

New Believer's Manual

by Dr. Gary S. Linton, Ph.D.


Copyright: Ministrymaker Ministries, Inc. 2019

Websites:

Ministrymaker Ministries <https://www.ministrymaker.com>

Ministrymaker University <https://www.ministrymaker.com/mmu/>

Ministrymaker Ministerial Fellowship <https://www.ministrymaker.com/mma/>

A wooden cross is positioned on the left side of the image, set against a textured, light brown background. The cross is made of dark wood and is oriented vertically. To the right of the cross, a quote is written in a bold, black, sans-serif font. The words "new creation" are highlighted in red. The quote reads: "Therefore if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; the old has gone, the new has come."

"Therefore if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; the old has gone, the new has come."

(2 Corinthians 5:17)

Two Destinies Awaiting Mankind

A Place Called Heaven and a Place Called Hell

In spite of what the world says there is a place called a place called heaven and a place called hell. Everyone born will spend eternity in one or the other. Where will you spend eternity?

A Place Called Heaven

Heaven, what is it like? How do we get there? Does everyone go to heaven? Can we know for sure we have a place reserved for us in heaven?

Know Where You Are Going

If you asked a number of people if they believe there is a place called heaven, most would probably say yes. But if you asked them what it's like or how to get there, I suspect you'd get a variety of answers. Though many people cling to a belief in heaven and hope to go there when they die, very few have an accurate understanding of it.

Since human beings are earth-bound until death, misconceptions about heaven are common. Some people imagine it as a foggy haze where formless spirits float about or winged saints sit on clouds playing harps. Movies about the afterlife present their own version of what awaits. And a few people who have reportedly returned from near-death experiences have described what they believe they saw.

Amid all the confusing and contradictory views, we need to remember that the only sure source of accurate information about heaven is the Bible. In its pages, God gives us glimpses of celestial scenes. Although we may long for more details and descriptions, the Lord has revealed what He wants us to know and, more than likely, what we can handle. Our human limitations keep us from adequately comprehending the inconceivable glories above. We have no frame of reference for understanding all that God has prepared for us (1 Corinthians 2:9). Many times we have more questions than answers.

How Do I Get to Heaven?

The Bible clearly states that after death, there are only two possible destinies for mankind—heaven or hell. In a story that vividly contrasted the comfort of eternal life with everlasting torment, Jesus explained that switching locations is impossible (Luke 16:19-31). Knowing this, we would be foolish to ignore God's Word and risk relying on our own ideas about how to get to heaven.

Many people think that eternal destiny is determined by behavior. If their good works outweigh the bad, they believe God will accept them. But the Lord says all our good works are like filthy rags in His sight (Isaiah 64:6). Since every person on earth inherits a fallen nature, no one is qualified to enter God's holy dwelling place.

Our entrance into heaven has nothing to do with how good we are; what matters is how good Jesus is, and what He did for us. He lived an absolutely perfect life and paid the penalty for our sin by dying in our place. Those who believe this and accept His payment on their behalf are given a ticket to heaven which can never be revoked.

Why Should I Be Interested in Heaven?

Some Christians are content simply to know they are eternally secure. Sure, they want to experience the glories above but see no immediate connection between their daily lives and their future destiny. Therefore, they feel no desire to learn more about it. But Christ wants believers to know “the hope of His calling, . . . the riches of the glory of His inheritance in the saints” (Ephesians 1:18). None of us would be uninterested in an earthly inheritance, yet many of God's children make no effort to discover what He has prepared for them in eternity.

Heaven is our future home

That's where our citizenship is; we're only travelers on earth. A lifetime here will seem like a mere breath compared to the time we spend in eternity. Whenever you read a Bible passage that describes some heavenly scene or activity, put yourself in the picture, because that is going to be your reality. The pearly gates and the

street of gold are not just a fairy tale. You will one day walk through those gates, step on that street, and come face to face with Jesus.

This eternal dwelling place is home for all of God's family. We'll meet the saints from every age and be reunited with our believing loved ones. But this reunion will be so much better than any we have previously experienced. There will be no conflicts or misunderstandings—only perfect love and intimacy. The ideal fellowship we all yearn for will be ours forever.

But the most important reason to learn more about heaven is because it's the dwelling place of God. We will finally be in the presence of the One who died for us. For all of our earthly years, we have loved and served Him, but in eternity, our faith will become sight. The sin that kept us from perfect, intimate fellowship with the Lord will never again hinder our relationship.

What Is Heaven Like?

Because Jesus came from the Father to earth, He had firsthand knowledge of our glorious future home. Shortly before dying, He told His disciples that He was returning to His Father's house to prepare a place for them and would come back to take them to their new home (John 14:1-3). Ever since that day, Christians throughout history have been waiting for His promised return.

Today, when believers die, their souls are ushered instantly into the Lord's presence to experience all the joys and comforts of heaven (2 Corinthians 5:6-9). Jesus will bring them with Him when He returns for His church, and their souls will be reunited with imperishable resurrected bodies (1 Thessalonians 4:13-17; 1 Corinthians 15:51-57). Those of us who are alive at that time will be changed—our bodies will be transformed from weak, mortal, and sinful to glorious, immortal, and perfect.

If you want to know what your new body will be like, look at Jesus' body after His resurrection. He was not an ethereal spirit but literal flesh and bone; the disciples could see and touch Him. He even ate with them (Luke 24:36-43). But the best thing about our new bodies is that they will be free of sin and its curse. Never again will we experience an inward struggle to obey the Lord. Nor will we ever live with the pain, suffering, and death that came as a result of the fall of mankind.

Many years after John heard Jesus promise to prepare a place for His followers, he was given a vision of the future. He saw a new heaven and earth that were completely cleansed of all sin. Standing on a high mountain, he watched the New Jerusalem come down out of heaven. The promised place was prepared and ready. The sight was beyond human description, but John did his best to put this celestial vision into earthly language (Revelation 21:1-22:5).

The brilliance of God's glory radiated from the structure, and its foundations gleamed with various colors of precious stones. The gates were made of pearls and the street of transparent gold. This 1500-mile-long cube-shaped city was designed by the Lord as a place where He and mankind would share an intimate, perfect relationship forever.

Though we may have difficulty imagining the physical structure of this city, we have no trouble understanding the meanings of the things that are not in the New Jerusalem. There will be no pain, tears, mourning, or death. All frustration, boredom, and problems will cease. No one will have handicaps, and our bodies will never grow old, tired, or sick.

What Will I Do in Heaven?

Although most of us understand that heaven is a place of great joy and delight, we may wonder what we are going to do there. Some Christians have even voiced their concern that it might be boring—one long church service that never ends.

Although praise of our God and Savior will be an essential part of our activities, we must be careful not to view it strictly from the perspective of our present earthly experience. Right now we live in fleshly bodies and struggle with self-centered thinking, but then we will be free from selfishness and will take constant delight in praising the Lord. When the blinders of this mortal life are removed, we will see things as they really are (1 Corinthians 13:12). Knowing fully what Christ has saved us from and seeing the glories He has provided for us, we will not be able to stop ourselves from joyfully thanking and exalting Him.

In fact, everything we do will be an act of worship. In Luke 19:12-26, Jesus told a parable that clearly shows we will be given responsibilities in heaven according to our degree of faithfulness with what God entrusted to us on earth. Even in eternity,

we're described as bond-servants of the Lord (Revelation 22:3). Our service for Christ began the moment we were saved and will continue forever. Relocation to heaven does not bring about the end of service but rather the perfection of it—all the frustration, failure, and inadequacy that has accompanied our work since the fall will be removed.

How Can I Prepare for Heaven?

Knowing the glories of eternity should motivate us to live for Christ during our time on earth. Keeping an eternal perspective enables us to endure hardship and pain without losing heart. Like Paul, we will realize that “the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory that is to be revealed to us” (Rom. 8:18). When the difficulties of this life become burdensome, remember that the only trouble and pain you'll ever experience will occur during your earthly lifetime, but the ecstasy of heaven will be yours forever.

As long as we remain here, God has work for us to do. Because we're Christ's witnesses, it is our responsibility to tell others about the Savior so they, too, can be with Him forever. In fact, everything we do is to be done as for the Lord (Colossians 3:23-24). Our purpose is to live for Him, not for our own pleasures and ambitions.

An awareness of eternity should also motivate us to live godly lives that are worthy of reward. When believers stand before the judgment seat of Christ, their eternal destiny will not be the issue; that was settled at the cross. But He will evaluate their works and compensate them accordingly (1 Corinthians 3:10-15). Those who have been faithful servants will be rewarded with increased responsibility, a greater capacity for joy in heaven, and praise from the Lord (Matthew 25:20-23).

Each day is an opportunity to prepare for our eternal home. It's so easy to get sidetracked with the cares of this life, but what we do today will shape our experiences in eternity. Let's spend our lives in faithful service to God, glorifying Him by bearing much fruit, and selflessly storing up treasure in heaven. Christ's commendation of “Well done, good and faithful servant” will be worth every earthly sacrifice.

Imagining Heaven

Read Revelation 21:1-22:5 and imagine yourself in the scene. Describe what you see as you approach the New Jerusalem and enter through its gate. What are you going to experience in this city? What will you not experience?

Benefits of an Eternal Mindset

How does Peter describe our inheritance (1 Peter 1:3-5)? Knowing this, what attitude and perspective can we have (1 Peter 1:6-9)? Read also 2 Corinthians 4:7-18. What difficult conditions are mentioned in verses 7-11? Describe the hope that is presented in verses 14-18. To prevent us from losing heart, where should our focus be?

Preparation for Heaven

As we wait for our eternal home, what ambition should motivate us (2 Corinthians 5:6-9)? Read 2 Peter 3:10-15. What is going to happen to the earth and everything that goes on here? How should this knowledge shape our lives now? What does Jesus recommend that we do to prepare for eternity (Luke 12:15-34)? Read the parable of the minas in Luke 19:11-27. How did the slaves' faithfulness affect their futures? How did the master respond to each one? What has the Lord entrusted to you? How can you use what He's given you to faithfully serve Him?

A Place Called Hell

Is there an everlasting hell? The Bible declares in very certain terms that there is. There are 162 texts in the New Testament alone that speak of the doom that awaits unrepentant sinners. The Lord Himself uttered 70 of these. Hell is a reality, an awful fact to be realized. It seems that the angels that sinned with Satan are even now in hell waiting for judgment (2 Peter 2:4). The Bible makes it abundantly clear that the wicked and anyone that rejects Christ will be turned into hell (Psalm 9:17).

How Real is Hell?

Hell is a place of torment and punishment, of unquenchable thirst, of suffering and agony at its worst (Luke 16:23). Hell is banishment from the presence of God (2 Thessalonians 1:9). It is a sort of prison where the wicked are punished forever (Matthew 25:46). The heat of hell-fire is unbearable (Isaiah 33:14; Matthew 13:42). The justice of God demands degrees of punishment; therefore, some parts of hell are hotter than others (Deuteronomy 32:22).

Hell was originally prepared for the devil and his wicked angels (Matthew 25:41). Hell was never intended for man but if men insist on rejecting Heaven through the Savior, Jesus Christ, then they must accompany Satan forever (Psalm 9:17). The original size of hell is not known but because of man's insistence on going there, hell has enlarged itself (Isaiah 5:14).

The worst part of it is that just as those who go to Heaven will recognize themselves, those who go to hell will also recognize themselves (Luke 16:23). They will even be able to pray but their prayers will never be answered or heard (Luke 16:27). The torment there is everlasting.

Other Questions About Hell:

1. Who will go to hell? All persons, of all ranks, ages, and conditions whose names are not found written in the book of life (Revelations 20:15).

2. Where is hell? The Bible says it is "down" (Isaiah 14:9).

3. Does "hell" not mean "grave" where both the good and the bad must go? No. In Luke 16, both the rich man and Lazarus died and went to the grave, as both were buried. However, their souls went to different places. One was in a place where he was comforted, the other in a place of torment and the two were separated by a great gulf to prevent travel back and forth.

4. Will the doomed repent in hell, seek the Lord, and then be forgiven? No. Salvation is limited to this life. There is no repentance in the grave. All prayers of the doomed are denied (Luke 16:24-27).

5. Is there a place of probation, purgatory, after death? Certainly not. Once a person dies, he either goes straight to paradise or the place of torment (Hebrews 9:27).

Conclusion

How does one get to hell? It is simply by neglecting the salvation purchased for us by the Blood of Jesus (Hebrews 2:3). How does one avoid hell? By receiving Jesus as one's personal Savior, and Lord (John 3:16; Proverbs 15:24). What is your choice? Where will you spend eternity – HEAVEN OR HELL?

The Bible – God's Holy Word

How to Study the Bible

One of the best ways to study the Bible is by using the inductive method which makes observations on a particular verse then draws conclusions based on those observations. This method typically consists of three components: observation, [interpretation](#) and application.

Benefits of Studying the Bible

1. We see Jesus.
2. We find eternal life (John 5:39-40).
3. We become Jesus' disciples (John 8:31-32).
4. We come to a knowledge of the truth (John 8:31-32).
5. We are set free from bondage (John 8:31-36).
6. We experience the blessing of God (Revelation 1:3).

Pray for Illumination

Pray for the Holy Spirit to guide you into His truth (John 16:13-14). To really understand the Bible, you'll need God's help. The Bible isn't a regular book, but a spiritual one. You will need divine aid to fully grasp what you read (1 Corinthians 2:14).

Ask God to Speak to You

You will want to hear from God as you read the Bible. The Bible is a spiritual book with many writers but only one author, God. This is what makes it so exciting to study. It's God's love letter to us. Read it expecting God to speak to you, apply His Word to your life, and give you direction (Hebrews 3:7, Acts 13:1-3).

Modern Translations

I like the King James version. It is written in a poetical style which makes it easy to memorize. However, much of its language is archaic and it uses words we are not familiar with. It's not inaccurate, it just may take getting used to reading it. Many of the words in the King James Bible are simply not used today.

If using the KJV compare it with newer translations and/or use a dictionary. For instance, in Hebrews 2:18 the KJV uses the word succour which is not a familiar word to most today. The NKJV and NASB uses aid and the NIV uses help. If you look up succour in Webster's dictionary it is defined as help or come to the aid of.

Some easier to read translations are the New International Version, the New Living Bible, the New American Standard, and the New King James. I actually prefer the NASB or NKJV to the NIV.

Understand the Context

It's important to know the historical context of each book of the Bible you study. This will help you understand the reason it was written and what was going on at that time in history. After discovering the context, you can move on to its relevance to you.

Use Bible Study Tools

There are many great Bible study tools and guides. For example, [Halley's Bible Handbook](#) gives a brief synopsis of each chapter, historical background, and relevant archaeological finds. As you advance in your study, you can move on to [Bible commentaries](#) and reference books.

Take Notes

As you study write down anything that stands out to you. If there is something you don't quite understand, write down your question and the passage so you can come back to it later. Sometimes things will seem to jump off the page as if God was speaking to you directly. Don't be afraid to write in your Bible. Underline or highlight important verses. You can also make notes in the margin beside the verse.

Join a Bible Study

God has gifted the body of Christ with many great teachers of His Word. Find a good Bible-teaching church that can help deepen your understanding of the Bible. If possible, find a church that offers small study groups that allows discussions on verses, passages and topics.

Be Willing to Obey

If you want to receive fresh revelation from God, you must be willing to put into practice the things He shows you. Jesus said, "If anyone is willing to do His will, he will know of the teaching, whether it is of God or whether I speak from Myself" (John 7:17). Also, "For to everyone who has, more shall be given, and he will have an abundance; but from the one who does not have, even what he does have shall be taken away" (Matthew 25:29).

Evidence for the Authenticity of Scripture

How do we know the Bible is authentic? 2 Corinthians 5:7 tells us faith is involved, but is it blind faith? No, we don't have to take a blind leap of faith to believe the Bible is the Word of God. In fact, the Bible is the most authentic historical document in existence. There are more evidences confirming the authenticity of scripture than there is to prove Caesar was emperor in Rome, or that Washington crossed the Delaware. Below are a few important external and internal evidences attesting to the authenticity of scripture.

External Evidences:

A Divine Revelation is Expected

Reason tells us God would naturally provide such a revelation for His creatures. Man has sinned, is separated from God, and knows no way of returning to Him apart from God giving us a written revelation of Himself. The revelation of God in nature isn't enough. It reveals He exists (Romans 1:20), but it doesn't show how we might be reconciled to Him. Without such a written revelation, man is in a helpless and hopeless state (Ephesians 2:11-12). Reason says that if God is a good and loving God, He'd naturally provide such a revelation.

Strong finds this argument in the arrangement for the healing of bruises in plants, for the mending of broken bones in the animal creation and in the provision of remedial agents for the cure of human diseases (Thiessen, Lectures in Systematic Theology, page 83). If God provides things like these, which we need, it stands to reason He would provide the most important need – the communication of God to man through written revelation. Though this may not be completely valid in proving the revelation of God, it contributes to that view.

The Miracle of the Bible's Existence

Arthur W. Pink put it this way, "When we bear in mind that the Bible has been the special object of never ending attack and persecution the wonder of the Bible's survival is changed into a miracle" (Arthur W. Pink, The Divine Revelation of the Bible: Thiessen, Lectures in Systematic Theology; page 83). For over 2,000 years, mankind's hatred of the Bible has been persistent, determined and relentless. Every possible effort has been made throughout history to destroy and undermine

faith in its inspiration and authority. Innumerable enterprises have been undertaken to consign it to oblivion.

Below are a couple examples:

- After discovering Christians grounded their faith in scripture, Roman Emperors attempted to destroy the Bible. Diocletian demanded by royal edict, in 303 A.D., that every copy of the Bible be destroyed with fire. He destroyed so many Bibles and killed so many Christians that when they were silent for a time he was convinced he had put an end to both Christianity and the Bible. So much so that he caused a medal to be struck with the inscription, “The Christian religion is destroyed and the worship of the gods restored.” It was only a few years later when Constantine rose to the throne that he declared Christianity a state religion (Thiessen, Lectures in Systematic Theology, page 84).
- Voltaire, the noted French infidel, who died in 1778, predicted that within 100 years after his death Christianity and the Bible would be extinct. God must have a great sense of humor. Only twenty five years after his death, the British and Foreign Bible Society was founded, and the very presses Voltaire used to print his atheistic literature were used to print the Bible (Thiessen, Lectures in Systematic Theology; page 85).

“The very fact that the Bible has been so singled out for such relentless persecution causes us to wonder at such a phenomenon” (Arthur W. Pink, The Divine Revelation of the Bible, Thiessen, Lectures in Systematic Theology, page 83). Why would the Bible be so singled out above and beyond any other book in history? Is it not because the enemy of our soul knows its power and that it is in fact, an embodiment of divine revelation. There is no other explanation for it being the object of such attacks. It alone has been sought after to be destroyed. The fact that it still exists and copies of it abound reveals the miraculous nature of its existence.

The Influence of the Bible

The Bible has influenced more people than any other book in existence. Its message has changed countless lives. It has changed drunkards and drug addicts into sober responsible citizens, criminals into law abiding citizens (2 Corinthians 5:17), comforts the sad and hurting (Romans 15:4), satisfies the spiritually hungry and thirsty (Matthew 5:6, John 7:37-39), and its promises give hope, courage and

strength to those in despair (Romans 15:13, Matthew 5:4). None other has influenced so many great men and women. The testimonies abound of how the Bible and its message has influenced and changed lives. Below are a few:

- William E. Gladstone said, "If I am asked to name the one comfort in sorrow, the sole rule of conduct, the true guide of life, I must point to what in the words of a popular hymn is called "the old, old story" told in an old, old book, which is God's best and richest gift to mankind."
- Robert E. Lee, the great southern general said, "The Bible is a book in comparison with which all others, in my eyes, are of minor importance, and which in all my perplexities and distresses has never failed to give me light and strength."
- Woodrow Wilson said, "The opinion of the Bible bred in me, not only by the teaching of my home when I was a boy, but also by every turn and experience of my life and every step of study is that it is the one supreme source of revelation, the revelation of the meaning of life, the nature of God, and the spiritual nature and needs of man. It is the only guide of life which really leads the spirit in the way of peace and salvation" (Thiessen, Lectures in Systematic Theology, page 87).

When I was young I was visiting a church and an evangelist handed out the following poem. It really depicts the influence the Bible has, and how it has touched people's lives.

*Though the cover is worn,
And the pages are torn,
And though places bear traces of tears,
Yet more precious than gold,
Is the Book, worn and old,
That can shatter and scatter my fears.*

*When I prayerfully look,
In this precious old Book,
Many pleasures and treasures I see,
Many tokens of love,
From the Father above,
Who is nearest and dearest to me.*

*This old Book is my guide,
Tis a friend on my side,
It lightens and brighten my way,
And each promise I find
soothes and gladdens my mind
As I read it and heed it today.*

*To this book I will cling,
Of its worth will I sing,
Though great losses and crosses be mine;
For I cannot despair,
Though surrounded by care,
While possessing this blessing Divine – Anonymous*

Archeology

Dr. W. F. Albright, John Hopkins University, said, “There can be no doubt that archeology has confirmed the substantial historicity of Old Testament tradition.” Nelson Glueck, renowned Jewish Archaeologist, said, “No archaeological discovery has ever controverted a Biblical reference” (Paul E. Little, Know What You Believe, page 25). We do not prove the Bible by archeology. The Holy Spirit confirms within our hearts that the Bible is the Word of God. However, it is encouraging to know and helps to solidify and strengthen our faith that archeology gives validity to the authenticity of scripture. Where there has been doubt, archeology has more often than not confirmed biblical records.

There are ample Biblical references that were once doubted which archeology has confirmed as true. The Hittites were once doubted to exist as a people until archeology proved it so. The battle of the kings in Genesis 14 is no longer guarded with suspicion since inscriptions in the valley of the Euphrates shows four kings were real persons. None of the rulers of Egypt, Babylon, Assyria, or Medo-Persia are represented in a manner contrary to history. In apparent conflict, rather than conclude the Bible in error, we must leave it open pending further discoveries since new information has always confirmed scripture rather than disproved it.

Miracles

The scriptures were sealed and birthed in the miraculous. John ended his account of the life of Christ saying, “Many other signs Jesus also performed in the presence of the disciples, which are not written in this book; but these have been written so that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that believing you may have life in His name” (John 20:30-31). Nicodemus said to Jesus, “Rabbi, we know that You have come from God as a teacher; for no one can do these signs that You do unless God is with him”(John 3:1-2). It was said of the Apostles, “They went out and preached everywhere, while the Lord worked with them, and confirmed the word by the signs that followed” (Mark 16:20).

Throughout both the Old and New Testaments God confirmed His Word through signs and wonders. Jesus said, “Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that believeth on me, the works that I do shall he do also; and greater works than these shall he do; because I go unto my Father” (John 14:12). What we need is a resurgence of the supernatural confirming “Thus says the Lord.” The writer of Hebrews said, “How shall we escape, if we neglect so great salvation; which at the first began to be spoken by the Lord, and was confirmed unto us by them that heard him; God also bearing them witness, both with signs and wonders, and with divers miracles, and gifts of the Holy Ghost, according to his own will (Hebrews 2:3-4)?

