may have caused the branch to snap and as a result he tumbled to the ground being ripped open in the process.

***“One of the many divine qualities of the Bible is that it does not yield its secrets to the irreverent and the censorious.”***

***- James I. Packer***

***“For I seek not to understand in order that I may believe; but I believe in order that I may understand.”***

***- Anselm of Canterbury***

Whether or not it happened precisely this way, nobody knows. What we do know is that it is possible to have happened the way I described, and therefore not contradictory. Maybe this is also why the field is called a field of blood by both Luke and Matthew (Acts 1:18 and Matthew 27:8).

3. *Doesn't Matthew mistakenly attribute a prophecy to Jeremiah which was actually given by Zechariah (Matthew 27:9,19 and Zechariah 11:12-13)?*

Matthew states that the money that was taken by the priests from Judas was used to buy a potter's field. This fulfilled a prophecy which Matthew claims that Jeremiah gave. However, the prophecy is actually recorded in Zechariah.

The most probable explanation is that Matthew is combining two prophecies, one from Jeremiah and one from Zechariah, while mentioning only one author, Jeremiah, the major prophet. The Zechariah passage says nothing about buying a field while Jeremiah states that the Lord had him buy a field.

*“One of the fields which God had in mind was the potter's field. Zechariah adds the details of the 30 pieces of silver and the money thrown down on the floor of the temple. Thus it can be seen that Matthew takes the details of both prophets, but stresses Jeremiah as the one who foretold these occurrences.”<sup>15</sup>*

For further study on supposed errors, I recommend, *Alleged Discrepancies of the Bible*, by John W. Haley and, *Answers*, by Josh McDowell. On the matter of discrepancies, I enjoyed what James Packer had to say in an article entitled, “A Lamp in a Dark Place”:

*I remember something which I read by an old seventeenth-century Puritan named William Bridge, a rather sweet passage in which he says that harping on discrepancies shows a very bad heart. ‘For the Godly man,’ he says, ‘it should be as it was with Moses.’ Then he appeals to Exodus 2. ‘When a Godly man sees the Bible and secular data apparently at odds, well, he does as Moses did when he saw an Egyptian fighting an Israelite, he kills the Egyptian. He discounts the secular testimony, knowing God's Word to be true.’ But, says Bridge, ‘When he sees an apparent inconsistency between two passages of Scripture, he does as Moses did when he found two Israelites quarreling. He tries to reconcile them. He says, ‘Aha, these are brethren. I must make peace between them.’ And that's what the Godly man does,’ says William Bridge.*

### **The Bible and Our Response: *Does God still speak today?***

In asking this question, I am not asking if God is giving new revelation today. I believe His written revelation is complete from Genesis to Revelation. What I am asking is, “Is the Bible relevant for us today? Can we apply Scripture to our circumstances today, even though it was written for earlier times? Is it valid to claim God's promises today?”

In answering these questions, I take us back to the wilderness scene with Jesus and the Devil. There are a number of truths that we learn from Jesus in regards to His attitude toward the Scripture which relates to us today.



1. Jesus accepted Scripture to be inspired by God. “*Man shall not live on bread alone, but on every word that proceeds out of the mouth of God*” (Matthew 4:4, NIV, emphasis mine).

2. Jesus understood Scripture to mean the entire Old Testament and also made provision for the New Testament, which was to be written by the Apostles.

3. Jesus accepted all of Scripture to be inspired by God. “*Man shall not live on bread alone, but on every word that proceeds out of the mouth of God*” (Matthew 4:4, NIV, emphasis mine).

4. Jesus placed total confidence in the Word as inerrant and infallible. “It is written... It is written... It is written” (Matthew 4:4,7,10).

5. Jesus submitted Himself to the authority of the Scripture. He did not try to manipulate events to His advantage. He did not do anything independently from Scripture. He remained obedient to the Word no matter what His circumstances looked like.

6. Jesus interpreted Scripture with Scripture. All of Scripture is inspired and we cannot take one portion of Scripture out of context and make it contradict other portions. Our interpretation of Scripture must harmonize with the rest of Scripture. The Devil quoted Scripture out of context and in contradiction to other passages. Jesus corrected his wrong interpretation by saying, “*On the other hand, it is written, ‘You shall not put the Lord your God to the test’*” (Matthew 4:7).

7. Jesus also interpreted Scripture in its historic and grammatical context. The Pharisees were at fault for making Scripture mean something other than what was intended. They distorted Scripture according to their own understanding. They interpreted Scripture according to their traditions and thus invalidated the Word of God (Matthew 15:1-6). In the Sermon on the Mount (Matthew 5), six times Jesus reminds the people, “*You have heard it said, but I say to you.*” Jesus is not coming up with a new interpretation of Scripture for He had already stated that He did not come to abolish or change the Law but to fulfill it (Matthew 5:17). He came to correctly interpret the Law and expose the misinterpretation of the Pharisees. In declaring, “*I say to you . . .*” Jesus is declaring to all that His interpretation of the Law, (i.e., OT), is the correct interpretation versus the wrong interpretation of the Pharisees.

8. Jesus first interpreted Scripture, then applied it to His circumstance. For example, the historical context of the quote, “*man shall not live on bread alone . . .*” is when Israel was being led by God in the wilderness as a test (Deuteronomy 8:3, NIV). Their test was to demonstrate their dependence upon God and His provision.

Jesus applies this historical account to His current situation. Jesus does not make the passage say something that was not intended.

***“It is clear that there must be difficulties for us in a revelation such as the Bible. If someone were to hand me a book that was as simple to me as the multiplication table, and say, ‘This is the Word of God. In it He has revealed His whole will and wisdom; I would shake my head and say, ‘I cannot believe it; that is too easy to be a perfect revelation of infinite wisdom.’ There must be, in any complete revelation of God’s mind and will and character and being, things hard for the beginner to understand; and the wisest and best of us are but beginners.”***

***- R.A. Torrey***

***“The greatest menace in this country is not the bootlegger, but the college professor who rejects the Bible and undermines the faith of the young.”***

***- Arno C. Gaebelein***

“The words meant for Him what they meant to those to whom they were originally addressed. He never ignores the meaning to make an application. Rather, the application results strictly from the meaning.”<sup>16</sup>

A perfect example of this is when the Devil used the Scripture to make it mean what God did not intend. Jesus quickly countered and corrected the Devil for his misuse of Scripture.

“The very fact that He so used Scripture shows that while Scripture was written to meet the immediate needs of the people to whom it was originally addressed, it also is applicable to the circumstances of the lives of others.”<sup>17</sup>

9. Jesus overcame personal temptation by relying on the Scripture and remaining in subjection to what God had said.

D. Martyn Lloyd-Jones made this comment about Jesus, “He puts His seal of authority, His imprimatur, upon the whole of the Old Testament canon, the whole of the Law and the prophets . . . He believed it all and not only certain parts of it! He quoted almost every part of it. To the Lord Jesus Christ the Old Testament was the Word of God; it was Scripture; it was something absolutely unique and apart; it had authority which nothing else has ever possessed nor can possess.”<sup>18</sup>

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## Endnotes

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- <sup>15</sup> Josh McDowell, *Ibid*, p. 87
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THE INERRANCY OF THE SCRIPTURES

## **Addendum: Statement on Biblical Inerrancy**

The International Council on Biblical Inerrancy (1977-1987)

“On October 26-28, 1978, the International Council on Biblical Inerrancy held a summit meeting near Chicago airport. At that time it issued a statement on biblical inerrancy which included a preamble, a short statement, Nineteen Articles of Affirmation and Denial and a more ample Exposition.”<sup>1</sup>

### **The Chicago Statement on Biblical Inerrancy<sup>2</sup>**

The authority of Scripture is a key issue for the Christian Church in this and every age. Those who profess faith in Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior are called to show the reality of their discipleship by humbly and faithfully obeying God’s written Word. To stray from the Scripture in faith or conduct is disloyalty to our Master. Recognition of the total truth and trustworthiness of Holy Scripture is essential to a full grasp and adequate confession of its authority.

The following statement affirms this inerrancy of Scripture afresh, making clear our understanding of it and warning against its denial. We are persuaded that to deny it is to set aside the witness of Jesus Christ and of the Holy Spirit and to refuse that submission to the claims of God’s own Word which marks true Christian faith. We see it as our timely duty to make this affirmation in the face of current lapses from the truth of inerrancy among our fellow Christians and misunderstanding of this doctrine in the world at large.

This statement consists of three parts: a Summary Statement, Articles of Affirmation and Denial, and an accompanying Exposition. It has been prepared in the course of a three-day consultation in Chicago. Those who have signed the Summary Statement and the Articles wish to affirm their own conviction as to the inerrancy of Scripture and to encourage and challenge one another and all Christians to growing appreciation and understanding of this doctrine. We acknowledge the limitations of a document prepared in a brief, intensive conference and do not propose that this Statement be given creedal weight. Yet we rejoice in the deepening of our own convictions through our discussions together, and we pray that the Statement we have signed may be used to the glory of our God toward a new reformation of the church in its faith, life and mission.

We offer this Statement in a spirit, not of contention, but of humility and love, which we purpose by God’s grace to maintain in any future dialogue arising out of what we have said. We gladly acknowledge that many who deny the inerrancy of Scripture do not display the consequences of this denial in the rest of their belief and behavior, and we are conscious that we who confess this doctrine often deny it in life by failing to bring our thoughts and deeds, our traditions and habits, into true subjection to the divine Word.

We invite response to this statement from any who see reason to amend its affirmations about Scripture by the light of Scripture itself, under whose infallible authority we stand as we speak. We claim no personal infallibility for the witness we bear, and for any help which enables us to strengthen this testimony to God’s Word we shall be grateful.

<sup>1</sup> R.C. Sproul, *Ibid*, foreword, p. 60-67. <sup>2</sup> R.C. Sproul, *Ibid*, p. 59-74

## Final Statements

1. God, who is Himself truth and speaks truth only, has inspired Holy Scripture in order thereby to reveal Himself to lost mankind through Jesus Christ as Creator and Lord, Redeemer and Judge. Holy Scripture is God's witness to Himself.
2. Holy Scripture, being God's own word, written by men prepared and superintended by His Spirit, is of infallible divine authority in all matters upon which it touches: it is to be believed, as God's instruction, in all that it affirms; obeyed, as God's command, in all that it requires; embraced, as God's pledge, in all that it promises.
3. The Holy Spirit, Scripture's divine author, both authenticates it to us by His inward witness and opens our minds to understand its meaning.
4. Being wholly and verbally God-given, Scripture is without error of fault in all its teaching, no less in what it states about God's acts in creation, about the events of world history, and about its own literary origins under God, than in its witness to God's saving grace in individual lives.
5. The authority of Scripture is inescapably impaired if this total divine inerrancy is in any way limited or disregarded, or made relative to a view of truth contrary to the Bible's own; and such lapses bring serious loss to both the individual and the Church.

## Articles Affirmations and Denials

- Article I      **We affirm** that the Holy Scriptures are to be received as the authoritative Word of God.  
**We deny** that the Scriptures receive their authority from the church, tradition, or any other human source.
- Article II      **We affirm** that the Scriptures are the supreme written norm by which God binds the conscience, and that the authority of the church is subordinate to that of Scripture.  
**We deny** that church creeds, councils, or declarations have authority greater than or equal to the authority of the Bible.
- Article III      **We affirm** that the written Word in its entirety is revelation given by God.  
**We deny** that the Bible is merely a witness to revelation, or only becomes revelation in encounter, or depends on the responses of men for its validation.
- Article IV      **We affirm** that God who made mankind in his image has used language as a means of revelation.  
**We deny** that human language is so limited by our created nature that it is rendered inadequate as a vehicle for divine revelation. We further deny that the corruption of human culture and language through sin has thwarted God's work of inspiration.

- Article V **We affirm** that God’s revelation within the Holy Scriptures was progressive.
- We deny** that later revelation, which may fulfill earlier revelation, ever corrects or contradicts it. We further deny that any normative revelation has been given since the completion of the New Testament.
- Article VI **We affirm** that the whole of Scripture and all its parts, down to the very words of the original, were given by divine inspiration.
- We deny** that the inspiration of Scripture can rightly be affirmed of the whole without the parts, or of some parts but not the whole.
- Article VII **We affirm** that inspiration was the work in which God by his Spirit, through human writers, gave us His Word. The origin of Scripture is divine. The mode of divine inspiration remains largely a mystery to us.
- We deny** that inspiration can be reduced to human insight, or to be heightened states of consciousness of any kind.
- Article VIII **We affirm** that God in his work of inspiration utilized the distinctive personalities and literary styles of the writers whom he had chosen and prepared.
- We deny** that God, in causing these writers to use the very word that he chose, overrode their personalities.
- Article IX **We affirm** that inspiration, though not conferring omniscience, guaranteed true and trustworthy utterance on all matters of which the biblical authors were moved to speak and write.
- We deny** that the finitude or fallenness of these writers, by necessity or otherwise introduced distortion or falsehood into God’s Word.
- Article X **We affirm** that inspiration, strictly speaking, applies only to the autographic text of Scripture, which in the providence of God can be ascertained from available manuscripts with great accuracy. We affirm that copies and translations of Scripture are the Word of God to the extent that they faithfully represent the original.
- We deny** that any essential element of the Christian faith is affected by the absence of the autographs. We further deny that this absence renders the assertion of biblical inerrancy invalid or irrelevant.
- Article XI **We affirm** that Scripture, having been given by divine inspiration, is infallible, so that, far from misleading us, it is true and reliable in all the matters it addresses.
- We deny** that it is possible for the Bible to be at the same time infallible and errant in its assertions. Infallibility and inerrancy may be distinguished, but not separated.
- Article XII **We affirm** that Scripture in its entirety is inerrant, being free from all falsehood, fraud, or deceit.
- We deny** that biblical infallibility and inerrancy are limited to spiritual, religious, or redemptive themes, exclusive of assertions in the fields of history and science. We further deny that scientific hypotheses about earth history may properly be used to overturn the teaching of Scripture on creation and the flood.

- Article XIII **We affirm** the propriety of using inerrancy as a theological term with reference to the complete truthfulness of Scripture.
- We deny** that it is proper to evaluate Scripture according to the standards of truth and error that are alien to its usage or purpose. We further deny that inerrancy is negated by biblical phenomena such as a lack of modern technical precision, irregularities of grammar, or spelling, observational descriptions of nature, the reporting of falsehoods, the use of hyperbole and round numbers, the topical arrangements of material, variant selections of material in parallel accounts, or the use of free citations.
- Article XIV **We affirm** the unity and internal consistency of Scripture.
- We deny** that alleged errors and discrepancies that have not yet been resolved vitiate the truth claims of the Bible.
- Article XV **We affirm** that the doctrine of inerrancy is grounded in the teaching of the Bible about inspiration.
- We deny** that Jesus' teaching about Scripture may be dismissed by appeals to accommodation or to any natural limitations of His humanity.
- Article XVI **We affirm** that the doctrine of inerrancy has been integral to the church's faith throughout its history.
- We deny** that inerrancy is a doctrine invented by scholastic Protestantism, or is a reactionary position postulated in response to negative higher criticism.
- Article XVII **We affirm** that the Holy Spirit bears witness to the Scriptures, assuring believers of the truthfulness of God's written Word.
- We deny** that this witness of the Holy Spirit operates in isolation from or against Scripture.
- Article XVIII **We affirm** that the text of Scripture is to be interpreted by grammatico-historical exegesis, taking account of its literary forms and devices, and that Scripture is to interpret Scripture.
- We deny** the legitimacy of any treatment of the text or quest for sources lying behind it that lead to relativizing, dehistoricizing, or discounting its teachings, or rejecting its claims to authorship.
- Article XIX **We affirm** that a confession of the full authority, infallibility, and inerrancy of Scripture is vital to a sound understanding of the whole of the Christian faith. We further affirm that such confession should lead to increasing conformity to the image of Christ.
- We deny** that such confession is necessary for salvation. However, we further deny that inerrancy can be rejected without grave consequences, both to the individual and to the church.



## Exposition

Our understanding of the doctrine of inerrancy must be set in the context of the broader teachings of Scripture concerning itself. This exposition gives an account of the outline of doctrine from which our summary statement and articles are drawn.

### Creation, Revelation and Inspiration

The Triune God, who formed all things by His creative utterances and governs all things by His Word of decree, made mankind in His own image for a life of communion with Himself, on the model of the eternal fellowship of loving communication within the Godhead. As God's image bearer, man was to hear God's word addressed to him and to respond in the joy of adoring obedience. Over and above God's self-disclosure in the created order and the sequence of events within it, human beings from Adam on have received verbal messages from Him, either directly, as stated in Scripture, or indirectly in the form of part or all of Scripture itself.

When Adam fell, the Creator did not abandon mankind to final judgment but promised salvation and began to reveal Himself as Redeemer in a sequence of historical events centering on Abraham's family and culminating in the life, death, resurrection, present heavenly ministry, and promised return of Jesus Christ.

Within this frame God has from time to time spoken specific words of judgment and mercy, promise and command, to sinful human beings so drawing them into a covenant relationship of mutual commitment between Him and them in which He blesses them with gifts of grace and they bless Him in responsive adoration. Moses, whom God used as a mediator to carry His words to His people at the time of the Exodus, stands at the head of a long line of prophets in whose mouths and writings God put His words for delivery to Israel. God's purpose in this succession of messages was to maintain His covenant by causing His people to know His name—that is, His nature—and His will both of precept and purpose in the present and for the future. This line of prophetic spokesmen from God came to completion in Jesus Christ, God's incarnate Word, who was Himself a prophet—more than a prophet, but not less—and in the apostles and prophets of the first Christian generation. When God's final and climactic message, His word to the world concerning Jesus Christ, had been spoken and elucidated by those in the apostolic circle, the sequence of revealed messages ceased. Henceforth, the church was to live and know God by what he had already said, and said for all time.

At Sinai God wrote the terms of His covenant on tables of stone, as His enduring witness and for lasting accessibility, and throughout the period of prophetic and apostolic revelation. He prompted men to write the messages given to and through them, along with celebratory records of His dealings with His people, plus moral reflections on covenant life and forms of praise and prayer for covenant mercy. The theological reality of inspiration in the producing of biblical documents corresponds to that of spoken prophecies: although the human writers' personalities were expressed in what they wrote, the words were divinely constituted. Thus, what Scripture says, God says; its authority is His authority, for He is its ultimate Author, having given it through the minds and words of chosen and prepared men who in freedom and faithfulness “spoke from God as they were carried along by the Holy Spirit” (2 Peter 1:21). Holy Scripture must be acknowledged as the Word of God by virtue of its divine origin.



### **Authority: Christ and the Bible**

Jesus Christ, the Son of God who is the Word made flesh, our Prophet, Priest, and King, is the ultimate Mediator of God's communication to man, as He is of all God's gift of grace. The revelation He gave was more than verbal; He revealed the Father by His presence and His deeds as well. Yet His words were crucially important; for He was God, He spoke from the Father, and His words will judge all men at the Last Day.

As the promised Messiah, Jesus Christ is the central theme of Scripture. The Old Testament looked ahead to Him; the New Testament looks back to His first coming and on to His second. Canonical Scripture is the divinely inspired and therefore normative witness to Christ. No hermeneutic, therefore, of which the historical Christ is not the focal point is acceptable. Holy Scripture must be treated as what it essentially is—the witness of the Father to the incarnate Son.

It appears that the Old Testament canon had been fixed by the time of Jesus. The New Testament canon is likewise now closed inasmuch as no new apostolic witness to the historical Christ can now be borne. No new revelation (as distinct from Spirit-given understanding of existing revelation) will be given until Christ comes again. The canon was created in principle by divine inspiration. The church's part was to discern the canon which God had created, not to devise one of its own.

The word *canon*, signifying a rule or standard, is a pointer to authority, which means the right to rule and control. Authority in Christianity belongs to God in his revelation, which means, on the one hand, Jesus Christ, the living Word, and on the other hand, Holy Scripture, the written Word. But the authority of Christ and that of Scripture are one. As our Prophet, Christ testified that Scripture cannot be broken. As our Priest and King, He devoted His earthly life to fulfilling the law and the prophets, even dying in obedience to the words of messianic prophecy. Thus, as He saw Scripture attesting Him and His authority, so He bowed to his Father's instruction given in His Bible (our Old Testament), so He requires His disciples to do—not, however, in isolation but in conjunction with the apostolic witness to Himself which He undertook to inspire by his gift of the Holy Spirit. So Christians show themselves faithful servants of their Lord by bowing to the divine instruction given in the prophetic and apostolic writings which together make up our Bible.

### **Infallibility, Inerrancy, Interpretation**

Holy Scripture, as the inspired Word of God witnessing authoritatively to Jesus Christ, may properly be called *infallible* and *inerrant*. These negative terms have a special value, for they explicitly safeguard crucial positive truths.

*Infallible* signifies the quality of neither misleading nor being misled and so safeguards in categorical terms the truth of that Holy Scripture is a sure, safe, and reliable rule and guide in all matters.

Similarly, *inerrant* signifies the quality of being free from all falsehood or mistake and so safeguards the truth that Holy Scripture is entirely true and trustworthy in all its assertions.

We affirm that canonical Scripture should always be interpreted on the basis that it is infallible and inerrant. However, in determining what the God-taught writer is asserting in each passage, we must pay the most careful attention to its claims and character as a human production. In inspiration, God

utilized the culture and conventions of his penman's milieu, a milieu that God controls in his sovereign providence; it is misinterpretation to imagine otherwise.

So history must be treated as history, poetry as poetry, hyperbole and metaphor as hyperbole and metaphor, generalization and approximation as what they are, and so forth. Difference between literary conventions in Bible times and in ours must also be observed: since, for instance, non-chronological narration and imprecise citation were conventional and acceptable and violated no expectations in those days, we must not regard these things as faults when we find them in Bible writers. When total precision of a particular kind was not expected nor aimed at, it is no error not to have achieved it. Scripture is inerrant not in the sense of being absolutely precise by modern standards, but in the sense of making good on its claims and achieving that measure of focused truth at which its authors aimed.

The truthfulness of Scripture is not negated by the appearance in it of irregularities of grammar or spelling, phenomenal descriptions of nature, reports of false statements (e.g., the lies of Satan), of seeming discrepancies between one passage and another. It is not right to set the so called "phenomena" of Scripture against the teaching of Scripture about itself. Apparent inconsistencies should not be ignored. Solution of them, where this can be convincingly achieved, will encourage our faith, and where for the present no convincing solution is at hand we shall significantly honor God by trusting his assurance that his Word is true, despite these appearance, and by maintaining our confidence that one day they will be seen to have been illusions. Inasmuch as all Scripture is the product of a single divine mind, interpretation must stay within the bounds of the analogy of Scripture and eschew hypotheses that would correct one biblical passage by another, whether in the name of progressive revelation or of the imperfect enlightenment of the inspired writer's mind.

Although Holy Scripture is nowhere culture-bound in the sense that its teaching lacks universal validity, it is sometimes culturally conditioned by the customs and conventional views of a particular period, so that the application of its principles today calls for a different sort of action.