The Bible’s Power to Change Lives

The Bible testifies to the power of God to change lives (2 Corinthians 5:17). History also testifies to this, as well as present times. Charles Bradlaugh, at one time one of England’s most outstanding Atheist, challenged a minister to a debate. “The minister said a debate wouldn’t change anyone’s opinion, so I propose that I bring concrete evidence of Christianity, in the form of those whose lives have been redeemed from sin and shame by its influence, and you by Atheism. I will bring one hundred. If you can, bring one hundred also. If you can not bring one hundred then fifty. If you can not bring fifty then bring twenty. If you can not bring twenty, Mr. Bradlaugh, then I will be satisfied if you can bring just one person whose life has been redeemed from sin and shame by the influence of Atheism.” Mr. Bradlaugh withdrew his challenge.

Internal Evidences:

The Unity of Scripture

The unity of scripture is a miracle in itself. The Bible was written over a 1,400-1,600 year time span, it had forty or more different writers (one author – God), and they all varied greatly in their backgrounds. The writers were made up of poets, kings, farmers, fishermen, doctors, philosophers, and statesmen. They not only lived in different times periods but they also lived on three different continents. Yet with all this diversity, they wrote with continuity. They wrote with doctrinal unity, one moral system, one plan of salvation and one major theme – the redemption of mankind. From the fall of man and the loss of paradise in Genesis to paradise being regained in Revelation, the theme is consistent, the redemption of man.

Imagine taking two people today and asking them to write a book. Instead of the diversity we find in scripture, let's make it easy on them. Let's pick these two people from the same age bracket, similar backgrounds, race, social status, similar political views and intellectually compatible. Ask them to write on the same topic. You can just imagine that when they finished there would, without a doubt, be varied points of disagreements. On the other hand, in the Bible there is so much diversity and yet it is written with unity and continuity throughout. As such, it could be nothing other than divinely inspired.

Prophecy

This is such an exhaustive topic, we will simply attempt to summarize. There is so much of prophecy in scripture that we see has been fulfilled that it boggles the mind. Most prophecy is so improbable in the natural that only God's hand in it could bring them to pass. For instance, Israel's dispersion. They were given the promise land and because of their disobedience they were scattered to the nations. There was no national land for the Jews until 1948 when they were miraculously given their land back and began returning to Israel (this also reveals our nearing the end, see Matthew 24:32-33). If we think about it, how could this have taken place outside of divine intervention.

Consider the prophecies concerning Jesus. There were over 300 prophecies concerning Jesus' first coming. There were twenty nine prophecies fulfilled about Him in one twenty-four hour period surrounding His death. These prophecies were

spoken by different people in five different centuries (1,000 to 500 B.C.). They dealt with the place, time, and manner of His birth and death, people's reaction (mocking and spitting), piercing of His side, and death. Coincidental? Not likely. Fulfillment of these would have to be deliberate and beyond human control. There may have been some in history who might have fulfilled one or maybe two but not all of them.

In His book, [Science Speaks](#), Peter Stoner applied the science of probability to eight prophecies concerning Jesus and the probability of all 8 prophecies being fulfilled accidentally in the life of one person. That probability is one in ten to the seventeenth power or 1 in 100,000,000,000,000,000. To try to comprehend a number like that, Stoner used the following illustration:

Cover the entire state of Texas two feet deep in silver dollars. Mark one silver dollar and drop it from an airplane flying somewhere over Texas. Stir the silver dollars thoroughly over the entire state. Then blindfold someone and let them travel anywhere in the state they wanted, stopping only once, at a spot of their choice to dig into the silver dollars and pick out the marked one. The chance of a person being able to pick the marked dollar in one try is the same chance as one man fulfilling only eight Messianic prophecies. Stoner concluded, "The fulfillment of these eight prophecies alone proves that God inspired the writing of those prophecies to a definiteness which lacks only one chance in ten to the seventeenth power of being absolute." Another good read is [Evidence that Demands a Verdict](#) by Josh McDowell.

The Bible was Written by Eyewitnesses

The scriptures were written by eyewitnesses. Luke tells us, "Inasmuch as many have undertaken to compile an account of the things accomplished among us, just as they were handed down to us by those who from the beginning were eyewitnesses and servants of the word" (Luke 1:1-2). "To these He also presented Himself alive after His suffering, by many convincing proofs, appearing to them over a period of forty days and speaking of the things concerning the kingdom of God" (Acts 1:3). John wrote, "What we have seen and heard we proclaim to you" (1 John 1:3). Peter said, "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" (1 Peter 1:16).

Our entire judicial system is predicated on the premise of eyewitnesses. This gives great credibility to the authenticity of scripture. To think the apostles lied and just

made everything up is a stretch beyond belief. Imagine if they had been lying and made a pact with each other saying they would all testify they had seen Jesus alive after His death. They swore to one another that none would back down from their story. Under normal circumstances we possibly could believe this as plausible. However, each apostle died for their witness to the resurrection of Christ, with the exception of John.

History tells us he was boiled in oil alive, then banished to the isle of Patmos for his testimony. One or two of them might hold out to the death but seeing their fellow apostles tortured and killed would have surely caused the others to say, "Forget this." One of them would have given in if it had been something they made up, but no, they all stuck with their story. Why? Because they had witnessed Jesus alive post resurrection and knew it to be true. It was a message worth dying for. As a result, we can trust what they said to be true.

Character of the Bible

When we write a resume we attempt to highlight and embellish our strengths, emphasize the positive and down play our weaknesses. The Bible does the opposite. It told things the way they actually were, never shading the truth to cover up for the sins and imperfections of it's most prominent characters. It tells of all the violent acts, David's sin with Bathsheba, Moses killing an Egyptian, Peter's denial of Jesus, Paul and Barnabas' dissension and so on. If a movie were produced of the Bible much of it would be an R rating at the very least.

Claims of the Bible

Since the Bible was attested to by many external evidences, is truthful in its character, and written by eyewitnesses, we can trust what it says about itself. The Bible claims to be the very Word of God, the embodiment of divine revelation. In the Old Testament we see statements similar to this throughout, "And the Lord spake unto Moses, saying" (Exodus 14:1, Exodus 14:15, Exodus 14:26, Exodus 16:4, Exodus 25:1, Leviticus 1:1, Leviticus 4:1, Leviticus 11:1, Numbers 4:1, Numbers 13:1, Deuteronomy 32:48). Moses was commanded to write what God told him in a book (Exodus 17:14, Exodus 34:27) and we are told he did (Exodus 24:4, Exodus 34:28, Numbers 33:2, Deuteronomy 31:9, Deuteronomy 31:22, Deuteronomy 31:24).

The Prophets speak thus, "The Lord hath spoken" (Isaiah 1:2), "Then said the Lord unto Isaiah" (Isaiah 7:3), "Thus saith the Lord" (Isaiah 43:1), "The word that came to Jeremiah from the Lord saying" (Jeremiah 11:1), "The word of the Lord came expressly unto Ezekiel" (Ezekiel 1:3), "The word of the Lord that came unto Hosea" (Hosea 1:1), "The word of the Lord that came to Joel" (Joel 1:1). Statements like these occur approximately 3,800 times in the Old Testament. Thus, the Old Testament claims to be the very Word of God.

The New Testament also claims to be the Word of God. It claims to have been "confirmed unto us by them that heard him" (Hebrews 2:3). "If anyone thinks he is a prophet or spiritual, let him recognize that the things which I write to you are the Lord's commandment" (1 Corinthians 14:37). "For this cause also thank we God without ceasing, because, when ye received the word of God which ye heard of us, ye received it not as the word of men, but as it is in truth, the word of God, which effectually works also in you that believe" (1 Thessalonians 2:13). We have in scripture an embodiment of divine revelation, the very Word of God. Also read Galatians 1:8, 2 Timothy 3:16, 1 John 5:9-10, 2 Peter 1:20-21, 2 Peter 3:2, 2 Peter 3:15-16.

Canonicity of the Bible

The canon is a list of books included in the Bible officially accepted as inspired of God. There are thirty-nine books in the Old Testament and twenty-seven books in the New Testament. Sixty-six books in total make up our present Bible. In this study we will examine how the Old and New Testament canon was established, and what criteria was used to insure the authenticity of the Bible. The word canon comes from the Hebrew “ganeh” and the Greek “kanon” and means a rod or reed, which was used as a measuring rod, rule or standard of measurement.

The church didn't create the canon or books accepted as scripture, but recognized they were inspired from their inception. So the canon are those books which have been measured, found satisfactory, and approved as inspired by God. Origen (184/185 – 253/254), an early Christian Alexandrian scholar and theologian, used the word to denote what we call the rule of faith – the standard by which we are to measure and evaluate.

The Establishment of the Old Testament Canon

The Old Testament canon was clearly established in the minds of the Jews before 70 A.D. with the destruction of Jerusalem and the temple by Titus. At that time the sacrificial system was halted, the Jews were scattered and there was a need for something definite. In 90 A.D. the Counsel of Jamnia solidified the canonicity of Old Testament scripture. During this time the canonicity of Ecclesiastes and the Song of Solomon was established.

It was the view of two Jewish scholars, David Kimchi (1160-1232) and Elias Levita (1465-1549), that the Old Testament canon was completed by Ezra and the members of the Great Synagogue. Raven suggests three reasons that make this view probable (Thiessen, Lectures in Systematic Theology; page 103):

1. **The testimony of Josephus** (Jewish historian, 33-100 A. D.). Josephus said that the Old Testament canon was completed during the reign on Artaxerxes Longimanus in the lifetime of Ezra.
2. **Ezra was particularly concerned with the sacred books.** He is called “the scribe” (Nehemiah 8:1, 4, 9, 13; 12:26, 36), “a ready scribe” (Ezra 7:6), and “a scribe of the words and of the commandment of Jehovah, and of his

statutes to Israel” (Ezra 7:11). It therefore stands to reason that he would have been greatly concerned with the completion of the Old Testament Canon.

3. **The character of Ezra’s time was set for it.** After the exile the people were founding anew the religious institutions of the nation. What would be more natural than to gather the volumes of the sacred library together?

Jesus’ Testimony of the Old Testament Canon

Jesus bore witness to the three divisions of the Old Testament. The Hebrew bible was divided into three sections: The law, the prophets and the writings. Jesus bore witness to these three divisions of the Old Testament. “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” (Luke 24:44). Jesus mentions Psalms because it was the first and largest book of the writings.

Jesus never disputed the canonicity of the Old Testament. Jesus often disagreed with the Jewish leader’s tradition, yet He never disputed the canonicity of the Old Testament. He said to them, “Why do you yourselves transgress the commandment of God for the sake of your tradition? You invalidated the Word of God for the sake of your tradition. You hypocrites, rightly did Isaiah prophesy of you: This people honors Me with their lips, but their heart is far away from Me. But in vain do they worship Me, teaching as doctrines the precepts of men” (Matthew 15:3-9). He told them, “You are mistaken, not understanding the scriptures nor the power of God” (Matthew 22:29). Again He said, “The Scripture cannot be broken” (John 10:35). Jesus constantly verified the canonicity of Old Testament scripture.

Jesus testified to the extent of the Old Testament canon. When arguing with the religious leaders Jesus said, “Upon you may fall the guilt of all the righteous blood shed on earth, from the blood of righteous Abel to the blood of Zechariah, the son of Berechiah, whom you murdered between the temple and the altar” (Matthew 23:35). Abel was the first to be murdered and Zechariah was the last to be martyred in the Old Testament order. Abel was slain by his brother Cain and Zechariah was stoned in the house of God while prophesying. Genesis was the first in chronological order and Chronicles the last.

Jesus testified to the sacredness of Old Testament. He said, “Do not think that I came to abolish the Law or the Prophets; I did not come to abolish but to fulfill. For truly I say to you, until heaven and earth pass away, not the smallest letter or stroke shall pass from the Law until all is accomplished” (Matthew 5:17-18). Speaking to the disciples after His resurrection He began “With Moses and with all the prophets, He explained to them the things concerning Himself in all the Scriptures. He said to them, ‘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 24:27, 44-45).

Old Testament Scriptures Jesus Endorsed as True

- Creation (Matthew 19:4-5, Mark 13:19).
- The personality and character of Satan (John 8:44).
- The universal flood (Luke 17:26-27).
- Destruction of Sodom and Gamorrah (Luke 17:28-30).
- Moses and the burning bush (Mark 12:26).
- Manna in the wilderness (John 6:32).
- Jonah swallowed by a big fish (Matthew 12:39-40).
- The existence of the tabernacle (Luke 6:3-4).
- The unity of Isaiah (Matthew 8:17, Luke 4:17-18).

Jesus endorsed these Old Testament passages as true, verifying the canonicity of the Old Testament. We must therefore accept our present collection of Old Testament books as complete and canonical as we have them.

Testimony of the New Testament Concerning the Old Testament

- **The Gospels.** Jesus said, “Have you never read in the scriptures; You are mistaken, not knowing the scriptures; How then could the scriptures be fulfilled; But all this was done that the scriptures of the prophets might be fulfilled; You search the scriptures, for in them you think you have eternal life; and these are they which testify of Me; The scripture cannot be broken” (Mathew 21:42, 22:29, 26:54, 56, John 5:39, 10:35).
- **The Apostle Paul.** “Paul, as his custom was, went in to them, and for three Sabbaths reasoned with them from the scriptures” (Acts 17:2); Paul in his letters: “Which He promised before through His prophets in the Holy Scriptures; what does the scripture say? Abraham believed God, and it was accounted to him for righteousness; For the scripture says to the Pharaoh; For the scripture says, Whoever believes on Him will not be put to shame; Do you not know what the scripture says of Elijah; Whatever things were written before were written for our learning; Now made manifest, and by the prophetic scriptures made known to all nations; I delivered to you first of all that which I also received: that Christ died for our sins according to the scriptures, and the scripture has confined all under sin; What does the scripture say?; For the scripture says; and all scripture is given by inspiration of God” (Romans 1:2; 4:3; 9:17; 10:11; 11:2; 15:4; 16:26; 1 Corinthians 15:3-4; Galatians 3:8, 22; 4:30; 1 Timothy 5:18; 2 Timothy 3:16). By these we see the Apostle Paul testified to the sacredness of Old Testament scripture.
- **The Apostle Peter.** Peter said, “No prophecy of scripture is of any private interpretation, for prophecy never came by the will of man, but holy men of God spoke as they were moved by the Holy Spirit (2 Peter 1:20-21). Peter said of Paul, “In all his epistles, speaking in them of these things, in which are some things hard to understand, which untaught and unstable people twist to their own destruction, as they do also the rest of the scriptures” (2 Peter 3:16). Peter and the New Testament in its entirety gives witness to the sacredness of Old Testament scripture.

Why Apocryphal Literature is not Canonical

Apocryphal means hidden or concealed. Jerome, in the fourth century, was the first to call a group of literature apocryphal. Below is a list of a number of reasons why the apocryphal books, used by the Roman Catholic Church, were not canonical.

The first four are reasons [Unger's Bible Dictionary](#) gives for their exclusion from the canon. The rest are historic testimonies.

- They abound in historic and geographical inaccuracies.
- They teach doctrines which are false and foster practices which are at variance with inspired scripture.
- They resort to literary types and display an artificiality of subject matter and styling out of keeping with inspired scripture.
- They lack the distinctive elements which give genuine scripture their divine character, such as prophetic power and poetic and religious feeling.
- Philo, an Alexandrian Jewish philosopher (20 B.C.-40 A.D.), quoted the Old Testament and recognized the three divisions of the Old Testament but never quoted the apocryphal books as inspired.
- Josephus, Jewish historian (30-100 A.D.), referenced a number of Old Testament books but never quoted any apocryphal books as inspired.
- Jesus and the New Testament writers never quoted from any apocryphal books, though there are hundreds of quotes from most canonical books.
- The Jewish scholars at Jamnia, 90 A.D. never recognized them.
- No canon or counsel for the first four centuries recognized them.
- Jerome, who did most of the work on the Latin Vulgate (fourth century Latin translation of the Bible), refuted them and often debated with Augustine over this.
- Most church fathers rejected them and frequently spoke against them.
- Many Roman Catholic scholars through the reformation period rejected them.

- Martin Luther and the reformers rejected them.
- They are not consistent with the rest of scripture.

A Few Broad Principles Aimed at Determining Canonicity of the New Testament

- **Apostolicity.** Was the writer one of the apostles? If he was not an apostle, did he have a close relationship with one of the apostles, in order to raise it to the level of an apostolic book? For example, Mark had been Paul's disciple and Luke was not an apostle but he accompanied Paul throughout the book of Acts.
- **Content.** Did it maintain a strong spiritual character? This is where most apocryphal books were rejected.
- **Universality.** Was it universally accepted by the church? For example, did the church fathers accept it?
- **Inspiration.** Did the book give evidence of being inspired? By the fourth century all 27 books of the New Testament were accepted as canonical. After Council of Rome (382 A.D.) and the Third Council of Carthage (397 A.D.) the question of what books were in the canon was closed. By the year 500 A.D. all the Greek speaking church had accepted all books presently in the New Testament.

Five Facts Concerning the Credibility of the New Testament Books

1. **The writers were competent.** They were qualified to witness and teach divine truth. Most of them were eye witnesses and those who were not eye witnesses were intimately involved with one of them who were.
2. **The writers were honest.** This can be observed by the moral overtone of what they wrote, their high regard for truth, and that they were in danger in every area of life for what they wrote. Many of them were martyred for what they preached and wrote. It stands to reason, if they had not been honest in their testimony and writings that they would have retracted their testimonies

before giving up their lives. William Paley (1743 – 1805), an English Christian apologist, philosopher and utilitarian, said, “There is no evidence any false witness has ever so acted.”

3. **Their writings agree with each other.** The gospels can be put together and Acts is the historic background for most of Paul’s writing. Some have tried to infer that James and Paul stood in contradiction in their writings, but they merely stood back to back fighting opposite foes.
4. **Their accounts agree with history and experience.** There were many accounts to contemporary history in the New Testament. As an example, Quirinius was governor of Syria (Luke 2:2). There is no evidence that the Bible contradicts one fact of history.
5. **Miracles also attest to the credibility of New Testament writers.** The scriptures were birthed in the miraculous. Jesus “presented Himself alive after His suffering by many infallible proofs” (Acts 1:3).

The Apostles were promised, “These signs will follow those who believe” and “they went out and preached everywhere, the Lord working with them and confirming the Word signs following” (Mark 16:17, Mark 16:20).

“God also bearing them witness, both with signs and wonders, and with divers miracles, and gifts of the Holy Ghost” (Hebrews 2:4). Paul ministered with “Mighty signs and wonders by the power of the Spirit of God” (Romans 15:19)

Theories of Inspiration of Scripture

The Bible is the most unique literary work in all of history, containing the very revelation of God. Questions have been raised as to how the Bible was inspired and to what degree inspiration permeates its pages. Studying the theories of inspiration is part of Bibliology, which is a must for any serious student of the Bible, especially those entering the ministry. Let's look at a few definitions of inspiration before considering the various theories of inspiration.

Definitions of Inspiration

1. "God's superintending of human authors so that, using their own individual personalities, they composed and recorded without error in the words of the original autographs His revelation to man" – Dr. Charles Ryrie.
2. "The inexplicable power which the divine Spirit exercised over the authors of scriptures, to guide them even in the employment of the words they were to use, and to preserve them from error as well as from every omission" – Dr. Gaussen, Knowing the Doctrines of the Bible.
3. "The supernatural influence of the Spirit of God on the human mind, by which prophets and apostles and sacred writers were qualified to set forth divine truth without any mixture of error" – Webster, Knowing the Doctrines of the Bible.

Differentiating Between Inspiration and Illumination

Many confuse inspiration with illumination, but they are very different things. Inspiration is the impartation and recording of divine truth by the Holy Spirit (2 Timothy 3:16, 2 Peter 1:20-21). Illumination is the Holy Spirit enabling Christians to grasp and understand divine truths (John 16:13-14, 1 Corinthians 2:14).

Prophets were often given divine truth or inspiration, but denied illumination or understanding of the truth given. Caiaphas was a vehicle of an inspired message, but he had no understanding of its meaning (John 11:50, John 18:14). So, illumination is the Spirit of God giving man understanding of divine truths already given, namely the Word of God.

Theories of Inspiration

1. **Intuition or illumination theory.** It's not the writings that are inspired, but the writers themselves. Inspiration is merely superior insight on behalf of natural man into moral and religious truth. God inspired individuals who wrote scripture. If this were true, this type of inspiration could be claimed by Plato, Socrates and many others. Even today anybody who is similarly inspired could potentially write scripture.
2. **Dynamic or partial inspiration.** This view believes God provided the enabling needed for the transmission of truth which the writers of scripture were commissioned to deliver. This made them infallible in matters of faith and practice but not in areas of nonreligious character. Parts of the Bible are inspired, primarily those related to faith and practice.

In this view, the Bible merely contains the Word of God, only certain portions of Scripture are inspired, such as prophetic passages, or that certain portions of the Bible are more, or less, inspired than others. This doesn't explain how the writers of scripture were inspired with perfect supernatural knowledge in one sentence and not in another.

This view of inspiration depends on the discernment of fallible man to decide what is and what is not inspired by God.

3. **Neo-orthodox inspiration.** This view is similar to dynamic or partial inspiration. It maintains while there are supernatural elements present, the Bible contain errors and cannot be taken literally. Neo-orthodoxy maintains God speaks through scripture as a means of communicating truth to the individual. However, this truth is realized only to the degree the individual recognizes or comprehends it.

Therefore, the Bible is not divinely inspired, but rather a channel through which divine inspiration flows. It elevates the subjective experience of the individual over scripture. As with dynamic or partial inspiration, this view makes truth dependent solely on the discretion of the individual. There are no absolutes with this view.

4. **Natural inspiration.** There is nothing supernatural about the Bible. The writers were just men who wrote books or letters the same way anybody would. Over time, the Bible came to hold special significance for Christians. This view holds the Bible is of an entirely human origin and no different than any other piece of literature. The Bible was written by men who were subject to error in what they wrote. Therefore, it is no different than any other work. This view should be rejected as erroneous.
5. **Conceptual inspiration.** The thoughts of scripture are inspired but the actual words used are not. Only the concepts or thoughts in the Bible were inspired. God gave ideas to the writers of scripture who did their best to convey those ideas in writing. This view weakens the concept of biblical inspiration, maintaining that God only inspired the concepts, and not the individual words written. This view completely contradicts the Bible's concept of divine inspiration in 2 Timothy 3:16, 1 Corinthians 2:13, 2 Peter 1:19-21, and Isaiah 59:21.
6. **Dictation theory.** The writers recorded God's words without any participation of their own styles or personalities. They mechanically recorded the words of scripture, much as a secretary might write down the words they were told to write. This view asserts that God dictated the Bible in its entirety. Some even argue that the grammar must be perfect in every place because it's the Holy Spirit's grammar.

This view excludes individual personalities in the writing of scripture. A dictated Bible would present a consistent level of style and vocabulary, rather than the diversity of human characteristics that are displayed in scripture. This ignores the fact there are apparent differences in the styles of the different writers. Some have tried to explain this saying the Holy Spirit adopted the style of the writer in each case.

7. **Verbal, plenary inspiration.** This view of Biblical inspiration holds that the Holy Spirit provided both verbal and plenary inspiration to the original writers. Both the words and ideas of scripture are inspired by God. Plenary means all the words used by the writers in their original manuscripts were equally inspired. Verbal means God directed the choice of the individual words used by the writers in their original manuscripts.

God so partnered with them to record His Word in the Bible in its entirety. This view accepts that the writer's personalities were used of God based

upon their unique backgrounds, including their styles and vocabularies. The Holy Spirit directed the writers of scripture in such a way that the original manuscripts were both verbally and fully inspired, infallible and without error.

This is in harmony with the declaration of 2 Timothy 3:16 which says, "All scripture is given by inspiration of God." Peter wrote, "Knowing this first, that no prophecy of the scripture is of any private interpretation. For the prophecy came not in old time by the will of man: but holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost" (2 Peter 1:20-21).

Introduction to Apologetics

The Church has always maintained that in scripture we have the embodiment of divine revelation – God’s Word to man. It is God communicating to man concerning Himself, man’s lost condition, God’s love, how man might be saved (redemption), warning of impending judgment for those rejecting His love, and the warfare with Satan in the battle for the souls of men.

The scriptures are God breathed. Peter wrote, “Knowing this first, that no prophecy of the scripture is of any private interpretation. For the prophecy came not in old time by the will of man: but holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost” (2 Peter 1:20-21). Paul said, “All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness” (2 Timothy 3:16).

Some have tried to pervert and twist this inferring it is “all Scripture given (that is given) by inspiration of God,” suggesting that some scripture is given by inspiration of God and some may not be. By this, inferring the Bible merely contains the Word of God. If that were so, what part contains the Word of God and what part doesn’t? Who decides which parts are divine revelation and which are not? No, the Word is emphatic, “All Scripture is given by inspiration of God” (2 Timothy 3:16). All scripture is God breathed.

It’s amazing how many mainline denominations over the years have fallen into error here. Even today many of our young, nondenominational churches have denied the inerrancy of scripture. Denying the inerrancy of scripture is the first step in theological liberalism. Once we begin doubting the infallibility of the Bible, it is a slippery slope. From here we begin to falter in other areas of essential Christian doctrine. This is indicative of the time in which we live.

Harold Lindsell, in his book “Battle for the Battle,” points out how many theologians and scholars began to doubt the inerrancy of scripture when working on their post doctorate degrees. “Professing to be wise, they became fools” (Romans 1:22). William Tyndale said the day would come when “A ploughboy with a Bible would know more of God than the most learned ecclesiastic without it.” (Evidence that Demands a Verdict, page 3)

We as Evangelicals must hold firm our belief in the inerrancy of God's Word and be able to defend it. We must "Contend earnestly for the faith which was once for all handed down to the saints" (Jude 3). "Sanctify the Lord God in your hearts: and be ready always to give an answer (make a defense) to everyone who asks you a reason of the hope that is in you" (1 Peter 3:15).

We as Christians and pastors particularly, must be ready and equipped to stand firm on and defend not only the inerrancy of scripture, but all doctrines essential to the Christian faith – the reason for writing this introduction to apologetics.

Apologia

Our English use of the word conveys the idea of excuse, apology or amends for some injury done. However, Apologia (apology) is a verbal defense, a speech made in defense and is sometimes translated answer in scripture. Any honest inquiry has a right to be answered.

I'm not referring to those wanting to argue or flex their intellectual muscles, not honestly seeking answers. Christianity has real answers for those honestly desiring truth. Clark Pinnock, an able apologist wrote, "An intelligent Christian ought to be able to point out the flaws in a non-Christian position and present the facts and arguments which tell in favor of the gospel." (Evidence that Demands a Verdict, page 3)

A common accusation aimed at the Christian is that all we have is a blind leap of faith. Many seem to think one has to commit intellectual suicide to become a believer in Christ and the scriptures. What they are really describing is existentialism, which is a blind leap of faith, a leap into the dark in hope of the ultimate experience. Each person's experience is unique to him alone.

Christianity, on the other hand, is a leap into the light (2 Timothy 1:12 and John 8:31-32). Clark Pinnock said, Christian apologetics "Strives at laying the evidence for the Christian gospel in an intelligent fashion, so that they can make a meaningful commitment under the convicting power of the Holy Spirit. The heart cannot delight in what the mind rejects as false." (Evidence that Demands a Verdict, page 2)

Apologia is Used Eight Times in Scripture

- Acts 22:1 “My defense”
- Acts 25:16 “Make his defense”
- I Corinthians 9:3 “My (answer) defense”
- 2 Corinthians 7:11 – “Vindication”
- Philippians 1:7 “Defense and confirmation of the gospel”
- Philippians 1:17 “Defense of the gospel”
- 2 Timothy 4:16 “My first (answer) defense”
- I Peter 3:15 “Ready to make a (give an answer) defense”

Rejection of Christ and the Authenticity of Scripture is Usually for the Following Reasons

1. **Ignorance.** Jesus said, “You are mistaken (do error), not understanding the Scriptures nor the power of God” (Matthew 22:29). “My people (perish) are destroyed for lack of knowledge” (Hosea 4:6). This is often self imposed and willful ignorance, refusing to look at the facts. Read also Romans 1:18-23.
2. **Pride.** “How can you believe, when you receive glory from one another and you do not seek the glory that is from the one and only God” (John 5:44). This is often spiritual or religious pride, “That is what I believe and I don’t care what you say.”
3. **Moral problems (sin).** “This is the judgment, that the Light has come into the world, and men loved the darkness rather than the Light, for their deeds were evil. For everyone who does evil hates the Light, and does not come to the Light for fear that his deeds will be exposed” (John 3:19-20). If they accept the authority of scripture and Christ they might have to change, God

will begin dealing with things in their life, like Jesus did with the rich young ruler (Mark 10:17-27).

4. **Self will.** “You are unwilling to come to Me so that you may have life” (John 5:40). Jesus demands to be Lord and we want to do our own thing and run our own life.

A Strong Defense of the Faith is Expressed in the Following Ways

1. **Verbally.** We must lay out a defense of the faith in a systematic way and present people with a challenge to commit their life to Jesus. “Sanctify Christ as Lord in your hearts, always being ready to make a defense to everyone who asks you to give an account for the hope that is in you” (1 Peter 3:15).

A verbal defense of the faith also has to do with our defending the faith against false teaching. Jude said, “Beloved, when I gave all diligence to write unto you of the common salvation, it was needful for me to write unto you, and exhort you that you should earnestly contend for the faith which was once delivered unto the saints” (Jude 3).

It’s incumbent upon us as followers of Jesus and especially ministers of the gospel to defend our faith (essentials of gospel and Christian faith) against those who would seek to pervert it (2 Corinthians 11:3-4 and Galatians 1:8-9).

2. **Through love.** “A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another, even as I have loved you, that you also love one another. By this all men will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another” (John 13:34-35). There is no better defense of the faith than seeing God’s people loving one another.
3. **Through unity.** Jesus prayed, “That they may all be one... that the world may believe that You sent Me” (John 17:21). Dr. Francis Schaeffer called love and unity among God’s people the great apologetic. Jesus prayed that we all might be one (unified) in order that the world would believe Jesus was sent to be the Savior of the world.

When the world sees Christians from diverse backgrounds, varied economic and social statuses experiencing unity and love for one another it's a testimony to the proof of the gospel. Read also 1 Corinthians 1:10, Romans 16:17 and Ephesians 4:11-16.

4. **With our lives.** Paul said, "You are our letter, written in our hearts, known and read by all men" (2 Corinthians 3:2). We are to present a defense of the gospel, not only verbally, but also with our lives. St. Francis of Assisi put it this way, "Preach the Gospel at all times. When necessary, use words." Men will read our lives for the better or worse.

Jesus faithfully represented the Father – "Jesus Christ, Who is the faithful witness" (Revelation 1:5). Will we faithfully represent Him? He gave us the empowerment of the His Spirit for this very purpose. "You shall receive power after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you; and you shall be witnesses" (Acts 1:8). Let's make a defense of the faith by means of our lives and words.

Let's study to show ourselves approved unto God and be ready always to give a defense of what we hold dear and fight for the faith that has been delivered to us through holy writ – 2 Timothy 2:15, 1 Peter 3:15 and Jude 3.

Biblical Hermeneutics: Guidelines to Proper Interpretation of Scripture

2 Timothy 2:15 says we must “study to show ourselves approved unto God, a workman that needs not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth.” The following guidelines are not exhaustive, but will give students of scripture a general understanding of the interpretive process. They are meant to be practical tools anyone can benefit from.

Differentiate Between Exegesis and Hermeneutics

Biblical exegesis is a systematic process by which a person arrives at a reasonable and coherent sense of the meaning and message of a biblical passage. In the process of exegesis, a passage must be viewed in its historical and grammatical context with its purpose and time of writing taken into account.

Hermeneutics stands in the same relationship to exegesis that a rule-book stands to a game. The rules are not the game, and the game is meaningless without the rules. Hermeneutics proper is not exegesis, but exegesis is applied hermeneutics. In this sense, hermeneutics may also be seen as the method of exegesis.

Using this analogy, hermeneutics is the rule-book of the game while exegesis is the game. Hermeneutics deals with the rules of interpretation, while exegesis deals with the actual interpretation of the passage.

This is done in four ways:

1. The context of the time it was written.
2. The purpose for which it was written.
3. An analysis of the original language.
4. The relevancy to our culture and lives.

Differentiate Between Metaphoric and Literal Language

Metaphoric language is usually easily distinguished from literal language. For instance, when the writer uses “like” or “as” in describing something they saw in a vision or dream, it is clearly metaphoric or symbolic. John did this frequently when recording what he saw in his revelation on the Isle of Patmos. He was attempting to share futuristic things he had never seen before using what he had from the first century to draw from. A few obvious metaphors in the Bible include:

- “He shall cover thee with his feathers, and under his wings shalt thou trust” (Psalms 91:4). God is clearly not a chicken or eagle. This passage was talking about God’s protective covering.
- God’s “stretched out arm” (Jeremiah 32:17). Jeremiah was not describing God’s body parts. He was referring to God’s mighty and creative power.
- “The Lord thy God is a consuming fire” (Deuteronomy 4:24). God is not saying He’s a blast furnace. This verse was describing Him as a jealous God.
- “I am the bread of life” (John 6:35). Jesus was not portraying Himself to be a loaf of bread. He was saying we get our spiritual sustenance from Him.
- “I am the light of the world” (John 8:12). Jesus was not saying He is a light bulb. He is the source of truth and enlightenment.

Approach the Scriptures with Humility

“But to this one I will look, To him who is humble and contrite of spirit, and who trembles at My word” (Isaiah 66:2). The first requisite for one to understand God’s Word is humility. We dare not approach the Bible with an attitude of pride and superiority.

Many approach scripture on a mere intellectual basis. The Bible is a spiritual book and must be understood spiritually. “The natural man receives not the things of the Spirit of God: for they are foolishness unto him: neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned” (1 Corinthians 2:14). We must cry out in humble

dependency as David, “Open my eyes, that I may see wondrous things from Your law” (Psalms 119:18).

We must approach the Word to find out what we are to believe, not to support what we believe. When we find something we disagree with, we rationalize scripture until it reconciles with our beliefs, or we search for scripture in support of what we believe and to refute what we disagree with. We must approach the study of God’s Word with humility, depending on the Holy Spirit to guide us into all truth as to what we are to believe (John 16:13-14).

Approach the Scriptures with a Submissive Spirit

Jesus said, “If anyone is willing to do His will, he will know of the teaching, whether it is of God or whether I speak from Myself” (John 7:17). If we are not willing to obey God and put into practice what He shows us, our insight into His Word will be limited at best. “To everyone who has, more shall be given, and he will have an abundance; but from the one who does not have, even what he does have shall be taken away” (Matthew 25:29).

We must be willing to do what He reveals to us if we expect Him to give us further insight and understanding into His Word. This is why many people don’t get much out of the Bible. If we are going to have an ongoing revelation (unveiling) of God’s Word, we must have a “yes” mentality. Say, “Yes God! Whatever you reveal to me, whatever revelation you give me, I will walk in it.” If this is our daily attitude, we will be on the way to “rightly dividing the Word of truth” (2 Timothy 2:15).

Pray for Illumination from the Holy Spirit

The unregenerate man can’t understand God’s Word. As soon as a person is born again (John 3:3, 1 Peter 1:23) he immediately has an understanding of scripture. The light has been turned on. We simply cannot understand the Word apart from the Holy Spirit. The Bible says, “The natural man receives (understands) not the things of the Spirit of God: for they are foolishness unto him: neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned” (1 Corinthians 2:14).

We must be completely dependent on the Spirit of God when seeking to interpret scripture. It is the Holy Spirit who illuminates our minds and spirits to understand

the Word. He is the one who guides us into all truth (John 14:26, John 16:13-14, 1 John 2:20, 1 John 2:27). Whenever we study the Word we must cry out to God, "Open my eyes, that I may behold wonderful things from Your law" (Psalms 119:18).

Use Dictionaries and Reference Books

On an elementary level, start by using dictionaries and comparing translations. Bible Gateway is an excellent tool that allows you to quickly look up verses and passages. For example, Hebrews 2:18 in the KJV says, "He is able to succour them that are tempted." The NASB substitutes succour with "come to the aid of" and the NIV uses the word "help." The word succour actually means to help or come to the aid of. It's not that succour is wrong but it's simply not used often any more. For more in depth studies use tools like [Strong's Concordance](#), [Thayer's Lexicon](#), [Vine's Expository Dictionary](#) and [Wuest's Word Studies](#).

Use Commentaries

It's foolish and prideful to think we can't learn from others. Commentaries are great tools that will help you understand and interpret scripture. I recommended you use at least three commentaries, and preferably seven or more. This way you are not using one person's opinion and can pool together all their insight and let the Holy Spirit give you the revelation He wants for you. There are many useful commentaries, but I prefer [Chuck Smith](#), [Matthew Henry](#), [William Barclay](#), [Henry Ironside](#), [Martyn Lloyd Jones](#), [G. Campbell Morgan](#), and [J. Vernon McGee](#) to name a few.

Interpret Scripture with Scripture

Scripture is always the best interpretation of scripture. The Bible says, "Precept must be upon precept, precept upon precept, Line upon line, line upon line, Here a little, there a little" (Isaiah 28:10). As we compare the passage or verse we are studying with other scripture we get a more balanced interpretation of scripture. A particular verse or passage should always be cross referenced with other related scripture.

Interpret Scripture According to its Context

We can prove anything from scripture by taking a phrase out of context. To get the proper meaning of a verse or passage we must carefully look at the verses and chapters surrounding what we are studying. For instance, we can disprove the existence of God by taking a phrase out of context. The Bible says, "There is no God." But when the context is viewed, we see that, "The fool has said in his heart, There is no God" (Psalms 14:1). There may be many great applications of scripture but only one proper interpretation of a passage.

Interpret Scripture According to the Time it was Written

Understanding what was going on at the time a passage was written is imperative to proper interpretation of God's Word. We should study what the customs were at the time and what was happening in the particular church, city, area, or region. For instance, many New Testament letters were directed to a specific church to counteract problems that were going on in the congregation or city.

For example, when dealing with women wearing make up and jewelry in 1 Peter 3:3-5 and 1 Timothy 2:9, Peter emphasized their adorning should not be "merely" those things. During that time prostitutes typically adorned themselves in this way, so the emphasis was for them not to look like they were women of the night. They were not saying women should not look as attractive as they can. Henry Ironside commenting on this said, "Any old barn looks better with a new coat of paint."

Another good example is in 1 Corinthians 14:34-35 when Paul told women to "keep silent in the churches." The early church setting was similar to the synagogue in that the women and men sat on opposite sides and women would often call to their husband or ask a question in the midst of the service. Paul wasn't saying women were never allowed to speak, but he was simply saying they were not to be disruptive.

He was telling the women that if they have questions they should "ask their husbands at home" (1 Corinthians 14:35). This is a great application for people who talk during church services. It's very disruptive. Any discussion or conversing should be done when the service is over and not during the sermon. When this takes place, it's no wonder people don't get anything out of the message. Talking also interferes with what the Holy Spirit is wanting to do in the lives of others in the

service. A couple good reference books are [Halley's Bible Handbook](#) and [Manners and Customs of the Bible](#).

The Most Obvious Interpretation is Usually the Correct One

God doesn't hide things and try and make His Word difficult to understand. He says what He means. Yes, we can find deep insights and applications from a verse or passage, but the most obvious meaning is usually the correct interpretation. Years ago I was ministering to someone and they said, "Everyone interprets things differently. It's all according to how one interprets the Bible."

I quoted Romans 3:23, "All have sinned, and come short of the glory of God." Then I asked what it meant to them. They replied, "We have all sinned." Then I quoted Romans 6:23, "The wages of sin is death." Again I asked what that verse meant to them. They said, "You sin you die." The Word means exactly what it says. So, the most obvious interpretation of any verse or passage is usually the correct one.

How to Benefit from the Word of God

As followers of Jesus, God desires that we receive the full benefit from His Word. God's Word exists for our good and benefit. If we are going to receive the full benefit and value from the Word of God that He has intended, there are specific requirements or prerequisites which must be implemented. Let's make sure we are [receiving the fullest benefit from the Bible](#) that we possibly can.

Prerequisites to Benefiting from the Word of God

1. **Being Born-again:**

“Being born again, not of corruptible seed but of incorruptible, by the Word of God which lives and abides forever” (1 Peter 1:23).

When the Word is preached we are convicted of sin (John 16:8-9), see our need of Christ, and accept Him as Lord and Savior. God's spirit unites with ours bringing it to life. None of the benefits of the Word apply to us unless we are born again.

2. **Read the Word:**

“Blessed is he that reads” (Revelations 1:3).

Many Christians do not study the Word of God regularly. You may have a Bible laying on your coffee table that you never open. The blessings of the Word are only for those who read it. Can you remember the last time you read the Bible?

3. **Listen to the Word being preached or taught:**

“Blessed is he that reads and they that hear the words of this prophecy” (Revelation 1:3).

This is why church is so important. Hearing the Word refers to it being taught or preached. If we want to receive a blessing from God, we must hear the Word proclaimed. Paul said only then will our faith grow (Romans 10:13-17).

4. **Applying the Word to life:**

“Blessed is he that reads and they that hear the words of this prophecy and keep those things which are written therein, for the time is at hand” (Revelation 1:3).

To receive the full benefit of the Word we must [put it into practice](#). When we do, we will be blessed in all things (James 1:25, Joshua 1:8). Otherwise, we are deceiving ourselves (James 1:22).

5. **Meditating on scripture:**

“This book of the law shall not depart out of your mouth, but you shall meditate on it day and night” (Joshua 1:8).

There may be times when you focus on a verse or phrase and repeat it over and over again, like when memorizing Bible verses. God wants us to constantly meditate on His Word (Psalms 1:2-3).

6. **Memorize the Word:**

When it comes to the Word of God, we must do more than a casual reading. We need to study it, know it, and be able to use it as needed. It's great to know where to find certain passages, but it's even better to memorize them. Below are a few verses to get you started.

“Thy Word have I hid in mine heart” (Psalms 119:11).

“I have written unto you young men because you are strong and the Word of God abides in you” (1 John 2:14).

“If you abide in me and my words abide in you” (John 15:7).

7. **Exercise faith:**

“For unto us was the gospel preached as well as unto them, but the Word preached did not profit them, not being mixed with faith in them that heard it” (Hebrews 4:2).

When God reveals something to you through the Word you must step out in faith and apply it to your life. Otherwise, the Word will not benefit you.

8. **Use it:**

The Bible compares itself to a sword in Hebrews 4:12 and Ephesians 6:17. The Sword of the Spirit is part of the armor of God and our main offensive weapon. It does us little good if we aren't going to use it.

A soldier won't last very long in battle if he doesn't use his weapon. Jesus used His sword when He was tempted in the wilderness (Matthew 4:1-11). Every time Satan came to him He used his weapon, eventually driving the devil away (Luke 4:13).

If we are going to make full benefit of the Word of God it must be properly implemented. God gave His Word to benefit us. Let's make full use and benefit of God's Word – The Bible!

14 Benefits of the Word of God

The Bible is a living instruction book that brings blessing and hope to all who read it. Hebrews 4:12 describes the Word as “alive and powerful” and 2 Timothy 3:16 says it is “God breathed.” 2 Peter 1:20-21 tells us the Bible was written by men, but God is the author.

Benefits of the Word of God

1. **Answered prayer** (John 15:7, Proverbs 28:9). Jesus said if we continue in a vital relationship with Him and His Word is in us, whatever we ask will be given to us. If His Word is in us, we must conclude that we will be [praying in His will](#) (1 John 5:14-15). However, if we turn our ear away from hearing His Word, our prayer is an abomination to God (Proverbs 28:9).

2. **Victory over sin** (Psalms 119:9-11, 1 John 2:14, John 8:31-32, Psalms 37:31). The Word of God makes us aware of sin and keeps us from sliding down a slippery slope. It doesn't mean we will never fail, but we won't continue to slide down. Like Peter, we will rise up victorious over failure. After denying Christ, he ministered with power on the day of Pentecost. The Bible will keep you from sin as sin will keep you from the Bible.
3. **Spirit-Filled living** (Ephesians 5:18-19, Colossians 3:16). There's no easy way to stay filled with God's Spirit. We must read the Word and spend time with Him in prayer. The context of these passages is nearly identical. One refers to being filled with the Spirit, while the other talks about the Word of Christ dwelling in us. The secret to being filled and remaining full of the Holy Spirit is to saturate yourself with His Word.
4. **The Word brings purpose in life.** “Sanctify them in your truth, your Word is truth. As you have sent me into the world, I also have sent them into the world” (John 17:17-18). Jesus came into the world to fulfill a purpose. Likewise, as we study His Word we find purpose in Him. Sanctification is not only setting us apart from sin, but also setting us apart for His divine purpose. Want to know God's purpose for your life? Dive into the Bible until He reveals it to you.
5. **The Word causes spiritual growth** (Romans 10:17, 1 Peter 2:2). We cannot grow spiritually apart from the Word. If we don't eat we won't grow and will eventually die. We grow from the Word in two ways:

- **Maturity.** Peter said we must desire the milk of the Word to grow, but we can't thrive on milk alone. We must also eat solid food to grow to maturity (1 Corinthians 3:1-2, Hebrews 5:12-14).
 - **Increased faith.** All Christians want to have more faith. Even the disciples desired this (Luke 17:5). The best way to increase faith is by spending time in the Word. "Faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the Word" (Romans 10:17). Our faith will never grow through personal study alone – we must also hear the Word proclaimed in church (Romans 10:13-17).
6. **The Word produces fruit in our lives** (Psalms 1:2-3). The Psalmist gives us a picture of a tree planted near a river with its roots going deep into the ground drinking water. Every time we immerse ourselves in the Word of God we are filled with His Spirit (John 15:16). Just like the tree planted by the river, the result is fruitfulness.
 7. **The Word defeats the enemy** (Matthew 4:3-11, Ephesians 6:17, Hebrews 4:12, 2 Corinthians 10:4-5). The Bible is the main offensive weapon for every Christian. We have victory over the enemy through the Word. We are in a spiritual battle (Ephesians 6:12). Jesus said Satan desired to sift Peter like wheat (Luke 22:31) and he desires the same for us. Jesus used the Word to defeat Satan and so should we. It equips us and makes us strong for battle (1 John 2:14). Knowing it isn't enough. A weapon must be used or it is worthless.
 8. **The Word brings success to life** (Joshua 1:8, Psalms 1:2-3, James 1:25). God told Joshua the Word must not depart from his mouth and he must do all that is written in it (Joshua 1:8). The principles in the Bible work. Meditate on them day and night (Psalms 1:2-3). God promised if we put the Word into practice He will bless us in all things (James 1:25).
 9. **The Word makes us competent counselors** (Romans 15:14, 2 Timothy 3:16). Biblical counseling is listening to a person's problems or struggles and applying God's Word to them. Concerning the children of Israel, Moses said, "When they have a dispute, I judge between a man and his neighbor and make known the statutes of God and His laws" (Exodus 18:16). This is exactly how we are to counsel. What I think does a person little good, but what God says is of infinite value. It's the Word that has the power to change lives.
 10. **The spoken Word is powerful** (Isaiah 55:10-11). Don't be afraid to say Bible verses out loud. When going through difficulties or ministering to someone, speak

His Word with authority. It will be released into the spiritual realm and continue to work until it fulfills God's purpose. Like rain watering seed in the ground, it may take a season to come to fruition, but it will come to pass.