### **Skepticism and Criticism**

Since the Renaissance, and more particularly since the Enlightenment, worldviews have been developed which involve skepticism about basic Christian tenets. Such are the agnosticism which denies that God is knowable, the rationalism which denies that He is incomprehensible, the idealism which denies that He is transcendent, and the existentialism which denies rationality in His relationships with us. When these un- and anti-biblical principles seep into men's theologies at a presuppositional level, as today they frequently do, faithful interpretation of Holy Scripture becomes impossible.

### **Transmission and Translation**

Since God has nowhere promised an inerrant transmission of Scripture, it is necessary to affirm that only the autographic text of the original documents was inspired and to maintain the need of textual criticism as a means of detecting any slips that may have crept into the text in the course of its transmission. The verdict of this science, however, is that the Hebrew and Greek text appear to be amazingly well preserved, so that we are amply justified in affirming, with the Westminster Confession, a singular providence of God in this matter and in declaring that the authority of Scripture is in no way jeopardized by the fact that the copies we possess are not entirely error free.

Similarly, no translation is or can be perfect, and all translations are an additional step away from the *autographa*. Yet the verdict of linguistic science is that English-speaking Christians, at least, are exceedingly well served in these days with a host of excellent translations and have no cause for hesitating to conclude that the true Word of God is within their reach. Indeed, in view of the frequent repetition in Scripture of the main matters with which it deals and also of the Holy Spirit's constant witness to and through the Word, no serious translation of Holy Scripture will so destroy its meaning as to render it unable to make its reader "wise for salvation through faith in Christ Jesus" (2 Timothy 3:15).

### **Inerrancy and Authority**

In our affirmations of the authority of Scripture as involving its total truth, we are consciously standing with Christ and His apostles, indeed with the whole Bible and with the main stream of church history from the first days until very recently. We are concerned at the casual, inadvertent, and seemingly thoughtless way in which a belief of such far-reaching importance has been given up by so many in our day.

We are conscious too, that great and grave confusion results from ceasing to maintain the total truth of the Bible whose authority one professes to acknowledge. The result of taking this step is that the Bible which God gave loses its authority, and what has authority instead of a Bible reduced in content according to the demands of one's critical reasonings and in principle reducible still further once one has started. This means that at bottom independent reason now has authority, as opposed to Scriptural teaching. If this is not seen and if for the time being basic evangelical doctrines are still held, persons denying the full truth of Scripture may claim an evangelical identity while methodologically they have moved away from evangelical principle of knowledge to an unstable subjectivism, and will find it hard not to move further.

We affirm that what Scripture says, God says. May He be glorified. Amen and Amen.

\*All Scripture quotations in this addendum are from the New International Version.



THE INERRANCY OF THE SCRIPTURES

**Exercise**

1. What was the main lesson you learned from these articles?

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2. What do the terms “inerrancy” and “infallibility” mean?

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3. Why is the inerrancy of Scripture vital today?

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THE INERRANCY OF THE SCRIPTURES

**Exercise**

4. What does Peter mean in 2 Peter 1:16-21 when he says, “*we have the prophetic word made more sure*”? More sure of what?

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5. What lessons do you learn from Jesus in how He used the Scriptures and submitted Himself to them?

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GRACE / THE DOCTRINE OF THE SCRIPTURES

## **Survey of the Old Testament**

Do you have a “big picture” view of the Scriptures? Are you familiar with the order of events in the Old Testament? In the following survey of the Old Testament, Jonathan Williams lays out the chronological order of the events of the Bible, from Genesis to Malachi.





## Survey of the Old Testament

Pastor Jonathan Williams · San Antonio, TX

### Creation to Abraham

When one thinks of the Old Testament, one naturally thinks of the nation of Israel, Moses, animal sacrifices, the Exodus, the prophets, and the prophecies about the Messiah. But this is not how the Old Testament begins. The Old Testament begins with the whole world, not just the Middle East. It speaks of all the nations before it mentions Israel.

And God is the God of the whole earth—not just the God of Israel. Moses, the compiler and writer of the first five books of the Bible, wants his readers to know that the plan for and destiny of Israel is rooted in God’s plan for the whole world. The God of Israel is not a tribal God like the other nations, but the God of the entire earth. Genesis, chapters 1-11, sets the stage for God’s drama with Israel which would decide the destiny of all the people of the world.

It might be surprising to some that the types of stories found in Genesis 1-11 are also found in the ancient literature of other nations. Every major ancient civilization had one or all of the following – a creation story, a story of rebellion, a flood story, and a dispersal story. This shows all ancient civilizations felt compelled to give an account of their origin, the problem of evil, the plight of man, and information about the gods (or God).

So it was with Moses. In the midst of idolatry, fantastic tales, and myths, he felt compelled to give a straightforward account of the creation and the key events that shaped the early history of Man. Genesis is striking in its simplicity and purity. Rather than many gods fighting each other, there is one God. Instead of creation being made from the carcass of a primeval monster, creation is the product of the work of God. Rather than man being a slave to do the mundane work of the gods, man is the pinnacle of creation and is bestowed with great honor and dignity.

Genesis 1-11 is a bold declaration of faith in one creator God in the midst of a world steeped in idolatry, mythology, and sin. In spite of their similarities with other ancient literature, their dissimilarities shout to the world the truth about God, the human race, evil, and the possibility of restoration. With this background, let’s investigate these foundational doctrines that the Bible lays in these chapters.

Genesis 1-11 God creates the world 1:1-2:3; Adam and Eve 2:4-25; The fall of man 3; Cain and Abel 4; Adam to Noah 5; The flood 6-8; Noah after the Flood 9; Origin of Nations 10; Tower of Babel 11:1-9; The line of Shem 11:10-32

Genesis 1-11 is crucial because it builds a worldview on the key questions that all people ask:

- Who is God and what is He like?
- How did the earth come into being?
- Where did the human race come from and what is its purpose and destiny?
- What is the cause of evil and suffering in the world?
- Is there hope that the human race and the world can be delivered from evil and suffering?
- Is God concerned about everyone and every nation in the world?

The *Enuma Elish* is a Mesopotamian account of creation. The *Epic of Atrahasis* contains not only a creation story, but a story of a great flood which brought the human race to near extinction. Egyptian literature contained many accounts similar to Genesis 1-11.

It is interesting to note that the older the stories are in the literature of ancient nations, the closer they are to the biblical account which indicates that at one time, the original story was known to all but became corrupted and embellished by the sinful imaginations of people.



**God and Creation (1-2)**

The first truth is that there is only one God. There were not many gods vying with each other for supremacy. God alone is the cause of creation and the creation is the product of His mighty power. This is the doctrine of *creatio ex nihilo*, creation out of nothing. But it was not from nothing. It was from Someone, the one God of heaven and earth.

This God first made matter (the formless void of verse 1:2 and from that basic matter He made all other things, light and darkness (3-5), sea and sky (6-8), land masses (10-13), luminaries (14-19), creatures for the sea and sky (20-23), and creatures for the earth, including man (24-27).

*Some have noted the parallels between the first three days and days four through six. God first created an environment, then created those things which would fill the environment.*

God's power is seen in creation so that all are without excuse. Romans 1:20  
 God is to be worshipped because of the creation. Revelation 4:11

<i>God makes various environments on the first three days</i>	<i>God fills these environments with suitable creatures on days four through six</i>
1. God makes the formless mass and light	4. God makes the luminaries to fill the earth with light
2. God makes the sea and the sky	5. God makes creatures to fill the sea and sky
3. God makes the earth fertile	6. God makes creatures to fill the earth.

“By the word of the Lord the heavens were made, and by the breath of his mouth all their host” (Psalm 33:6).

“By faith, we understand that the worlds were prepared by the word of God, so that what is seen was not made out of things which are visible” (Hebrews 11:3).

**God rests on the seventh day.**

The beautiful symmetry of the creation account is a worthy reflection of the beauty of the universe and the glory of the Creator of the universe.

**Mankind and Creation (1-2)**

The pinnacle of the creation occurred on day six when God created man and woman in His image—not even the angels come close. When God created all other parts of creation He stated, “*Let there be...*” (1:3, 6, 14) or “*Let the waters be gathered...let the earth sprout...let the waters teem...let the earth bring forth*” (1:9, 11, 20, 24). But when God made man, He stated something completely different, “*Let us make man in our image...*” It is the highest privilege to be accorded to any part of creation. One can go no higher in creation than a human, for the next level of being is God.

“When I consider your heavens, the work of your fingers, the moon and the stars, which you have ordained, what is man that you think of him? And the son of man, that you care for him? Yet you have made him a little lower than God and crown him with glory and Majesty” (Psalm 8:3-5)!

God restores His image in us through Christ. Romans 8:29; 2 Corinthians 3:18; Ephesians 4:24; Colossians 3:10

Jesus uses the passage about marriage to reestablish the sanctity and permanence of marriage in light of loose divorce laws in Israel. (Matthew 9:5-6)

Paul uses this passage to show that marriage is a picture of Christ and the Church. (Ephesians 5:25-33)

Romans 5:12-21 and 1 Corinthians 15:21-22 are key passages which explain the spiritual consequences of the fall of the human race.

The Curses of the Fall-  
*The Serpent* slithering on its belly and will be crushed. *The woman* – pain in the childbirth.  
*The man* – toil in work.  
*The creation* – the ground is cursed.

The Serpent is identified in Revelation 12:9; 20:2 and 2 Corinthians 11:3. He will be crushed under the feet of the saints. See Romans 16:20

To be made in the image of God means that man can have a relationship with God like no other creature. Man, being made in His image, was intended to reflect God’s nature on the earth. Man was also made to rule the earth. Being in the image of God is therefore a matter of being (character) and doing (ruling).

It is for this reason that God gave man the commission to be fruitful, multiply, fill the earth, and have dominion over it. This image of God also means that people are creatures of dignity and worth. Mankind’s value and purpose is seen in chapter two when God placed him in the Garden of Eden and commissioned him to keep it. Work is not a result of sin, but is part of what it means to be human—it is fulfilling and noble to work.

The creation story ends with the account of God making the woman and bringing her to the man. The female is the perfect complement to the man. She is different, yet the same, and is his equal physically, spiritually, and mentally. This equality is not meant for competition, but for oneness with the man that they might together fulfill God’s will.

### Evil in Creation (3-11)

Placed in the Garden, having daily fellowship with God with all needs abundantly met, man was given one prohibition, not to eat from the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil (2:16-17). Enticed by the Serpent, the man and the woman disobeyed God and partook of the fruit. What the Serpent said would happen came true—their eyes were opened and they became like God (see 3:4-5, 22). But what the Serpent said would not happen—that they would not die—did occur, the man and the woman died, not physically at first, but spiritually.

The man and woman were banished from the Garden and the blessing of eating from the Tree of Life which conferred immortality. All descendants of Adam and Eve would share in their sin and fallenness. All sons and daughters of the first couple would be born alienated from God and cut off from eternal life.

In this sorrowful section a glimmer of hope shines. God promises that a descendant of the woman will rise up and bruise the head of the Serpent (3:15). Many have seen in this verse the first promise of the Serpent’s deception. One can also see the beginning of the sacrificial system as God covers the man and the woman with skin from a (slain) animal, an act that would become highly symbolic of our sin and insufficiency being covered by the righteousness of the Lamb of God.

Such a view of man was revolutionary in the ancient world and it is crucial in any age when ideologies or lawlessness reduce man to a meaningless product of time and chance, a cog in a machine, or a resource to be exploited.

The account of the creation of the woman teaches three vital truths: 1) the dignity and value of women, 2) marriage is the foundational social unit of the human race, 3) sex is God’s gift for marriage and when enjoyed and done in His way it is holy and pure.

The art of deception – giving enough truth to entice one into wrong action.

The essence of Mankind’s rebellion is that in the eating of the fruit, it sought to establish its own authority. Not content to rule the earth under the sovereignty of God, mankind sought to establish itself as an independent authority (knowing and deciding for itself good and evil).

Cain is an example of hatred and not loving the brethren. 1 John 3:11-12

In the gospels and the epistle of 2 Peter, Noah and the great flood are a type of the coming judgment. See Matthew 24:37-39 and 2 Peter 2:5, 9; 3:3-7.

God would become known as “the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob.” See Exodus 2:24; 3:6; Matthew 22:32; Acts 3:13.

The rest of Genesis 4-11 shows the multiplication and continuing consequences of sin. In chapter 4, Cain murders Abel. Cain is banished from his family and wanders the earth. His descendants multiply, but are rebellious while Seth’s descendants multiply and call upon the Lord. Yet death reigns. In chapter 5, the genealogy of Adam through Seth is recounted, but all die. The command to fill the earth with people is being fulfilled, but all the earth is in rebellion to God. God sends a great flood to destroy humanity, but saves the human race through the line of Noah (chapters 6-8).

After the Flood, God again commissions humanity to be fruitful, to multiply, and to fill the earth. But the human race rebels again! They are fruitful, but they refuse to fill the earth and concentrate in one region near ancient Babylon. The human race, like the first pair in Eden, is seeking to assert its independence from God. This is seen in the phrase, “let us make a name for ourselves” with the expressed purpose of disobeying God’s order (11:4). Once again God must intervene with judgment. He confuses the language of the people so that they do not understand one another. Their building project—the Tower of Babel—halts, and the descendants of Noah begin to separate from one another, move out to the different regions of the earth, and form the nations of the world.

This important section of Scripture ends with a genealogy. Lists of names can sometimes be difficult to read, yet this genealogy contains something significant for it ends with a few words about a man living in the Mesopotamian area. He lived in the ancient city of Ur and his name was Abram. It is this man who will be the prominent character of the second epoch of human history and it is his faith in the promises of God which will change the world.

### **Abraham to Moses**

The second great epoch in Scripture is found in Genesis chapters 12-50. It focuses on three men, Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, and can be called the Age of Promises for in this time God made promises to men that He would intervene to bring salvation to the world. Abram, whose name would be changed to Abraham, is the final figure of the last epoch and the first figure of this one. He lives in the city of Ur, in ancient Mesopotamia near (what is now known as) the Persian Gulf and has a life-changing encounter with the living God that would influence the whole world.

“Then men began to call upon the name of the Lord” (Genesis 4:26).

The Tower of Babel was probably a three-tiered or seven-tiered ziggurat which was devoted to astrology and the worship of false gods.

### *The Abrahamic Covenant*

Abraham leaving his country is an example of faith for NT believers. See Hebrews 11:8-10.

The Covenant renewal with Isaac is found in Genesis 26:2-5 and it is renewed with Jacob in Genesis 28:10-17 and 35:9-15.

Our relationship with God through Jesus Christ is a covenant relationship, established through His sacrifice. All covenants would eventually be broken by man's sin, which brought curses. Jesus enacted a new and better covenant by His faithfulness, even faithfulness to death, and it is this covenant we enter by faith. See Luke 22:20 and Hebrews 8:7-13.

*“Now the Lord said to Abram, Go forth from your country, and from your relatives and from your father’s house, to the land which I will show you; And I will make you a great nation, and I will bless you, and make your name great; and so you shall be a blessing; and I will bless those who bless you, and the one who curses you I will curse. And in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed” (Genesis 12:1-3).*

Here is the beginning of the covenant relationship between God and Abraham. God calls him to leave his land, his people, and his family in order that He might give him a new land and descendants. The climax of the promises is found in the final phrase—*in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed*. All the families of the earth had rebelled against God. They had been judged at the Flood and again at the Tower of Babel, but God still loved them and was initiating a covenant relationship with one man through whom He would recover all the families of the earth.

The stories of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob in Genesis 12-50 tell of God’s work with these men, their journeys in the land of promise, but most importantly their journey in faith. The covenant is renewed to Abraham and Sarah’s son, Isaac. Isaac and his wife Rebekah have twin sons and the covenant is passed to Jacob. Jacob has twelve sons who become the twelve tribes of Israel.

The final chapters tell the story of the betrayal of Joseph by his brothers, his being sold into slavery where he is carried into Egypt, his miraculous rise to power, and how God used him to deliver a nation and his family from famine. The period closes with Abraham’s descendants in Egypt and the stage is set for the third great epoch of God’s work in history, Moses and the founding of the nation of Israel.

## **Key Events and Theological Concepts**

### *Covenant*

A covenant is an agreement into which two parties enter. They can be equal parties or one can be superior to the other. They contain promises and may have curses in case of covenant violations. In God’s covenant with Abraham He promised land and descendants. This was meaningful to Abraham because he had been called to leave his homeland and was also childless. But the aspect of the covenant that makes it unique from all other covenants of the ancient world is that this man is to be a blessing to the whole world. The covenant does not exalt his descendants and place them in a superior role because they are better than others, but it makes them a channel of the blessing of God so that all other peoples of the world can be restored to God.

### *Abraham in Genesis 12-25*

His call 12:1-9; In Egypt 12:10-20; Lot separates 13:1-18; Abram rescues Lot 14; Covenant confirmed 15; Hagar and Ishmael 16; Circumcision 17; Isaac promised 18:1-15; Sodom and Gomorrah 18:16-19:28; Abraham and Abimelech 20; Isaac and Ishmael 21:1-21; Covenant w/ Abimelech 21:22-34; Offering of Isaac 22; Death and burial of Sarah 23; Isaac and Rebekah 24; Death of Abraham 25:1-11; Ishmael 25:12-18

*Isaac in Genesis 24:1 - 27:46*  
A wife for Isaac 24; Abraham dies 25:1-11, Ishmael’s line 25:12- 8; Esau and Jacob 25:19-34; Isaac the well-digger 26; Jacob’s trickery 27:1-46

*Jacob in Genesis 27:47-50*  
Jacob in Haran 27:47-29:14; Jacob’s family 29:15-30:24; Jacob and Laban 30:25-31:55; Jacob and Esau 32-33; Jacob’s daughter 34; Jacob in Bethel 35:1-29; Esau’s line 36; Joseph and his brothers 37; Judah’s sin 38; Joseph in Egypt 39-41; Joseph and family reconciled 42-45; Jacob in Egypt 46-48; The blessing on the sons 49; Deaths of Jacob and Joseph 50

The Hebrew phrase for making a covenant is *karath berith* – to cut a covenant.

The sacrifice of Isaac is an example of faith for NT believers. See Hebrews 11:17-19.

See Romans 4 and Galatians 3:5-29 for Paul's use of Abraham's faith as the OT basis of justification by faith apart from works.

The covenant is confirmed in several episodes in the lives of the patriarchs. In Genesis 15, God promises that a biological descendant will be the heir of Abraham. He confirms it in a dramatic way by cutting animals in half, laying them on the ground and passing between the pieces. This may seem strange to us, but in that culture, when an animal was sacrificed, a covenant partner would pass between the pieces and proclaim his faithfulness. The partner was demonstrating that if he did not keep his promises, his life would be forfeited just as the life of the animal was forfeited. Here is an amazing demonstration of God's promise to us. He stakes His faithfulness to fulfill the promises on His own life!

God reconfirms the covenant in Genesis 17. Here God changes Abram's name to Abraham and Sarai's name to Sarah. In the ancient world, naming was a sign of ownership and knowing someone's name was an indication of having complete authority over them. In this covenant renewal, God establishes circumcision as the sign of the covenant and promises that the descendant will be a biological son of Abraham and Sarah who at this time was nearing 90 years of age!

The final confirmation of the covenant with Abraham is in the story of the sacrifice of Isaac. After Abraham fully obeyed, and after God intervened and provided a substitute, God renewed the promises that Abraham's descendants would be as numerous as the stars of the heavens and that all the nations of the earth would be blessed through those descendants.

The promises of the covenant are renewed later to Isaac (Genesis 26:4) and to Jacob (Genesis 28:14; 35:9-12).

### *Justification by Faith*

In the Genesis 15 account of the covenant renewal, He took Abram outside his tent and told him to look at the stars and number them if he could. And when God told him, "So shall your descendants be," Abram believed God and God counted it to him as righteousness. This is one of the most important phrases and passages in the Bible for it shows that Abraham was justified in the sight of God by faith and not by works. In Paul's arguments with the Pharisees, he showed how Abraham was made righteous while still uncircumcised. Justification is by faith alone in the promises of God and not by works.

In the world of the patriarchs, a man without an heir could purchase a slave, cultivate him, honor him, and designate him as his heir. A man could also sire a son through his wife's handmaid and that son would be considered a biological son. Abraham sought to do both of these as seen in Genesis 15:2 with Eliezer and in 16 with Hagar and Ishmael. God had a different plan. His plan was to strengthen his faith so he and his wife Sarah could bear a son in their old age. God chose this method as an example of faith for NT believers in Romans 4:19-25 and Hebrew 11:11-12.



*Sodom and Gomorrah  
in the Bible*

The Prophets -Isaiah  
1:10; 3:9; Ezekiel 16:46  
Jesus -Luke 17:28-32  
The apostles -2 Peter  
2:6-9; Jude 1:7

Circumcision primarily  
was to be of the  
heart – Deuteronomy  
10:16; 30:6; Jeremiah  
4:4; Romans 2:29;  
Philippians 3:3;  
Colossians 2:11

Moses' parents are  
cited in Hebrews as  
an example of faith.  
Hebrews 11:23

“And Moses was  
educated in all the  
learning of the  
Egyptians, and he was a  
man of power in words  
and deeds.” Act 7:22

*Sodom and Gomorrah*

These two cities are infamous for their wickedness and became a standard for sin and an example of judgment. They figure into the story because Abraham's nephew, Lot, located his flocks toward the city and eventually moved into the city. The prophets, Jesus, and the Apostles used this episode in their teaching as a warning against sin.

*Circumcision*

This has already been mentioned in the section on the covenant. Yet, it is important to mention again because of its significance in the history of the people of God. Circumcision became the God-given sign of the covenant. It was reconfirmed for the nation during the Passover in Egypt (Exodus 12) and directly before they entered the land of promise (Joshua 5).

Circumcision was a “badge of belonging.” One could be part of the covenant people only if he were circumcised. But in the NT, as the gospel spread among the Gentiles, Paul argued that covenant membership was now based on grace through faith in the Messiah. A man could be part of the covenant people without circumcision. The Jerusalem Council (Acts 15) settled this matter stating that Gentiles did not have to be circumcised to be accepted as full members in the believing community.

**Moses to the Conquest of Canaan**

Hundreds of years passed between the end of Genesis and the beginning of Exodus. At the end of Genesis, the descendants of Abraham are few in number, but one of their own (Joseph) is ruler under Pharaoh. At the beginning of Exodus, the descendants of Abraham have multiplied greatly, but are subjected to slavery and infanticide. In the midst of this suffering, God brings a child into the world that will deliver the Jews from their bondage. He is Moses, the most prominent figure in the Old Testament.

But the path to power was unexpected. Moses' mother hid him as long as she could from Pharaoh's infanticide policy. When she could no longer keep Moses a secret, she hid him in a basket in the river, entrusting him to God. Pharaoh's daughter found the baby and raised him as her own. This enabled Moses to receive his training in the courts of Pharaoh. One would think he was now positioned in this place of power to deliver his people. Moses thought so. But when he killed an Egyptian who was oppressing a Hebrew, and the incident was discovered, Moses had to flee from the wrath of Pharaoh (who probably feared some sort of insurrection from him). Moses went to

Two thousand years after circumcision was established, the Jerusalem Council met to discuss whether it was necessary for salvation. See Acts 15.

**Exodus**

Exodus means “the road out”

Israel's oppression 1- 2;  
God's deliverer 3-4;  
Deliverance from Egypt  
5-15; From the crossing  
to Sinai 16- 19; Israel  
at Mt. Sinai 20-40; The  
Ten Commandments 20;  
Social & ethical laws 21-  
23; Covenant of blood  
24; Tabernacle 25-31;  
The Golden Calf 32-34;  
Tabernacle built 35-40

**Leviticus**

This book is named after the levitical priesthood but the Hebrew bible titles it, “and he called” which is the first word in the book.

Moses went from the height of power to the depths of an occupation which was loathsome to Egyptians, shepherding. See Genesis 46:34

When God appeared to Moses, He identified Himself with His promises to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. See Exodus 6:6

Jesus used the sacred, unutterable name of God for Himself when He said, "Before Abraham was, I AM." See John 8:58.

#### *The Ten Plagues*

1. River to blood
2. Frogs
3. Gnats
4. Insects
5. Pestilence on Cattle
6. Boils
7. Hail
8. Locusts
9. Darkness
10. Death of firstborn

#### *Three Purposes of the Ten Plagues*

1. Bring Israel out of Egypt – Exodus 7:3-4
2. Proclaim God's name in all the earth – Exodus 9:16
3. Judge the gods of Egypt – Ex. 12:12; Numbers 33:4

The crossing of the Sea became the event that Israel would sing about throughout history and would be a type for future deliverance

the land of Midian where he became a shepherd, an occupation loathsome to cultivated Egyptians. There he married and settled into a nomadic lifestyle, never intending to return to Egypt. Moses had failed.

Then God appeared. The episode of the burning bush is the event in which God commissioned Moses to return to the land of Egypt and deliver His people. It is significant for at least two reasons. First, though Moses had forgotten his people, God had not (Exodus 2:23-25). He would act because He had made covenant promises and would always be faithful to them. Second, in this event, God revealed His eternal name, "I AM who I AM. Thus you shall say to the sons of Israel, 'I AM has sent me to you.'"

Moses returned and with the aid of his brother, Aaron, confronted Pharaoh. When Pharaoh refused to let the Hebrews go, God intervened with the Ten Plagues, the most famous being the slaying of every firstborn male in households where the blood of a sacrificed animal was not brushed on the doorway.

It was in this plague that the Passover meal was established. The slaying of the firstborn sons was too much for Pharaoh. He let the Hebrew slaves go, then changed his mind and pursued them to bring them back. The Hebrews were in a wilderness area close to an impassable body of water. With the water on one side and the Egyptian army on the other, the Hebrews appeared trapped, but this set the stage for the Lord to perform a mighty deed and glorify His name—the splitting of the Red Sea through which the Hebrews safely passed, but which swallowed up the Egyptian army.

The Hebrews were delivered by the power of God through the hand of Moses. What Moses in all his training and sophistication could not do, God did through the power of His might and thoroughly decimated mighty Egypt.

The Hebrews encountered many challenges in their journey from Egypt, each designed to teach spiritual lessons, but their primary destination was a meeting with God at Mt. Sinai—the place where Moses originally met God.

It was here that Israel was formerly constituted as a nation through a blood sacrifice. It was also where God revealed His Law to them. In this law were the Ten Commandments, laws which regulated societal behavior, instructions for building the tabernacle which would be God's dwelling in the midst of His people, instructions for animal sacrifices, and instructions for festivals. All that remained for the Hebrews was to follow God's lead into the land He had promised them.

Sacrificial laws 1-7; Priesthood 8-10; Laws on cleanness 11-15; Day of Atonement 16; The Holiness Code 17-26; Vows 27

#### **Numbers**

The title "Numbers" is from the Septuagint. The Hebrew title is "in the desert."

Israel organized at Sinai 1-10; Israel rebels from Sinai to Edom 11-20:21; From Edom to the Jordan River 20:22-36.

#### **Deuteronomy**

Deuteronomy means "the second law."

God's faithfulness in the past 1-4; How to love in the covenant 5-26; The blessing and the curses 27-31; Appendices 32-34; The Song of Moses 32; The Blessing of Moses 33; The Death of Moses 34

Just as the blood on the doorpost enabled the angel of death to pass over a household, so the blood of Christ, frees us from eternal death. Christ is called our Passover in 1 Corinthians 5:7.

Animal sacrifices prefigured the sacrifice of Christ who is the Lamb of God and whose blood cleanses us from all sin. See Revelation 5 and Hebrews 9:23-28.

The levitical priesthood served as a foreshadowing of the priesthood of Christ who ever lives to intercede for us. See Hebrews 5 and 7.

Israel's purpose as a nation was to be a kingdom of priests and a holy nation. See Exodus 19:6. This terminology is used in the New Testament to describe the purpose of the Church in 1 Peter 2:9 & Revelation 1:6.

The story of the fiery serpents and the bronze serpent was used by Jesus as a picture of His dying for the sins of the world. See Numbers 21:6-9 and John 3:14-15.

John 1:14 can be translated, "And the Word became flesh and tabernacled among us, and we beheld His glory...."

Knowing that God kept His Covenant promises, and that He was willing to exert His power to fulfill those promises, should have made it easy for the Hebrews to obey God. Twelve spies were sent into the land to scout it, but when ten of them returned with reports of what seemed like insurmountable challenges, the nation rebelled against God and Moses' leadership and sought to return to Egypt. Though God prevented His people from returning, He did judge them by forcing them to wander the wilderness areas for 40 years until all of the adults who had rebelled died and the younger generation was old enough to conquer the land. The years of wandering contain more stories of Israel's disobedience and God's discipline. Some of these stories are well known, such as that of the prophet Balaam and the story of the serpents attacking the camp.

This period of history ends with Moses pronouncing the blessing and curses of obedience and disobedience, his song of blessing to the nation, and his death outside the land of promise.

## Key Concepts and Events

### *Covenant*

Covenants continue to play a prominent role in this section of Scripture. On Mt. Sinai God established a covenant with Israel, which formally constituted them as a nation. In His covenant with Abraham, God required righteous living (Genesis 17:1), in the covenant with Israel, God spells out the details of righteous living in the Law. This covenant was renewed in Leviticus 26 and again with the second generation in Deuteronomy 28 where Moses spelled out the blessing of obedience and the curses of disobedience.

### *Tabernacle*

The Tabernacle was the tent-like structure God commanded Israel to construct as His dwelling place among them. It had a courtyard with an altar for sacrifices, a laver for washing, and a building that had a holy place in which the Ark of the Covenant was placed.

### *Sacrifice and Priesthood*

God ordained many types of sacrifices. Leviticus 1-7 lists five ways by which Hebrews could be forgiven of sin and worship God. Only Levitical priests could offer these and the blood of the sacrifice was the means by which the nation was cleansed from sin. The most important sacrifice was the one made on the Day of Atonement (Leviticus 17) in which the High Priest went into the Most Holy Place to sprinkle blood on the Ark of the Covenant.

The rebellion in the wilderness serves as a powerful reminder that we should be obedient to God. See 1 Corinthians 10:1-13 and Hebrews 4.

Balaam is cited in 2 Peter 2:15-16 and Jude 1:11 as examples of men who serve for worldly gain and not for God.

Some scholars believe that when Jesus said, "For this is My blood of the covenant which is poured out for many for forgiveness of sins," that He was looking back to the event of Exodus 24. See Matthew 26:28.

All covenants are fulfilled in Christ who kept all covenants perfectly, who bore the curses of the covenants on our behalf, and who received all the promises of the covenants, which He now bestows, by grace to those who have faith in Him. See Hebrew 8.



Peter quoted from Leviticus when he said, “As obedient children, do not be conformed to the former lusts which were yours in your ignorance, but like the Holy One who called you, be holy yourselves also in all your behavior; because it is written, ‘you shall be holy, for I am holy.’” See 1 Peter 1:14-16.

When Jesus was asked which was the greatest commandment, He referred back to this passage in Deuteronomy 6. See Matthew 22:37-28.

Joshua shows up long before the book which bears his name. Shortly after Israel escaped from Egypt, he led Israel to victory when it was attacked by the Amalekites. See Exodus 17:8-13. Joshua served Moses faithfully during the years in the wilderness. When Moses was on Mt. Sinai, Joshua accompanied him at least part of the way (Exodus 24:13). Joshua was called Moses’ servant in 33:11 and was designated as one of the spies sent to scout out the land. Finally, Joshua was named Moses’ successor in Deuteronomy 31:3-23.

## Holiness

A key theme emerges in the closing chapters of Leviticus: *holiness*. Chapters 17-26 are called the “holiness code.” After having established right worship through sacrifices in which a man may become holy, these chapters emphasize right living on how one may stay holy. The key phrase is “you shall be holy for I am holy” and the word holy, or a form of it, occurs over 80 times in these chapters.

## Rebellion in the Desert

Exodus 19 through Numbers 1 takes place at Mt. Sinai. In Numbers 11, Israel resumes its journey, but in chapter 11 the people complain about food, in chapter 12, Aaron and Miriam grumble about Moses and in chapter 13 and 14, the spies give a bad report and cause the nation to turn against Moses. In chapter 16, Korah rebels and in chapter 21 the people complain again about food and water that causes the plague of the serpents. Chapters 22-24 tell the story of Balaam and chapter 25 is the immorality at Baal-Peor.

## Shema

The Shema is the primary expression of Israel’s monotheism. It is found in Deuteronomy 6:4, “*Hear, O Israel, The Lord our God, the Lord is one.*” Not only does this declare there to be one God rather than many gods, it also declares that this one God is faithful and immutable. The Shema is the foundation for the greatest commandment—to love God with all one’s heart, soul, mind and strength.

## Conquest of Canaan to United Monarchy

Joshua is the prominent figure and hero of this period of Israel’s history. When the period of mourning over Moses was completed, God spoke directly to Joshua and commissioned him in the following way:

*“...every place on which the sole of your foot treads, I have given it to you...no man will be able to stand before you...just as I have been with Moses, I will be with you. I will not fail you or forsake you...only be strong and very courageous. Be careful to do according to all the law which Moses My servant commanded you...This book of the law shall not depart from your mouth, but you shall meditate on it day and night so that you may be careful to do according to all that is written in it; for then you will make your way prosperous, and then you will have success. Have I not commanded you? Be strong and courageous! Do not tremble or be dismayed, for the Lord your God is with you wherever you go” (Joshua 1:3-9).*

## Joshua

*Preparation for conquest*  
God’s commission 1; Spying Jericho 2; Crossing Jordan 3-4; Circumcision, Passover, and the Captain 5

*Conquest*  
Central campaign 6-9; South campaign 10; North campaign 11; Summary 12; Division of land 13-22; Joshua’s speeches 23-24

*Rahab in the NT*

1. An ancestor of Jesus – Mt. 1:5
2. An example of faith – Hebrews 11:31
3. An example of faith that works – James 2:25

*Holy War*

1. God gave time for the people of the land to repent. See Genesis 15:13-16
2. The inhabitants were excessive and extreme in their wickedness. See Leviticus 18:24-30
3. Israel's was God's instrument of judgment. Joshua 11:18-20
4. God commanded this at other times. See 1 Sam. 15:1-3; 2 Chron. 20:15-23.
5. Holy war today is spiritual. See Ephesians 6:12ff and 2 Cor. 10:3-5

Joshua's first act was to send spies into Jericho. These spies met Rahab the harlot, escaped through her window, and returned with a report. The Hebrews then crossed the Jordan River in a manner similar to Israel crossing the Red Sea; God split the waters as the priests moved out into the river. This confirmed that God was with Joshua as He had been with Moses.

Israel was now on the western side of the Jordan. But they did not immediately go to war. The men were first circumcised, an act of covenant obedience. Second, they celebrated the Passover. It is obvious that these were not strategic moves, humanly speaking, as they left themselves vulnerable to attack. But God's protection and strategies were what the people needed. This was confirmed to Joshua when he met a mysterious man and asked him if he was for or against Israel and the man replied, "No, rather, I come as captain of the Lord of hosts." God was the one who was in charge, not Joshua, and it was His strategy that had to be followed if Israel was to win. Then followed the unique strategy for Jericho. March around the city six days without a word, on the seventh day march around seven times, then shout! We know the story. God tore down the walls and the city was taken.

Ai was next. But Israel was defeated. When Joshua inquired of the Lord, He was told the defeat took place because someone had disobeyed and taken something from Jericho. Achan had sinned by taking something from Jericho when all was to be destroyed. When this sin was purged from their midst, Ai and Bethel both were defeated.

Joshua's strategy was to conquer the central part of the land. After conquering the center they turned their attention to the south (10), conquered it and then moved north (11:1-15). The major cities were destroyed. Then the land was allotted to the tribes who had the responsibility of taking the minor cities and tribes in their possession.

The Book of Joshua closes with two speeches. In the first, Joshua exhorts Israel to remember the great things God had done for them... in the second he reviews Israel's history from Abraham to his day and exhorts them, "*Choose for yourselves today whom you will serve...but as for me and my house, we will serve the Lord*" (24:15).

Gideon, Barak, Samson, and Jephthah are mentioned as examples of faith in Hebrews 11:32

Samson's birth was one of many supernatural births in the Bible. See Judges 13.

It is a testament to Joshua's character that the people remained faithful to the Lord during his life and that of the elders who served with him (Judges 2:7). But once that generation was dead, Israel turned away from the Lord. Rather than conquer the people of the land completely, they allowed them to remain and were polluted by their false religions. Israel would worship the foreign gods of the nations, God would bring oppression upon them through these nations, the people would cry out to God, and He would send them deliverers, commonly known as judges.

This period of time in Israel's history can be found in the Book of Judges. Judges were civil and military leaders raised up by the Spirit of God to deliver Israel from its oppressors. The most famous judges are:

Othniel – 3:7-11

Ehud – 3:12-30

Deborah – 4:1-5:31

Gideon – 6:1-8:28

Jephthah – 10:6-12:7

Samson – 13:1-15:20

It is likely that the judges did not work successively, but concurrently to some degree, that is, their work overlapped and they served in different regions of the land. The time for Judges could be as little as 150 years or as much as 350 years.

Judges was a time of great difficulty due to the moral relativism of the day. The theme verse for Judges can be found in 17:6; 18:1; 19:1 and 21:25, "In those days there was no king in Israel. Each man did that which was right in his own eyes." The final chapters of Judges tell of the moral degradation in Israel.

Yet, in the midst of the darkness, God was at work. It was during the time of the judges that the story found in the Book of Ruth occurred. Ruth recounts the story of a famine in Israel, the move of Elimelech and Naomi and their two sons to Moab, the marriage of their sons to Moabite women, and the death of the father and sons in Moab. When Naomi returns, one daughter-in-law remains in Moab, the other, Ruth, returns with her to Israel out of devotion and faithfulness. Through a series of events, Ruth meets Boaz, a relative of Naomi. Boaz marries Ruth and they become ancestors of King David.

### **Judges**

Incomplete obedience 1:1-3:8; Ehud 3:9-31; Deborah and Barak 4- 5; Gideon 6-8; Abimelech 9; Minor judges 10; Jephthah 11-12; Samson 13-16; Corruption 17-21

### **Ruth**

Losses in Moab and Ruth's gain 1; Ruth gleans in the field of Boaz 2; Ruth proposes that Boaz redeem her 3; Boaz and Ruth marry 4

## United Monarchy to Divided Kingdom

The wording of Hannah's prayer in 1 Samuel 2:1-10 served as a model for the Magnificat, Mary's praise to God found in Luke 1:46-55.

Spiritual silence is because of sin – "Word from the Lord was rare in those days. Visions were infrequent." 1 Samuel 3:1

The kind of priest God wanted – "But I will raise up for Myself a faithful priest who will do according to what is in My heart and in My soul; and I will build him an enduring house, and he will walk before My anointed always" (1 Samuel 2:35).

Israel's request for a king was worldly, "Now appoint a king for us to judge us like all the nations," 1 Samuel 8:5, and was a rejection of God's kingship, "Listen to the voice of the people in regard to all that they say to you, for they have not rejected you, but they have rejected Me from being king over them" (1 Samuel 8:7).

"And the women sang as they played, and said, 'Saul has slain his thousands, and David his ten thousands.' Then Saul became very angry..." (1 Samuel 18:7-8).

Psalms 18, 52, 54, 56, 57, and 59 were written by David during his trials with Saul.

Samuel is a transition figure between the judges and the kings. He was a judge like Gideon and Samson, but he also lived to anoint Saul and David as kings over Israel.

The period begins with another supernatural birth. The year is somewhere between 1100 and 1050 BC. Hannah, wife of Elkanah, is unable to conceive. Praying fervently in the courtyard of the Tabernacle, Hannah promises God that she will dedicate her child to the Lord. Her request is heard and Samuel is conceived. After he is weaned, Hannah takes him to Eli the priest to be raised in the service of the Lord. While a young boy, Samuel hears the voice of God and is commissioned to serve Him. These events occurred during the latter period of the reign of judges in Israel. The priesthood was corrupt because of Eli's sons and the Ark of the Covenant was used more as a talisman than a reminder of God's presence among His people. The Ark is lost in battle, although God supernaturally brings it back to the land.

Samuel rules over Israel faithfully, but his sons are corrupt and the people ask for a king. God views this as a rejection of His kingship, but grants their request. Saul is selected and anointed king. At first, his reign is wise and humble, but Saul begins making mistakes which prove tragic for his reign and for Israel.

First, Saul offers sacrifices in place of Samuel. Only a priest could offer the sacrifices. Second, Saul makes a foolish vow which prevents Israel from gaining a thorough victory over the Philistines. Third, Saul disobeys the command to annihilate the Amalekites. Because of this last act of disobedience, God decrees that the kingship will pass from Saul's family to another.

The king God has in mind to replace Saul is still a youth. He is a young shepherd named David. David is anointed king, but must wait for God to finish His purposes with Saul. It is during these early years that David slays Goliath and is given Michal, the daughter of Saul, in marriage. David is also made military commander in Saul's army and gains great fame, but this arouses Saul's suspicion and jealousy. A long and torturous period of time follows in which Saul seeks to slay David and in which David must flee. Finally, Saul is killed in battle and after a brief period of civil war between David and Saul's son, Ishbosheth, David is anointed king over all Israel.

David solidifies his rule and leads Israel to victories over surrounding nations which enables Israel to emerge as a cohesive and strong political unit.

### 1 Samuel

#### Samuel 1-8

His birth 1; His childhood 2; His call 3; The Ark is lost in battle 4; The Ark in Philistia 5; The Ark returns 6; Samuel wins over Philistia 7; The people ask for a king 8

#### Saul 9-15

Meets Samuel 9; Anointed king 10; Victory over Ammon 11; Samuel's address 12; Saul's sacrifice 13; Saul's rash vow 14; Saul's great sin 15

#### David 16-31

Anointed king 16; Victory over Goliath 17; Jonathan and David 18; Danger from Saul 19; Jonathan and David's covenant 20; Fleeing from Saul 21-24; Nabal and Abigail 25; David flees again 26-27; Witch of Endor 28; David in Philistia 29; David and Amalek 30; Saul and Jonathan die in battle 31

Samuel wanted to anoint Eliab, David's oldest brother, to replace Saul, but God said, "Do not look at his appearance or at the height of his stature, because I have rejected him; for God sees not as man sees, for man looks at the outward appearance, but the Lord looks at the heart" 1 Samuel 16:7

David wrote Psalm 51 after confessing his sin with Bathsheba.

God took the life of the first baby conceived (in adultery) by David and Bathsheba. But she conceived again as his wife and bore him Solomon. God's name for Solomon was Jedidiah – beloved of the Lord – a graphic illustration of God's mercy and grace toward repentant sinners.

Solomon's wisdom was first tested and revealed over a dispute of who was the mother of a baby. See 1 Kings 3:16-28.

Obedience rather than sacrifice is a major biblical theme: See Psalm 40:6-8; Isaiah 1:11; Hosea 6:6; Micah 6:6-8; Matthew 9:13; 12:7.

Faithfulness in small things and passion for God's glory gave David strength over a giant.

Then, trouble comes. It is not from an enemy outside or inside the borders of the land. It is from the heart of the leader himself— David commits adultery with the wife of one of his soldiers, tries to cover it up, and has the soldier murdered so that he can marry her. David's cover-up seems successful until God sends Nathan the prophet to rebuke him for his sin. David is forgiven and remains king, but the rest of his life is one of turmoil and civil war, God's discipline for his disobedience.

After David's death, his son, Solomon, assumes the throne and Israel enters into its golden era. Solomon consolidates power and builds Israel into a political and military power unmatched in the world at that time. During his reign of 40 years, he builds the Temple and amasses great wealth. Silver is no longer valuable because it is so bountiful. But Solomon is most famous for his wisdom, granted him by God to rule Israel and people seek him from the ends of the earth to hear his wisdom (1 Kings 8:43). Toward the end of his reign Solomon begins to forsake the Lord. His numerous marriages to women of foreign powers entice him to pursue their gods. Because of his idolatry, God announces that He will tear part of the kingdom from David's family. The United Monarchy is in its last days. The year is 931 BC.

## Key Concepts and Events

### *Saul's Great Sin*

Holy war was declared against Amalek for its attack upon Israel hundreds of years earlier. Saul was to "utterly destroy all." But Saul spared the best of the flocks and spared the king. When Samuel saw Saul's disobedience he uttered the following famous words.

*"Has the Lord as much delight in burnt offerings and sacrifices as in obeying the voice of the Lord? Behold, to obey is better than sacrifice, and to heed than the fat of rams. For rebellion is as the sin of divination, and insubordination is as iniquity and idolatry. Because you have rejected the word of the Lord He has also rejected you from being king" (1 Samuel 15:22-23).*

### *David and Goliath*

Where did David gain such courage and confidence to face the giant? He gained it from seeing God work on his behalf as he faithfully guarded his flock as a youth. During those years he killed a bear and a lion to save his sheep. The God who delivered him from the lion and bear would deliver him from the giant (1 Samuel 17:31-37). David also gained strength from his passion for God's glory. He said to Goliath, "This day the Lord will deliver you up into my hands and I will strike you down...that all the earth may know that there is a God in Israel" (1 Samuel 17:46).

When Saul and Jonathan were killed in battle, David honored them by writing, "Your beauty,

O Israel, is slain on your high places! How have the mighty fallen!" For the entire lament, see 2 Samuel 1:19-27.

David's discipline- "...the sword shall never depart from your house because you have despised Me..." (2 Samuel 12:10).

"...you have given occasion to the enemies of the Lord to blaspheme..." (2 Samuel 12:14).