11. **The Word is a cleansing agent** (Ephesians 5:25-27, John 15:3). The Word has a cleansing affect in our lives. Have you ever done something wrong, confessed it as sin, knew God had forgiven you (1 John 1:9), but still felt guilty? It's during these times we must allow the Word to cleanse us. It is both a mirror showing us our sin (James 1:23-24) and a wash basin to cleanse us from impurities.
12. **The Word brings comfort and hope** (Romans 15:4, Hebrews 6:17-20). Many Christians can testify to being discouraged and hopeless, and after reading a few verses or hearing a message preached were filled with hope, comfort and encouragement. During times of despair we usually don't feel like reading the Bible, but this is exactly when we need to. Get into the Word and let God encourage you.
13. **The Word gives guidance and direction.** "Thy Word is a lamp unto my feet and a light unto my path" (Psalms 119:105). The Bible shines a light on our path so we know which way to go. However, the light shines only so far in front of us. As we walk forward, it shines further out. We must walk in the light we have before we receive additional light (Matthew 25:29).
14. **The Word brings joy into our life and situation** (Jeremiah 15:16). Jeremiah said God's Word was the "joy and rejoicing" of his heart. Why? Because he was called by His name.

I wonder about people who claim to be called by Jesus' name but have no desire for His Word. Jeremiah did more than casually read the Word, he devoured it. Devour and absorb the Word of God. When you do, it will fill you with "joy unspeakable and full of glory" (1 Peter 1:8).

Our Salvation

You've Been Chosen By God

God sought after us, not us after Him. We should be forever grateful for His grace in pursuing us. It was only by the exercise of His own will that we were brought forth, born of Him, and are living for Him today.

Romans 9:15-16 – For He says to Moses, “I will have mercy on whomever I will have mercy, and I will have compassion on whomever I will have compassion. So then it is not of him who wills, nor of him who runs, but of God who shows mercy.”

James 1:18 – “In the exercise of His own will begat He us with the word of truth, so that we would be a kind of first fruits His creatures.”

John 1:12-13 – “As many as received Him, to them He gave the right to become children of God, to those who believe in His name. Who were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God.”

Romans 3:11 – “There is none who understands, there is none who seeks after God.”

John 6:44 – “No man can come to me, except the Father which hath sent me draw him.”

John 15:16 – “You did not choose Me, but I chose you and ordained you that you should go and bear fruit and that your fruit should remain.”

Ephesians 1:4 – “According as He has chosen us in Him before the foundation of the world.”

Isn't that awesome? He chose us before the foundation of the world, before the world ever existed or was created.

God, in His infinite wisdom, foreknowledge and predestination, looked through the corridors of time, saw us, chose us to be His own and adopted us into His family. Praise the Lord!

Someone will say, "But that's not fair, God didn't choose me." Well, if you accept Jesus, you'll discover that you were chosen in Him before the foundation of the world. But you say, "I don't want to accept Jesus into my life." Well, I guess you weren't chosen then.

It's clear from scripture that God sought after and chose us and not the other way around. He pursued us until He had apprehended us. Much like Paul described Jesus' apprehension of himself saying, "I was laid hold of by Christ Jesus" (Philippians 3:12).

When the painting of Jesus standing at the door of our heart knocking was completed, a group of preachers and theologians were standing around admiring it. Many were commenting on what a great work of art and masterpiece it was. While they were discussing it in awe, Karl Barth, that great theologian, spoke up in what could only be described as frustration and anger.

He cried out, "Nein! Nein! Nein! My Jesus did not stand at the door of my heart gently knocking, hoping I would allow Him in, as I, big and strong, held the door of my heart shut. Nein! He picked up His heavy cross, took the big bloody end of it and began pounding on the door of my heart over and over as I tried, with all my strength, to hold the door closed. Finally, when I could hold the door closed no longer, I fell away, the door of my heart flew open, and He came in and took up residence in the citadel of my heart." Thus, the Master apprehends us!

Someone put it this way, God votes for us, the devil votes against us and we cast the final ballot. I'm not sure that adequately explains it, but it's something to consider. The whole thing dealing with election, predestination and man's free will can be baffling to many or if we are honest, it perplexes most of us with our limited, finite understanding.

Many claim they understand it but that is merely pride talking. None of my children chose to be born prior to their conception. They literally had no choice in the matter. They had nothing whatsoever to do with their birth or to whom they would be born.

It is parents who choose to have children and not children who choose to have parents.

Paul spent two chapters in Romans 9 and 11 explaining God's sovereignty, predestination and election. In Romans 10, right in the middle of explaining it, Paul throws man's free will into the mix and totally confuses everything. In Romans 11:33 he says, "O the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! how unsearchable are his judgments, and his ways past finding out!"

He is basically saying, "I just thoroughly explained it all to you, but I'm here to tell you I really don't get it." God is God! God's total sovereignty, predestination and election are true and man's free will is absolutely true as well. Both are true! When dealing with an infinite God, some things simply boggle our finite minds. Let's just rejoice in the fact that God chose us.

It was in the exercise of His will that we were born again into His family. If we receive Jesus we discover that He chose us in Him before the foundation of the world. We have been chosen by God! God is even now, through the Holy Spirit, calling you to come to Christ. Will you accept Jesus and invite Him into your life? He's standing at the door of your heart, knocking and anxiously waiting for you to invite Him in.

Prayer: Lord Jesus, thank You for reaching out to me and choosing me to be Your own. Please come into my life and heart, forgive me of all my sins, fill me with the Power of Your Holy Spirit and help me to live for You from this day forth and forever. I choose to make you the Lord of my life and surrender all of myself to You this very moment. In Jesus' name, Amen!

8 Benefits of the Blood of Christ

The purpose of Jesus' incarnation was to shed His blood for us. As the old hymn says, "There is power, power, wonder working power in the precious blood of the lamb." The benefits of the blood of Christ do little good unless we apply them to our lives.

Hebrews 4:2 – "For unto us was the gospel preached as well as unto them, but the Word preached did not profit them, not being mixed with faith in them that heard it."

Benefits of the Blood of Christ

1. **Cleansing and forgiveness.** When you accept Jesus as Lord, His blood immediately cleanses your sins. God looks at you through Jesus' righteous blood and sees only His righteousness. Walking in the light doesn't mean we are walking in perfect righteousness, it's walking in the light of His exposure, not hiding anything from God.

1 John 1:7 – "If we walk in the light as He is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanses us from all sin."

2 Corinthians 5:21 – "For He made Him who knew no sin to be sin for us, that we might become the righteousness of God in Him."

2. **Redemption.** Redemption means to buy back. We were sold into slavery to sin under Satan's control. When Jesus shed His blood for our sins we were set free from the power of sin. You were purchased by the blood of Jesus. You belong to Him now.

Ephesians 1:7 – "In Whom we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of His grace."

Colossians 1:13 – "He rescued us from the domain of darkness, and transferred us to the kingdom of His beloved Son."

John 8:36 – “If the Son makes you free, you will be free indeed.”

3. **Deliverance.** Redemption can also be translated as deliverance which was purchased through Jesus’ precious blood. There is delivering power in the blood of Jesus! It was the blood of a lamb that bought Israel’s deliverance out of Egypt. Plead the blood of Jesus over your situation, stand in faith, and [praise Him](#) for your deliverance until it is manifested.
-

Luke 4:18-19 – “The Spirit of the Lord is upon Me, Because He has anointed Me To preach the gospel to the poor. He has sent Me to heal the brokenhearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives And recovery of sight to the blind, to set at liberty those who are oppressed. To proclaim the acceptable year of the Lord.”

Revelation 12:11 – “They overcame him by the blood of the Lamb.”

Romans 11:26 – “As it is written, there shall come out of Zion the Deliverer.”

4. **Abundance.** When Israel left Egypt, the angel of death passed over all who applied the blood to their door posts. Not only were they delivered from death and the bondage of Pharaoh, they left Egypt with their goods and riches. Whatever you may be facing, claim the delivering power of His blood in your situation. You can also claim His abundance.

Exodus 12:35-36 – “The Israelites did as Moses instructed and asked the Egyptians for articles of silver and gold and for clothing. The Lord had made the Egyptians favorably disposed toward the people, and they gave them what they asked for, so they plundered the Egyptians.”

John 10:10 – “I have come that they may have life, and that they may have it more abundantly.”

2 Corinthians 9:8 – “God is able to make all grace abound toward you, that you, always having all sufficiency in all things, may have an abundance for every good work.”

Proverbs 13:22 – “A sinner’s wealth is stored up for the righteous.”

Isaiah 60:5 – “The wealth on the seas will be brought to you, to you the riches of the nations will come.”

Proverbs 10:22 – “It is the blessing of the Lord that makes rich.”

Deuteronomy 8:18 – “It is He who gives you power to get wealth.”

Jeremiah 29:11 – “For I know the plans I have for you, declares the Lord, plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future.”

Psalm 35:27 – “Let the Lord be magnified, Who has pleasure in the prosperity of His servant.”

5. **Life.** Our life is in His blood. Stop allowing life to beat you down. Claim the life He purchased for us on Calvary.

Leviticus 17:11 – “The life of the flesh is in the blood, and I have given it to you upon the altar to make atonement for your souls for it is the blood that makes atonement for the soul.”

John 10:10 – “I have come that they may have life, and that they may have it more abundantly.”

Isaiah 60:5 – “Then you will look and be radiant, your heart will throb and swell with joy.”

Isaiah 35:10 – “Those the Lord has rescued will return. They will enter Zion with singing. Everlasting joy will crown their heads. Gladness and joy will overtake them, and sorrow and sighing will flee away.”

1 John 1:4 – “And these things write we unto you, that your joy may be full.”

6. **Victory.** Revelation 12:11 contains a three-step process to victory. The first is the blood of the Lamb. This verse is referring to believers in the tribulation period when evil is unleashed. If they are victorious in the great tribulation period, under the reign of the Antichrist, we can surely expect victory in our situation. Let's claim the victory God has promised us!

Revelation 12:11 – “They overcame him by the blood of the Lamb, and by the word of their testimony and they loved not their lives unto the death.”

2 Corinthians 1:20 – “For all the promises of God in Him are yes and Amen unto the glory of God by us.”

Romans 8:31 – “What shall we then say to these things? If God be for us, who can be against us?”

Romans 8:37 – “In all these things we are more than conquerors through Him that loved us.”

1 John 4:4 – “You are of God, little children, and have overcome them because greater is He that is in you, than He that is in the world.”

1 John 5:4 – “For whatsoever is born of God overcomes the world and this is the victory that overcomes the world, even our faith.”

Psalm 68:1 – “Let God arise, let His enemies be scattered.”

7. **Access.** We were separated from God because of sin. Access is right of entry through the favor of another. Because of Jesus' shed blood, the veil that kept man out of the presence of God was ripped in half providing access to all.

All who come to God through the blood of Jesus have right of entry into His presence. Let's take advantage of this divine privilege purchased for us at

such a great price. We have right of access into the throne room of heaven by the blood of Jesus!

Romans 5:2 – “By whom also we have access by faith into this grace wherein we stand, and rejoice in hope of the glory of God.”

Hebrews 10:19-22 – “Therefore, brethren, having boldness to enter the Holy place by the blood of Jesus, by a new and living way which He inaugurated for us through the veil, that is, His flesh, and since we have a great priest over the house of God, let us draw near with a sincere heart in full assurance of faith.”

8. **Healing.** When Jesus shed His blood He became our Passover Lamb. We must apply His blood to the door posts of our hearts and claim the healing provided through His atoning blood. The atonement brings spiritual, physical, emotional, and mental healing.

“He is despised and rejected of men; a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief: and we hid as it were our faces from Him; He was despised, and we esteemed Him not. Surely He has borne our griefs, and carried our sorrows: yet we did esteem Him stricken, smitten of God, and afflicted. He was wounded for our transgressions, He was bruised for our iniquities: the chastisement of our peace was upon Him; and **With His stripes we are healed**” (Isaiah 53:3-5).

Exodus 15:26 – “I will put none of the diseases on you which I have put on the Egyptians (the world) for I, the Lord, am your healer.”

Prayer: Lord Jesus, forgive me for not applying the benefits of your blood to my life. Help me stand in faith and apply these benefits to every situation of my life. In Jesus name, Amen!

7 Scriptures on the Grace of God

Grace is defined as the unmerited or undeserved favor of God. While mercy is not giving us what we deserve, grace is giving us what we don't deserve. Below are seven passages that refer to the grace of God. Each verse is followed by a brief comment.

Bible Verses on the Grace of God

1. **John 1:16** – “Of His fullness we have all received, and grace upon grace.” In Christ we have all received His fullness of grace, upon grace, upon grace. There is enough grace (favor) in God's storehouse to meet every need we might ever have. “Ages upon ages will hardly be long enough to allow us to experience all the riches of His grace.” ~ A.W. Tozer “So that in the ages to come He might show the surpassing riches of His grace in kindness toward us in Christ Jesus” (Ephesians 2:7).

2. **Ephesians 2:8-9** – “By grace you have been saved through faith, and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God, not of works, lest anyone should boast.” We are saved by grace through our faith in Christ. Our salvation is unmerited, undeserved and unearned. There is nothing we can ever do to earn the salvation that has been so freely bestowed upon us. It is “not of works, lest any man should boast.”

If we could do anything to earn it then we would be able to stand before God and say, “I did this, now give me the salvation I so rightly deserve – what I have earned, that which you owe me. Look what I have done.” Paul said, “Now to him who works, is the reward not counted as grace but of debt” (Romans 4:4). God is debtor to no man.

3. **Ephesians 2:10** – “We are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God prepared beforehand that we should walk in them.” Grace makes us God's work of art. The word workmanship is “poiema” in the Greek. Poiema means “something made” from which we get our English words poem and poetry. We are made new in Christ (2 Corinthians 5:17). By God's grace we become His masterpiece, His handiwork, His work of art. We are custom designed, tailor-made by the hand of the Master.

Charles Spurgeon put it this way, “You have seen a painter with his palette on his finger and he has ugly little daubs of paint on the palette. What can he do with those spots? Go in and see the picture. What a splendid painting! In an even wiser way does Jesus act toward us. He takes us, poor smudges of paint, and He makes the blessed pictures of His grace out of us. It is neither the brush nor the paint He uses, but it is the skill of His own hand which does it all.”

4. **1 Corinthians 15:9-10** – “I am the least of the apostles, and not fit to be called an apostle, because I persecuted the church of God. But by the grace of God I am what I am, and His grace toward me did not prove vain, but I labored even more than all of them, yet not I, but the grace of God with me.” “We were created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God prepared beforehand that we should walk in them” (Ephesians 2:10). Grace makes workers of us.

Have you ever noticed that people who work the hardest for the kingdom were often the most notorious sinners prior to giving their lives to Jesus. This was true of the woman who, “Brought an alabaster flask of fragrant oil, and stood at His feet behind Him weeping, and she began to wash His feet with her tears, and wiped them with the hair of her head, and she kissed His feet and anointed them with the fragrant oil. When the Pharisee who had invited Him saw this, he spoke to himself, saying, ‘This Man, if He were a prophet, would know who and what manner of woman this is who is touching Him, for she is a sinner’” (Luke 7:37-39).

Jesus’ response was, “I say to you, her sins, which are many, are forgiven, for she loved much. But to whom little is forgiven, the same loves little” (Luke 7:47). This woman’s love was displayed through her actions (1 John 3:18). The more we are forgiven, the more we love and do. The Apostle Paul had done much in his attack against the church prior to his conversion. As a result, after he was saved on the road to Damascus, he gave his all in service to Christ (1 Corinthians 15:9-10). True grace produces workers. It’s not really us but the grace of God working through us.

5. **Romans 5:20** – “Moreover the law entered, that the offence might abound. But where sin abounded, grace did much more abound.” Grace covers and cleanses every sin. The greater the sin, the greater the grace to cover it. There is no sin too bad or too many sins for God’s grace to handle. Where sin abounds, grace does much more abound. I don’t care how bad you’ve messed up, or how many times you’ve fallen, God’s grace is sufficient to cover and cleanse you from all sin.

Related verses:

- 1 John 1:7 – “The blood of Jesus, His Son cleanses us from all sin.”
- 1 John 1:9 – “If we confess our sins, He is faithful and righteous to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.”
- Romans 3:25 – “Whom God hath set forth to be a propitiation through faith in His blood, to declare His righteousness for the remission of sins that are past, through the forbearance of God.”
- Psalm 103:12 – “As far as the east is from the west, so far has He removed our transgressions from us.”
- Micah 7:19 – “You will again have compassion on us; You will tread our sins underfoot and hurl all our iniquities into the depths of the sea.”

6. **Romans 5:21** – “That as sin reigned unto death, even so might grace reign through righteousness unto eternal life by Jesus Christ our Lord.” When we fall into sin, God’s grace picks us up and places our feet on solid ground. “To his own master he stands or falls. Indeed, he will be made to stand, for God is able to make him stand” (Romans 14:4). The Psalmist said, “He also brought me up out of an horrible pit, out of the miry clay, and set my feet upon a rock, and established my steps” (Psalms 40:2, Galatians 6:1).

7. **2 Corinthians 9:8** – “God is able to make all grace abound toward you, that you, always having all sufficiency in all things, may abound to every good work.” God gives us financial grace. As we look at the context, the more we sow financially the more financial grace abounds to us. “He who sows sparingly will also reap sparingly, and he who sows bountifully will also reap bountifully” (2 Corinthians 9:6).

The purpose of financial grace is so we “may abound to every good work” and that we might have “all sufficiency in all things.” If we are not blessed, we cannot be a blessing (Genesis 12:2-3).

The Old and New Covenants

Covenants are conditional promises made to humanity by God. There are two distinct covenants mentioned in the Bible – the old (first) covenant and the new covenant. The following is an outline of the differences between the old and new covenants.

The Old Covenant

The first or old covenant was between a holy God and sinful man. Was there anything wrong with the first covenant? Of course not. “The Law is holy, and the commandment is holy and righteous and good” (Romans 7:12). The problem was man’s inability to keep it. The failure was with man and not God. The covenant designed to result in life, resulted in death. Paul said, “And the commandment, which was ordained to life, I found to be unto death” (Romans 7:10). With the advent of the law 3,000 people died (Exodus 32:28).

The New Covenant

“Behold, days are coming, declares the LORD, when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah, not like the covenant which I made with their fathers in the day I took them by the hand to bring them out of the land of Egypt, My covenant which they broke, although I was a husband to them, declares the LORD. But this is the covenant which I will make with the house of Israel after those days, declares the LORD, I will put My law within them and on their heart I will write it; and I will be their God, and they shall be My people. They will not teach again, each man his neighbor and each man his brother, saying, Know the LORD, for they will all know Me, from the least of them to the greatest of them,” declares the LORD, for I will forgive their iniquity, and their sin I will remember no more” (Jeremiah 31:31-34).

The old covenant revealed we needed something better. “Therefore the Law has become our tutor (schoolmaster) to lead us to Christ, so that we may be justified by faith” (Galatians 3:24). The new covenant is between the Father and the Son. God told Jesus if He would go to earth in the likeness of sinful flesh (Romans 8:3) and go to the cross for the sins of mankind (1 Peter 3:18), God would forgive the sins of anyone who accepts Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior (John 1:12, Romans 4:4-5, Romans 5:1, Romans 10:13).

Why will this covenant succeed when the first one failed? Because the new one doesn't depend on us. It's a covenant between the Father and the Son. God lived up to the first contract, but we failed to live up to our part. In the new contract man is left out of the equation. Jesus lived up to the covenant by going to the cross in payment for our sins. God lived up to the covenant by forgiving and justifying all who put their faith in Jesus. "Being justified as a gift by His grace through the redemption which is in Christ Jesus" (Romans 3:24). This one cannot fail because both parties involved lived up to their side of the contract.

The Good News

"For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him shall not perish, but have eternal life. For God did not send the Son into the world to judge (condemn) the world, but that the world might be saved through Him" (John 3:16-17). "There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus" (Romans 8:1).

The first covenant brought death, but life ensued at the coming of the new covenant. When the law came, 3,000 died (Exodus 32:28). When the Holy Spirit came at Pentecost, 3,000 received eternal life (Acts 2:41). What a glorious contrast. The new covenant in Jeremiah 31:31-34 is quoted by the writer of Hebrews in chapters 8:8-12 and 10:16-17. The key word in Hebrews is "better." Jesus is better than the angels, the high priestly system, Moses, and He created a better covenant. In Hebrews 8:10-12 we see four "I wills" or benefits of the new covenant.

- **Enlightenment.** "I will put My laws in their mind" (Hebrews 8:10). A fresh enlightenment is received under the new covenant. In the Old Testament the Holy Spirit only came upon people to perform certain tasks. Under the new covenant, the Holy Spirit permanently lives within us (Romans 8:9, 1 Corinthians 3:16) guiding us into all truth (John 16:13) and giving us an understanding that wasn't available under the law. The light has been turned on!
- **Desire.** "And write them on their hearts" (Hebrews 8:10). Under the new covenant it's not about law, but desire for God. He gives us a desire to follow Him, do His will and please Him. "For while we were in the flesh, the sinful passions, which were aroused by the Law, were at work in the members of our body to bear fruit for death. But now we have been released from the Law, having died to that by which we were bound, so that we serve in

newness of the Spirit and not in oldness of the letter” (Romans 7:5-6). Under the new covenant, we are given a new founded desire and power to follow Jesus, do what pleases the Father and obey God (2 Peter 1:3-4).

- **Relationship.** “I will be their God, and they shall be My people” (Hebrews 8:10). Under the old covenant only certain people had a relationship with God. God was referred to as the “God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob.” Under the new covenant, God promises to have a relationship with anyone who will trust Jesus Christ as their personal Savior. After the resurrection Jesus told Mary,

“I ascend to My Father and your Father, and My God and your God” (John 20:17). Christianity is about a relationship, not religiosity. “For ye have not received the spirit of bondage again to fear; but ye have received the Spirit of adoption, whereby we cry, Abba, Father” (Romans 8:15). “And because ye are sons, God hath sent forth the Spirit of his Son into your hearts, crying, Abba, Father” (Galatians 4:6).