## 2 Samuel

*Power comes to David*  
David's lament 1; David over Judah 2; Abner defects 3; Ishbosheth dies 4; David over Israel 5:1-16

*David solidifies power*  
Victory over Philistia 5:17-25; The Ark comes to Jerusalem 6; Davidic Covenant 7; Victories 8; Mephibosheth 9; Amnon and Aram 10

*Sin and Discipline*  
Adultery and murder 11; Nathan's rebuke 12; Incest 13; Absalom 14- 19; Sheba's revolt 20; Gibeonites 21; Psalm of Praise 22; Mighty Men 23; The census 24

## 1 Kings 1-11

David's last days 1; Solomon's enthronement 2; Wisdom from God 3; Solomon's court 4; The Temple and Palace 5-7; Solomon's prayer 8; Solomon and Hiram 9; Queen of Sheba 10; Apostasy 11.



A major NT emphasis is Jesus, descendant of David, who fulfills the Davidic covenant. Jesus is:

- Son of David – Mt. 1:1; Romans 1:3; 2 Tim. 2:8
- Davidic king – Acts 2:29-36; 13:34
- Holds the key or authority of David – Revelation 3:7
- Overcomes as Lion of Judah and Root of David – Revelation 5:5

In the beginning, only David had the courage to confront Goliath, but his example paved the way for others to kill giants after he became king. See 2 Samuel 21:15-22

### *David and Jonathan*

Perhaps the greatest example of brotherly love in Scripture is that between David and Jonathan. The two made a covenant and Jonathan was willing to forsake the kingship for himself and serve under David's authority. But Jonathan would never see this happen for he died in the same battle in which Saul died.

### *The Davidic Covenant*

This is one of the key passages in the Old Testament. After consolidating his rule, David was troubled that the Ark of the Covenant resided in a tent while he lived in a palace. David decided to build a great temple for the Lord. But God reserved this privilege for his son, Solomon. However, God made a covenant with David that one of his descendants would always sit on the throne. It is this promise that is the basis for the messianic hope that a descendant of David would be the Messiah. The Messiah would reign on the throne of David (Isaiah 9:7), would live in the tent of David (16:5), would be the fulfillment of faithful mercies to David (55:3), would be born in the city of David (Micah 5:2), and would be a righteous branch raised up for David (Jeremiah 23:5). David's humble response to God was "*Who am I, O Lord God, and what is my house, that you have brought me this far*" (2 Samuel 7:18)?

### *David's Mighty Men*

2 Samuel 23:8-39 lists David's mightiest warriors. It is a "Who's Who" of the greatest and most courageous men of that time who emerged in their greatness because they had a leader in David who brought out the best in them. One of the ironies of history is that one of David's greatest soldiers was Uriah the Hittite, the husband of Bathsheba!

### *Solomon's Prayers*

As Solomon began his reign, God appeared to him and invited him to ask what he wanted God to give him. Solomon's wise answer was: "*Give Your servant an understanding heart to judge Your people to discern between good and evil*" (1 Kings 3:9). Because Solomon did not ask for long life or wealth, God granted him wisdom that surpassed all—and long life and wealth as well! Many years later, after the Temple was built, Solomon dedicated the Temple with prayer. After he prayed, God filled the Temple with His Glory.

Wisdom literature flourished in the ancient near east. Israel used the cultural forms and expressions of their day to express faith in the one true God.

### *Types of Psalms*

*Hymn* – praise and thanksgiving to God – 8, 136, 150 Penitential – confession of sin and prayer for forgiveness- 38, 51

*Wisdom* – observations about life and one's relationship with God- 1, 14, 73

*Royal* – the king is God's agent to do God's will on earth- 2, 45, 110

*Messianic*- prophecies of the coming Messiah- 2, 22, 45, 110

*Imprecatory*- a plea for God to judge enemies- 35, 69, 137 Lamentation- one's difficult condition, trust in God, praise – 3, 4, 6

### *Poetic Styles*

*Parallelism* – Hebrew poetry is primarily a parallelism in thought rather than in sound. Three types of parallelism are:

*Synonymous* – a repetition of thought- “The heavens are telling of the glory of God; and their expanse is declaring the work of His hands.” 19:1. See also 15:1 and 24:1

## Hebrew Poetry and Wisdom Literature

It was during this time in Israel's history that Hebrew poetry and wisdom literature flourished. Although ancient poetry and wisdom sayings can be found throughout the OT, five books are grouped into a poetry and wisdom literature section. These are Job, Psalms, Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, and Song of Solomon.

Job is the first of the five poetic books. In the ancient near east, societies dealt with life's difficult questions of justice in the world. The Babylonian Theodicy is a lengthy dialogue between a suffering man and his friend. One famous monologue tells the story of a man and his friend. Another discourse tells the story of a man who met with multiple disasters before his god restored him. It is obvious that Job was written with this literary style. It shows that the Hebrews shared in a culture that used various styles to express their viewpoint. Job is a statement of faith that answers one of life's difficult questions, how can the righteous suffer, from the viewpoint of faith in the one true God.

The Book of Psalms was the praise book of Israel and has been a source of praise and worship for Christians throughout history. The word psalm means hymn. In the Hebrew, the book is called Praises.

The primary author of the Psalms is David. Other authors include Asaph, who was a chief musician in the time of David, the sons of Korah, Moses, and Solomon. Psalms is divided into five sections each of which may have circulated independently and then were compiled into one volume. Another type of wisdom literature was short proverbial maxims. This type of literature can be found in Egypt dating back to 2450 BC and contained observations about life and exhortations to wisdom. The Book of Proverbs is this type of book.

The purpose of the Book of Proverbs is to give counsel on how to live wisely, through short, easy-to-remember sayings. The ultimate goal of Proverbs is that both the fool and naive will gain wisdom on the various practical aspects of life.

### *Job*

Job and a spiritual battle 1-3; Job's debate with his friends 4-31; the speeches of Elihu 32-37; the wisdom and power of God 38-42:6; Job's repentance and restoration 42:7-17

### *Proverbs*

Introduction 1:1-7; Wisdom and her enemies 1:8-9:18; Solomon's proverbs: Wisdom vs. folly 10-22:16; Proverbs of the wise- 22:17- 24:34; Proverbs copied by Hezekiah's scribes 25-29; The proverbs of Lemuel 31:1-9; The virtuous woman 31:10- 31

*Antithetic* – two lines contrast one another  
 “For the Lord knows the way of the righteous, but the way of the wicked will perish.” 1:6

*Synthetic* – the second line completes the thought of the first. 1st  
 “And he will be like a tree planted by streams of water, 2nd which yields its fruit in season, and does not wither,” 1:3 (See also 2:6 and Ecclesiastes 11:1)

*Chiasms* – this word comes from the Greek letter “chi” which is written X. The two phases of the first line are reversed in the second line giving an A-B-B-A pattern such as in Psalm 51:1

Be gracious	A
... lovingkindness	B
... compassion	B
Blot out...	A

The structure of Psalm 8 is chiasmic:

God’s name	1
God’s rule	2-3
Man’s smallness	4
Man’s greatness	5
Man’s rule	6-8
God’s name	9

Ecclesiastes is a combination of poetry, proverbs, narrative, and meditations. The word Ecclesiastes comes into English via Greek and Latin, and translated a Hebrew word used only in this book. Its meaning is imprecise, but it appears to refer to one who leads an assembly. Thus, in the NASB, it is translated “preacher.” The basic theme of Ecclesiastes is that life apart from God is vanity. The Hebrew word for vanity can be translated: absurd, frustrating, futile, nonsense, empty, or vapor.

Song of Songs is an anthology of songs about romantic love between a man and a woman, especially sexual love. It may not have been composed by Solomon, but by another who wrote it for one of Solomon’s weddings, and it may have become music to play during other weddings. Many Jewish and Christian commentators have been embarrassed by its unashamed sexual content and have sought to allegorize it into God’s love for Israel or Christ’s love for the Church. But the original intention seems straightforward— the wonder and beauty of romantic and sexual love between a man and a woman is something created by God and therefore good when enjoyed as God intended.

### *Ecclesiastes*

Introduction 1:1-11;  
 Reflections 1:12-4:16;  
 Observations on life and exhortations 5:1-12:8;  
 Conclusion 12:9-14

### *Song of Songs*

The love of bride and groom – 1:-2:7; The bride speaks and dreams 2:8-3:5; Wedding day and other events 3:6-6:3; Beauty and desire 6:4- 8:15

### *Proverbs 31:10-31*

Which describes a virtuous woman is an acrostic.

*Acrostics* are alphabet poems where the first letter of the first line begins with the first letter of the alphabet. The first letter of the second line begins with the second letter and so on. The first eight verses of Psalm 119 begin with *Aleph*, the first letter of the Hebrew alphabet. The next eight verses begin with the second letter, *Beth*, and so on all the way through the 22 letters of the Hebrew alphabet for a total of 176 verses.



Jeroboam's idolatry was the root cause of Israel's captivity 200 years later. See 1 Kings 14:16

Omri is mentioned in Assyrian Documents because of his great political power in extending Israel's borders. The writer of Kings focuses, instead, on his sin.

## Divided Kingdom to Exile

This period begins with the accession of Rehoboam, son of Solomon. Early in his reign, the kingdom divides. Ten northern tribes break away and form the Kingdom of Israel. They will be conquered by Assyria in 722 BC. The southern kingdom is known as Judah and will be conquered by Babylon in 586 BC.

Israel divided for four reasons. First, tribal jealousy between Judah and the other tribes was deep rooted going back to the time of the judges. Second, Solomon's policies were burdensome to the people. Third, Rehoboam foolishly followed the advice of his peers to be heavy-handed with the people, rather than follow the advice of his elders to be a servant to the people. Fourth (the main cause), God was judging Solomon for worshipping idols during the latter part of his reign.

Due to space restraints, this article will survey key events, kings, and prophets of the northern kingdom, then backtrack to the southern kingdom.

### The Northern Kingdom – Israel (931-722 BC)

Jeroboam I – 930-909 – Jeroboam was divinely selected to lead the northern kingdom (1 Kings 11:26-31), but he turned against God by building images of golden calves and setting them up in the cities of Dan and Bethel as representations of God. From this point forward Israel would be a nation of idolaters and the evil of all subsequent kings would be measured against this idolatrous act. Jeroboam also instituted new festivals and opened the priesthood to any man from any tribe.

Nahab 909-908

Baasha 908-886

Elah 886-885

Zimri 885

Omri 885-874

Ahab 874-853 – Ahab and his wife, Jezebel, introduced something into Israel which would plague the nation until the end, Baal worship. Whereas Jeroboam's idols were intended for the worship of the Lord, Baal worship was an attempt to supplant it entirely. The story of Ahab is a story of his and Jezebel's struggle with the prophet Elijah over who would be the God of Israel, the LORD or Baal.

### 1 Kings 12-22

Rehoboam's act of foolishness and sin 12:1-25; Jeroboam in the north 12:16-14:20; Abijam. Asa, Jehoshaphat over Judah 15:1-24; Petty kings over Israel 15:25-16:28; Ahab, Jezebel, and Elijah 16:29-22:53

### 2 Kings

Ahaziah and Jehoram over Israel 1; Elijah and Elisha 2; Jehoram fights Moab 3; Miracles of Elisha 4:1-7:6; Hazael of Syria, Jerhorm and Ahaziah of Judah 8:7- 29; Judgments on house of Ahaz 9-10; Athaliah of Judah 11; Joash repairs the temple in Jerusalem 12; Jehoahaz and Jehoash of Israel 13:1-13; Elisha dies 13:14-25; Amaziah over Judah 14:1-14; High point of Israel and Judah 14:15-29; Decline in Israel 15; Ahaz over Judah 16; Israel falls to Assyria 17; Hezekiah's good reign 18-20; Manasseh and Amon's evil reign 21; Josiah's reforms 22:31-24:20; Destruction of Jerusalem 25:1-30

### Omri

Omri forged an alliance with the king of Sidon. Omri's son, Ahab, would marry this king's daughter, Jezebel.

The ministry of Elijah began during the reign of Ahab. He is famous for his confrontation with the prophets of Baal on Mt. Carmel. At the end of his ministry he was bodily taken into Heaven. Elisha ministered as prophet in the northern kingdom from 852-800.

“And the Lord said to Jehu, ‘Because you have done well in executing what is right in My eyes, and have done to the house of Ahab according to all that was in My heart, your sons of the fourth generation shall sit on the throne of Israel.’ But Jehu was not careful to walk in the law of the lord, the God of Israel with all his heart; he did not depart from the sins of Jeroboam, which he made Israel sin” (2 Kings 10:30-31).

#### **Hosea**

Hosea’s marriage to a prostitute vividly portrayed Israel’s spiritual adultery and God’s unwavering love and restoration. Like Amos, he also was concerned about the lack of social justice. He ministered from about 750-725 BC.

#### **Outline:**

Marries Gomer 1:1-9; Prophecy 1:10-11; Israel unfaithful 2:1-13; Israel restored 2:14-23; Gomer redeemed 3; Messages of guilt, idolatry, unbelief, judgment, and restoration 4-14

Ahaziah 853-852

Joram 852-841

Jehu 853-814 – Jehu is noted for his destruction of Baalism and the family of Ahab in Israel. He was commended for these acts of zeal. Nevertheless, Jehu, held fast to the sins of Jeroboam.

Jehoahhaz 814-798

Jehoash 798-782

Jeroboam II 793-753 – Jeroboam enjoyed the longest and most peaceful reign of all the kings of the north. But it was also a time of spreading decadence and by the time he died, judgment was only three decades away.

Zechariah 753

Shallum 752

Menahem 752-742

Pekahiah 742-740

Pekah 752-732

Hoshea 732-722

Israel was conquered by Shalmaneser V of Assyria in 722 BC. They were not conquered because of political or military weakness, but because of sin. 2 Kings 17 describes the reasons why Israel fell. They:

- Feared other gods 7
- Walked in the customs of the nations 8
- Sinned in secret and built high places 9
- Set up idols everywhere 10-12
- Refused to listen to the prophets 13-14
- Rejected His word 15-16
- Sacrificed children to gods and engaged in occult practices 17

*“So the Lord was very angry with Israel, and removed them from His sight; none was left except the tribe of Judah” (2 Kings 17:18).*

### **The Southern Kingdom**

Rehoboam 930-913 – Rehoboam was left with a remnant of the great empire his father, Solomon, had given to him. This was the tribe of Judah and the individuals from throughout Israel to the south who remained faithful to the true worship of God. God spared this remnant for Rehoboam to maintain His covenant that there would always be a descendant of David on the throne.

### **A Summary of Northern Prophets of Israel**

(dates are approximate)  
Elijah – early 9th  
Elisha – mid 9th  
Jonah – early 8th  
Amos – mid 8th  
Hosea – mid 8th to the fall of Israel in 722

#### **Jonah**

Jonah prophesied during the reign of Jeroboam II. He is mentioned in 2 Kings 14:25. He is noted for his running from God, being swallowed and regurgitated by a fish, and his reluctant ministry to Assyria. His three days in the fish were a foreshadowing of the Messiah being dead for three days and rising again. See Matthew 12:40. The response of the Ninevites to his ministry was used by the Lord as a rebuke to His generation. See Matthew 12:41.

#### **Outline:**

Disobedience 1;  
Deliverance from fish 2; Ninevah repents 3;  
Anger and bitterness 4

#### **Amos**

Amos was not a professional prophet, but a shepherd and grower of sycamore trees. His theme was immorality, selfishness, idolatry, and social injustice in the northern kingdom. His work was in the mid 8th century.

#### **Outline:**

Prophecy against the nations 1-2; Prophecy against Israel 3-6; Prophetic visions 7-9  
The Jerusalem Council saw the salvation of Jews and Gentiles as a fulfillment of Amos 9:11-12. See Acts 15:13-18

Asa – his heart was wholly devoted to the Lord. 1 Kings 15:14

“The Lord was with Jehoshaphat because he followed the example of his father David’s earlier days...” 2 Chronicles 17:3

“...he took great pride in the ways of the Lord” 2 Chronicles 17:6

#### **Isaiah**

The prophet Isaiah began his ministry around 740. It lasted until 690 BC. Isaiah is primarily noted for two things: his messianic prophecies and his ministry with Hezekiah to help bring deliverance from the Assyrian army. Some of his most famous prophecies include the virgin birth (7:14), the son being born (9:6-7), the suffering servant (53), and the anointing of the Messiah by the Spirit (61:1-3).

Abijah 913-910 – “*his heart was not wholly devoted to the Lord his God, like the heart of his father David*” (1 Kings 15:3).

Asa 910-869 – Asa destroyed the images set up during the reigns of Rehoboam and Abijah and instituted spiritual reforms (1 Kings 15:9-13; 2 Chronicles 15:8-19). By calling on God, he conquered an army of Ethiopians that threatened the land. Yet late in his life, he forgot this great deliverance and relied on the Syrians, rather than God, for help and was rebuked by a prophet.

Jehoshaphat 872-848 – Jehoshaphat is known for his alliance with Ahab in war. When Ahab called upon the prophets to tell if there would be victory, Jehoshaphat asked for a prophet of the Lord who prophesied defeat and death for Ahab. In Judah, Jehoshaphat instituted legal and teaching reforms. He is most famous for his prayer recorded in 2 Chronicles 20. When Moab and Ammon threatened Judah, defeat was inevitable, but through prayer and the weapon of praise, God routed the enemy.

Jehoram 848-841

Ahaziah 841

Athaliah 841-835 – Athaliah was the daughter of Ahab and Jezebel. She was the wife of Ahaziah and assumed the throne when he died. She introduced Baalism into Judah and destroyed all the offspring of David except for one son who escaped, Joash.

Joash 835-796 – Joash repaired the Temple and cleansed it after the idolatry and Baalism of Athaliah. He was hidden for seven years during Athaliah’s reign. Then at age seven, he was proclaimed king by the faithful priest Jehoiada.

Amaziah 796-767 – “*He did right in the sight of the Lord, yet not with a whole heart*” (2 Chronicles 25:2).

Uzziah 792-740 – Uzziah was a faithful king. It is stated, “as long as he sought the Lord, God prospered him” (2 Chronicles 26:5). Late in his life, he sought to usurp the role of the priests and was judged with leprosy. Isaiah began his ministry in Uzziah’s reign.

Jotham 750-732 – “So Jotham became mighty because he ordered his ways before the Lord his God” (2 Chronicles 27:6).

Ahaz 735-715- This king reintroduced idolatry into Judah. Also, because of his refusal to trust God, Isaiah uttered the prophecies of Immanuel and the virgin birth.

#### *Asa’s prayer*

“Lord, there is no one besides Thee to help in the battle between the powerful and those who have no strength; so help us, O Lord our God, for we trust in Thee, and in Thy name have come against this multitude. O Lord, Thou art our God; let not man prevail against Thee” 2 Chronicles 14:11.

#### *Jehoshaphat’s prayer*

“O Lord, the God of our fathers, are You not God in the heavens? And are You not ruler over all the kingdoms of the nations? Power and might are in Your hand so that no one can stand against You...listen to me, O Judah and inhabitants of Jerusalem, put your trust in the Lord your God and you will be established. Put your trust in His prophets and succeed” 2 Chronicles 20:6, 20.

#### **Micah**

Micah was a contemporary of Isaiah. He shared prophecies with Isaiah (compare 4:1-3 with Isaiah 2:1-4), but his most famous prophecy was the birthplace of Messiah in Bethlehem (5:2). He also spoke out against the social injustice in Judah.

#### *Outline:*

God’s wrath 1:1-7; mourn over judgment 1:8-16; Sin of the rich 2:1-11; The remnant 2:12-13; Sin of the people and prophets 3:1-7; Destruction of Jerusalem 3:8-12; God’s Kingdom 4:1-5; Regathering 4:6-13; Bethlehem prophecy 5:1-4; Israel’s victory 5:5-15; God’s requirement and man’s sin 6; God’s salvation and love 7:7-20

**Outline:**

First sermons 1-5;  
 Vision of the Lord 6;  
 Prophecies of Immanuel  
 7-12; Judgment  
 on nations 13-23;  
 Judgment on world  
 24-27; Israel and Judah  
 28-35; Deliverance  
 from Assyria 36-39; The  
 Servant of the Lord 40-  
 53; Return to the Land  
 54-59; Final Restoration  
 60-66

**Zephaniah**

He prophesied in the  
 reign of Josiah (640-  
 609). Because it is a  
 message of judgments,  
 his ministry was  
 probably prior to the  
 finding of the Law  
 of Moses. Judgment  
 would come to Judah  
 and the nations of the  
 world. But God would  
 restore Judah and bring  
 blessing to the nations.

**Outline:**

Day of the Lord 1;  
 Seek the Lord 2:1-3;  
 Judgment on nations  
 2:4-15; Jerusalem's sin  
 3:1-7; Future blessing  
 3:8-20.

Hezekiah 729-686 – Hezekiah was a godly king and reformer. He cleansed the Temple of idols, led the nation to observe the Passover, and abolished idolatry throughout the land. During his reign, Sennacherib of Assyria invaded the land, but with the help of Isaiah and through faith in God, Judah was delivered. This story is told three times in the Bible: 2 Kings 18-19, 2 Chronicles 32, and Isaiah 36-39! It was said of him that “...*he did what was good, right and true before the Lord his God.*” And every work that he began “...*seeking his God, he did with all his heart and prospered*” (2 Chronicles 31:20-21).

Manasseh 696-642 – Manasseh was the worst king of Judah and had the longest reign. It was primarily his wickedness that brought the downfall of Judah (2 Kings 21:10-15), yet he also repented at the end of his life (2 Chronicles 33:10-17).

Amon 642-640 – Amon's reign was brief, but evil, and he did not humble himself as Manasseh had done. Two years into his reign he was assassinated.

Josiah 640-609 – Josiah was the last of the godly kings of Judah. During his reign a copy of the Law of Moses was discovered (2 Kings 22:11,13). When it was read to him, he tore his clothes because of the great sin of Judah and sought God. God replied that judgment would come upon Judah, but not in his day. Josiah repaired and cleansed the Temple, removed idols and witchcraft from the land, and like Hezekiah, led the nation in an observance of Passover. He was killed in battle at Megiddo fighting Pharaoh Necho II.

Jehoahaz 609 Jehoiakim 608-598 Jehoiachin 598-597 Zedekiah 597-587

During the final years of Judah, great events were transpiring in world history. Assyria had been the dominant political power, but was dealt a deathblow by the Babylonians in 612 BC when its capital, Ninevah, was destroyed. A remnant of the Assyrian army maintained resistance by camping just northeast of Judah by the Euphrates River. It was bolstered by Pharaoh Necho II who, en route to help Assyria was challenged by and prevailed over Josiah of Judah. But the combined forces of Egypt and Assyria could not stop the Babylonians. Assyria was totally destroyed in 609 BC and the Babylonians would then dominate. They first entered Jerusalem in 606 BC and took some captives to Babylon (among them Daniel and his friends). A second captivity took place in 597 and Zedekiah rebelled. This brought a swift reaction by the Babylonians who laid siege to Jerusalem. In 587-586, all of Judah was subjugated by Nebuchadnezzar. Jerusalem was destroyed and the

**Nahum**

The prophet Nahum prophesied somewhere between 650 and 620 BC. His message was judgment upon Ninevah, which was fulfilled when it was destroyed by Babylon in 612 BC.