- **Pardon.** “I will be merciful to their unrighteousness, and their sins and their lawless deeds I will remember no more” (Hebrews 8:12). Under the old covenant there was immediate judgment for sin. Under the new covenant, there is complete pardon of all transgressions.

Not only are we forgiven, we are also justified (Romans 3:26, Romans 4:25-5:1). God sees us through the blood of Christ just as if we had never sinned. We are declared the righteousness of God in Christ (1 Corinthians 5:21). Below are three benefits of our pardon.

1. **Freeness of our pardon.** God is a merciful God. “But thou, O Lord, art a God full of compassion, and gracious, long suffering, and plenteous in mercy and truth” (Psalms 86:15). Praise the Lord! Peter thinking about God’s mercy proclaimed, “Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, which according to his abundant mercy hath begotten us again unto a lively hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead” (1 Peter 1:3). “It is of the Lord’s mercies that we are not consumed, because his compassions fail not. They are new every morning: great is thy faithfulness” (Lamentations 3:22-23).
2. **Fullness of our pardon.** All of our sins are under the blood. No matter what we have done, we are forgiven when we come to Jesus. There is no sin that

God won't forgive when we trust Jesus as our only hope of salvation. Notice the plurality of our sin – “their sins and their lawless deeds I will remember no more.” The multiplicity (fullness) of all our sins are all washed away, by the blood of Jesus, under the new covenant. “The blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanses us from all sin” (1 John 1:7).

3. **Fixedness of our pardon.** Our sins are gone forever – God does not remember them. People often throw our sins back in our face, but Jesus is our great advocate (1 John 2:1) declares, “I paid for that. It's been forgiven forever, back off!” “As far as the east is from the west, So far has He removed our transgressions from us” (Psalms 103:12). Our pardon is fixed forever – “I will remember no more.”

Micah prophesied of this, “He will again have compassion on us; He will tread our iniquities under foot. Yes, You will cast all their sins into the depths of the sea” (Micah 7:19). Corrie Ten Boom used to say that God casts our sins into the sea of His forgetfulness and puts up a sign saying, “NO FISHING!”

Don't let the devil, others or even yourself bring up what God has washed away from our lives forever (1 John 1:7, 1 John 1:9, Hebrew 10:14, Romans 8:33-34). Remember, the accuser of the brethren has been cast down (Revelation 12:10, Luke 10:17-19).

Responsibilities Under the New Covenant

Do believers have any responsibilities under the new covenant? The [old covenant](#) was a contract between God and man, which man could not live up to. The new covenant was a contract between God the Father and God the Son and both lived up to their side of the contract.

Jeremiah foretold of this new covenant in Jeremiah 31:31-34. This prophecy of Jeremiah is quoted in Hebrews 8:8-12 and 10:16-17. Just before and after referring to the new covenant the writer says, “For by one offering He has perfected for all time those who are sanctified” (Hebrews 10:14). “Where there is forgiveness of these things, there is no longer any offering for sin” (Hebrews 10:18).

Praise the Lord! Jesus did it all. It’s all about Him. He made the way for us. He made provision under the new covenant where we failed under the old one.

So, do we have any responsibilities under the new covenant? Just following discussing the new covenant the writer says “let us” three times in verses 22, 23 and 24-25. With these two words he is challenging and exhorting us about our responsibility under the new covenant.

Draw Near

Hebrews 10:22 – “Let us draw near with a sincere heart in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled clean from an evil conscience and our bodies washed with pure water.”

Our first responsibility is to spend time drawing near to God (James 4:8).

Below are a few ways we can draw near to God:

1. **The blood of Jesus.** The context is always imperative. “Therefore, brethren, since we have confidence to enter the holy place by the blood of Jesus, by a new and living way which He inaugurated for us through the veil, that is, His flesh, and since we have a great priest over the house of God” (Hebrews

10:19-21). When Jesus died on the cross the veil of the temple was ripped apart from top to bottom by God the Father.

The veil was eighteen inches thick and interwoven. It was what kept mankind out of the the Holy of Holies – God’s presence. The veil was ripped apart signifying man’s sin was atoned for and that nothing could keep us from God’s presence as long as we came through the blood of Jesus. Let’s draw near God with all boldness by the blood of Jesus. Also read Proverbs 28:1, Hebrews 4:16, Hebrews 10:14, Romans 3:25-26, Romans 4:4-5, Romans 5:1-2, 1 John 1:7, and 2 Corinthians 5:21.

2. **Submit to God.** “Submit therefore to God. Resist the devil and he will flee from you. Draw near to God and He will draw near to you” (James 4:7-8). Submission to the Lord is a special way of drawing near to God. When a believer submits to God they are choosing to draw close to Him in obedience and full surrender as Jesus did in the garden of Gethsemane. We are in essence making Him not just Saviour but Lord of our lives.
3. **Spend personal time with God.** Whenever we set apart time to spend alone with God we are purposely drawing near to God. Jesus made this a priority in His life as our example. “And in the morning, rising up a great while before day, He went out, and departed into a solitary place, and there prayed” (Mark 1:35). This should be a daily practice of every born again believer. “The one who says he abides in Him ought himself to walk in the same manner as He walked” (1 John 2:6). Let’s spend daily time drawing near to Him!
4. **Practice His presence.** We draw near to God by constantly practicing God’s presence. “He Himself has said, I WILL NEVER DESERT (LEAVE) YOU, NOR WILL I EVER FORSAKE YOU” (Hebrews 13:5). Jesus said, “I am with you always, even to the end of the age” (Matthew 28:20). His promise is that He will always be with us. It is incumbent upon us to constantly acknowledge and conscientiously dwell on His presence. In doing so we are drawing near Him.
5. **Fellowship with other believers.** “Where two or three have gathered together in My name, I am there in their midst” (Matthew 18:20). When we gather together with those of like precious faith, He is there with us. We know He is always with us but His presence is in our midst in a special way when we gather in His name. John wrote, “No one has seen God at any time; if we love one another, God abides in us” (1 John 4:12). If God resides in every

believer, it stands to reason His presence would be magnified the more of us are assembled as one in His name.

6. **Worship Him.** Worship (both personally and corporately) ushers in His presence in one of the most profound and powerful ways we can ever imagine. The Bible says, “Shout joyfully to the LORD, all the earth. Serve the LORD with gladness; Come before His presence with joyful singing. Enter His gates with thanksgiving And His courts with praise. Give thanks to Him, bless His holy name” (Psalms 100:2-3 and 4).

And again, “But Thou art holy, O Thou that inhabitest the praises of (Your people) Israel” (Psalms 22:3). I’ve noticed, the more intensely I am involved in worship the more I sense His presence. Let’s worship our Lord with all we have within us. The Psalmist said, “Bless the LORD, O my soul: and all that is within me, bless His holy name” (Psalms 103:1).

7. **Exercise your faith.** We must approach Him “In full assurance of faith” (Hebrews 10:22). Jesus made the way for us to come to God without fear having become sin for us and making us the righteousness of God in Him (2 Corinthians 5:21). Our hearts and consciences have been cleansed. Guilt can keep us from and hinder us from drawing near God.

We must draw near “in full assurance of faith” that we have been cleansed of all sin and guilt by the finished work of Christ on our behalf. Faith is the key. We are saved by faith and we must approach Him by faith, believing we are “The righteousness of God in Him” (2 Corinthians 5:21). “Through whom also we have access by faith into this grace in which we stand, and rejoice in hope of the glory of God” (Romans 5:2).

Washed with Pure Water (Hebrews 10:22)

What is the pure water referring to?

A few scenarios to consider:

1. **Baptism.** Baptism is probably the first thing most think of, however, it says “pure water.” This was written to Hebrews. Any baptizing would have likely been done in the Jordan river which was very muddy – anything but pure.
2. **The Holy Spirit.** Water was frequently a type of the Holy Spirit in Scripture. Jesus said, “He that believeth on Me, as the scripture hath said, out of his belly shall flow rivers of living water. But this spake He of the Spirit, which they that believe on Him should receive” (John 7:38-39).
3. **The blood and water from Jesus’ side.** “One of the soldiers pierced His side with a spear, and immediately blood and water came out” (John 19:34). Many have speculated this to be a sign of dying from a broken heart. Read also 1 John 5:6.
4. **The Word of God.** Water was also used as a type of God’s Word in scripture. Jesus said, “Now you are clean through the word which I have spoken unto you” (John 15:3). Paul said, “Christ also loved the church and gave Himself for her, that He might sanctify and cleanse her with the washing of water by the Word” (Ephesians 5:25-26).

Our Confession

Hebrews 10:23 – “Let us hold fast the confession of our hope without wavering, for He who promised is faithful.” Confession is powerful in the spiritual realm. It was said of those in the tribulation period battling the devil or Anti Christ – “And they overcame him by the blood of the Lamb and by the word of their testimony” (Revelation 12:11).

A few aspects of confession:

1. **Never give up or quit.** Holding fast is essential to our Christian faith and survival as followers of Christ. Holding fast signifies persistence, endurance, tenacity, stubbornness and simply refusing to quit or give up. When we get saved the devil immediately attacks us. He does everything he can to get us to give up. If we refuse to give up, we are promised God will bring us through to a successful conclusion (Philippians 1:6).

2. **Hold on to the confession of your hope.** This is how the enemy endeavors to make us give up. If he can cause us to lose hope we begin to weaken. "Hope deferred makes the heart sick: but desire fulfilled is a tree of life." (Proverbs 13:12).

We must hold onto "the God of all hope" (Romans 15:13). "And not only that, but we also glory in tribulations, knowing that tribulation produces perseverance; and perseverance, character; and character, hope. Now hope does not disappoint, because the love of God has been poured out in our hearts by the Holy Spirit who was given to us" (Romans 5:3-5).

It is imperative we cling to the promises of God and never forget "He who promised is faithful" (Hebrews 10:23). "It is of the LORD's mercies that we are not consumed, because His compassions fail not. They are new every morning: great is Thy faithfulness" (Lamentations 3:22-23). "He who calls you is faithful, who also will do it" (1 Thessalonians 5:24). "But the Lord is faithful, who will establish you and guard you from the evil one" (2 Thessalonians 3:3).

3. **Confess Jesus as Lord and Savior.** Confessing Jesus is imperative to salvation. "Whoever confesses Me before men, him I will also confess before My Father who is in heaven. But whoever denies Me before men, him I will also deny before My Father who is in heaven" (Matthew 10:32-33).

"But what does it say? The word is near you, in your mouth and in your heart that is, the word of faith which we preach: that if you confess with your mouth the Lord Jesus and believe in your heart that God has raised Him from the dead, you will be saved. For with the heart one believes unto righteousness, and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation" (Romans 10:8-10).

This is not a one time confession at conversion. It is something that is to be ongoing throughout our entire Christian walk. Paul said, "For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ: for it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth; to the Jew first, and also to the Greek" (Romans 1:16). Let's hold fast our confession of Jesus as Lord and Saviour.

4. **Witnessing for Christ.** The Bible says, "But ye shall receive power, after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you: and ye shall be witnesses unto me" (Acts 1:8). Jesus said, "Follow me, and I will make you fishers of men" (Matthew

4:19). If we are not fishing (witnessing) we are not following. Read also Matthew 28:19-20 and Mark 16:15.

5. **Trusting God.** I am not nor have I ever been part of the Word of Faith movement. Nevertheless, there is always an element of truth in everything. We mustn't throw the proverbial baby out with the bath water. It is incumbent upon us to "hold fast the confession of our hope without wavering."

We must hold onto what we are hoping and believing God for. The only way we should ever let go of it is if the Holy Spirit shows us we are in error and that we should alter or change what we are believing God for. "As it is written, I have made thee a father of many nations, before Him whom he believed, even God, who quickens the dead, and calls those things which be not as though they were" (Romans 4:17).

We are to Consider One Another

Hebrews 10:24-25 – "And let us consider one another to provoke unto love and to good works: Not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as the manner of some is; but exhorting one another: and so much the more, as ye see the day approaching." It is an interesting study to go through all the "one another's" in scripture and a great series for you preachers.

Considering one another is the challenge. Putting others first. The scriptures exhort us, "Let nothing be done through strife or vainglory; but in lowliness of mind let each esteem other better than themselves. Look not every man on his own things, but every man also on the things of others" (Philippians 2:3-4). "Be kindly affectioned one to another with brotherly love; in honor preferring one another" (Romans 12:10). If we could heed this it would solve most relationship problems.

3 Things to Consider:

1. **Provocation.** We are exhorted to provoke, stimulate and challenge one another. I like the old King James here – "Provoke." This is particularly a challenge to us Pastors (Preachers or Ministers).

The writer is basically saying we should be really pushy, in a loving manner of course. We are to keep pushing and challenging our people or one another until they are doing what they need to be doing and beyond.

I've always been big on follow up. At my first pastorate/church plant, if someone missed church I was calling or visiting them first thing Monday morning. There is one person I went to visit frequently. I found out years later they would often hide in their closet from me when I came over.

To the best of my knowledge, these many years later, they are faithful in church and being used of God to this day. It was said of Simon of Cyrene that he was "pressed into service... to bear His (Jesus') cross" (Mark 15:21). Many who are pressed into His service end up becoming someone great in service to the King.

2. **Love and good works.** "Let us consider one another to provoke unto love and to good works" (Hebrews 10:24). We are not saved by works but unto good works. After speaking about salvation by grace apart from works Paul said,

"We are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works" (Ephesians 2:10).

James said, "Even so faith, if it has not works, is dead, being by alone" (James 2:17).

John Calvin put it this way, "It is faith alone that saves, but faith that saves is not alone."

We must provoke one another to love and good works. Read also John 13:34-35 and 1 John 3:16-18.

3. **Fellowship (church).** The context here is fellowship. "Not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as the manner of some is; but exhorting one another: and so much the more, as ye see the day approaching" (Hebrews 10:25). Fellowship, according to this scripture, should be more prevalent and frequent today than ever before,

“As ye see the day (of His return) approaching.” It’s interesting that believers fellowship less today than we ever have. Few churches have more than Sunday morning services today. This is primarily because they can’t get people to show up to anything more than one service a week.

The reason for fellowship should be because we are considering one another. “Let us consider one another, not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together” (Hebrews 10:24-25).

It’s common to hear people in church complain about not getting enough attention or not getting their needs met properly. Though we should not ignore our personal and spiritual needs that is not what fellowship is all about. We are to go to church (fellowship) because we are considering everyone else and their needs and not our own needs.

What can I do to love and be a blessing to everyone else in the church I attend? If the truth be known, just showing up is an encouragement to others. I should go because others will be encouraged and blessed by my presence.

Let’s draw near to the Lord, hold fast our confession and consider one another thus fulfilling our responsibilities under the new covenant!

Running the Race

Participants in a race encounter roadblocks, diversions and fatigue, and the Christian life is no exception. We must run the race set before us with endurance and perseverance. The Bible is our guidebook and owner's manual, in it we are told to conform to Christ's likeness, bring glory to God, and fulfill His purpose for our life.

"Wherefore, seeing we also are compassed about with (surrounded by) so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which doth so easily beset us, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us" (Hebrews 12:1).

Let's draw our attention to six things:

1. **Those who have gone before us.** The saved who have gone before us do not come back here to watch us and hang out with us as some spiritual being but rather are part of a great heavenly amphitheater, looking down on us. (The lost are another story).

They are sitting in that great heavenly amphitheater cheering us on in the race that is set before us. I can hear them shouting, "Come on, you can make it, don't give up, keep running the race. I went through a similar situation and I made – You can make it too.

2. **We are to lay aside all that hinders us.** There are things that will hinder us, dog at our feet, in our Christian walk and the race that is set before us which we must cast aside. These things will drag us down, keeping us from being all we can be and from fulfilling our purpose and calling in Him. These things must be cast aside.
3. **Differentiating between weights and sins.** Our verse clearly distinguishes between weights and sins. All sin must be cast away and crucified (Romans 6:11-13). There are weights that can drag us down in the race that is set before us. Serious runners shed everything but what is absolutely necessary. The same must be done spiritually.

These weights may not be sin (right or wrong in and of themselves) but nonetheless they hinder us in our race. There are things that may not hinder someone else but they do us, as a result, we are to “lay aside” these weights from our lives. Likewise, another person may have things which hinder them that will not hinder us. Only the Holy Spirit can reveal this to us (Romans 14:5).

4. **The Christian race in general compared to a person’s individual race or calling.** We are all in this race together as believers – The Christian race or life. All born again believers and followers of Christ are running this race together.

God also has a specific race (purpose) for every follower of Christ. This is a race that is specific to you alone. This is your purpose and calling in life. You must run your race with endurance. Paul said, “Do you not know that those who run in a race all run, but one receives the prize? Run in such a way that you may obtain – win” (1 Corinthians 9:24).

5. **A Marathon verses a Sprint.** The race we are running as believers in general and your individual race that is specific to you is a marathon and not a sprint. A sprint is usually a short race which we run fast and hard and then it is over. One is usually out of breath and worn out after a sprint and it is over quickly.

A marathon, on the other hand, is a long and drawn out race that continues for quite some time. It is a race which requires a steady pace and endurance. If one begins running a marathon as a sprint they will never reach the finish line. “Let us run with endurance the race that is set before us” (Hebrews 12:1c).

6. **Perseverance is Required – Never Give Up.** “Let us run with endurance the race that is set before us” (Hebrews 12:1c). The devil’s biggest job is to get us to give up. You will experience trials, temptations, failure, sin, reversals, discouragement and disappointments. The devil will use these things attempting to make you give up in the middle of your race.

He will throw everything conceivable at you. The only way he will ever win or we will lose is if we give up. If we will refuse to give up, we will ultimately win

and the devil will lose. The primary key to winning the race that is set before us is endurance. Perseverance is a must!

Paul said, “But none of these things move me, neither count I my life dear unto myself, so that I might finish my course – race with joy, and the ministry, which I have received of the Lord Jesus, to testify the gospel of the grace of God” (Acts 20:24).

Near the end of his life, as he was sitting in prison waiting to be escorted out to the chopping block and have his head severed from his shoulders, he writes,

“I am now ready to be offered, and the time of my departure is at hand. I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course – race, I have kept the faith: Henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, shall give me at that day: and not to me only, but unto all them also that love His appearing” (2 Timothy 4:6-8).

Let's finish the race God has set before us!

The Believer and Sin

After dealing with his sin with Bathsheba, David cried out to the Lord, “Cast me not away from thy presence and take not thy Holy Spirit from me” (Psalm 51:11). This should be the cry of every Christian. When we stop feeling the conviction of the Holy Spirit we are in a desperate situation.

Jesus said, “When He is come, He will convict the world of sin, and of righteousness and of judgment” (John 16:8). If He convicts the world, how much more His children when they drift into sin and/or worldly thinking? There are six definitions or categories that sin falls under. As born again children of God, we should feel deep conviction when we transgress any of these areas.

Categories of Sin

1. **Missing the mark.** When the King James Bible was translated archery was common. When the archer shot his arrow and missed the bullseye someone would yell “sin” signifying he had missed the mark. We’ve missed God’s mark for us. Our target is God’s perfection and holiness (Matthew 5:48, 1 Peter 1:15-16).

We have all missed His mark for us (Romans 3:23). Problems start when we stop trying to hit the mark. The Bible makes it clear that without the pursuit of holiness, no one will see the Lord (Hebrews 12:14).

2. **Sins of commission.** 1 John 3:4 says, “Whosoever commits sin transgresses the law, for sin is the transgression of the law.” This is purposely transgressing the law or Word of God. There are things God has clearly forbidden. If we do them, knowing He has said not to, we are sinning against Him.

We all struggle with things and at times slip and fall. The problem is far too many Christians do things they know God has forbidden and don’t think twice about it. It doesn’t bother them at all. This should not be and is a dangerous place to be spiritually.

3. **Sins of omission.** James 4:17 says, “Therefore, to him who knows to do good and does it not, to him it is sin.” This is not doing what we know God

has commanded us to do. There are many Christians who seldom fall into sins of commission (doing wrong things) and feel good about their right standing with God. On the other hand, they fail to do the things they know God has expressly told them to do.

This is sin. Take time daily to ask God what He wants you to do and follow through with it (John 7:17, Matthew 25:29). Also, think of those things you know God has already said you should do that you are not doing. Confess them as sin and start doing them.

4. **Violation of personal convictions.** In Romans 14:1, Paul deals with “disputable areas.” What may be sin for one person, another may have perfect liberty in. Paul says they are to be left up to personal conviction. If we violate our conscious in these disputable areas, we are sinning.

We are to respect the convictions of others, and at the same time not look down on those who have liberty in their area of conviction (Romans 14:3-5). Romans 14:5 says, “Let every man be fully persuaded in his own mind.”

In disputable areas that are left up to conscious, we must ask God what is okay and what is not permissible for us. We must develop our own personal conviction in these disputable areas and abide by them.

5. **Failure to live by faith.** Romans 1:17 says, “The just shall live by faith.” Abraham was declared righteous because he believed God. We are justified before God the same way (Romans 5:1). Romans 1:17 says “from faith to faith.” It’s one thing to be saved by faith, but another to live and walk by faith.

Not living by faith is sin. Romans 14:23 says, “For whatsoever is not of faith is sin.” Many people saved by faith in Jesus Christ have not gone on to live by faith. Hebrews 10:38 says, “Now the just shall live by faith, but if any man draw back my soul shall have no pleasure in him.”

Hebrews 11:6 says, “But without faith it is impossible to please God.” The entire chapter that follows talks about men and women who did great things for God by faith. They took great risks in spite of impossible odds and circumstances. Living by faith takes great courage and isn’t for the faint of heart.

Study Hebrews 11 and see how the greats lived by faith. 2 Corinthians 13:5 says, “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?”

6. **Unbelief – Not Believing in Jesus.** The primary reason for the coming of the Holy Spirit was to convict the world of sin, because they had not believed or trusted in Jesus. “When He is come, He will convict the world of sin, and of righteousness and of judgment: Of sin, because they believe not on me” (John 16:8-9). The greatest sin is that of unbelief.

We came into the world as sinners because under the federal headship of Adam, the head of the human race, we inherited his Adamic or sin nature. “Wherefore, as by one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin; and so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned? (Romans 5:12). We sin because we are sinners by our very nature. We are not sinners because we sin.

The only way to have our sins atoned for is by believing in or trusting in Jesus Christ and His finished work on our behalf – that He and His atoning blood is the only remedy for sin. Without Him we have no salvation and we are still in our sins. Not believing in Jesus, means we do not believe what God has said concerning His Son and therefore, we have no remedy for our sin. Therefore, the greatest sin is that of unbelief.

“If we receive the witness of men, the witness of God is greater: for this is the witness of God which He hath testified of His Son. He that believeth on the Son of God hath the witness in himself: he that believeth not God hath made Him a liar; because he believeth not the record that God gave of His Son. And this is the record, that God hath given to us eternal life, and this life is in his Son.” (1 John 5:9-11).

The State of the Heart

“The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked: who can know it” (Jeremiah 17:9)? We are all born into this world with an utterly depraved and carnal nature. Paul said, “I know that in me (that is, in my flesh,) dwelleth no good thing” (Romans 7:18).