**Outline:**

God's love and justice  
 1:1-8; Plans against  
 God's will fail 1:9-  
 14; The good news  
 1:15; Ninevah will  
 be destroyed 2:1-13;  
 Nineveh's sin 3:1-7;  
 Nations rejoice at  
 Ninevah's fall 3:8-19

**Jeremiah**

He ministered from  
 Josiah's reign through  
 the fall of Jerusalem,  
 627 to about 575. It  
 was his task to call  
 Judah to repentance  
 and pronounce God's  
 judgment. He includes  
 more biographical  
 information than any  
 other prophet and  
 is often called the  
 “weeping prophet”  
 because of his trials. He  
 foretold the 70- year  
 period of exile, but his  
 most famous prophecy  
 is that of the New  
 Covenant in chapter 31.  
 The New Covenant is a  
 prominent theme in the  
 NT. See Luke 22:20 and  
 Hebrews 8:7-13.

**Outline:**

Jeremiah's call 1:1-19;  
 Judah's sin 2:1-10:25;  
 Jeremiah's trials 11:1-  
 20:8; Battles with kings  
 and false prophets 21-  
 29; Comfort and New  
 Covenant 30-33; The  
 Fall 34-39; Jerusalem  
 after destruction 40-45;  
 Prophecies against  
 nations 46-51; Jerusalem  
 52



Temple burned to the ground. Judah and Israel were both now under judgment and in exile for their sin.

### **Habakkuk**

His ministry ranged from the time that Babylon became the world leader in 609 to the fall of Jerusalem. He was therefore a contemporary of Jeremiah. The book shows the struggle of the prophet, trying to understand how God can use a wicked nation to judge His people. God responds to the prophet and the prophet finishes his work in a song of praise. This book contains one of the most important verses in the OT, "The just shall live by faith" in 2:4, which Paul used to ground his doctrine of justification by grace through faith. He quotes it in Romans 1:17 and Galatians 3:11. See also Hebrews 10:38.

#### *Outline:*

Why does sin go on? 1:1-4; God will punish sin though Babylon 1:5-11; Why use wicked Babylon? 1:12-21; Trust in God 2:2-4; The sin of Judah 2:5-20; Song of Praise 3.

### **Obadiah**

This one-chapter book is a poem of judgment upon Edom for the harsh way it treated the Jews when Jerusalem fell to the Babylonians. It was written shortly after the fall of Jerusalem.

#### *Outline:*

Pride of Edom 1:1-4; Fall of Edom 1:5-9; Edom's sin 1:10-14; The Day of the Lord 1:15-21

## **Key Concept – Prophecy**

Many images and ideas arise when one thinks of prophets and prophecies. But what were the prophets of Israel really like and what was their focus? The prophets were a mix of backgrounds and personalities. They ranged from Isaiah, who may have been of royal blood, to Amos, a shepherd and sycamore tree grower. Some began in palaces such as Moses and others began in the wilderness like Elijah. Not all committed their works to writing (Samuel, Elijah, Elisha). Consistent with all the prophets was their sense of divine calling and their love for God and his people. They continually called Israel back to covenant faithfulness with their God.

What many scholars call the Classic Age of Prophecy lasted from about 800- 400 BC. This would begin with Isaiah and Micah and end with Malachi. Some characteristics of the prophets were:

- Concern with all the people and not just the king—they called on people from all walks of life to change their heart and behavior.
- The holiness of God—the people should repent of their sin and return to Him. The prophets were primarily concerned with bringing a message to the people of their time to bring them back to God.
- Repentance and judgment—the people had forsaken the covenant and by their sin were calling down the curses of the covenant. The prophets appealed to the covenant between God and Israel as their basis in preaching.

Judgment was always mixed with promises of salvation. Promises included restoration to the land after the judgment of exile. In the prophecies of blessing and restoration, a chief figure arose who would be the agent of this blessing. He became known as the "anointed one" or the Messiah. Thus, prophecies of the Messiah are sprinkled throughout the prophetic books. He would bring salvation to Israel and the Gentile nations. He would also be the judge of the world. It is interesting and important to realize that while the prophets foretold events, their words were most often in the context of a current crisis. In this way, there was relevance for the time in which they lived and immediate fulfillment of many prophecies, as well as distant fulfillment when the Messiah would appear.

### **Lamentations**

This book is completely acrostic; one verse of each chapter corresponding with a Hebrew letter of the alphabet. It is a lamentation over the fall of Jerusalem written shortly after its destruction.

#### *Outline:*

The lonely city 1; God's judgment 2; The prophet mourns over the city 3; Siege remembered 4; Final prayer 5

### **A summary of the Southern Prophets of Judah**

(dates are approximate)  
Isaiah – 739-690 Micah – 735-700 Nahum – 650-630 Zephaniah – 635-625 Jeremiah – 627-575 Habakkuk – 620-610 Obadiah – 587

**Post-exilic Prophets**  
(dates are approximate)  
Haggai 520-505 Zechariah 520-490 Joel 500-450 Malachi 460 or 435

Exilic Prophets

Daniel 606-530s

Ezekiel 593-560

### **Joel**

Some have dated Joel as early as 900 BC, but 3:13 points to it as a post-exilic book, probably somewhere between 500 and 450 BC. The focus is a locust plague as God's judgment. But God would restore His people. It is this book that contains the most explicit prophecy of the Holy Spirit from which Peter quoted on the Day of Pentecost. See acts 2:14-21.

Outline:

Locusts 1:1-7; Wailing over judgment 1:8-13; Day of the Lord 1:14-2:17; The Holy Spirit 2:28-32; Judgment on nations 3:1-17; Blessings on Judah 3:18-21

## **Exile to Restoration**

Even in the midst of the thunder of judgment preached by the prophets, hope could be found. Jeremiah said that the people would be exiled to foreign lands, but after 70 years would return. Isaiah prophesied that Israel would be brought back to the land and used the splitting of the sea in Exodus to explain that God would again do a great wonder to bring His people out of bondage.

Even while the Hebrews were in bondage, they were not without their spiritual leaders. The poorest of the poor were allowed to stay in the land with Gedaliah as governor. Jeremiah continued his ministry to this remnant, but after Gedaliah's assassination, they fled to Egypt in spite of Jeremiah's warning to remain. They hoped to escape from Nebuchadnezzar's tyranny, but it was in vain. While in Egypt, the remnant of Judah resorted to idolatry and for this God proclaimed through Jeremiah that Nebuchadnezzar's tyranny would extend to Egypt. This prophecy is the last message of Jeremiah.

Among the exiles of Judah in Babylon were two men who would have a ministry to the people of God. They were Ezekiel and Daniel, who were carried away into Babylon before the final destruction of Jerusalem.

Before Jerusalem's fall in 586 BC, many Jews believed that God would intervene for Judah and destroy the Babylonians. Those who had already been sent into exile held out hope of a speedy return to their homes in Judah. But it was Ezekiel's job to tell them that the sin in Judah was getting worse and God would send the entire nation away. Ezekiel is also famous for his prophecy of dry bones, Gog and Magog, and of the new Temple.

### **Ezekiel**

Vision of God and calling 1-5; The Day of the Lord 6-7; The Glory departs 8-11; Judgment against Jerusalem 12-24; Judgment against nations 25-32; Israel restored 33-39; New Temple 40-48

### **Daniel**

Daniel's obedience 1; Nebuchadnezzar's first dream 2; Fiery furnace 3; Second dream 4; Fall of Babylon 5; The lion's den 6; The Son of Man 7; Beasts 8; Daniel's prayer and the 70 weeks 9; Final vision 10-12

### **Haggai**

The call to continue rebuilding the Temple 1; Glory of the new Temple 2

**1 and 2 Chronicles**

These two books are placed last in the Hebrew canon of Scripture; many have thought that Ezra wrote them, but the author is never identified. The purpose of the book is to retell the story of God's work among His people to encourage those Jews who have returned from exile. It is dated around 450 to 400 BC.

Outline of 1 Chronicles:

Patriarchs 1; Sons of Israel 2-8; People of Jerusalem 9:1-34; Sons of Saul 9:35-44; Saul's death 10; David crowned 11:1-9; David's mighty men 11:10-47; David's supporters 12; The Ark 13; David's sons 14:1-7; Philistia 14: 8-17; The Ark 15; Psalms and worship 16; Davidic covenant 17; Wars 18-20; The census 21; Preparations for the Temple 22; Solomon crowned 23; Organization of people 24:1-29:22a; Death of David 29:22b-30

Outline of 2 Chronicles:

Solomon's worship and wealth 1; Temple built 2-5; Prayers 6-7; Solomon's works 8; Queen of Sheba 9:1-12; Glory and death 9:13-31; Kingdom divided 10-11; Rehoboam 12; Abijah 13; Asa 14-16; Jehoshaphat 17-20; Jehoram 21; Ahaziah 22:1-9; Athaliah 22:10-23:21; Joash 24; Amaziah 25; Uzziah 26; Jotham 27; Ahaz 28; Hezekiah 29-32; Manasseh and Amon 33; Josiah 34-35; Last kings 26:1-16; Exile 36:17-23

Daniel and his friends were sent to the courts of Babylon to be trained as government officials. God used them in mighty ways to testify to Nebuchadnezzar and other officials that the God of Israel was the God of all the earth. Some of these events are the best known and loved stories of the Bible including Nebuchadnezzar's dream, the fiery furnace, and Daniel in the lion's den. The latter part of Daniel details prophecies about the last days and Israel's battles with the nations.

Late in Daniel's life, shortly after the Babylonians were overthrown by the Persians, Daniel was reading from the prophet Jeremiah. There he found the prophecy that God would restore his people after 70 years. The 70 years were almost up and Daniel turned to God in prayer confessing the sins of the people and asking for His deliverance to come to pass. It was during this prayer that God gave him the famous vision of the 70 Weeks recorded in 9:24-27.

Daniel's prayer was answered—Cyrus, king of Persia, in his first year, decreed that the Jews could return to their land and rebuild their temple. The decree was issued in 538 BC.

The return to the land took place in stages. The first group returned under the leadership of Zerubbabel who became governor and who was also a direct descendant of David. Under his leadership, the bronze altar for sacrifices was rebuilt and the foundation for the Temple was laid. But work was hard and opposition from the Samaritans was intense. Work on the Temple ceased until the year 520 when God raised up the prophets Haggai and Zechariah to encourage people to resume the work of the Temple.

Zechariah is noted for his very specific messianic prophecies.

- The Messiah would ride into Jerusalem on a donkey and be proclaimed king in 9:10.
- The Messiah would be struck down and the sheep would be scattered in 13:7.
- The 30 pieces of silver in 11:13.
- Looking upon the One whom they have pierced in 12:10.

A second group of Jews returned to the land around the year

457 BC under the leadership of Ezra. Ezra was a priest who was profoundly concerned about the lack of knowledge and obedience to the Law of Moses among the people. He taught the people faithfully and led them in a prayer of repentance and covenant reaffirmation found in Ezra 9-10.

**Zechariah**

Call to repent 1:1-6; Four horsemen 1:7-17; Horns and craftsman 1:18-21; Surveyor 2:1-13; Joshua 2; Golden lampstand and olive trees 4; Flying scroll and evil woman 5; Chariots 6:1-8; Joshua crowned 6:9-15; Justice 7; Coming peace 8; Judgment on cities 9:1-8; The humble Messiah 9:9-17; False prophets 10; Flock scattered 11; Jerusalem attacked 12; False and true shepherd 13; God rules 14

**Ezra**

Decree of Cyrus 1; Return to Jerusalem 2; Work on the Temple 3; Opposition 4; Temple finished 5-6; Ezra's leadership 7-8; Ezra's prayer 9; Mixed marriages 10

**Nehemiah**

Report of Jerusalem 1; Nehemiah returns to Jerusalem 2; Wall builders 3; External enemies 4; Internal enemies 5; Wall is finished 6; Reforms 7-13

**Esther**

Vashti deposed 1; Esther crowned 2; Haman's rage 3; Esther helps Mordecai 4; Esther's banquet 5; Mordecai honored 6; Haman hanged 7; Mordecai promoted 8; Deliverance 9-10

A third group was brought back to the land through the leadership of Nehemiah. Under Nehemiah, the walls of Jerusalem were rebuilt, something which had not been done in over 80 years, but which he accomplished in just over 50 days!

Not all Jews returned to Israel. Most, in fact, stayed in exile. Here they had their jobs and their families. The book of Esther recounts the tale of one such family, Mordecai and his niece, Esther, and how she rose to the place of queen under King Ahasuerus. Even though God and the covenant with Abraham are never mentioned in the book, the fingerprints of God are seen throughout the book as events are arranged to save the Jews from the plots of Haman and exalt Mordecai to a place of authority beneath Ahasuerus.

But a remnant of Jews were now settled back in the land. Great events were transpiring in the world. The next article will begin by looking at events that took place between Malachi and Matthew, the intertestamental period, and then we will look at the climax of history—the coming of Christ and the establishment of His Church.

## Malachi

Malachi speaks to the people of God who have returned to the land from the exile who are growing tired of their service to the Lord and need to be revived and challenged. Malachi contains the famous prophecy of the messenger of the Lord which was fulfilled in the ministry of John the Baptist. See Luke 7:18-27.

### Outline:

God's love 1:1-5;  
 Despising God 1:6- 2:9;  
 Treachery and wearying  
 God 2:10- 17; The  
 messenger 3:1-6; Tithing  
 3:7-12; Arrogance  
 3:13-15; Book of  
 remembrance 3:16-18;  
 Day of the Lord and  
 Elijah 4

\*There are no exercises for the Old Testament Survey. Instead, you will be given a test over the material you just read. Ask your pastor or our office (info@gccweb.org) for a copy of this test.







GRACE / THE DOCTRINE OF THE SCRIPTURES

**Survey of the New Testament**

The Gospel of Jesus Christ is the great message in the New Testament. In the following survey, Jonathan Williams gives a comprehensive survey of this Book that has transformed the world.





## Survey of the New Testament

Pastor Jonathan Williams · San Antonio, TX

### Between Malachi and Matthew

Between the writing of the last prophet, Malachi, and the birth of Christ about 400 years expired. Many history shaping events took place in this period. It is important to look at it to provide a more complete background for the life of Christ and the beginning of His Church. This section will look at both political and religious developments.

#### Political Developments

The Jews were taken into exile in the year 587/86 BC by Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon. Babylon was the supreme power of the Middle East, but its years were numbered. In 539 BC, Cyrus the Great solidified his rule of the Persian Empire and in 539 conquered Babylon.

It was Cyrus' policy to allow conquered peoples to return to their native land and rebuild their country, although they had to remain loyal to the Persians. Cyrus decreed that the Jews could return to their land in the year 538 BC. The Jews first returned under Zerubbabel and rebuilt the Temple with the encouragement of the prophets, Haggai and Zechariah. Others returned under Ezra and Nehemiah in the mid 450's BC.

Life would remain peaceful under the Persian rule for another 100 years until a new power threatened from the west, Greece, under the leadership of Alexander the Great. Alexander pushed back the Persians and extended his empire from Greece to India. When Alexander died in 323 BC, his generals vied for different segments of this vast domain. Ptolemy took control of North Africa including Egypt. Seleucus controlled the vast territory from Mesopotamia to India. Antigonus controlled Palestine and Syria, but was defeated in battle by Seleucus in 301 BC, and the Seleucid Empire was established over Palestine.

For the next 100 years, the Ptolemies in Egypt and the Seleucids in Syria would fight for control of Palestine that formed a natural land bridge between Egypt and Syria. In 198 BC, the Seleucids, under the leadership of Antiochus III the Great, gained supremacy. Antiochus III was succeeded by his son, Antiochus IV Epiphanes. It was this Antiochus who sought to hellenize all the territory under his rule, including Palestine and the Jewish people. He forced the worship of Zeus upon the people, even erecting an image to this god in the Jerusalem temple and offered sacrifices of swine on the altar in 167 BC. He sought to eradicate the worship of the God of Israel and conform everyone to Greek ways.

See Daniel 5 for the story of Belshazzar and Daniel, the handwriting on the wall, and the fall of Babylon to the Medes and Persians

Cyrus is mentioned by name in the prophecy of Isaiah 44:28 and 45:1

Daniel prophesied these events when he wrote, "and forces from him will arise, desecrate the sanctuary fortress, and do away with the regular sacrifice. And they will set up the abomination of desolation" (Daniel 11:31).

Resistance rose from the quarters of an old priest by the name of Mattathias. After killing the representative of Antiochus, he and his sons fled to the hills from which they and other warriors waged guerilla warfare for years. Under the leadership of Judas Maccabeus, one of Mattathias' sons, the Jews defeated the Seleucids in battle. In 164 BC, the Temple was cleansed and an eight-day celebration ensued which became known as the Feast of Dedication.

The descendants of Mattathias ruled for many years and were known as the Hasmonean dynasty. They allied with the growing Roman power in the west to hold the Seleucids in check. Some of the Hasmoneans were wise and just rulers, but some were corrupt and wicked. Civil war would eventually break out in the 60's BC which opened the door for the conquest of the land by Pompey in 63 BC and the establishment of Roman sovereignty.

The Jews had now lost political control. They were still led by Hasmonean priests, but these were in direct subjection to the Romans. An Idumean (Edomite), Antipater, became governor in 47 BC. In 40 BC, however, the Parthians made Antigonus II the ruler of Palestine, but in that same year, the Roman Senate declared Herod the Great king of Judea. Three years of warfare followed and in 37 BC, Herod the Great, backed by the Romans, took Jerusalem and became sole ruler of Palestine under the Romans. This was the Herod of infamy, the one who killed wives and sons in order to maintain his hold on power, and the one who ordered the slaughter of the children of Bethlehem in a vain attempt to kill the One who had just been born king of the Jews.

### Religious Developments

The Temple in Jerusalem had been the center of life in Israel. When the Temple was destroyed by the Babylonians in 587-86 BC and the people scattered into foreign nations (called the Dispersion or the Diaspora), the synagogue became the center of Jewish communities. It was the place of worship, childhood education, civil decision making, and social interaction.

When the Temple was rebuilt in 520 BC, the synagogue continued as one of the most important elements of Jewish life and worship with numerous synagogues built in Jerusalem itself.

During the period between Malachi and Matthew, the rise of sects within Judaism became prominent. Judaism was flexible enough to allow a variety of opinions on many theological and political questions, except for faith in the God of Israel as the true God and Israel as His people. Probably the most famous of the sects was the Pharisees,

The Feast of Dedication, also known as the Feast of Lights, is modern-day Hannukah. It is mentioned in John 10:22.

Herod the Great is mentioned in Matthew 2 in association with the visit of the Magi and the slaughter of the children in Bethlehem.

The Dispersion is mentioned in John 7:33-36.

The first Christians were all Jewish and continued to meet in synagogues. When Hebrews 10:25 stated that the believers should not forsake their assembling together, the writer uses the phrase "synagogue together." James 2:2 states, "For if a man comes into your synagogue..."

descendants of the pious warriors who fought alongside the Maccabees in the war against Antiochus Epiphanes in the 160s.

The name Pharisee probably means “separated ones.” They may have received this name when they “separated” from the Hasmonean ruler, John Hyrcanus (135-104 BC) over a dispute about the priesthood. The break with the Hasmoneans became complete in 104/103 under the wicked rule of Aristobulus. The Pharisees eventually broke into two factions—a conservative faction led by Shammai and a liberal faction led by Hillel. When the Temple was destroyed in AD 70, Pharisaism became the prevailing force in Judaism and its traditions would become part of the Talmud.

The Sadducees were a rival sect to the Pharisees. They came into prominence in the reign of John Hyrcanus I when the Pharisees broke with him over their control of the high priesthood. They were the priestly aristocracy. They only accepted the first five books of the Old Testament, did not believe in angels, the resurrection, or an afterlife.

The Zealots and Meridians are the final two groups mentioned in the New Testament. It is unclear exactly who the Meridians were. Josephus mentions a political party of Herod which may have referred to Jews who favored the reign of his family. The Zealots were those Jews who believed in using force to overthrow the Roman Empire though some were devoutly patriotic, many were nothing more than assassins and their extremism brought down the wrath of the Roman Empire that caused the final destruction of Israel and the Temple in AD 70. Their roots were probably in the wars of the Maccabees against Antiochus Epiphanes.

The Essenes are not mentioned in the New Testament. They were an ascetic, celibate community living in the Judean wilderness who shared all things in common. They believed they were the remnant whose task was to purify themselves in preparation for the coming of the Messiah. They gave themselves to prayer, ritual washings, Scripture study, and copying of the Scriptures and other books.

The Samaritans were not a sect within Judaism. Although they considered themselves Jews, they were never accepted into the Jewish community. They were a part Jew, part Gentile, mixed race who settled the land north of Judea after the Assyrian conquest of Israel in 722 BC. Because of their mixed ancestry, Ezra did not allow them to help in the rebuilding of the Temple (Ezra 4:3-4). Because of this slight, they built a rival temple on Mt. Gerizim for their worship of God. They were committed to the Law, circumcision, and festivals. Their rival temple was destroyed by John Hyrcanus in 128 BC. The Samaritans, in turn, sneaked into the Temple at Jerusalem and littered it with the

It was Hillel's son, Gamaliel I who was the teacher of Saul of Tarsus. See Acts 5:34ff, and 22:3.

One of Jesus' disciples had been a Zealot. See Luke 6:15

It was the manuscripts of the Essenes which were found in 1947 which are known as the Dead Sea Scrolls. A copy of every OT book, except Esther, was found along with hundreds of other documents. “The Samaritan woman therefore said to Him, ‘How is it that You, being a Jew, ask me for a drink since I am a Samaritan woman’ (For Jews have no dealings with Samaritans.)” (John 4:9)?

bones of corpses. This antagonism between Jew and Samaritan persisted into New Testament times and a civil war eventually erupted which the Romans had to put down in AD 51.

Although there were no canonical Scriptures (with the possible exception of 1 and 2 Chronicles) written during this period, Jewish literature was prolific. The most important work was the translation of the Hebrew Bible into Greek for the Greek speaking Jews scattered throughout the Mediterranean world. This became known as the Septuagint and was the Bible of many of the Early Christians. It was translated in Egypt somewhere between 300 and 150 BC.

The Apocryphal books were also written during this time. It refers to a set of books written between 200 BC and AD 100 that dealt with Jewish history and theological ideas. They are not quoted in the New Testament and were never considered inspired scriptures by the Jews or the early Christians. The Septuagint included some of them along with its Greek translation of the Old Testament and some Christians used them in their study, although there was never any consideration of their canonicity until the Roman Catholic Council of Trent in the mid 16th century.

Apocalyptic literature was a style of writing that found a home among all Jewish groups during the intertestamental period. Though it has its roots in Daniel, Zechariah, Ezekiel, and Isaiah 24-27, it flourished around 200 BC and lasted until about AD 100. This style of writing focused on visions and symbols which purported to reveal God's plan for the world. Angels were involved in interpreting the visions to the human writer and the purpose of the book was to stress God's sovereignty and eventual conquest over all evil in the world. It emerged during the time of suffering of the Jews at the hands of the Seleucids and the Romans. In coming back to the land, the Jews had rebuilt the Temple and separated themselves from the idolatry of the nations, but they could not understand why they continued to suffer at the hands of pagan powers. Apocalyptic literature sought to solve this dilemma and build up the faith of God's people by promising cataclysmic divine intervention at the end of the age which was thought to be imminent.

The Jews were now firmly entrenched in their land and in communities throughout the Mediterranean world. The Temple was being beautified by Herod and his descendants and the Pharisees were seeking to interpret and apply the Law of Moses for their times. Expectation was high that the promised Messiah would soon be revealed and would lead His people to victory over the Romans and establish God's Kingdom.

In light of the antagonism, and sometimes open hostility between Jews and Samaritans, Jesus' ministry to them is all the more remarkable. See John 4:1-42; Luke 10:30-37; 17:11-19; Acts 1:8; 8:4-24.

*The Apocrypha*  
 Additions to Esther  
 Baruch Bel and the Dragon  
 Ecclesiasticus  
 1 & 2 Esdras  
 Judith  
 Letter of Jeremiah  
 1,2,3,4 Maccabees  
 Prayer of Azariah  
 Prayer of Manasseh  
 Psalm 151  
 Song of the Three Jews  
 Susanna  
 Tobit  
 Wisdom of Solomon

The meaning of Apocalyptic is "to reveal."

The apocalyptic style is also found in the NT in Matthew 24, Mark 13, Luke 21, and most notably, The Apocalypse, commonly called the Book of Revelation.

When the Jews told Jesus that it took 46 years to build the Temple, they were referring to the 46 years of work to beautify and complete the Temple that had begun under Herod. See John 2:20.

**Matthew**

Matthew emphasizes Jesus as the fulfillment of God's plan and promises to Israel. As the fulfillment, He is the supreme authority over all. Dates for the composition of Matthew are from AD 40 to 100, although most date it before AD 70. It was written either in Syria or Palestine.

**Outline:**

Birth and childhood 1-2; John, baptism, and temptation 3:1- 4:11

**Jesus in Galilee**

Preaching 4:12-25; Sermon on the Mount 5-7; Ten Miracles 8-9; Apostles sent out 10; John lauded 11:1-19; Rebukes 11:20-24; Come to Me 11:25-29; Opposed by Pharisees 12; Kingdom parables 13; Death of John 14:1-13; 5000 fed 14:14-21; Walking on water 14:22- 36; Tradition 15:1-21; Canaanite woman 15:22-28; 4,000 fed 15:29-39; Pharisees 16:1-12; Who am I 16:13-28; Transfiguration 17:1-13; Disciples fail 17:14-23; Taxes 17:24-27; Forgiveness 18

**Jesus in Perea**

Divorce 19:1-12; Children 19:13-15; Rich people 19:16-26; Rewards 19:27-20:16

**Jesus in Judea**

Death awaits 20:17-19; Servanthood 20:20-28; Bartimaeus 20:29-34; Triumphal entry 21:1-11-17; Fig tree 21:18-22; Questions 21:23-22:46; Woe to pharisees 23; End of the age 24-25; Death of Christ 26-27; Resurrection & Great Commission 28

But to whom would the Messiah first come and through whom would He work? Would it be to those who had separated themselves, the Pharisees? Or to those who took even more radical measures, the wilderness community of the Essenes? Perhaps He would come to the Zealots and lead them in a great war? But in the midst of all the political intrigue and religious developments in the world, God looked upon a young virgin living a simple life in Galilee and sent the following message through His angel, Gabriel:

*“Hail favored one! The Lord is with you...for you have found favor with God. And behold, you will conceive in your womb, and bear a son, and you shall name him Jesus. He will be great, and will be called the Son of the Most High; and the Lord God will give Him the throne of His father David; and He will reign over the house of Jacob forever; and His kingdom will have no end” (Luke 1:28- 33).*

**The Life of Christ**

It was all for this purpose—the coming of the Messiah. Every covenant given, every promise made, and every act of faith was a preparation for the advent of Christ. Paul stated it this way, *“but when the fullness of time came, God sent forth His son...”* (Galatians 4:4). And when Christ began His ministry He stated, *“...the time is fulfilled...”* (Mark 1:15).

This section will look at key events in the life of our Savior, Jesus the Lord; His birth, His ministry, and His death, resurrection and enthronement at God's right hand.

**The Birth of Christ**

Each Gospel begins at a different point. John begins with His pre-existence and divine identity (John 1:1-18) and skips over the birth narratives. Mark begins with his baptism (Mark 1:1-11). Matthew and Luke begin with events surrounding His birth. Luke emphasizes that the Law was being carried out. Zacharias and Elizabeth, parents of John the Baptist, were *“...righteous in the sight of God, walking blamelessly in all the commandments and requirements of the Lord”* (Luke 1:6). John is circumcised on the eighth day (Luke 1:59), as is Jesus (Luke 2:21), and the offering for a firstborn son is presented as prescribed by Moses (Luke 2:22-24). Luke also includes elements of the covenant promise; Mary's Magnificat includes God's remembrance of His covenant to Abraham (1:54-55), as does Zacharias' song of praise (1:72-73). Zacharias also sees in the birth of the forerunner the certainty that the promises made to King David will be fulfilled (1:68-

**Luke**

Luke emphasizes that the story of Jesus is historically valid and his message is for the whole world and not Israel only. It was written in the late 50's or early 60's, but the location is unknown.

**Outline:**

Prologue 1:1-4  
Preparatory events  
Announcements 1:5-56;  
Birth of John 1:57-80;  
Birth of Jesus 2:1- 20;  
Jesus in Temple 2:21-42;  
John 3:1-20; Baptism 3:21-22; Genealogy 3:23-38; Temptation 4:1-13;

**Jesus in Galilee**

Nazareth 4:14-30;  
Miracle 4:31-41; Fishers of men 5:1- 11; Leper and paralytic 5:12-26; Matthew 5:17-39; Sabbath 6:1-11; Twelve chosen 6:12-16; Sermon 6:17-49; Centurion 7:1-10; Widow's son 7:11-17; John 7:18-35; Immoral woman 7:36- 50; Support by woman 8:1-3; Parables 8:4-21; Sea of Galilee 8:22-25; Miracles 8:26-56; Twelve sent out 9:1-9; Five thousand fed 9:10-17; Transfiguration 9:18-36; Disciples fail 9:37-50

**The Road to Jerusalem**

Samaria 9:51-62;  
Seventy sent out 10:1-24; Good Samaritan 10:25-37; Mary and Martha 10:38-42; Prayer 11:1-13; Controversies 11:14-12:12; Treasure in Heaven 12:13-34; Parables 13:35-39; Repentance 13:1-9; Sabbath 13:10-17; Parables 13:18-35; Healing 14:1-6;



**Mark**

The consistent testimony of the Church for the first 300 years is that John Mark recorded the work of Peter. It was written somewhere between the 40's and the 60's from Rome. The gospel emphasizes Jesus' supernatural identity and His impact.

**Outline:**

John, baptism, and temptation 1:1-13

**Jesus in Galilee**

Fishers of men 1:16-20; Demons and disease 1:21-2:12; Matthew 2:13-22; Sabbath 2:23-3:12; Twelve chosen 3:13-21; A new family 3:22-35; Parables 4:1-34; Sea of Galilee 4:35-41; Miracles 5; Unbelief 6:1-6; Twelve sent out 6:7-13; Death of John 6:14-29; Five thousand fed 6:30-44; Walk on water 6:45-52; Power of God 6:53-56; Tradition 7:1-23; Canaanite woman 7:24-30; Deaf man 7:31-37; Four thousand fed 8:1-9; Leaven of Pharisees 8:10-21; Blindness 8:22-26; Who am I? 8:27-33; Discipleship 8:34-38; Transfiguration 9:1-14; Disciples fail 9:15-32; Greatness 9:33-41; Hell 9:42-50

**Jesus in Perea**

Divorce 10:1-12; Children 10:13-16; Rich people 10:17-31; Death awaits 10:32-34; Servanthood 10:35-45; Bartimaeus 10:46-52

**Jesus in Judea**

Triumphal entry 11:1-11; Fig tree 11:12-26; Questions 11:27-12:40;

71), which was also stated by Gabriel to Mary—the One being born would sit on the throne of David and would rule forever (1:32-33).

Matthew begins his Gospel by emphasizing the covenants when he stated that Jesus is the son of Abraham and the son of David (1:1). He also emphasizes that the events that transpired in the birth of Jesus were fulfillment of Israelite history and prophecy: the virgin birth (1:18-25), Bethlehem (2:5-6), mourning in Bethlehem (2:16-18), and the Messiah being a Nazarene (2:23), i.e., a branch (Hebrew = *netzer*).

One can see that the Gospel writers want their audience to know that the One being born was perfectly qualified to be the Messiah and would fulfill the Law and all the promises made by God.

**The Ministry of Christ**

If there is one theme that dominates the ministry of Christ it is the Kingdom of God. John the Baptist announced the imminent appearance of the Kingdom of God (Matthew 3:2). When he baptized Jesus, God spoke from Heaven and quoted from Psalm 2:7, "*This is My beloved Son...*" Psalm 2 is a royal psalm promising that God's son would one day rule all the nations. At Christ's baptism, God also quoted from Isaiah 42:1 "*...in whom I am well pleased.*" Isaiah 42 is in the Suffering Servant section of Isaiah. By combining these two passages, God was stating that His Kingdom would be inaugurated through the path of suffering.

When Christ was tempted, it was in the terms of the Kingdom of God. Satan offered Him all the kingdoms of the world (Luke 4:6-7). They could be His and He wouldn't have to take the path of suffering ordained for Him by His Father if only He would switch allegiance to him.

When Christ began His ministry in Nazareth, He began by linking the Kingdom prophecies of Isaiah 61 with Himself: "*The Spirit of the Lord is upon Me because He anointed Me to preach the gospel to the poor. He has sent Me to proclaim release to the captives, and recovery of sight to the blind, to set free those who are downtrodden, to proclaim the favorable year of the Lord*" (Luke 4:18-19).

The people of Nazareth rejected what seemed to them a preposterous claim—that the humble carpenter of Nazareth, Jesus, was the promised Messiah and the One who would bring in the promised Kingdom of God. This set the stage for the rest of His ministry—Jesus proclaiming and inaugurating the Kingdom of God through His ministry and the reaction of the nation (especially its leaders) to His claims of Messiahship and Kingdom fulfillment. It would be a life of conflict and

Humility 14:7-14; Refusal of Kingdom 14:15-24; Discipleship 14:25-33; Salvation parables 15; Faithfulness 16:1-18; Rich man and Lazarus 16:19-31; Kingdom 17:1-18:34; Blind man 18:35-43; Zacchaeus 19:1-10; Parable 19:11-27 Jesus in Jerusalem Triumphal entry 19:28-48; Questions 20:1-47; Widow's mite 21:1-4; End of Age 21:5-38 Death & Resurrection Judas 22:1-6; Passover 22:7-38; Gethsemane 22:39-53; Peter 22:54-62; Trials 22:63-32:1-25; Crucifixion 23:26-56; Resurrection 24:1-43; Commission 24:44-53

**John**

John's gospel emphasizes the deity of Christ and is written that people might believe. Most of the gospel takes place in Judea. The Apostle John most likely wrote it in the 90's in Ephesus.

**Outline:**

Prologue on deity 1:1-18 Ministry and claims; The Lamb 1:19-34; First disciples 1:35-51; Water into wine 2:1-11; Temple cleansed 2:12-25; Nicodemus 3:1-21; John and Jesus 3:22-36; Samaria 4:1-42; Nobleman's son 4:43-54; Miracle at pool 5:1-18; The Father and Son 5:19-47; Five thousand fed 6:1-17; Walk on water 6:12-21; Bread from Heaven 6:22-71;

Widow's mite 12:41-44;  
End of age 13 Death  
and Resurrection  
Conspiracy 14:1-2;  
Anointed 14:3-9; Judas  
14:10-11; Passover  
14:12-31; Gethsemane  
14:32-42; Arrest, denials  
by Peter, and trials  
14:43-15:15; Crucifixion  
15:16-47; Resurrection  
16:1-14; Commission  
16:15-20

The Jews thought that  
God could only issue  
forgiveness on the last  
day. Jesus affirms His  
deity and shows that  
the forgiveness of the  
Kingdom has broken  
into this present age.

Jews would normally  
sit upright at meals and  
recline only on special  
occasions. In reclining  
with sinners, Jesus was  
demonstrating that  
a special event was  
occurring, the Messiah  
was banqueting with  
His people.

Jesus appealed to the  
story of David eating  
bread reserved for  
priests to sustain his  
men in crisis. See  
Matthew 12:3-4; Mark  
2:25-26; Luke 6:3-4

hardship culminating in His crucifixion, but as we will see, His death was the triumph of the Kingdom.

The Gospel of John mentions several events taking place in Galilee, Samaria, and Judea early in His ministry. These included His first contact with some of His Disciples (Peter, John, Andrew, Philip, and Nathaniel in 1:35-51), the first miracle (turning water into wine in 2:1-11), His teaching on being born again (3:1-21), the story of the Samaritan woman (4:1-42), and the healing of the nobleman's son (4:43-54). But His ministry accelerated when He focused on Galilee after his rejection in Nazareth. Although this two-year period in His life included trips to Judea and Jerusalem, it focused mainly on Galilee.

One of the first things Jesus did in this Galilean ministry was to call Peter, Andrew, James, and John to leave their fishing business and become "fishers of men." They had spent time with Him before, but now they must make a commitment and be with Him as He ministered in Israel. The ministry began rather dramatically. On one Sabbath day, He taught in the synagogue at Capernaum, cast out a demon from a man, and in the evening received people into His home where He taught, healed, and cast out demons late into the evening. After a preaching and healing ministry in other parts of Galilee, Jesus returned to Capernaum where He claimed to forgive the sins of a paralytic. When the Pharisees grumbled at such blasphemy, He backed up His claim by healing the man on the spot. Jesus would give them more to grumble about—he called Matthew, a tax collector, to be one of His disciples and then accepted an invitation to dine in his home. When the Pharisees asked how He could eat with such sinners, Jesus replied that He had come for the sick and not the healthy.

Shortly after this event, Jesus went to Jerusalem where He healed a lame man—"unfortunately" it was on the Sabbath. This brought about more conflict with the religious authorities. But in this episode, Jesus made one of His clearest claims to deity as recorded in John 5.

The Sabbath controversy would continue back in Galilee. The disciples were reprimanded by the Pharisees for plucking grain in a field and Jesus healed a man on the Sabbath. Jesus defended these actions by stating the Sabbath was made for man and not man for Sabbath, and as Lord of the Sabbath, He had divine prerogatives.

It was these events and claims that intensified the Pharisees desire to eliminate Him (Mark 3:6). With pressure mounting from the leaders of Israel, Jesus spent the night in prayer and selected 12 men to be with Him, that He might equip them, and train them to be His Apostles.

Jesus' brothers 7:1-10;  
Water of life 7:11-59;  
Light of world & I AM  
8; Blind man 9; The door  
and the good Shepherd  
10; Resurrection and  
Life 11

*Teaching to disciples*  
Anointed 12:1-11;  
Triumphal entry 12:12-  
19; Lifted up 12:20-50;  
Foot washing 13:1-20;  
Betrayal 13:21-31; New  
commandment 13:31-  
38; Jesus and the Father  
14:1-14; Obedience and  
the Spirit 14:15-31; Vine  
and branches 15:1-16;  
Persecution 15:17-16:6;  
Spirit 16:16-33; Prayer  
17

*Death and Resurrection*  
Gethsemane 18:1-11;  
Trials 18:12-19:16;  
Crucifixion 19:17-42;  
Resurrection 20-21

"For this cause...the  
Jews were seeking...to  
kill Him because He not  
only was breaking the  
Sabbath, but also was  
calling God His own  
Father, making Himself  
equal with God." John  
5:18

*The 12 Apostles*  
Simon  
Peter  
James of Zebedee  
John of Zebedee  
Andrew  
Philip  
Bartholomew (Nath.)  
Matthew  
James of Alphaeus  
Thaddaeus  
Simon the Zealot  
Judas Iscariot

Sermon on the Mount is found in Matthew 5-7.

“If I cast out demons by the Spirit of God then the Kingdom of God has come upon you!” See Matthew 12:28; Luke 11:20.

Jarius’ daughter being raised is found in Matthew 9, Mark 5, and Luke 8.

The man healed of the legion is found in Matthew 8, Mark 5, and Luke 8.

Many events of teaching, forgiving, and healing followed including the Sermon on the Mount, the immoral woman who washed His feet with her tears, and His casting out a demon which He claimed as proof that the Kingdom of God had come upon them. When Jesus was asked to perform a sign to prove His claims, He replied that no sign would be given, except the sign of Jonah the prophet. Just as Jonah was three days and nights in the fish, so He would be three days and nights in the grave and would rise again.

Lines were being drawn. The Pharisees claimed that Jesus was performing His wonders by the power of Satan. Jesus claimed they were evidence of the Kingdom of God among them. But where did the multitudes stand and what did they think? In order to answer this question, Jesus presented a series of parables that illustrated the Kingdom of God. Those who had spiritual insight because of a right heart with God would respond to the parables. Those who did not would reject them. The parables were designed to illustrate that God’s Kingdom was coming into the world in a way different than they had expected. It was not coming as a warrior with a sword, but like a farmer casting seed. It was not coming as a giant stone crushing the kingdoms of the earth, but like a mustard seed and leaven that were small and hidden. But the Kingdom would one day cover the earth. Just as a mustard plant dominated a garden, and leaven permeates a lump of dough, so God’s Kingdom would one day overcome all its enemies. This Kingdom was the most prized possession. It was like a treasure and a fine pearl, and those who possessed it would one day shine like the sun in God’s Kingdom while the wicked would be judged. It is imperative that people understand what God’s Kingdom was like. Those who did would gather the spiritual harvest with Him; those who did not would be judged.

Many other notable events took place during the two-year period in Galilee. Jesus healed Jairus’ daughter from the dead, calmed a storm on the Sea of Galilee, healed a man possessed with thousands of demons, and gave sight to blind men. It was during this time that Jesus sent out the Twelve to preach the Kingdom of God. When they returned, Jesus took them aside for a time of refreshment, but many thousands followed. Jesus welcomed them all and fed them with five loaves and two fish. The Jews saw this as a clear sign of His kingship, but the kind of king they wanted and the kind of king He was were quite different. Jesus withdrew from them, sent His disciples to the other side of the lake, and went away to pray. During the night he walked on water displaying Himself to the disciples as the Lord of all creation.

About the immoral woman Jesus said, “... Her sins which are many have been forgiven, for she loved much but he who is forgiven little loves little.” See Luke 7:47

The sign of Jonah is mentioned in Matthew 12:40. and Luke 11:29-32

Seven parables of the Kingdom of God in Matthew 13

1. Four soils
2. Wheat and tares 3. Mustard seed
4. Leaven
5. Hidden treasure 6. A fine pearl
7. The fishing net

The feeding of the 5000 is the only miracle found in all four gospels – Matthew 14:13-21; Mark 6:30-44; Luke 9:10-17; John 6:1-14.

Peter's confession –  
 “You are the Christ, the Son of the Living God.”  
 And Jesus answered and said to him, “Blessed are you, Simon...because flesh and blood did not reveal this to you, but My Father who is in heaven. And I also say to you that you are Peter, and upon this rock I will build My church and the gates of Hell shall not overpower it. I will give you the keys of this kingdom of heaven...” See Matthew 16:13-20.

“I am the light of the world; he who follows Me shall not walk in the darkness, but shall have the light of life” (John 8:12)

“Do not rejoice in this, that the spirits are subject to you, but rejoice that your names are recorded in heaven” (Luke 10:20).

“I am the resurrection and the life; he who believes in Me shall live even if he dies and everyone who lives and believes in Me shall never die” (John 11:25-26).

As the confrontation with the Pharisees festered, Jesus continued to build the faith of His disciples. He asked them, “Who do men say that I am?” After a variety of answers He asked them again, “But who do you say that I am?” This is when Peter confessed Him as the Christ. Such a confession should have brought great jubilation, but Jesus told them to tell this to no one—that He was indeed the promised Messiah. The reason? The kind of Messiah they wanted was the wrong one. He was the Suffering Servant and He would go to Jerusalem and die for the nation.

From this point on the Gospels show Jesus speaking and training His disciples in further ways about the kind of kingdom He was inaugurating. He took some of them to a mountain and revealed Himself in all His glory to them to build their faith, but He continued to teach them that the way to the Kingdom was through humility and servanthood. His ministry in Galilee was coming to a close and Jesus would spend the last six months in Judea and Perea.

### **Final Public Ministry in Judea and Perea**

John's Gospel becomes more prominent at this point. Chapters 7 through 10 take place at this time where Jesus claims to be the Light of the world and the I AM, heals the blind man (on the Sabbath again!), claims to be the Door and the Good Shepherd, and that He and God in Heaven are one. The Jews were ready to kill Him, but it was not yet the right time. Jesus therefore withdrew in the region of Perea, east of the Jordan River.

In this region, and at this time, many notable events took place that are found exclusively in Luke 10-18. Jesus sent out 70 disciples to preach. They rejoiced that even the demons were subject to them. He told them to rejoice that their names were written in the Book of Life! The story of the Good Samaritan is given during this time and He follows it with a visit to the home of Mary and Martha, where Mary sits at His feet to learn while Martha becomes frustrated with all her busyness. Jesus tells the multitudes to count the cost of discipleship, but to the Pharisees He tells the stories of the lost coin, the lost sheep, the prodigal son, the unjust steward, and the rich man and a beggar.

Then Jesus hears that the brother of Mary and Martha, Lazarus, is sick. Jesus delays in coming to heal him and he dies. By the time Jesus arrives, Lazarus has been in the tomb for four days, much to the sorrow of Martha and Mary. But Jesus uses His delay to teach a vital lesson—He is not just a healer, He is the resurrection and the life—and He proves it by raising Lazarus from the dead. This occurs in Bethany, on the outskirts of Jerusalem, and word quickly reaches the city—the authorities who are disturbed by this display of power. The leaders

After Peter's confession, he also stumbled by trying to prevent Jesus from going to Jerusalem. This is when Jesus told him, “Get behind me Satan. You are not setting your mind on God's interests, but man's.” See Matthew 16:21-23 and Mark 8:31-33. It was on this occasion that Jesus first told His disciples that they must pick up their cross and follow Him. See Matthew 16:24-27, Mark 8:34-38 and Luke 9:22-26.