Our spirit is dead to God because of sin. When we are born again, God's Spirit unites with our human spirit and brings it to life, hence we are born again or born from above (John 3:3). "You hath he quickened – made alive, who were dead in trespasses and sins" (Ephesians 2:1).

When we are born again, we receive God's divine nature, the Holy Spirit, and He dwells within us (1 Corinthians 3:16; 2 Peter 1:3-4), but we still live in the flesh and still have a carnal or sin nature, so the battle begins.

"The flesh lusts – wars against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh: and these are contrary the one to the other: so that you cannot do the things that you would" (Galatians 5:17).

"For that which I do I allow not: for what I would, that do I not; but what I hate, that do I" (Romans 7:15).

That which we feed the most becomes the strongest. If we feed our flesh, it will dominate, but if we feed our spirit it will become the most dominant. This is why Peter said,

"As newborn babes, desire the sincere milk of the Word, that you may grow thereby" (1 Peter 2:2).

Paul said,

"So then faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the Word of God" (Romans 10:17).

Lester Sumrall used to say we must "feed our faith and starve our doubts." The same applies to our spiritual and carnal man.

Jesus said what is displayed in our actions and speech begins in the heart. "A good man out of the good treasure of his heart brings forth good; and an evil man out of the evil treasure of his heart brings forth evil. For out of the abundance of the heart his mouth speaks" (Luke 6:45).

Our outward actions and the philosophies by which we live begin in our thinking . This is why the Bible admonishes us “not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind” (Romans 12:2). “For as he thinks within himself, so he is” (Proverbs 23:7a).

We live in the world and if we are not careful it's easy to be taken captive by the way the world thinks instead of having the mind of Christ (1 Corinthians 2:16). This is why the Bible cautions us,

“See to it that no one takes you captive through philosophy and empty deception, according to the tradition of men, according to the elementary principles of the world, rather than according to Christ” (Colossians 2:8).

Let's set our focus on being “transformed by the renewing of your mind” (Romans 12:2).

It's easy when living in the world to be influenced by its philosophies rather than Christ's. This is particularly easy to fall prey to when find ourselves spending less time in the Word of God, Christian influences such as Christian books and teachings and when we fall out of fellowship with other believers – church (Acts 2:41-42; Hebrews 10:24-25). Almost without exception, I have seen this happen after believers have fallen out of fellowship for a period of time.

“If then you were raised with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ is, sitting at the right hand of God. Set your mind – affection on things above, not on things on the earth” (Colossians 3:1-2).

The Blessed Hope of the Believer

Proverbs 13:12 – “Hope deferred makes the heart sick.”

Hope is a necessity of life and the Christian experience, and the enemy of our souls attempts to drain every ounce of it from us that he possibly can.

Let's remember and cling to the words of God through the Apostle Paul:

Romans 15:13 – “May the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, that you may abound in hope by the power of the Holy Ghost.”

He is the God of all hope! In spite of the devil's attacks, despair and discouragement, and adversity on every front, we must remember, there is hope in Him and Him alone.

With the devil's plan to rob us of all hope, we should remember above all the blessed hope of the Christian – the return of Lord is imminent!

Titus 2:13 – “Looking for that blessed hope and glorious appearing of our great God and our Savior Jesus Christ.”

A few things we can learn from Titus 2:13:

Waiting for Jesus

We should be expectantly waiting for Jesus to return. Are we anxiously awaiting His return, or do we secretly hope He delays just a little longer?

Hebrews 9:28 – “To those who eagerly wait for Him He will appear a second time, apart from sin, unto salvation.”

One thing is certain, as things increasingly worsen in the world scene, we will once again begin to “eagerly wait for Him.”

Jesus' Divinity

Jesus is our great God and Savior, and none other than God Himself. Titus 2:13 is such a wonderful proof text for His divinity, and only one of many scriptures that attest to [Jesus' deity](#).

Hebrews 1:8 – “But unto the Son he saith, Thy throne, O God, is for ever and ever.”

Revelation 1:8 – “I am Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the ending, saith the Lord, which is, and which was, and which is to come, the Almighty.”

Colossians 2:9 – “For in Him dwells all the fullness of the Godhead bodily.”

Also read John 1:1, John 5:18, John 10:30-33, and Philippians 2:6-11.

Jesus' Return

Titus 2:13 also speaks about [Jesus' soon return](#) of which we should be waiting for with anxious anticipation.

Revelation 1:7 – “Behold, He cometh with clouds; and every eye shall see Him, and they also which pierced Him: and all kindreds of the earth shall wail because of Him. Even so, Amen.”

Hebrews 10:37 – “For yet a little while, And He who is coming will come and will not tarry.”

Revelation 22:20 – “He who testifies these things saith, Surely I come quickly. Amen. Even so, come, Lord Jesus.”

With all that is taking place in our world today, it is abundantly clear the return of Lord is at hand. One cannot turn on the news without wondering what new chaos is going ensue today. From riots in various places, terror attacks at home and abroad, persecution and slaughter of Christians, earthquakes, wild fires, deception and false teachings (1 John 2:18), and much more.

Luke 21:26 – “Men’s hearts failing them for fear, and for looking after those things which are coming on the earth.”

James 5:8 was never more true than it is today, “the coming of the Lord draweth nigh.” Let’s long for Jesus’ return with anxious anticipation.

Discipleship and the Calling of the Disciples

Discipleship is conformity to Christ and the process by which a believer is trained to carry on the work of Jesus. It is learning to follow Jesus in every aspect of our lives. All believers are called to be and make disciples. Jesus called the first disciples in Mark 1:16-20. Below are a few important facts and characteristics of discipleship.

Every new believer should not only read and study this teaching on discipleship, but they are also encouraged to listen to the audio version. To listen click on the following link or copy and paste it into your browser:

<https://www.ministrymaker.com/wp-content/images/audio/call-of-disciples.mp3>

1. Jesus will Have Disciples

Discipleship was practiced throughout scripture. Jesus will train people to carry on His work, those who are willing to learn and in turn train others. Discipleship is declared in the great commission, “Go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age” (Matthew 28:19-20).

Every believer is called to be and make disciples. We see discipleship taking place immediately following the day of Pentecost, “Those who had received his word were baptized; and that day there were added about three thousand souls. They were continually devoting themselves to the apostles’ teaching and to fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer” (Acts 2:41-42).

Paul commissioned Timothy, “The things that you have heard from me among many witnesses, commit these to faithful men who will be able to teach others also” (2 Timothy 2:2). This passage exemplifies the discipleship process. We are trained by someone, we in turn train someone, and they in turn train someone. The key is “faithful men.” The Psalmist cried, “Help, Lord, for the godly man ceases to be, for the faithful disappear from among the sons of men” (Psalm 12:1).

Unfortunately, there is very little true discipleship going on today. We are not learning and growing, which enables us to teach others. “For though by this time

you ought to be teachers, you have need again for someone to teach you” (Hebrews 5:12). Many people go to church their entire life without being disciplined.

The church needs a renewed call to discipleship. We see discipleship carried out in the lives of Elijah and Elisha. Elisha was busy plowing in the fields when Elijah threw his mantle on him, calling him to follow. Elisha used the yokes to start a fire, cooked the oxen, gave it to his friends, and left to follow Elijah. He burnt all his bridges to the past when he began to follow Elijah, there was no turning back.

A true disciple’s anointing, victory and achievements will far surpass that of their mentor. In 2 Kings 2, three times Elijah told Elisha that he was going on a long, difficult journey to Bethel, Jericho and Jordon. Each time Elisha responds by saying, “As the LORD lives, and as your soul lives, I will not leave you!” (2 Kings 2:2, 2 Kings 2:4, 2 Kings 2:6).

When they arrived at the Jordon, “Elijah took his mantle, rolled it up, and struck the water; and it was divided this way and that, so that the two of them crossed over on dry ground. And so it was, when they had crossed over, that Elijah said to Elisha, Ask! What may I do for you, before I am taken away from you? Elisha said, Please let a double portion of your spirit be upon me. So he said, You have asked a hard thing. Nevertheless, if you see me when I am taken from you, it shall be so for you; but if not, it shall not be so” (2 Kings 2:7-10).

Notice, “If you see me when I am taken from you, it shall be so for you; but if not, it shall not be so.” We must continue following our mentor and not let anything detour us if we expect to advance beyond them in our anointing, victory and achievements. Shortly thereafter, Elijah was taken away in a whirlwind. His mantle fell on Elisha, and he received a double portion of Elijah’s anointing. Elisha performed twice the miracles as that of Elijah.

It was said of Joshua, “As the LORD had commanded Moses his servant, so Moses commanded Joshua, and so Joshua did. He left nothing undone of all that the LORD had commanded Moses” (Joshua 11:15). This is an example of a disciple’s faithful obedience. Moses delivered the children of Israel out of the bondage of Egypt, but was unable to lead them into the promise land. Joshua did what Moses was unable to do.

2. Jesus Chose Simple People

Abraham Lincoln said, "God must love common people, He made so many of them." Most of the disciples were rough fishermen. Levi was a tax collector and was pilfering off the top of what he collected from taxes. David's followers were a collection of men who were in distress, debt and discontented (1 Samuel 22:2).

Isaiah said, "Let My outcasts dwell with you. Be a shelter to them from the face of the spoiler" (Isaiah 16:4). The best disciples are normally the most unlikely candidates. People who don't always have it all together (1 Corinthians 1:26-29).

3. Jesus Chose Workers

The disciples were busy working when Jesus called them. They put all they had into what they were doing. Though Levi was dishonest, he was still a hard worker. Paul said he labored more abundantly than all the rest (1 Corinthians 15:8-10).

The Bible says, "Not slothful in business; fervent in spirit; serving the Lord" (Romans 12:11). "And we desire that every one of you do shew the same diligence to the full assurance of hope unto the end: That ye be not slothful, but followers of them who through faith and patience inherit the promises" (Hebrews 6:11-12). Elisha, likewise, was hard at work when Elijah called him.

4. Disciples are Servants

Jesus said, "It shall not be so among you; but whoever desires to become great among you, let him be your servant. And whoever desires to be first among you, let him 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" (Matthew 20:26-28). Elisha was a servant before he received his double portion.

It was said of Joshua that he was Moses' servant (Joshua 1:1). Jesus said, "If you have not been faithful in what is another man's, who will give you what is your own" (Luke 16:12)? Paul wrote concerning Jesus, "Who, being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God: But made himself of no reputation, and

took upon him the form of a servant” (Philippians 2:5-11). Disciples are always servants. Elisha was plowing behind twelve pair of oxen when Elijah called him.

5. The Disciples Gave up Everything

The disciples left their father’s fishing business, including their hired servants, and followed Jesus (Mark 1:20). They stood to inherit a very lucrative business, yet they still left all to follow Jesus. Would we pay such a price?

Jesus was being followed by a large crowd of people. Most today would have preached something slightly more encouraging to keep them – Not Jesus. He preached the kind of message that would likely thin out the crowd. He in essence was saying, “let’s how many of you will continue to follow me now.”

3 Requirements of Discipleship: Jesus gave three requirements of discipleship, without which, we cannot be His disciple (Luke 14:25-33).

1. **We must hate those close to us.** He was not telling us to literally hate anyone, but that He must be first in our lives above everyone.
2. **We must take up our cross.** The cross was a sign of death. He was saying we must give up all personal and earthly ambitions and put Him first.
3. **We must surrender our possessions.** When we become His disciple, all we have becomes His. From this point on we are merely stewards of what He has placed in our care. Elisha sacrificed all he had when he followed Elijah (1 Kings 19:19-21). We must do no less.

As a note of encouragement, when we forsake all and follow Jesus, the return we receive far out weighs what we leave behind. Jesus said, “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 will receive a hundred times as much now in the present age, houses and brothers and sisters and mothers and children and farms, along with persecutions; and in the age to come, eternal life” (Mark 10:29-30).

6. Disciples are Called to a Life of Uncertainty

“We walk by faith, not by sight” (2 Corinthians 5:7). Jesus said, “Foxes have holes and the birds of the air have nests, but the Son of Man has nowhere to lay His head” (Matthew 8:20). Abraham was called of God to leave his father’s land and go to a land which God said he would show him (Genesis 12:1). “Now the just shall live by faith; but if anyone draws back, My soul has no pleasure in him” (Hebrews 10:38). All we have are the promises of God.

7. Disciples Inevitably Become Fishers of Men

“Follow Me, and I will make you become fishers of men” (Mark 1:17). Notice the inevitable, when we begin to follow Jesus, we inevitably begin fishing – soul winning. If we are not fishing, we inevitably are not truly following Him. The true follower of Jesus is always fishing for the souls of mankind.

A few things to remember about fishing for the souls of men:

1. **Start where you are.** We may not know a lot at the beginning, but each of us has a testimony to share (Revelation 12:11). The blind man merely said, “One thing I know: that though I was blind, now I see” (John 9:25).
2. **Resist Fear.** The devil will attempt to strike fear in our hearts about sharing our faith, which we must resist. “God has not given us a spirit of fear, but of power and of love and of a sound mind” (2 Timothy 1:7). The writer of Hebrews said, “The Lord is my helper, and I will not fear what man shall do unto me” (Hebrews 13:6).
3. **The Holy Spirit is the one who does the saving, not us.** It’s not our job to save people, but the Holy Spirit’s job. He’s the one who convicts of sin and the need our Jesus (John 16:8-9). We must, however, develop a deep rooted persuasion in the gospel’s power and ability to change lives.

Paul said, “I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ: for it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believes” (Romans 1:16). Paul was persuaded that if one truly believes, the gospel will transform their life (2 Corinthians 5:17).

8. Disciples Imitate God

The Bible says, “Be imitators – followers of God, as beloved children” (Ephesians 5:1). We mimic God as we familiarize ourselves with Him in scripture, and then do our best to be like Him, following His example. 1 Corinthians 11:1 says, “Imitate me, just as I also imitate Christ.” People are not perfect and at times fail. That’s why Paul said, “as I also imitate Christ.” We follow them only as they follow Jesus, not where they fall short.

Peter failed miserably in his denial of Christ, yet, on the day of Pentecost, it was Peter who stood and boldly proclaimed the gospel. Acts 2:14 says, “Peter, taking his stand with the eleven.” As Peter rose to preach, the eleven stood with him in full support in spite of his failure. When our mentor or leader falls short we are to stand with him and follow him as he follows Christ, not where he falls short. The eleven followed Peter, in spite of his failure, because they were confident of his call.

God uses marred and imperfect vessels, which gives us hope. When David was hiding from King Saul in “the cave Adullam... every one that was in distress, and every one that was in debt, and every one that was discontented, gathered themselves unto him; and he became a captain over them” (1 Samuel 22:1-2). These became David’s mighty men. God calls those the world would never think could be used and makes them fit for His service. This way none can boast before Him and He gets all the glory.

“For you see your calling, brethren, that not many wise according to the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble, are called. But God has chosen the foolish things of the world to put to shame the wise, and God has chosen the weak things of the world to put to shame the things which are mighty; and the base things of the world and the things which are despised God has chosen, and the things which are not, to bring to nothing the things that are, that no flesh should glory in His presence” (1 Corinthians 1:26-29).

How to Lead Someone to Christ

The Bible makes it clear that every person must have an experience with Jesus through the Holy Spirit to be saved.

John 3:3 – “Verily, verily, I say unto you, Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God.”

1 Peter 1:23 – “Being born again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, by the Word of God, which lives and abides for ever.”

Two destinations for those who leave this life and enter eternity:

1. Heaven

Jesus said, “In My Father’s house are many mansions; if it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and receive you to Myself; that where I am, there you may be also” (John 14:2-3).

Heaven is a place where God is, where we will spend eternity reunited with Him in His presence. To His good and faithful servant the Lord said, “Enter into the joy of your Lord” (Matthew 25:23). Heaven is a place where, “God will wipe away every tear from their eyes; there shall be no more death, nor sorrow, nor crying. There shall be no more pain, for the former things have passed away” (Revelation 21:4).

2. Hell

Hell is where those who do not surrender to Christ are separated “from the presence of the Lord and from the glory of His power” (2 Thessalonians 1:9). This is a place where they will be tormented day and night.

Paul said, “In flaming fire taking vengeance on those who do not know God, and on those who do not obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ. These shall be punished with everlasting destruction” (2 Thessalonians 1:8-9).

This is the same place prepared for the devil and his angels, “Then shall He say also unto them on the left hand, depart from me, you cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels” (Matthew 25:41).

Hell was not prepared for mankind but for the devil and his angels. God made provision through the cross of Christ so that we would not have to go hell.

1 Peter 3:18 – “For Christ also suffered once for sins, the just for the unjust, that He might bring us to God.”

It’s not God’s will or desire for anyone to go to hell. Paul said, God “desires all men to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth” (1 Timothy 2:4). Peter said, the Lord is “not willing that any should perish but that all should come to repentance” (2 Peter 3:9).

Jesus wants to come into people’s lives as Lord and Savior, sitting on the throne of their heart. He said, “Behold, I stand at the door and knock. If anyone hears My voice and opens the door, I will come in to him and dine with him, and he with Me” (Revelation 3:20).

You’ve Been Commissioned

Someone must share the gospel with them, giving them the opportunity to invite Jesus into their heart. Will you accept the call? Jesus said, “Follow Me, and I will make you fishers of men” (Matthew 4:19). If we are not fishing, we are not following Him. Please don’t leave it to someone else to lead them to Christ, you may be their only hope.

Jesus commissioned us as His followers,

“Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost: Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you” (Matthew 28:19-20).

“Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature” (Mark 16:15).

“But ye shall receive power, after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you: and ye shall be witnesses unto me both in Jerusalem, and in all Judaea, and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth” (Acts 1:8).

Let’s fulfill “The Great Commission!”

How to Lead Someone to Jesus Christ

Start by asking them three simple questions that will allow you to find out where they stand in their relationship with the Lord.

1. Ask permission. Say, “Do you mind if I ask you a question? If you died tonight where would you spend eternity?” If they say, “I don’t know,” share the plan of salvation below (Roman Road) with them. If they say “Yes,” ask the next question to determine if their salvation is based upon Jesus’ finished work on the cross.
2. Say, “If you stood before God and He asked, ‘Why should I allow you into my heaven?’ what would you say?” If they say something like, “Jesus is my Lord and Savior, Jesus is my only hope of salvation” or “I would tell God, because of Jesus” rejoice with them that they are saved. If they say something like “I’m a good person, I try to live a good life, I go to church,” etc., proceed to the next question then share the gospel with them.
3. Ask, “Do you mind if I share a few scriptures with you?” As you share the gospel, don’t elaborate too much. Get to the point.

Bookmark the first verse in your Bible and let them read the following verses with you. In the margin of the first verse, write the reference to the second verse. Do this with each verse so you know where to go to next. Use whatever translation you like or are the most comfortable with. This gospel presentation is known as the “Roman Road.”

The Roman Road

Romans 3:23 – “All have sinned and fall short of the glory of God.” Begin by showing them we have all sinned. Do not say, “See you are a sinner!” You don’t

want to condemn them, but give them revelation and understanding of God's Word. Identify with them. Include yourself. Say something like, "The Bible says we have all sinned. I know I have, haven't you?"

If they say they have not sinned, say something like, "That's good, not many can say that, I know I can't." Then point to sins you know everyone has committed at one time or another like lying, disobeying parents, stealing, etc. These are all sin.

Romans 6:23a – "The wages of sin is death." Explain how we are all going to die. "It is appointed for men to die once, but after this the judgment" (Hebrews 9:27).

We are not only going to die physically, but we will all stand before God on the day of judgment to give an account of our sin. Sin has wages and they must be paid for. The wages (penalty) of sin is death.

This is not only dying physically but spiritually, being separated from God throughout all eternity and ultimately being banished to eternal damnation in hell (2 Thessalonians 1:8-9; Matthew 25:41). God has made provision for us so we won't have to face this penalty, but the choice is ours.

Romans 6:23b – "The gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord." Jesus paid the penalty for our sins when He died on the cross. He went to the cross, experienced death and separation from God in our place.

Eternal life is a free gift. We don't have to pay the penalty for our sins ourself. He did it for us. This free gift comes only through Jesus and His finished work for us on the cross (John 14:6 and Acts 4:12).

Romans 10:13 – "Whoever calls on the name of the Lord shall be saved." Our only responsibility to receive this free gift of eternal life is to call upon Him, accept Jesus as our Savior and only hope of salvation, ask Him to forgive us of our sins, come into our heart and be the Lord of our life (John 1:12; Revelation 3:20; 1 John 1:9).

At this point, ask them if they would like to pray and receive Jesus as their Lord and Savior right now. If they say yes, pray a simple prayer for them to invite Jesus into

their life. If they say no, ask if they would mind if you said a brief pray for them. Most people won't mind if you pray for them.

Pray something like, "Lord, I pray for (use their name) that You will touch them, open their heart to receive you, and make yourself real to them. In Jesus name, Amen!"

Once you have prayed, look directly at them, and say in faith, (don't ask if they'd like to pray again) "Pray with me." Ask them to repeat after you and pray a simple sinner's prayer with them to accept Christ as their Lord and Savior.

Sinner's Prayer

"Lord, I know I've sinned against you. I ask you to forgive me of all my sins, come into my heart, be the Lord of my life, and help me to live for you forever. In Jesus name!"

Assurance of Salvation

After they pray, assure them of their salvation. Say, "Did you mean what you just prayed?" The last verse we read said, "Whoever calls on the name of the Lord shall be saved" (Romans 10:13).

God keeps His Word! When we pray a prayer like this God answers it. You called on the Lord just now and He said "YOU WOULD BE SAVED." Take them to 1 John 5:13 for additional assurance.

1 John 5:13 – "These things I have written to you who believe in the name of the Son of God, that you may know that you have eternal life."

Ask, "Do you now believe in Jesus, the Son of God? Then God's Word says you now have eternal life."

Follow Up

There are a few things new Christians need to do to grow in their relationship with the Lord. Call or visit them in a few days and from time to time.

Remember, immediately after the first harvest of souls “Those who had received His word were baptized, they were continually devoting themselves to the apostles’ teaching and to fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer” (Acts 2:41-42).

1. **Confess Jesus as Lord.** One of the first things they must do is confess to someone they have accepted Jesus as lord and savior of their life. Stress to them the importance of telling someone what they did.

Romans 10:9-10 – “If you confess with your mouth the Lord Jesus and believe in your heart that God has raised Him from the dead, you will be saved. For with the heart one believes unto righteousness, and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation.”

Matthew 10:32-33 – “Whoever confesses Me before men, him I will also confess before My Father who is in heaven. But whoever denies Me before men, him I will also deny before My Father who is in heaven.”

2. **Pray daily.** Encourage them to take time each day to talk to God.

Luke 18:1 – “Men always ought to pray and not lose (faint) heart.”

1 Thessalonians 5:17 – “Pray without ceasing.”

Acts 2:41-42 – Those who had received the Word were committed to prayer.

3. **Read the Word.** Encourage them to read a little from their Bible each day. They don’t have to read a lot, but some every day. Encourage them to stay in the New Testament for a while. If they don’t have a Bible, make sure you get them one that is a translation they can easily understand.

Romans 10:17 – “Faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the Word of God.”

1 Peter 2:2 – “As newborn babes, desire the pure milk of the Word, that you may grow thereby.”

Revelation 1:3 – “Blessed is he who reads and those who hear the words of this prophecy, and keep those things which are written in it; for the time is near.”

4. **Fellowship with other believers.** It’s extremely important for them to attend a strong Bible believing church right away.

Acts 2:41-42 – “Those who had received his word were baptized; and that day there were added to the church and were continually devoting themselves to fellowship.”

Hebrews 10:25 says we are not to “forsake the assembling of ourselves together.” New Christians need fellowship for growth and encouragement. We also become like those we are around (1 Corinthians 15:33 and Proverbs 13:20). Don’t just tell them to go to church, offer to pick them up and take them to church with you.

5. **Follow Jesus in water baptism.** It’s important they realize they were saved the moment they called on the Lord. Baptism doesn’t save us, but it is an act of public confession of our faith in Christ. It symbolizes that we have died, been buried, and risen together with Him to walk a new life with Christ (Romans 6:3-4).

Acts 2:41 – “Those who had received His Word were baptized.”

The God We Serve

Attributes of God: Essence and Substance

It's difficult for a finite mind to comprehend an infinite God. Trying to understand God with a finite mind is like trying to put the Atlantic ocean in glass. However, that doesn't mean we shouldn't try.

Job 11:7 – “Can you search out the deep things of God? Can you find out the limits of the Almighty?”

Essence and substance are synonymous when referring to God. Thiessen defines them as “That which underlies all outward manifestation, the reality itself whether material or immaterial, the substratum of anything (substance lying beneath a thing). That in which the qualities or attributes inhere” (Thiessen, Lectures in Systematic Theology, page 119).

Webster defines essence as “an entity or that which makes something what it is.” Both essence and attribute refer to the nature of God. Although there is a difference between the two, the difference is hard to distinguish. The essence and substance of God is that which underlies His attributes.

Spirituality

Jesus said, “God is a spirit” (John 4:24). There are four things involved in God's spirituality:

1. **God is immaterial or incorporeal.** After His resurrection Jesus said, “See My hands and My feet, that it is I Myself; touch Me and see, for a spirit does not have flesh and bones as you see that I have” (Luke 24:39). What about all the passages where God is described as having body parts? For example, His “stretched out arm” (Jeremiah 32:17); “The Ancient of Days took His seat; His vesture was like white snow and the hair of His head like pure wool” (Daniel 7:9).

These are metaphors which serve to bring the infinite within the apprehension of the finite. The Bible also uses wings to describe God, “He will cover you with His

pinions, And under His wings you may seek refuge” (Psalm 91:4). Therefore, to use the above scriptures to say God has a human body, you would also have to say He is a bird. Anyone would say that is absurd. So God is immaterial or without material substance.

2. **God is invisible.** “He (Jesus) is the image of the invisible God” (Colossians 1:15); “Now to the King eternal, immortal, invisible, the only God, be honor and glory forever and ever. Amen” (1 Timothy 1:17). The scriptures state that no man can see God (Exodus 33:20; John 1:18; 1 Timothy 6:16). How do we reconcile this with the fact that Moses looked on God (Exodus 33)? As you read the passage, Moses merely caught a glimpse of God’s glory. No man can see God in His full essence and live.

There are other scriptures which refer to men seeing God. “As for me, I shall behold Your face in righteousness; I will be satisfied with Your likeness when I awake” (Psalms 17:15). “Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God” (Matthew 5:8). “Pursue peace with all men, and sanctification (holiness) without which no one will see the Lord” (Hebrews 12:14). “They will see His face” (Revelation 22:4). R.A. Torrey says, “A man may see a reflection of his face in a glass (mirror). It’d be true for him to say, I saw my face and also I never saw my face” (R.A. Torrey, What the Bible Teaches; page 15).

These, however, seem to refer to our seeing God in eternity after we have been glorified (1 Corinthians 15:50-57). Mortal flesh cannot inherit the kingdom of God nor see God (1 Corinthians 15:50). The Bible says, “Beloved, now we are children of God, and it has not appeared as yet what we will be. We know that when He appears, we will be like Him, because we will see Him just as He is” (1 John 3:2). At that point, when we are glorified, we will be able to look on Him in all of His glory. Praise the Lord!

3. **God is alive.** The idea of spirit also implies God is alive. Joshua told the children of Israel, “By this you shall know that the living God is among you” (Joshua 3:10). David said, “Who is this uncircumcised Philistine, that he should taunt the armies of the living God” (1 Samuel 17:26)? Peter answered Jesus, “You are the Christ, the Son of the living God” (Matthew 16:16).

Paul said, “For they themselves report about us what kind of a reception we had with you, and how you turned to God from idols to serve a living and true God” (1 Thessalonians 1:9). The Psalmist cried out, “My soul longed and even yearned for

the courts of the LORD; My heart and my flesh sing for joy to the living God” (Psalms 84:2).

Our God is alive – Praise the Lord! Listed below are a few things we can glean from this:

- **Victory in battle.** It is the living God whom we serve that gives us victory in battle. Joshua said, “By this you shall know that the living God is among you” (Joshua 3:10). When facing Goliath, David said, “Who is this uncircumcised Philistine, that he should defy (taunt) the armies of the living God” (1 Samuel 17:26)? Peter’s revelation of Jesus being “The Christ, the Son of the living God” was the foundation upon which Jesus said, “The gates of Hades (Hell) shall not prevail against it” (Matthew 16:16 and 18).
 - **Worship of the true God.** Paul described the Thessalonians as having “Turned to God from idols to serve the living and true God” (1 Thessalonians 1:9).
 - **The soul longs for such a God.** Psalmist said, “My soul longs, yes, even faints For the courts of the LORD; My heart and my flesh cry out for the living God” (Psalms 84:2).
 - **Who Jesus is.** Peter declared of Jesus, “You are the Christ, the Son of the living God” (Matthew 16:16). When Peter said Jesus was the Son of the living God, he was declaring Him to be very God. Study John 5:18; 10:30-33; Hebrews 1:8 and Revelation 1:8. These scriptures emphatically state that to declare Jesus as being the Son of God is a confession of [His deity](#).
-
- **Our foundation is built on the solid Rock (Matthew 16:16-19, Matthew 7:24-27).** The confession of faith in the person of Christ in relation to the living God is a sure foundation which withstands the powers of darkness and all the storms of life.
 - **The Church is built upon a sure foundation (Matthew 16:16-19).** It was upon Peter’s confession of Jesus being “The Christ, the Son of the living God” that Jesus said, “The gates of Hades (Hell) shall not prevail against it” (Matthew 16:16 and 18).

- **This living God appoints authority to His trusted followers.** It was upon Peter's confession of who Jesus is that Jesus said, "I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven, and whatever you bind on earth will be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth will be loosed in heaven" (Matthew 16:19).

4. **God is a person.** This also is implied in God being a spirit. Take the analogy of ourself being made in His image (Genesis 1:27). If He were not a person, He'd be on a lower level than us. Personality denotes we can have a relationship with Him which is the essence of true Christianity. God manifests all the characteristics of personality. To name just a few:

- **Self-consciousness** – "What man knows the things of a man except the spirit of the man which is in him? Even so no one knows the things of God except the Spirit of God" (1 Corinthians 2:11).
- **Intellect** – "For who has known the mind of the Lord? Or who has become His counselor" (Romans 11:34).
- **Feelings** – "Do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God" (Ephesians 4:30).
- **Speaking** – "See that you do not refuse Him who speaks. For if they did not escape who refused Him who spoke on earth, much more shall we not escape if we turn away from Him who speaks from heaven" (Hebrews 12:25).
- **Anger** – "Therefore I was angry with that generation" and "With whom was He angry forty years" (Hebrews 3:10 and 17)? Again, "See that you do not refuse Him who speaks" (Hebrews 12:25-28).
- **Jealousy** – "I, the Lord your God, am a jealous God" (Exodus 20:5).

God is Self-Existent

"God said to Moses, I AM WHO I AM; and He said, Thus you shall say to the sons of Israel, I AM has sent me to you" (Exodus 3:14). This is hard for the finite mind to grasp. The ground of God's existence is in and of Himself. Our existence is outside of ourself.

God's existence is in Himself alone. His existence is not dependent on anything outside of Himself. This is implied in Exodus 3:14. This can be mind boggling. He is the self-existent one. Thomas Aquinas said, "He is the first cause, Himself uncaused" (Thiessen, Lectures in Systematic Theology; page 122, paragraph 1).

The Immensity of God

This has to do with His infinity in relation to time and space. He is not confined or limited by space. He is here and at the same time He is somewhere else. Solomon said, "But will God indeed dwell on the earth? Behold, heaven and the highest heaven cannot contain You, how much less this house which I have built" (1 Kings 8:27)!

God asked Jeremiah, "Can any hide himself in secret places that I shall not see him? saith the LORD. Do not I fill heaven and earth? saith the LORD" (Jeremiah 23:24).

The Psalmist asked, "Where can I go from Your Spirit? Or where can I flee from Your presence? If I ascend to heaven, You are there; If I make my bed in Sheol, behold, You are there" (Psalms 139:7-8). Paul said, "That they would seek God, if perhaps they might grope for Him and find Him, though He is not far from each one of us" (Acts 17:27).

Here Paul declares that, because of the immensity of God, we should seek Him and when we do we'll be able to find Him. Jeremiah echoes this as well, "You will seek Me and find Me when you search for Me with all your heart" (Jeremiah 29:13). Let's seek Him with all that is within us. When we do He will be made known (manifest or revealed) to us.

God is Eternal

God is free from all succession of time. Time for God is one big eternal now. He sees the eternal past, present and future all at once. Peter said, "With the Lord one day is like a thousand years, and a thousand years like one day" (2 Peter 3:8). This does not mean that when God refers to a day it is really a thousand years.

God is not stupid nor does He try and make things hard for us to understand. It simply means, He is timeless and sees all time as one big eternal now. He is the cause of time (Hebrews 1:2 and 13; Colossians 1:16). One day time itself will merge into eternity. God is the eternal one! Here are a few scriptures which depict God's infinity as it relates to time.

- “Before the mountains were born or You gave birth to the earth and the world, even from everlasting to everlasting, You are God” (Psalms 90:2).
- “Your throne is established from of old; You are from everlasting” (Psalms 93:2).
- “For thus saith the high and lofty One that inhabits eternity, whose name is Holy; I dwell in the high and holy place, with him also that is of a contrite and humble spirit, to revive the spirit of the humble, and to revive the heart of the contrite ones” (Isaiah 57:15).
- “The eternal God is thy refuge, and underneath are the everlasting arms: and he shall thrust out the enemy from before thee; and shall say, Destroy them” (Deuteronomy 33:27).

This applies to Jesus as being God as well. “But thou, Bethlehem Ephratah, though thou be little among the thousands of Judah, yet out of thee shall he come forth unto me that is to be ruler in Israel; whose goings forth have been from of old, from everlasting” (Micah 5:2). This verse clearly portrays Jesus' eternal existence. His existence was from eternity past. He had no beginning. His goings forth was from everlasting.

God is One

The scriptures make it clear there is but one God. There are not many gods, but only one true and living God. There is a difference between an [absolute and compound unity](#).

For example man is an absolute unity whereas a man and his wife becoming one is a compound unity. Compare Ezra 3:1 and Ezekiel 37:17 for compound unity and Genesis 22:2, 12; Jeremiah 6:26 and Zechariah 12:10 for absolute unity. The following scriptures make it abundantly clear there is but one God:

- “To you it was shown that you might know that the LORD, He is God; there is no other besides Him” (Deuteronomy 4:35).
- “The Lord Himself is God in heaven above and on the earth beneath; there is no other” (Deuteronomy 4:39).
- “Hear oh Israel, the Lord our God is one Lord” (Deuteronomy 6:4).
- “There is no one holy like the LORD, Indeed, there is no one besides You, Nor is there any rock like our God” (1 Samuel 2:2). “So that all the peoples of the earth may know that the LORD is God; there is no one else” (1 Kings 8:60).
- “So that you may know and believe Me And understand that I am He. Before Me there was no God formed, And there will be none after Me” (Isaiah 43:10).
- “Thus says the Lord, the King of Israel, And his Redeemer, the Lord of hosts: I am the First and I am the Last; Besides Me there is no God” (Isaiah 44:6).
- “Look to Me, and be saved, All you ends of the earth! For I am God, and there is no other” (Isaiah 45:22).
- “Is there a God besides Me? Indeed there is no other Rock; I know not one (Isaiah 44:8).
- “Therefore You are great, O Lord God. For there is none like You, nor is there any God besides You, according to all that we have heard with our ears” (2 Samuel 7:22).
- “You alone are the Lord” (Nehemiah 9:6).
- “We know that an idol is nothing in the world, and that there is no other God but one” (1 Corinthians 8:4).
- “Now to the King eternal, immortal, invisible, the only God, be honor and glory forever and ever. Amen” (1 Timothy 1:17).

- “There is one God, and one mediator also between God and men, the man Christ Jesus” (1 Timothy 2:5).

God is Transcendent

God is above and beyond His creation. In pantheism God is all and in all. The scriptures are clear that God can be seen in nature but nature is not God. “For the invisible things of him from the creation of the world are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even his eternal power and Godhead; so that they are without excuse” (Romans 1:20).

God is above and beyond His creation. “For thus says the high and exalted One Who lives forever, whose name is Holy, I dwell on a high and holy place, And also with the contrite and lowly of spirit In order to revive the spirit of the lowly And to revive the heart of the contrite” (Isaiah 57:15).

“For My thoughts are not your thoughts, Nor are your ways My ways, declares the LORD. For as the heavens are higher than the earth, So are My ways higher than your ways And My thoughts than your thoughts” (Isaiah 55:8-9).

God is Immanent

God’s presence and power pervade His entire creation. Though He is above and beyond creation, He is not separated from it. God is clearly involved in and with His creation. One cannot read God’s Word without seeing His involvement with His creation.

He is not so totally transcendent that He set the universe in motion and left it to take care of itself, as deists would have us think. He didn’t create us just to leave us to fend for ourselves. He wants His presence and power to pervade every aspect of our lives.

The Bible says He not only created everything but He actually holds all things together, “Upholding all things by the word of his power” (Hebrews 1:3); “And He is before all things, and by Him all things consist” (Colossians 1:17). If we think things are bad now, think of what everything would be like if He ever withheld His hand.

He is, however, a gentleman and doesn't typically get involved where he is not wanted. There are exceptions to this. He does get involved in response to His people's prayers. Prayer moves the hand of God to involve Himself in situations and the lives of people.

He will, at that point, get involved in people's lives who are actually running from Him. If you are running from God, He will let you go if you so choose. On the other hand, if you have a godly person praying for you – lookout.

Mankind has come to the place in our day of moving God to gentleman status. We, overall, no longer want God involved in our lives. As a result, we see God pulling His hand back more and more. This is a scary place to be.

The more God removes His hand, the more we are left to fin for ourselves. The further He withdraws, the more evil is unleashed and man is left to his own devices. God help us if He ever completely removes His hand.

This is exactly what we will see take place in the end times. Mankind (this world) will push God further and further away. As we do, God will begin to withdraw His hand and we will see evil unleashed in an unprecedented way. We are even now beginning to see this take place more and more. One day it will unfold entirely.

Our only hope is, "If My people, which are called by My name, shall humble themselves, and pray, and seek My face, and turn from their wicked ways; then will I hear from heaven, and will forgive their sin, and will heal their land" (2 Chronicles 7:14). We, the people of God, need to [seek His face](#) like never before.

Attributes of God: Non-Moral Attributes

The [essence and substance of God](#) is that which underlies all outward manifestation. The attributes of God are the inherent characteristics closely associated with or belonging to God. In this study we will be discussing God's non-moral attributes.

Omnipresence of God

“Omni” means all and when combined with presence means he is all present or present everywhere at once. This does not mean God's form is spread out so that parts of him are in every location. God is spirit (John 4:24), he has no physical form. His presence is everywhere in that everything is immediately in His presence. God is not like a thin substance spread out over all the earth. All of Him is everywhere at once.

Psalms 139:7-12 says, “Where can I go from Your Spirit? Or where can I flee from Your presence? If I ascend to heaven, You are there; If I make my bed in Sheol, behold, You are there. If I take the wings of the dawn, if I dwell in the remotest part of the sea, even there Your hand will lead me, And Your right hand will lay hold of me. If I say, ‘Surely the darkness will overwhelm me, and the light around me will be night’, even the darkness is not dark to You, and the night is as bright as the day. Darkness and light are alike to You.” Jeremiah 23:24 says, “Can any hide himself in secret places that I shall not see him? saith the Lord. Do not I fill heaven and earth? saith the Lord.”

No one can hide from God or escape from His presence. What a chilling thought. He is there no matter where we are or what we are doing. That can be very comforting or scary according to our perspective. If you are trying to hide or run from God, give up. Jonah tried it, and in his quest to run away from God he ended up running right into Him.

This is also comforting. His presence is always with us. He promises He will never leave us or forsake us (Hebrews 13:5). He is always present, but His presence is manifest in special ways when we:

1. Worship Him (Psalm 100, Psalm 22:3, Acts 13:1-3).

2. Gather in His name (Matthew 28:19-20).
3. Submit to His authority (James 4:7-8).
4. Draw near to Him in prayer (James 4:8).
5. Practice His presence (Hebrews 13:5, Matthew 28:20).
6. Proclaim His Word (Matthew 28:19-20).

Omniscience of God

God knows the past as well as the future. He knows all that we have done and all that we will do. He also knows the thought and intent of our heart.

1. "The eyes of the Lord are in every place, beholding the evil and the good" (Proverbs 15:3).
2. He knows our works and deeds (Psalms 33:13-15).
3. He knows our thoughts and motives (Psalms 139:1-4).
4. He knows our needs and desires (Matthew 6:8 and 32-33)
5. We stand naked before Him. "And there is no creature hidden from His sight, but all things are naked and open to the eyes of Him to whom we must give account (Hebrews 4:13)"
6. Nothing is hidden from God. Everything we've done in secret He is aware of. We will give an account of all. "Can anyone hide himself in secret places, So I shall not see him? says the Lord. Do I not fill heaven and earth? says the Lord." (Jeremiah 13:24).

Omnipotence of God

“And I heard as it were the voice of a great multitude, and as the voice of many waters, and as the voice of mighty thunders, saying, Alleluia: for the Lord God omnipotent reigneth” (Revelation 19:6). Our God is omnipotent. He is the all powerful one.

Five times in the scripture it is says nothing is too hard or difficult for God:

1. God’s purposes being fulfilled (Job 42:2).
2. God’s ability and creative power (Jeremiah 32:17).
3. In confronting Abraham concerning Sarah’s laughter and unbelief (Genesis 18:14).
4. The impossibility of man to save himself (Matthew 19:26).
5. When dealing with Mary’s astonishment at her pregnancy (Luke 1:34-38).

Seeing that God is all powerful, is there anything He cannot do? Yes, there are some things God cannot do. He cannot do anything contrary to His will, character, or nature.

Seven things God cannot do:

1. Look on iniquity or sin. He will never allow anyone to stand in His presence apart from Christ (Habakkuk 1:13).
2. Deny Himself (2 Timothy 2:13).
3. Be unfaithful (2 Corinthians 1:20, Lamentations 3:23-24).
4. Lie (Hebrews 6:18, Titus 1:2).

5. Not do what He says He will do (2 Corinthians 1:20, Numbers 23:19).
6. Tempt people to sin (James 1:13). God may test our faith and obedience, as He did Abraham (Genesis 22:1), but He will never tempt us to sin.
7. Do what is self contradictory. We've all heard absurd questions from unbelievers like, "If God is all powerful, can He make a circle square or a rock so large He cannot move it?" C.S. Lewis responded, "Nonsense is still nonsense, if talking of God or something else" (Know What You Believe, Paul E. Little).

The Immutability of God

God is unchangeable (Hebrews 1:12, James 1:17). Malachi 3:6 says, "For I am the Lord, I change not." This verse refutes Joseph Smith's (Mormon's) doctrine of eternal progression.

God cannot change. All change of necessity must go from worse to better or better to worse. Seeing God is perfect, He cannot be more perfect, truthful or holy. For example:

1. His plans and purposes do not change (Psalms 33:11, Isaiah 46:10, Romans 11:29).
2. His righteousness and justice (Genesis 18:25, Isaiah 28:17). God is always perfectly just and righteous in all He does.
3. His goodness and light (James 1:17).
4. His Love and mercy (Psalm 103:17).
5. His promises (1 Kings 8:56, Hebrews 6:17-18).
6. His Son (Hebrews 13:8). Immutability being attributed to Jesus declares his deity. Jesus bares the same attributes as the Father.

Omniscience of God

The omniscience of God refers to Him being all wise. This also includes His discernment and judgment. Below are a few scriptures declaring God's infinite wisdom.

1. "Great is our Lord and abundant in strength; His understanding is infinite" (Psalms 147:5).
2. "O the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! how unsearchable are His judgments, and His ways past finding out" (Romans 11:33)!
3. "To God only wise, be glory through Jesus Christ for ever. Amen" (Romans 16:27).
4. "Wherein he hath abounded toward us in all wisdom and prudence; Having made known unto us the mystery of His will, according to His good pleasure which He has purposed in Himself (Ephesians 1:8-9).
5. "That the manifold wisdom of God might now be made known through the church to the rulers and the authorities in the heavenly places. This was in accordance with the eternal purpose which He carried out in Christ Jesus our Lord (Ephesians 3:10-11).
6. "Now unto the King eternal, immortal, invisible, the only wise God, be honor and glory for ever and ever. Amen" (1 Timothy 1:17).

Sovereignty of God

God does as He pleases, which is encouraging in light of all His attributes. If you had the choice, would you choose to be ruled by blind fate, chance, irrevocable natural law, short sighted and perverted self (man), or an infinite, wise, holy, powerful, all knowing God who loves us and knows what's best for us? D.S. Clark said, "He who rejects God's sovereignty may take his choice of what is left" (Pearlman, Knowing the Doctrines of the Bible, page 63). Below are a few scriptures dealing with God's sovereignty:

1. "I have spoken it, I will also bring it to pass; I have purposed it, I will also do it" (Isaiah 46:11).
2. "Is it not lawful for me to do what I wish with my own things" (Matthew 20:15)?
3. "So then it is not of him who wills, nor of him who runs, but of God who shows mercy. For the Scripture says to the Pharaoh, For this very purpose I have raised you up, that I may show My power in you, and that My name may be declared in all the earth. Therefore He has mercy on whom He wills, and whom He wills He hardens....Does not the potter have power over the clay, from the same lump to make one vessel for honor and another for dishonor" (Romans 9:16-18 and Romans 9:21)?
4. "Being predestined according to the purpose of Him who works all things according to the counsel of His will" (Ephesians 1:11).
5. Daniel brings to bear God's sovereignty perhaps better than any other writer. "He changes the times and the seasons; He removes kings and raises up kings; He gives wisdom to the wise And knowledge to those who have understanding" (Daniel 2:21).
6. "All the inhabitants of the earth are reputed as nothing; He does according to His will in the army of heaven And among the inhabitants of the earth. No one can restrain His hand Or say to Him, What have You done" (Daniel 4:35)?
7. "His heart was lifted up, and his spirit was hardened in pride, he was deposed from his kingly throne, and they took his glory from him. Then he was driven from the sons of men, his heart was made like the beasts, and his dwelling was with the wild donkeys. They fed him with grass like oxen, and his body was wet with the dew of heaven, till he knew that the Most High God rules in the kingdom of men, and appoints over it whomever He chooses" (Daniel 5:20-21).