“Truly, truly I say to you, before Abraham was, I am.” See John 8:58 and compare with Exodus 3:14.

The Good Samaritan is found in Luke 10:25-37. The story of Mary and Martha is found in Luke 10:38-42.

The exhortation to count the cost is found in Luke 14:25-35.



“Whoever wishes to become great among you shall be your servant, and whoever wishes to be first among you shall 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.” See Matthew 20:20-28; Mark 10:35-45.

“Say to the daughter of Zion, ‘Behold your king is coming to you, gentle, and mounted on a donkey, even on a colt, the foal of a beast of burden.’” See Matthew 21:5 and John 12:15.

“The stone which the builders rejected has become the chief cornerstone” (Matthew 21:42).

The Olivet Discourse is considered by some biblical scholars to be mostly about the future, and by others to be mostly about the destruction of Jerusalem in AD 70.

know now they must kill him quickly, and Jesus returns to Perea. Here He heals ten lepers, blesses little children, challenges a rich young ruler, and corrects the ambition of James and John by re-emphasizing that true leadership is servanthood.

Jesus is now approaching Jericho, just a few miles from Jerusalem. He heals blind Bartimaeus, has a meal with a diminutive tax collector named Zacchaeus, and revisits the home of Mary, Martha, and Lazarus where He is anointed for His burial. His ministry is nearly complete. There is one week to go.

### The Final Week

It began with fulfillment of prophecy—one that Jesus purposely set out to fulfill by riding into Jerusalem on a donkey as Zechariah foretold. The multitudes along with the disciples hailed him as the Son of David and rejoiced that the Kingdom would soon appear. But again, their version of the Kingdom was different from God’s. With a word, Jesus could have united the people against Rome and against the corrupt priesthood, especially when He cleansed the Temple. But Jesus’ vision was to establish an eternal kingdom which required a perfect sacrifice for sin and He held to the path His Father had set out for him.

On Tuesday of His final week, Jesus was confronted by the leaders to explain the basis of His authority to cleanse the Temple, heal, and teach. He was asked trick questions about paying taxes, the resurrection, and the greatest of the commandments. On this day, Jesus gave His most scathing rebuke of the Pharisees for their hypocrisy. Seven times Jesus said, “*Woe to you hypocrites*” and closed His rebuke with the lamentation, “*O Jerusalem, Jerusalem who kills the prophets and stones those who are sent to her! How often I wanted to gather your children together, the way a hen gathers her chicks under her wings, and you were unwilling. Behold your house is left to you desolate*” (Matthew 23:37-38)! His public ministry was now finished.

As Jesus was leaving the Temple, His disciples pointed out the grandeur of the Temple buildings. This led Jesus to utter His prophecy of destruction that not one stone would be left upon another—the Temple and the city of Jerusalem would be completely destroyed. Jesus went on to describe these days in detail, which is called the Olivet Discourse, and to teach parables about His return and the need for faithfulness among His people.

The next recorded events are on Thursday. Jesus and His disciples eat the Passover meal, He washes the feet of His disciples, and then institutes what is commonly called the Lord’s Supper. They are to eat this

Of the ten lepers healed, only one returned to give thanks, a Samaritan! Luke 17:11-19.

It was Mary of Bethany who anointed Jesus and prepared Him for burial. See John 12:2-8, Matthew 26:6-13, and Mark 14:3-9.

When some Greek speaking Jews wished to see and talk with Him, He replied, “The hour has come for the Son of Man to be glorified. Truly, truly

I say to you, unless a grain of wheat falls into the earth and dies, it remains by itself alone; but if it dies, it bears much fruit.” John 12:23-24.

“The Kingdom of God will be taken from you and given to a nation producing the fruit of it.” Matthew 21:43.

“Heaven and earth will pass away but My words will not pass away.” See Matthew 24:35.

“After washing the feet of the disciples Jesus said, “If I then, the Lord and the Teacher, washed your feet, you also ought to wash one another’s feet.” See John 13:14.

“A new commandment do I give you, that you love one another as I have loved you.” See John 13:34-35.

“Let not your heart be troubled. You believe in God. Believe also in Me.” John 14:1

“I ask that they may all be one...that the world may believe...” (John 17:20-21).

“My Father, if it is possible, let this cup pass from Me; yet not as I will, but as You will” (Matthew 26:39).

*The Seven Last Statements from the Cross*

1. “Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they are doing.” Luke 23:34
2. “Woman, here is your son. Here is your mother.” John 19:26-27
3. “I tell you the truth, today you will be with me in Paradise.” Luke 23:43
4. “I am thirsty.” John 19:28
5. “My God, My God, why have You forsaken me?” Matthew 27:46 (Psalm 22:1)
6. “It is finished.” John 19:30
7. “Father, into your hands I commit my spirit.” Luke 23:46

meal, no longer in remembrance of their deliverance from Egypt, but in remembrance of Him for He would bring about a greater deliverance. Jesus also equated the meal with the establishment of the new covenant prophesied by Jeremiah. After the supper, Jesus gives His disciples extensive teaching. They are to love one another and in the coming days they will all receive the Holy Spirit and be able to do even greater works than He did. They will be able to pray to the Father in His name, receive answers, and bear much fruit. Jesus closes the teaching with His prayer for their protection and for unity that all might see that He is the One promised and sent by God.

They are now at the Garden of Gethsemane and Jesus enters His time of suffering. He travails in prayer, there being such intensity that His sweat is like great drops of blood falling from His brow. Three times He prays for the Father to remove the cup of suffering from Him. Can there be any other way? But there is none, and Jesus resolves to remain on the path ordained for Him. Jesus longed for friendship at this time from His disciples, but they could not remain awake. Then an armed guard, led by Judas, arrives to arrest Him. Peter’s attempt to stop the arrest is forbidden by Jesus who offers Himself to the authorities. All the disciples flee for their lives. Peter eventually follows at a distance and gets as close as he can, but winds up denying Him three times—just as Jesus said he would do.

Jesus will face six trials. He will appear before Annas, Caiaphas and the Sanhedrin twice, Pilate, Herod, and then Pilate again. He is silent before the Sanhedrin and does not answer any of the accusations until they admonish Him in the name of God to reply. This is when He states, “From this time you shall see the Son of Man sitting at the right hand of power.” They pronounce Him guilty of blasphemy and take Him to the Romans to get the death penalty. It was during the first trial with Pilate that Jesus confessed His kingship. It was not a kingdom of this world, but one that was spiritual and which was based on the truth. Pilate then utters his famous line, “What is the truth?” After a brief mockery of a trial with Herod, Jesus is returned to Pilate and though Pilate three times acquits Him, the intensity of the mob is such that he yields to their frenzied demands for His execution and he delivers up Jesus.

Jesus is led to the hill Golgotha where He is crucified. For six hours He suffers on the cross, the last three being in total darkness when He cried out, “My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me?” As the physical and spiritual suffering ends, Jesus says, “It is finished. Father, into Your hands I commit my spirit.” And He dies. The earth shakes, the veil in the Temple, which separated the Holy Place from the Most

The wine that the disciples drank was a symbol of His blood and the new covenant prophesied in Jeremiah 31. See Luke 22:20.

“I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except by Me.” See John 14:6.

“He who has seen me has seen the Father.” See John 14:9.

“Truly, truly I say unto you, he who believes in Me the works that I do shall he do also; and greater works than these shall he do because I go to the Father.” John 14:12

“I am the vine, you are the branches.” John 15:5

“Do you think that I cannot appeal to My Father, and He will at once put at My disposal more than 12 legions of angels?” Matthew 26:53

Jesus’ last words to Pilate were, “You would have no authority over Me, unless it had been given you from above....”

“Destroy this temple and in three days I will raise it up” (John 2:19).

#### *Resurrection*

#### *Appearances in the Gospels*

1. Mary Magdalene
2. Other women
3. Two on the road to Emmaus
4. Peter
5. Ten Apostles
6. Eleven Apostles
7. James, his brother
8. Seven Apostles
9. Five hundred disciples

#### *The Great Commission*

1. Matthew 28:18-20
2. Mark 16:15-16
3. Luke 24:46-49
4. John 20:21
5. Acts 1:8

From the beginning, the Messiah was characterized as the One who would bring the Holy Spirit. See Matthew 3:11; Mark 1:8; Luke 3:16; John 1:33

Holy Place, is ripped from top to bottom signifying that through this tragedy and suffering God has opened the way to eternal life!

### **The Resurrection and Enthronement**

Three days later Jesus rose from the dead just as He said He would. The resurrection of Christ proves two things—it proves that Jesus was Who He said He was, and it proves that He did what He said He would do; He offered the perfect sacrifice for sin. Because it was complete, He could rise again to immortality.

Jesus had three tasks ahead of Him after His resurrection. First, He had to appear to His followers to show them that He had risen. They were scattered and in shock from His death. Some had begun returning to their homes. No one expected a resurrection. But in appearing to Mary Magdalene, then to a group of women, then to Peter, to the two on the road to Emmaus, and then to the ten of the remaining eleven Apostles, Jesus re-established their faith in Him and in His Kingdom.

Second, Jesus had to teach them. A lot had happened in His ministry which they did not understand. They had one concept of the Messiah and the Kingdom, Jesus had another. Jesus had to show them how His ministry fulfilled Old Testament prophecy. And He especially had to show them how His death laid the righteous foundation for the Kingdom of God.

Third, Jesus had to re-orient them to the future. What lay ahead? What was the next stage of the Kingdom of God? On several occasions Jesus made it plain, “Go into all the world and preach the gospel. All authority in heaven and earth has been given to Me, therefore, go and make disciples. As the Father has sent Me, so send I you.”

They would not be alone in this task. And they wouldn’t do it by their own power. They could not do it in their own power. He would send the promised Holy Spirit. Three years previous, John the Baptist had announced that the Messiah would come with the Holy Spirit. Jesus talked of this event during His ministry.

And now the fulfillment lay only a few days in the future. He would empower them to be His witnesses to the end of the earth to all the peoples of the world. As they made disciples, the promises to Abraham that in his seed all the families of the earth would be blessed would come to pass.

Jesus led them out to the Mount of Olives. And after He gave them His great commission to reach all the nations, He was lifted up into

“God raised Him up again, putting an end to the agony of death, since it was impossible for Him to be held in its power.” Acts 2:24

These are My words which I spoke to you while I was still with you, that all things which are written about Me in the Law of Moses and the Prophets and the Psalms must be fulfilled. Then He opened their minds to understand the Scriptures.” Luke 24:44-45

“And lo, I will be with you always, even to the end of the age.” Matthew 28:20

Paul, especially, would equate preaching with the promises to Abraham. See Acts 13:34 and Galatians 3.

Peter would view the resurrection and the gift of the Spirit as proof that the promises to David were fulfilled and the Messiah-King has assumed the throne. See Acts 2:29-36.

Jesus' enthronement was prophesied in Psalm 110:1 and was a major theme of apostolic preaching. See Acts 7:55f; Rom. 8:34; Eph. 1:20; Col. 3:1; Heb. 1:3; 8:1; 10:12; 12:2; 1 Peter 3:22.

#### **Acts**

Acts, written by Luke, continues the story of Jesus begun in the Gospels. It recounts the rise and progress of the Church from Jerusalem to Rome. It was probably written in the early 60's, right after Paul's house arrest in Rome.

#### **Outline:**

Jerusalem, Judea, Samaria, Final instructions 1:1- 11; A 12th Apostle 1:12- 26; The Spirit comes 2:1-13; Preaching 2:14- 40; The Church 2:41-47; Healing & preaching 3; Warning & prayer 4; Greed 5:1-11; Miracles & persecution 5:12-42; Deacons 6:1-15; Stephen's message 7:1-50; First martyrs 7:51-8:3; Samaria 8:4-25; Ethiopian 8:26-40; Saul is saved 9:1-31; Dorcas raised 9:32-40; Cornelius 10:1-11:18; Growth 11:19-30; Herod 12:1-25

#### **Ends of the Earth Paul and Barnabas**

13:1-3; First journey 13:4-14:28; Jerusalem Council 15:1-35; Second journey 15:36-18:22; Third journey 18:23-21:17

#### **Paul's trials**

Arrest in temple 21:18-40; Paul's defense 22:1-30; The Sanhedrin 23:1-10;

Heaven and enthroned as the Messianic king at the right hand of God. The worldwide ministry of Jesus was now ready to begin.

## **The Church**

Jesus was gone, but only physically. And He promised to send the Holy Spirit shortly, the same Spirit who empowered Him to perform all His mighty works. Jesus was gone, but He had ascended to the most important and strategic place in the universe, enthronement at the right hand of God. From this place He would direct His people in a worldwide spiritual conquest.

## **Jerusalem**

The Apostles returned to Jerusalem in obedience to the command of Jesus. During this brief period they had one family matter to attend to—the selection of a twelfth apostle to replace Judas. Their only other responsibility at this time was to pray and wait. Finally, on the Day of Pentecost, the King of Israel sent His Spirit upon the disciples who then began proclaiming the mighty deeds of God supernaturally in various languages. Jews from all over the Mediterranean were still present in the city for the festivals and wondered at this spectacle. This provided an opportunity for Peter, who had just weeks before denied Jesus, to stand forth boldly and proclaim the following message: the people speaking in various languages were doing so by the power of the Holy Spirit who had come in fulfillment of Joel's prophecy that God would send the Spirit to Israel. The reason it was happening in their day is that the One they crucified, Jesus, was truly the promised Messiah. He had risen from the dead, ascended into Heaven, been enthroned as the Messiah-King, and received all of the covenant promises which He would share by grace to all who would repent of their sins. The first promise He was fulfilling was the gift of the Spirit.

Three thousand people were pierced by this message, repented, were baptized, and were added to the company of disciples. Joy abounded. They continually devoted themselves to the teaching of the Apostles, to fellowship, to the breaking of bread, and to prayer. Love abounded. They held everything in common and shared with any who had need, not counting their possessions as their own.

A few days later, Peter and John were en route to the Temple for the afternoon time of prayer. When a lame beggar asked for charity, they healed him in the name of Jesus. The lame man now walked and leaped and praised God for such mercy. And when the multitudes gathered around to view this wonder, Peter preached again. The reason the work of power could occur is that Jesus, the One who was

The coming of the Spirit is prophesied Joel 2:28-32. The uniqueness of this event is that He comes to everyone who believes—sons and daughters, young and old, male and female slaves—and He comes in the name of the glorified Messiah.

A theme of apostolic preaching is that Jesus' death was the foreordained plan of God. See Acts 2:24 and 4:27-28.

In his sermon, Peter quotes from Deuteronomy 18:15 claiming that Jesus is the prophet like Moses that God would raise up. Stephen will make the same point in Acts 7:37.



The plot to kill 23:11-35; Before Felix 24:1-27; Appeal to Caesar 25:1-11; Before Agrippa 25:12-26:32; Malta 28:1-10; Paul in Rome 28:1-31

Peter grounded his message in Acts 3 in the covenant made by God to Israel through Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. He quotes from Genesis 12:3 that God would bless all the families of the earth beginning with the family of Israel.

The prophecy of the stone being rejected by the builder is found in two places. Psalm 118:22 is the first place and Jesus used this prophecy during His ministry in Matthew 21:42 and Paul would use it in his in Ephesians 2:20. It was also in Isaiah 28:16 and was used by Paul in Romans 9:33 and Peter in 1 Peter 2:6.

The Apostles considered it a privilege to suffer for the name of Jesus. See Acts 5:42

The men chosen were like the deacons of 1 Timothy 3. Although a different Greek word is used, their purpose was to oversee physical ministries that the leaders might remain devoted to the spiritual ministry of the Word and prayer.

crucified, was now glorified by God. He was exercising His Kingdom power in Israel through His chief representatives. The people must repent in order to be forgiven of their sin and be blessed by the Messiah.

The number of disciples was now up to 5000 and the authorities were alarmed. They arrested Peter and John and made them stand trial. This time Peter, filled with the Spirit, did not deny Jesus. He boldly proclaimed exactly what Jesus had said to the Pharisees during His last week—the stone which the builders rejected had been made the very cornerstone of God’s new building program. The name of Jesus, the very name they had cursed and despised, was now exalted and given as the means of salvation for all who would repent. When the authorities commanded them to stop preaching, Peter and John boldly told them they couldn’t stop speaking what they had seen or heard. They returned to the assembly of the saints and cried out to God, not for protection, but for confidence to keep on proclaiming the Word.

The first setback for the young Church came, not from the leaders of Israel, but from themselves. Ananias and Sapphira sold a piece of property, pretended to give the entire sale amount to the Church, but held back part of it for themselves. For this hypocrisy and lie to the Holy Spirit, God took their lives. The fear of God came upon the entire Church and many others who heard of this event. Being purified, the gospel went forward with greater might. Many signs and wonders took place in public places by the Apostles and more people were added to the Church.

The authorities stepped in again. They threw all the Apostles into jail, but an angel released them in the night and they went back to preaching the next day. When the authorities brought them back to stand trial, Peter boldly proclaimed the resurrection and exaltation of Jesus. This enraged the leader who would have killed them were it not for Gamaliel who advocated a “wait and see” policy; if the movement was of God, no one could stop it. They flogged the Apostles and commanded them again to stop preaching in Jesus’ name.

Another danger now threatened the Church—division along the lines of Hellenistic Jews, the Jews from foreign countries, and those Jews who lived in Palestine. The widows of the Hellenistic Jews were being overlooked in the daily serving of food. To rectify this injustice the Apostles asked that the congregation select seven men to administer this task so that they might continue to focus on prayer and the ministry of the Word. It is interesting that the seven selected were all Hellenistic Jews as indicated by their Greek names. When they were selected, the gospel went out in renewed power.

“And when they had prayed, the place where they had gathered together was shaken, and they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak the word of God with boldness.”  
Acts 4:31

Gamaliel was Paul’s teacher and mentor. See Acts 22:3.

Stephen was “a man full of faith and of the Holy Spirit” and “full of grace and power.” See Acts 6:5,8.

“They will make you outcasts from the synagogue, but an hour is coming for everyone who kills you to think that he is offering service to God” (John 16:2).

One of the seven chosen was Stephen. He preached in the Temple courts with such power that the authorities brought him to stand trial. After laying the charge before him, Stephen preached to the entire council, laying out the history of Israel and showing how the people had a history for rejecting their rulers. Now, they had rejected the greatest ruler of all, their Messiah. Then Stephen lifted up his eyes and saw Heaven opened. There was Jesus, standing at the right hand of God. When Stephen told them that Jesus was appearing before him, the rulers were so enraged that they seized Stephen, dragged him outside the city, and stoned him. Then a great persecution came upon the whole Church, let by the zealous Pharisee, Saul of Tarsus. Both men and women were seized from their homes, thrown in jail, and martyred for their faith. Others fled from the city and began the journey to their homes in other parts of the Mediterranean world. But as they went, they preached the good news of Christ.

### **Judea and Samaria**

One of the first places where the Christians scattered was Samaria, the Samaria despised by the Jews, yet the same Samaria in which Jesus ministered. Philip, one of the seven deacons chosen to administer food for widows, proclaimed the Kingdom of God and the name of Jesus Christ. The people responded and believed. Ministry was exciting in this land, but the Holy Spirit gave Philip a strange order, to go to a desert road, the one going from Jerusalem to Gaza. When he arrived, he encountered a Jew from Ethiopia, preached the gospel to him and baptized him when he believed.

The next two events that occurred were momentous for Church history. First, Saul of Tarsus, en route to Damascus to imprison followers of Jesus, was struck down by the glorified Christ. He asked, “Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting Me?” When Saul asked, “Who are you, Lord?” The voice answered, “I am Jesus...” Who can imagine the shock that Saul felt when he heard these words? In obedience to Jesus’ command, Saul, now blind, went into the city with the help of others to await further instructions. After three days of fasting, he was approached by a man named Ananias who laid his hands upon him and healed him. Saul (Paul) was then baptized, went away to Arabia to take stock of what had happened, returned to Damascus, and began preaching boldly in the name of Jesus. The unbelieving Jews of Damascus were quite surprised to see and hear this complete and sudden reversal of his convictions. They tried to refute his message, but could not. And because Paul kept increasing in his ability to preach Jesus, they sought to kill him. Paul was able to escape from Damascus with the help of other Christians and returned to Jerusalem, but the Christians there were suspicious of him. Only when Barnabas intervened,

Stephen’s line of reasoning was that the Jews had a habit of rejecting their leaders; Joseph, Moses in Egypt and the wilderness, and the prophets. They had now rejected the Messiah.

But when He who had set me apart, even from my mother's womb and called me through His grace was pleased to reveal His Son in me that I might preach Him among the Gentiles, I did not immediately consult with flesh and blood, nor did I go up to Jerusalem to those who were apostles before me; but I went away to Arabia and returned once more to Damascus" (Galatians 1:15-17).

"...the disciples were first called Christians in Antioch" (Acts 11:26).

and personally brought him to the Apostles, was Paul accepted. When his life was threatened again, he had to leave Palestine and return to his hometown of Tarsus. With Paul converted and out of town, a period of calm settled upon the Church. Before the persecution, believers were in one city only, Jerusalem. After the persecution, believers could be found throughout Judea, Galilee, and Samaria.

The next major event to occur was the salvation of the Roman centurion Cornelius. Being instructed by an angel to send for Peter, Cornelius and his family were eager to hear the gospel. Before Peter was done preaching, the Holy Spirit came upon Cornelius and his household just as He came upon the first disciples on the Day of Pentecost. The order of the event was highly significant. The Apostles did not have to lay hands on them to receive the Spirit. Nor was it necessary for these Gentiles to be circumcised to receive the Spirit. They received the Spirit in exactly the same way as the Jews. This fact would become crucial in a coming debate over whether Gentiles had to be circumcised to become Jews.

Two other events are recorded in this section of the Book of Acts. First is the beginning of the Church in Antioch, started by Greek speaking Jews fleeing the persecution. This became one of the mightiest congregations of the Church. It was here that followers of Jesus were first called Christians. When people began confessing Jesus as the Christ, the Apostles sent Barnabas to help in the work of the Church. Barnabas saw this as an ideal setting for Paul from Tarsus, and together, the two of them provided leadership for this congregation for many years.

The final event of this period was the martyrdom of James, brother of John, and the arrest of Peter. He was scheduled to be executed, but through the fervent prayer of the Church he was released through angelic intervention.

### **The Uttermost Part of the Earth**

The scene now shifts from Jerusalem and its environs to Antioch. Here Paul and Barnabas, with three other men, are providing leadership for the Church. As they are fasting and worshipping, God directs Paul and Barnabas to be sent out to new regions.

The first missionary journey takes them to Cyprus and the cities of Pamphylia and Lycaonia, in what is now modern day Turkey. Their strategy is to preach in their synagogues, because the gospel had to go to Israel first before it could go to the nations. Luke mentions Salamis and Paphos in Cyprus, and Antioch in Pamphylia as well. In Antioch, they preached that Jesus had fulfilled the covenant promises to Abra-

"So the Church throughout all Judea and Galilee and Samaria enjoyed peace, being built up and going on in the fear of the Lord and in the comfort of the Holy Spirit, it continued to increase" (Acts 9:31).

Barnabas "was a good man, and full of the Holy Spirit and of faith. And considerable numbers were brought to the Lord" (Acts 11:24).

“Through many tribulations we must enter the Kingdom of God” (Acts 14:22).

“After these things I will return and I will rebuild the tabernacle of David which has fallen, and I will rebuild its ruins, and I will restore it, in order that the rest of mankind may seek the Lord, and all the Gentiles who are called by My name, says the Lord, who makes these things known from of old.” James, in Acts 15:16-18, is quoting from Amos.

ham and David. The people could be freed from their sins in the name of Jesus, something which the Law could never do. When the entire city came to hear them the next week, the synagogue leaders were filled with jealousy and persecuted them. But the Apostles saw this only as an opportunity to minister to Gentiles in the area. First the Jew, then the Gentile.

Leaving Antioch, they journeyed to Iconium, Lystra, and Derbe. Everywhere they met with great success and started churches, but also with great suffering. After appointing elders in every city, they returned to Jerusalem. The brethren rejoiced to hear the good news of their journey, but especially the news of the Gentiles turning to the God of Israel. But this turning of Gentiles only underscored a debate that had now erupted in the Church—was it necessary for Gentiles to be circumcised (which amounted to them becoming Jews) in order to be saved?

The debate took place in Jerusalem. Many of the brethren from Judea believed that circumcision was necessary. Paul and Barnabas disagreed. The future of the Church hung in the balance. Finally, Peter spoke. He reminded everyone of what had happened when he preached the gospel to Cornelius—the Spirit came upon the Gentiles before they were circumcised. Gentiles could be purified by faith and it was not necessary to bring them under the rituals of Moses. Gentiles could be saved *as Gentiles*.

James, the brother of Jesus, who had been converted after the resurrection, was the leading elder of the young church. His opinion would be respected by all. James appealed to the Old Testament prophecy in Amos that said that God would restore the Davidic Kingdom in order that blessing might come to the Gentiles. Since Jesus was the exalted Davidic ruler, it was His will that Gentiles turn to Him and they should not get in the way of His work among the Gentiles. In other words, Gentiles didn't have to become Jews, and salvation was a matter of grace through faith alone and not faith plus works. Paul would later fight for this truth of salvation by grace through faith alone for the Gentiles, as well as the Jews.

The Council ended with a letter of encouragement for all the churches telling them of their conclusions. Paul and Barnabas went back to Antioch. After a period of ministry, they decided to re-visit the churches they had started. But when they could not agree on who their helper should be, they divided. Barnabas took John Mark and Paul took Silas.

Acts continues to trace the missionary activity of Paul. He and Silas travel up the coast through Syria, through the Silcian Gates and arrive at the churches of Derbe and Lystra. They bring great joy to

Paul saw ministry to Gentiles rooted in the prophecy of Isaiah 49:6. “For thus the Lord has commanded us, ‘I have placed you as a light for the Gentiles, that you should bring salvation to the end of the earth.’” Acts 13:47

#### **Galatians**

This may have been Paul's first epistle, written as early as AD 49, but possibly not until the mid 50's. It focuses on his apostolic authority and the gospel of grace apart from works.

#### *Outline:*

Paul's ministry  
Introduction 1:1-10;  
Paul's background 1:11-24; Paul and Jerusalem 2:1-10; Rebuking Peter and Barnabas 2:11-21  
Paul's gospel Galatian error 3:1-5; OT examples 3:6-18; Purpose of the Law 3:19-25; Faith and adoption 3:26-4:7; Appeals 4:8-31; Freedom in Christ 5; Practicality of gospel 6:1-10; Conclusion 6:11-18

“For while I was passing through and examining the objects of your worship, I also found an altar with this inscription, TO AN UNKNOWN GOD. What therefore you worship in ignorance, this I proclaim to you.” Paul, in Athens, in Acts 17:23

### **Romans**

Most consider this Paul’s greatest letter. It was written on his third journey in AD 57 most likely from Greece. Its purpose was to rally support for his mission to Spain, to help the church in Rome, and to set forth theological convictions.

the churches as they deliver the decrees of the council in Jerusalem. When they leave this region, they take with them a young disciple who was gaining a great reputation among the churches—Timothy. They first attempted to enter Asia, on the west coast of modern day Turkey, but are forbidden by the Holy Spirit. They enter the Galatian and Phrygian regions where they build up the churches. When they attempt to enter Bithynia, they see a man from Macedonia (Greece) asking them for help. They conclude that this is God’s will and embark on a ship across the sea to this place.

Their first stop is Philippi. There is no synagogue in this city, so they walk to a river on the Sabbath, which is where Jews without a synagogue would gather. They meet with a few, one of whom is Lydia whose heart was opened to respond to the gospel. On another day, when they were going to a place of prayer, a young demon-possessed slave girl accosted them. This went on every day and since the apostles did not want this demonically inspired attention, Paul cast out the demon. This enraged the owners of the slave girl because this demon empowered her to tell fortunes, which brought them great profit. These men formed a mob, turned the city against Paul and Silas, and threw them into jail. But during the night, as Paul and Silas worshipped God, God caused an earthquake that freed them from their bonds. As a result, the jailer and his family become Christians. But on the next day, when Paul told the authorities that he was a Roman citizen and had been unlawfully jailed, the authorities became fearful and sent them away.

The apostles would now visit several more cities in Greece and establish churches in Thessalonica, Berea, and Corinth. Before they reached Corinth, they spent some time in Athens where Paul engaged the Athenians in debate. He preached the gospel to them, beginning with the premise of there being one God over all the nations and that this one God would judge the world through Jesus whom He had raised from the dead. Only a few responded to Paul’s preaching in this city which prided itself on wisdom and debate. From Corinth, the apostles sailed to Ephesus in Asia, and from Ephesus sailed back to Antioch.

Luke, our author, simply states that Paul spent some time in Antioch and then went on another missionary journey, taking approximately the same route as on the second journey. On this, Paul’s third journey, he is now allowed into the province of Asia and the city of Ephesus. Previously, the Holy Spirit prevented him from entering, perhaps because the region was not ready for the gospel or perhaps because Paul was not ready for the intense spiritual conflict awaiting him.

### **1 & 2 Thessalonians**

These epistles were written during Paul’s second journey about the year AD 50. They focus on Christ’s return and how His coming affects life today.

*Outline of 1st Thessalonians:*  
Introduction 1:1-2; Example of Thessalonians 1:3-10; Example of Paul 2:1-16; Example of Timothy 2:17-3:13; Purity 4:1-8; Love 4:9-10; Integrity 4:11-12; Christ’s return 4:13-5:11; Attitudes 5:12-22; Conclusion 5:23-28

*Outline of 2nd Thessalonians:*  
Introduction 1:1-2; Deliverance by Christ 1:3-12; Christ’s return 2:1-12; Thanksgiving 2:13-15; Prayer 3:1-5; Work 3:6-15; Conclusion 3:16-18



*Romans Outline:*

Introduction 1:1-17  
 God's righteousness  
 Gentiles unrighteous  
 1:18-32; Jews  
 unrighteous 2:1-3:8;  
 All unrighteous 3:9-20;  
 God's provision 3:21-  
 26; Righteous by faith  
 3:27-5:11; Adam and  
 Christ 5:12-21; Dead to  
 sin 6:1-11; Under grace  
 6:12-23; Dead to the  
 Law 7:1-14; The Flesh  
 7:15-25; Flesh vs. Spirit  
 8:1-11; Life in the Spirit  
 8:12-27; God's purpose  
 8:28-39; Israel in God's  
 plan, Past 9; Present 10;  
 Future 11 Holy Living  
 Living sacrifice 12:1-2;  
 Gifts 12:3-8; Conduct  
 12:9-21; State 13:1-7;  
 Love 13:8-14; Strong  
 and weak 14:1-15:13;  
 Appeal for help and  
 conclusion 15:14-16:27

*Philippians*

This letter was to encourage the Church that current setbacks would be overcome by the gospel. It also warns them of false teachers.

*Outline:*

Introduction 1:1-11;  
 Gospel progress 1:12-  
 30; Example of Christ  
 2:1-11; Example of  
 godly men 2:12-30;  
 Escaping legalism 3:1-6;  
 Reach for the prize 3:7-  
 16; Follow Paul 3:17-  
 21; Unity 4:1-3; Joy and  
 peace 4:4-9; Conclusion  
 4:10-23

*Philemon*

This is the most personal of Paul's letters and is an appeal to receive a runaway slave as a brother in Christ.

Ministry in Ephesus was frontline spiritual warfare. The passages in Acts recount episodes of demonic possession and miracles being worked at the hands of Paul. Multitudes were delivered and were confessing and forsaking their occult practices and idolatry. So many were being saved that the local industry that profited from the sale of idols rose up against Paul and formed a rally in the temple of the goddess Artemis. Paul wanted to enter this rally and address the people, but the other disciples knew it would be certain death for him and did not allow it.

Paul left Ephesus and returned to Macedonia. He strengthened the churches in this region and in the area of southern Greece known as Achaia. He then returned to Ephesus where he gave a touching farewell speech to the elders of the church. He knew he would never see them again in this life. The Holy Spirit indicated to him that he would be taken prisoner in Jerusalem.

**From Jerusalem to Rome**

The final chapters of Acts tell of Paul's journey to Jerusalem to deliver an offering to help the suffering saints of the church there. The significance of the offering is that it was money from Gentiles who were supporting their Jewish brethren in need. Paul saw this as unifying the Church.

Paul's first days in Jerusalem passed quietly, but eventually an enemy recognized him and formed a mob to arrest him. Paul would have been killed on the spot, but a Roman guard intervened and saved his life. The Roman guard was going to scourge him, but when Paul stated that he was a Roman citizen, he released him from his bonds and allowed him to speak to the Jewish people in the temple. When Paul addressed them in Hebrew all became quiet.

Paul told his story. He told of his life of zeal for the Law of Moses, of his persecution of the followers of Jesus, and of his change to become a follower of Jesus when Jesus appeared to him near Damascus. All seemed to be going well, and Paul was probably hoping against hope that his Jewish brethren would receive his message and repent, but when Paul mentioned his ministry to Gentiles, the people went into an uproar. They wanted nothing to do with the polluted Gentiles or with anyone who wanted to have mercy on them.

The rest of the story of the early Church in Acts recounts Paul's trials before the Jewish council, his audience with Felix, the governor, and his audience with Festus who succeeded Felix. When Festus tried to get Paul to agree to a trial in Jerusalem—which would have meant certain death—he appealed to Caesar which kept him under Roman

**1 & 2 Corinthians**

The first epistle was written in Ephesus and the second from Macedonia during Paul's third journey. In them, Paul deals with sin, false doctrine, and defends his apostolic authority. They were written in AD 55-56.

*Outline of 1 Corinthians:*

Introduction 1:1-9;  
 Explaining division  
 1:10-27; God's wisdom  
 1:18-2:16; Childishness  
 3; Wrong view of  
 people 4; Immorality 5;  
 Lawsuits and immorality  
 6; Singleness & marriage  
 7; Liberty & service  
 8:1-11:1; Men & women  
 11:2-16; Lord's supper  
 11:17-34; Spiritual gifts  
 12-14; Resurrection 15;  
 Conclusion 16

*Outline of 2 Corinthians:*

Introduction 1:1-2;  
 Distress 1:3-11; Paul's  
 plans 1:12-2:13; God's  
 triumph 2:14-17; New  
 covenant 3; Paul's  
 ministry 4; A new body  
 5:1-9; Reconciliation  
 5:10-6:13; Separation  
 6:14-7:1; Paul's heart  
 7:2-13; Offerings 8-9;  
 Credentials 10-12; Final  
 thoughts 13

**Prison Epistles**

Ephesians, Philippians, Colossians, and Philemon were written from his Roman prison in AD 60-62.

**Ephesians**

This epistle emphasizes the believer's position in Christ.

*Outline:*

Introduction 1:1-3;  
Thanks for Philemon  
1:4-7; Appeal for  
Onesimus 1:8-21;  
Conclusion 1:22-25

**1 Timothy**

Paul writes this about  
AD 66 to encourage  
Timothy in his ministry.  
He shows him the  
proper use of the Law  
and how to organize life  
in the Church.

*Outline:*

Introduction 1:1-2;  
Proper use of Law  
1:3-11; Paul's example  
1:12-17; Exhortation  
to Timothy 1:18-20;  
Prayer 2:1-8; Women  
2:9-15; Leaders 3:1-16;  
False teaching 4:1-5;  
Disciplined life 4:6-16;  
Widows 5:1-16; Elders  
5:17-25; Masters and  
slaves 6:1-2; Money  
6:3-10; Pursuing God  
6:11-21

**Titus**

Written in 65-66, Paul  
wants Titus to join him  
at Nicopolis. The letter  
gives guidance as to  
how to organize the  
churches.

*Outline:*

Introduction 1:1-4;  
Elders 1:5-9; Rebellious  
men 1:10-16; Older  
men 2:1-2; Women 2:3-  
5; Young men 2:6-15;  
Conduct for all 3:1-8;  
Disputes and faction  
3:9-11; Conclusion  
3:12-15

protection, but which also meant he would have to journey to Rome. After one more audience with Festus, and with the visiting Agrippa, Roman soldiers escort Paul to a ship and they sailed to Rome. After much danger and difficulty, he finally arrives and is placed under house arrest, although he is given much freedom. Paul calls for the Jews of the synagogue to come and hear his message. There he testifies of the Kingdom of God, trying to persuade them that Jesus had inaugurated the Kingdom. The Jews were split. Some sided with Paul and some were vehemently opposed to his message. But Paul had fulfilled his obligation in another city. He preached to the Jews in Rome and now the ministry could expand to the Gentiles there. The Book of Acts closes with Paul preaching the Kingdom of God and teaching about Jesus Christ with all openness and unhindered.

What had begun in Jerusalem with 120 disciples had now multiplied to hundreds of congregations of Jews and diverse Gentile groups, all the way to Rome.

Evidences from the Epistles show that Paul was released from prison and would minister for a couple of more years and then journey to Spain. But he would eventually be arrested again and would be martyred in Rome under the reign of Nero, about the year AD 67.

**The General Epistles and Revelation**

The General Epistles are so called because they are written to a general audience that is not identified. They are arranged by length, with Hebrews being the longest and Jude the shortest (2 and 3 John are shorter, but they are kept with 1 John). They are sometimes called the "catholic" (universal) epistles.

*Ephesians Outline:*

Introduction 1:1-2  
Believer In Christ Seven  
blessings 1:3-14; First  
prayer 1:15-23; Salvation  
by grace through faith  
2:1-10; Gentiles are  
one 2:11- 3:6; Eternal  
purpose 3:7-13; Second  
prayer 3:14-21 Christ in  
believers, Unity 4:1-6;  
Gifts 4:7-16; Holiness  
4:17- 5:17; Holy Spirit  
5:18-21; Relationships  
5:22- 6:9; Warriors 6:10-  
20; Conclusions 6:21-24

**Colossians**

This was written to  
counteract syncretistic  
tendencies in this  
church by showing the  
supremacy of Christ.

*Outline:*

Introduction 1:1-14;  
Lord of Creation  
1:15-19; Lord of  
Reconciliation 1:20-23;  
Lord of Paul 1:24-2:7;  
Lord over philosophy  
2:8; Lord over sin and  
powers 2:9-15; Lord  
over ritual 2:16-19; Lord  
over legalism 2:20-23  
Lord of the Christians  
Raised in Christ 3:1-4;  
Get rid of the old 3:5-8;  
Put on the new 3:9-17;  
Relationships 3:18-4:6;  
Conclusion 4:7-18

**2 Timothy**

Written from Rome in  
AD 67 as he awaited  
execution, Paul reflects  
on his suffering and  
urges Timothy to come  
to him.

*Outline:*

Introduction 1:1-2;  
Exhortation 1:3-14;  
Those in Asia 1:15-20;  
Strengthened 2:1-3;  
Soldier 2:4; Athlete  
2:5; Farmer 2:6; Christ  
and the gospel 2:8-13;  
Workman 2:14-19;  
Vessels 2:20-23; Servant  
2:24-26; Last days 3:1-9;  
Paul's lifestyle 3:10-13; A  
man of the Word 3:14-  
4:4; Conclusion 4:5-22

\*There are no exercises for the New Testament Survey. Instead, you will be given a test over the material you just read. Ask your pastor or our office (info@gccweb.org) for a copy of this test.



**Hebrews**

No one knows who wrote this epistle. We do know it was written before the fall of Jerusalem in AD 70 and possibly as early as in the 40's, but maybe as late as the 60's. It shows the supremacy of Christ to OT practices.

*Outline:*

Superiority of Christ: To prophets 1:1-2; To angels 1:3-14; All other subjects 2:1-3; Christ is humbled and exalted 2:4-18; Superior to Moses 3; To the Sabbath 4; To the priesthood 5:1-10; Exhortation to maturity 5:11-6:20; Superior to Melchizedek and Aaron 7; Superior covenant 8; Superior sacrifice 9 Walk of faith, 10 Old Testament heroes 11; Jesus' example 12:1-4; Discipline 12:5-13; Peace and holiness 12:14-29; New life 13:1-19; Benediction 13:20-25

**James**

Jesus' brother, who became a leader in the Jerusalem church, wrote this epistle. It was written as early as the mid 40's or as late as the early 60's, before he was martyred in AD 62. It is similar in style to OT wisdom and prophecy books.

*Outline:*

Trials 1:1-18; Anger 1:19-21; Obedience and pure religion 1:22-27; Partiality 2:1-13; Works and faith 2:14-26; Tongues 3:1-12; Wisdom 3:13-18; Worldliness 4:1-10; Judging 4:11-12; Business 4:13-17; Riches 5:1-6; Patience 5:7-11; Oaths 5:12; Sickness and prayer 5:13-18; Converting sinners 5:19-20

**1 Peter**

This epistle is written to Christians in the provinces of Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia, and Bithynia in what is now western and northern Turkey. It is written to encourage believers who are suffering for their faith.

*Outline:*

Introduction 1:1-2; Joy in the gospel 1:3-12; Minds for action 1:13; Holiness 1:14-16; Fear God 1:17-21; Love 1:22-25; Grow in the Word 2:1-3; Living stones 2:4-10; Excellent behavior 2:11-12; Submit to authority 2:13-3:7; Summary of godly behavior 3:8-4:11; Christ's suffering 4:12-19; Elders and all men 5:1-5; Humility and truth 5:6-11; Conclusion 5:12-14

**2 Peter**

This epistle was written to encourage believers to grow and to warn believers of false teachers.

*Outline:*

Introduction 1:1-2; Growing through promises 1:3-4; Growing through character 1:5-11; Growing through truth 1:12-21; False teachers 2; False doctrine 3:1-9; Hope of God's judgment 3:10-11; Hope of eternal life 3:12-14; Learning and obeying 3:15-17; Conclusion 3:18

**1 John**

John explains the purpose of his letter: to give joy, to keep believers from sin, to encourage love, and to assure believers of salvation. These, and his other epistles, were written in the 80's or 90's, late in John's life.

*Outline:*

The incarnate Word 1:1-4; Fellowship 1:5-10; Christ the Advocate 2:1-2; Obedience 2:3-11; Growth 2:12-14; Do not love the world 2:15-17; Spirit of the Antichrist 2:18-27; Christ is coming 2:28-3:3; Don't practice sin 3:4-12; Love 3:13-24; Test the spirits 4:1-6; God's love 4:7-5:3; Overcome the world 5:4-5; Christ's witness 5:6-9; Assurance of salvation 5:10-13; Confidence in prayer 5:14-17; Concluding remarks 5:18-21

**2 John**

This was written either to a woman who hosted a house church or to a church personified as a woman. Its themes are similar to 1 John.

*Outline:*

Introduction and greeting 1:1-3; Truth and love 1:4-6; Avoiding heresy 1:7-11; Conclusion 1:12-13

**3 John**

This is written to a man name Gaius, to encourage him in his faith and help him against troublesome people.

*Outline:*

Introduction 1:1; Wish for prosperity 1:2; Walk in the truth 1:3-4; Help workers in the gospel 1:5-8; Pride of Diotrephes 1:9-11; Example of Demetrius 1:12; Conclusion 1:13-14

**Jude**

Jude was another brother of Jesus who was converted after His resurrection. He is mentioned in Acts 1:12-14. It could have been written from Palestine between the 60's and 80's.

*Outline:*

Introduction 1:1-2; Contend for the faith 1:3-4; Sinners and false teachers 1:5-16; Godly living 1:17-23; Benediction 1:24-25

**Revelation**

Ah, Revelation! The favorite book of many, a closed book for others, and a book that has spawned many opinions. There are four schools of interpretation for this book: 1) Spiritual- the book was written to give spiritual lessons for the Church, 2) Preterist- the book was written to describe events occurring during first century persecution of Christians and to give hope of God's ultimate victory in the midst of their trial, 3) Historist- the book foretells events that started occurring in the first century and has continued to unfold throughout Church history up to our time, 4) Futurist- except for the Church material in chapters 2-3, the book outlines a literal future tribulation and millennial reign. Devout, godly Christians have promoted each view! One thing to keep in mind with this book is that its style was a popular style used by the people of God from about 200 BC to AD 100 to describe events occurring in their day to give hope and strengthen faith that God will intervene and bring evil to an end and reign supreme. This apocalyptic style is also found in Ezekiel, Daniel, Zechariah, Isaiah, and in some chapters of the Gospels. It was highly dependent on visions, fantastic images, and OT themes to convey theological truths and historical realities.

*Outline:*

Introduction 1:1-8; The glorified Christ 1:9-20; Ephesus – first love 2:1-7; Smyrna – persecution 2:8-11; Pergamum – idols and immorality 2:12-17; Thyatira – idols and immorality 2:18-29; Sardis – deadness 3:1-6; Philadelphia - open door 3:7-13; Laodicea – lukewarmness 3:14-22; God on His throne 4; The Lamb who overcame 5; Six seals 6; God's people sealed 7:1-4; Salvation for Jew and Gentile 7:5-17; Seventh seal 8:1; Six trumpets 8:2-9:21; The angel and the book 10; Two witnesses 11:1-14; Seventh trumpet 11:15-19; The woman, child, and dragon 12:1-6; War in Heaven 12:7-12; Persecution on earth 12:13-17; The beast and false prophet 13; 144,000 on Mt. Zion 14:1-5; Three angels 14:6-13; The reapers 14:14-20; Joy over judgment 15; Six bowls 16:1-13; Announcement of Armageddon 16:14-16; Seventh bowl 16:17-21; Babylon 17:1-19:5; Marriage of the Lamb 19:6-10; Christ's return 19:11-21; Satan bound 20:1-3; Reign of Christ and saints 20:4-9; Satan loosed 20:7-10; Great White Throne 20:11-15; New heaven and earth 21:1-8; New Jerusalem 21:9-22:5; Conclusion 22:6-21