So God's Non-Moral Attributes consists of His Omnipresence, Omniscience, Omnipotence, His Immutability, the Omnisapience of God, and His Sovereignty. Wow – What a God we serve!

Attributes of God: Moral Attributes

The attributes of God are the inherent characteristics closely associated with or belonging to Him. In this study we will be dealing with God's moral attributes. His holiness, righteousness, goodness, love, mercy, grace, and faithfulness.

The Holiness of God

There is a great need for a recognition of God's holiness in the church today. We are told to "Hallow His name" (Matthew 6:9). We need a revelation of the holiness of God, without which we will never be used of Him the way he desires. Anyone who desires to make an impact for God must understand His holiness (Exodus 3:3-5, Joshua 5:13-18 and Isaiah 6:1-6).

1 John 1:5 says, "This is the message we have heard from Him and announce to you, that God is light and in Him there is no darkness at all." Light philosophically represents truth, physically God's glory, and morally His holiness. God is holy and there is nothing unholy or sinful in Him.

Five things we learn from this:

1. **Our own personal sinfulness.** At Isaiah's revelation of God he said, "I am a man of unclean lips, And I live among a people of unclean lips. For my eyes have seen the King, the Lord of hosts" (Isaiah 6:5).

Peter, at his first revelation of the master, fell down at Jesus' feet saying, "Go away from me Lord, for I am a sinful man" (Luke 5:8). Where there is a revelation of God's holiness, there will also be a revelation of our own personal sinfulness and depravity.

2. **There is a chasm between God and man.** Sin separates us from God. Isaiah cried out, "Your iniquities have made a separation between you and your God, And your sins have hidden His face from you so that He does not hear" (Isaiah 59:2).

Immediately after sinning Adam and Eve hid from the presence of the Lord (Genesis 3:10). As a result of sin, "God drove the man out" (Genesis 3:24).

They were driven out of the garden and God's presence. Because God is holy and we are sinful there is a great chasm between God and man.

3. **We must approach God in the merits of another.** We cannot approach God in our own merit. The only way we can approach God is through Jesus' blood and righteousness.

Ephesians 2:18 ~ "For through Him we both have access by one Spirit to the Father."

Romans 5:2 ~ "By whom also we have access by faith into this grace wherein we stand, and rejoice in hope of the glory of God."

Hebrews 10:19-20 ~ "Having therefore, brethren, boldness to enter into the Holiest by the blood of Jesus, By a new and living way, which He hath consecrated for us, through the veil, that is to say, His flesh."

4. **We must approach God with reverence.** In these days of casualness, we've lost a sense of reverence in the church. People should be free to attend church however they feel comfortable, but have we taken things too far?

Have we lost our reverence for God? Hebrews 12:28-29 says, "Therefore, since we are receiving a kingdom that cannot be shaken, let us be thankful, and so worship God acceptably with reverence and awe, for our God is a consuming fire."

5. **Aim for holiness.** 1 Peter 1:15-16 says, "As He who has called you is holy, so be you holy in all manner of conversation; Because it is written, Be holy; for I am holy." Hebrews 12:14 says, "Follow peace with all men, and holiness, without which no man shall see the Lord."

We've heard over and over without holiness no man shall see the Lord, but that's not what it really says. The key word is "follow." It's without the pursuit of holiness that no man shall see the Lord. None of us will ever be completely holy, but we must pursue being holy as He is holy. We are to "be imitators of God as dear children" (Ephesians 5:1). We are "to walk even as He walked" (1 John 2:6).

The Righteousness of God

Righteousness is God's holiness in action. In Abraham's intercessory prayer for Sodom and Gomorrah he said, "Shall not the Judge of all the earth do right" (Genesis 18:25)? God always does what is right in every situation and at all times. It's not in His character to do otherwise. He is always just. No one can point an accusing finger at God asking, "What have you done" (Daniel 4:35)? He always does what is right.

How can God be just and still withhold punishment from us as sinners? He judged all our sin by pouring out His wrath on His Son in our place. That is why Paul could write, "To declare, I say, at this time His righteousness: that He might be just, and the justifier of him who believes in Jesus" (Romans 3:26). He is both just and the justifier of all who trust Christ. Whenever we sin, we can be assured that when "We confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness" (1 John 1:9).

Hebrews 6:10 says, "God is not unjust to forget your work and labor of love which you have shown toward His name, in that you have ministered to the saints, and do minister." Whatever we do in His name He does not overlook. Pastors, the service you do for God to the body of Christ does not go unnoticed. He will reward your faithfulness! Don't let the devil ever make you think your service for Him is in vain. 1 Corinthians 15:58 says, "Therefore, my beloved brethren, be steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, knowing that your labor is not in vain in the Lord."

The Goodness of God

God is a good God. No matter what happens or what you may be facing remember, He is good. "Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, and comes down from the Father of lights, with whom there is no variation or shadow of turning" (James 1:17). There is not even a shadow in God's goodness. He is pure, unadulterated goodness. "Taste and see that the Lord is good" (Psalms 34:8). Even the bad things in life He promises He'll turn out for our good (Romans 8:28).

Your future is bright. "Christ appeared as a high priest of the good things to come" (Hebrews 9:11). You say, things have been good. Well, there's more good to come. Maybe you've been going through a rough patch, things are going to get better.

There are “good things to come.” “No good thing does He withhold from those who walk uprightly” (Psalms 84:11).

It's important we continue in His goodness. “Consider the goodness and severity of God: on those who fell, severity; but toward you, goodness, if you continue in His goodness” (Romans 11:22). If you have strayed from His path let the goodness of God turn you back to Him today. “The goodness of God leads you to repentance” (Romans 2:4). “I have loved you with an everlasting love; Therefore I have drawn you with lovingkindness” (Jeremiah 31:3). When we stray God uses three things to turn us back to Him.

1. **Conviction.** John 16:8 says, “When He has come, He will convict the world of sin” (John 16:8).
2. **His goodness.** Romans 2:4 says, “Do you despise the riches of His goodness, forbearance, and longsuffering, not knowing that the goodness of God leads you to repentance.”
3. **Discipline.** Hebrews 12:5 says, “Do not despise the chastening (discipline) of the Lord, Nor be discouraged when you are rebuked by Him.”

The Love of God

This is one of the most well known of all God's attributes. The Bible emphatically states, “God is love” (1 John 4:8, 1 John 4:16). It's not that God loves, He is love. It's not something He does, but who He is. Love isn't God, this concept only perverts His love. God's very nature is love. Manifestations of His love flow from His being.

Six manifestations of God's love:

1. The sacrifice of His Son (John 3:16, 1 John 3:16, 1 John 4:9, Romans 5:6-8).
2. Calling us His children (1 John 3:1).

3. Giving us life and position in Christ (Ephesians 2:4-6).
4. His discipline (Hebrews 12:5-11).
5. His inability to forget about us (Isaiah 49:15-16).
6. Rejoicing over our return (Luke 15:3-24).

What should our response be to God's love?

1. Continue in His love (Jude 21).
2. Love Him back (1 John 4:19).
3. Love one another (1 John 4:11-12).

The Mercy of God

Mercy is not giving us what we deserve. We deserve judgment, but God had mercy on us for Christ's sake. Praise His holy name!

Ephesians 2:4 ~ "But God, who is rich in mercy, because of His great love with which He loved us." God is abundant in mercy toward us.

Psalms 86:15 ~ "But thou, O Lord, art a God full of compassion, and gracious, long suffering, and plenteous in mercy and truth."

1 Peter 1:3 ~ "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who according to His great mercy has caused us to be born again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead."

Even when we fall short and sin, we are encompassed about with mercy when we turn to Him. David had sinned with Bathsheba and had her husband killed, but when he turned to the Lord he said, "Many sorrows shall be to the wicked, but he that trusts in the Lord, mercy shall compass him about" (Psalms 32:10).

There's a wall of mercy surrounding us. When everyone is condemning and expecting us to get what we deserve, mercy shouts back "leave them alone!"

Lamentations 3:22 ~ "It is of the Lord's mercies that we are not consumed."

There was a story of a painter who was painting a portrait of a woman. She was anxiously waiting to see the end product. When it was finally completed, she looked at it and angrily said, sir, this portrait doesn't do me justice. He replied, It's not justice you need, but mercy. Thank God He doesn't give us what we deserve.

The Grace of God

Where mercy is not giving us what we deserve, grace is giving us what we don't deserve. It's unmerited favor. A. W. Tozer said, "Ages upon ages will hardly be long enough to allow us to experience all the riches of His grace" (Root of Righteousness, page 86).

"So that in the ages to come He might show the surpassing riches of His grace in kindness toward us in Christ Jesus." ~ Ephesians 2:7

"Of His fullness we have all received, and grace upon grace." ~ John 1:16

There is enough grace in God's storehouse to meet every need we will ever have.

God's Grace:

1. Saves us (Ephesians 2:8-9).
2. Makes us His work of art (Ephesians 2:10).
3. Makes us workers (Ephesians 2:10, 1 Corinthians 15:8-10).
4. Helps us when we don't measure up (Romans 5:20).

5. Picks us up when we fall (Romans 5:20-21).
6. Sustains us in times of trouble (2 Corinthians 12:7-10).
7. Fulfills our [financial needs](#) (2 Corinthians 9:8).

The Faithfulness of God

He is a [faithful God](#). We may try to be faithful, but it is part of His very being.

Lamentations 3:22-23 ~ “It is of the Lord’s mercies that we are not consumed, because His compassions fail not. They are new every morning, great is Thy faithfulness.”

2 Timothy 2:13 ~ “If we are faithless, He remains faithful, He cannot deny Himself.”

God is faithful to:

1. Fulfill His calling through us (1 Thessalonians 5:24).
2. Protect us from evil (2 Thessalonians 3:3, John 17:15, 1 Peter 1:5, Psalms 91-1-16).
3. Keep His Word and promises (Numbers 23:19-20, 2 Corinthians 1:20).
4. Complete the work He began in us (Philippians 1:6).
5. Forgive (1 John 1:9).
6. Not deny Himself (2 Timothy 2:13).
7. Show us fresh mercies daily (Lamentations 3:22-23).

1 Thessalonians 5:24 ~ “Faithful is He that calls you, who also will do it.”

The Trinity: The Unity and Oneness of God

Dr. Walter Martin, the original Bible Answer Man and author of *The Kingdom of the Cults*, said that cults twist the majority of Christians into doctrinal pretzels because we know what we believe, but not why we believe it. The trinity is one of the most important and foundational doctrines of the Christian faith. It is extremely important that we are well equipped and versed in what we believe concerning this doctrine.

Peter said, “Sanctify the Lord God in your hearts and be ready always to give answer to every man that asks you a reason of the hope that is in you” (1 Peter 3:15). We are admonished to “Contend (fight) for the faith which was once delivered unto the saints” (Jude 3).

The term “trinity” is not mentioned in the Bible. It was first used in the second century to describe the Godhead, which is a biblical term (Colossians 2:9, Romans 1:20). So trinity is merely another word to describe the Godhead. The planet Jupiter existed before it was ever named. Therefore, just because the term trinity came along later, doesn’t make it any less valid.

Deuteronomy 6:4 says, “Hear oh Israel, the Lord our God is one Lord.” Lord is Yahweh in the original and is singular. On the other hand, Elohim is plural for God. It could read, “Yahweh (singular) our Elohim (plural) is one Yahweh (singular).” This is referring to the oneness of God, but it also refers to plurality. There is no other way to properly explain this other than the trinity.

There is only one God

There is only one God that we worship and serve. There are not many gods, but only one true and living God. The following scriptures make this fact abundantly clear:

- “Hear oh Israel, the Lord our God is one Lord” (Deuteronomy 6:4).
- “So that you may know and believe Me And understand that I am He. Before Me there was no God formed, And there will be none after Me” (Isaiah 43:10).

- “Thus says the LORD, the King of Israel and his Redeemer, the LORD of hosts: ‘I am the first and I am the last, And there is no God besides Me’ (Isaiah 44:6).
- “Turn to Me and be saved, all the ends of the earth; For I am God, and there is no other” (Isaiah 45:22).
- “There is none like You, and there is no God besides You” (2 Samuel 7:22).
- “For there is one God, and one mediator also between God and men, the man Christ Jesus” (1 Timothy 2:5).
- “There is no God but one” (1 Corinthians 8:4).

God is a compound unity

God is a compound rather than an absolute unity. There are plenty of places in scripture where God is speaking in the plural:

- “Then God said, Let Us make man in Our image, according to Our likeness” (Genesis 1:26).
- “Behold, the man has become like one of Us, knowing good and evil (Genesis 3:22).
- “Come, let Us go down” (Genesis 11:7).
- “Then I heard the voice of the Lord, saying, “Whom shall I send, and who will go for Us?” (Isaiah 6:8).

The following prophecy refers to each member of the trinity (Godhead):

“I will pour out on the house of David and on the inhabitants of Jerusalem, the Spirit of grace and of supplication, so that they will look on Me whom they have pierced; and they will mourn for Him, as one mourns for an only son, and they will weep bitterly over Him like the bitter weeping over a firstborn” (Zechariah 12:10).

Notice how the pronouns are interchanged or intermingled in the verse “I will,” “They will look upon Me,” “They will mourn for Him,” and “They will weep bitterly over Him”. The wording here can only be explained by viewing it as the compound unity of the Godhead.

Let’s look at a few examples of compound unity in other things. Remember, no illustration is perfect, it merely sheds light on the subject. A wise man of ancient Greece once said, “Every illustration limps.” The following examples will help bring understanding to the composite unity of the Godhead (trinity). They will help us see this doctrine as a composite rather than a solitary unity.

Marriage. “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, Mark 10:8). Obviously, Adam didn’t become Eve, but they became as one before God.

A cluster of grapes. “Then they came to the valley of Eshcol and from there cut down a branch with a single cluster of grapes; and they carried it on a pole between two men” (Numbers 13:23-24). Moses sent twelve men to spy out the promise land and bring back samples of what the land had to offer. They brought back one cluster of grapes that was so large they had to carry it on a pole between two men. It was one cluster of grapes, clinging from the same stem, and drawing it’s life from the same source. There were many grapes within the one cluster.

A group of people. A group often says they “stand as one” in time of crisis, to defend themselves, to protest, or to fulfill some purpose:

“Behold, they are one people, and they all have the same (one) language. And this is what they began to do, and now nothing which they purpose to do will be impossible for them” (Genesis 11:6).

It was said of the early church, “Day by day continuing with one mind in the temple, and breaking bread from house to house, they were taking their meals together with gladness and sincerity of heart” (Acts 2:46).

Frequently, when a country or group is under attack or in a time of crisis, they come together as one people more so than usually.

The Trinity: One God, Three Persons

There is only one God. This fact is made clear throughout scripture. However, there are three persons eternally existent in the one God. Paul Little said it this way, "God is one in His essential being, but that divine essence exist in three modes or forms, each consisting a person, yet in such a way that the divine is wholly in each person."

There are not three Gods all independent and self existing. The three co-operate with one mind and purpose so that in the truest sense of the word, they are one. Instead of being independent, they are wholly dependent on each other or interdependent. There are three separate and distinct persons that are called God in scripture. The trinity is one God, but three persons.

God the Father

Very few people dispute the existence of God the Father, unless they are an Atheist. Paul begins his letter to the Galatians saying he was appointed an apostle, not by man, but by Jesus Christ and "God the Father" (Galatians 1:1). In referring to Jesus' incarnation, resurrection and exaltation, Paul says that one day every knee will bow and every tongue confess Jesus to be Lord "to the glory of God the Father" (Philippians 2:11). Clearly there is a person called God the Father within the Godhead.

God the Son

This is where most erroneous teachings begin. Cults and false teachers deny the divinity of Jesus. In doing so, they create another Jesus and a different, false gospel (2 Corinthians 11:3-5 and Galatians 1:6-9). This doctrine is so frequently attacked because of its importance. If you don't have the right Jesus, your salvation is negated. If your Jesus is anything other than God Almighty, you have the wrong Jesus.

Paul said, "But I am afraid that, as the serpent deceived Eve by his craftiness, your minds will be led astray from the simplicity and purity of devotion to Christ. For if one comes and preaches another Jesus whom we have not preached, or you receive a different spirit which you have not received, or a different gospel which

you have not accepted, you bear this beautifully” (2 Corinthians 11:3-4). From this passage we see clearly there can be another Jesus portrayed by false teachers, which is a false Christ. Any Jesus that is anything other than God incarnate is a false Christ.

Paul said again, “I marvel that you are turning away so soon from Him who called you in the grace of Christ, to a different gospel, which is not another; but there are some who trouble you and want to pervert the gospel of Christ. But even if we, or an angel from heaven, preach any other gospel to you than what we have preached to you, let him be accursed. As we have said before, so now I say again, if anyone preaches any other gospel to you than what you have received, let him be accursed” (Galatians 1:6-9).

From this we see that whereas there is another Jesus, there is also a different gospel – A false gospel. It is a perversion of the true gospel of Christ. Paul uses very stern words here in dealing with those who espouse false doctrine. Twice he says, “Let him be accursed.” He says it twice because, as the dreams of Pharaoh of old, the thing is sure. The Greek word translated “accursed” is “anathema.” In this context, “anathema” refers to someone who is without hope of being redeemed, doomed to destruction, and accursed, under the divine curse. In essence, Paul was saying of those who preach a false gospel, “Let them go to hell.”

I suggest you study the following scriptures thoroughly and even put them to memory. This is where the gospel we preach is attacked and we must be equipped to defend and fight for it diligently. Jude says, “Beloved, while I was very diligent to write to you concerning our common salvation, I found it necessary to write to you exhorting you to contend earnestly for the faith which was once for all delivered to the saints” (Jude 3). We must be able to give an answer for the hope that is in us. “Sanctify the Lord God in your hearts: and be ready always to give an answer to every man that asks you a reason of the hope that is in you” (1 Peter 3:15). We must be so well equipped with the Word of God that we are able to give an answer to those honestly seeking answers and be able to adequately defend our faith.

The Incarnation

In a prophecy about Jesus being born of a virgin, Isaiah said, he would be called Emanuel (Isaiah 7:14). Matthew quotes Isaiah and defines Emanuel as meaning “God with us.” “Behold, a virgin shall be with child, and shall bring forth a son, and

they shall call his name Emmanuel, which being interpreted is, God with us" (Matthew 1:23). His very name refers to the incarnation, hypostatic union, the union of two natures or God becoming man. Jesus was very man and very God.

John begins his gospel with this, "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God" (John 1:1). He goes on to say, "And the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us, and we beheld his glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father" (John 1:14). The Word was with God and the Word was God and was made flesh. These verses not only declare the eternal existence, divinity, and incarnation of Christ, but they also show the plurality of persons in the Godhead, "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God and and the Word was God." The Word (Jesus prior to His incarnation) was already there in the beginning. He was with God and was in fact, very God.

In a prophecy about where Jesus (the Messiah) was to be born, Micah declares, "But thou Bethlehem Ephrathah, though thou be little among the thousand of Judah, yet out of thee shall he come forth unto me that is to be ruler in Israel; whose goings forth have been from of old, from everlasting" (Micah 5:2). This verse declares that the baby that was to be born in Bethlehem was from "everlasting." He had, as his origin, eternity past (an everlasting past). This clearly means He had no beginning. This was said of God, thus making the baby in the manger God Almighty (Psalms 90:2 and 93:2). Also read Philipians 2:5-11; 1 Timothy 3:16; Colossians 2:9; John 14:8-9; 20:19-29.

The Son of God

Whenever Jesus said God was His Father, He was claiming to be God Almighty and the Jews knew it. It is extremely important, when we call Jesus the Son of God, we define what we mean. There is typically a language barrier that exist between cults and authentic Christians. What they mean by the Son of God and what the Bible teaches are usually totally different things. If their definition isn't that He is very God, then we have a major point of disagreement.

The Jews were seeking to kill Jesus, as they so often were. John reports, "Therefore the Jews sought the more to kill Him, because He not only had broken the sabbath, but said also that God was His Father, making Himself equal with God" (John 5:18). The Jews knew when Jesus said God was His Father, He was claiming equality with God. If Jesus was not very God, He was committing blasphemy, which was punishable by death. This is why they sought to kill Him.

They knew He was claiming equality with God. Therefore, we must conclude, Jesus is very God.

Again Jesus said, "I and my Father are one" (John 10:30). You cannot stop here. The context is always imperative. When dealing with false teachers and cults, they will always say, we are one with God too. We are one with Him in purpose, desire and so on. John continues, "Then the Jews took up stones to stone Him. Jesus answered them. Many good works have I shown you from my father; for which of those do you stone me? The Jews answered Him, saying, For a good work we stone you not; but for blasphemy; because you being a man make yourself out to be God" (John 10:31-33). The penalty for blasphemy was stoning. The Jews knew, when Jesus claimed to have God as His Father, He was making Himself out to be God.

Let's look at one more verse dealing with Jesus as the Son. "But unto the Son He (the Father) saith, Thy throne, O God, is forever and ever: a scepter of righteousness is the scepter of thy kingdom" (Hebrews 1:8). Here, the Father is talking to the Son and says, your throne O God. The Father is calling the Son God. You can't get much clearer than that.

When I was young in the Lord and just starting out in ministry, I was visiting an old friend. There was another young man there who was part of the Way International. The Way denied the divinity of Jesus. Their founder had written a book entitled "Jesus is not God." We began debating some about the person of Christ. I went through all the scripture I shared above and more. He seemed to have a way of explaining everything away in order to dispute Christ's divinity. Near the end of our discussion, I quoted Hebrews 1:8, "But to the Son He says: Your throne, O God." He got a puzzled look on his face and said, "I haven't seen that one before. I'll have to work that out." I replied, "Work what out? Either Jesus is God or God the Father lied." He had no further argument. God says just what He means. Jesus, the Son of God, is very God incarnate.

The Resurrection of Christ

Paul begins his letter to the Romans by saying Jesus was "declared to be the Son of God with Power, according to the spirit of holiness, by the resurrection from the dead" (Romans 1:4). The resurrection is an infallible proof that Jesus is indeed the Son of God or God Himself. Jesus "presented Himself alive after His suffering by

many infallible proofs, being seen by them during forty days and speaking of the things pertaining to the kingdom of God” (Acts 1:3).

Read also 1 Corinthians 15:3-8.

Thomas, who had doubted before, after seeing the resurrected Christ, proclaimed, “My Lord and my God” (John 20:28). Jesus never rejected Thomas’ worship and declaration. Throughout scripture, whenever an angel or man received worship, they always rejected the person’s adoration. The fact that Jesus never rejected Thomas’ worship is proof of His divinity.

Jesus, the Firstborn

Let’s clear up a common misconception of Jesus as the firstborn. The Bible says, “He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of all creation” (Colossians 1:15). Cults and false teachers conclude from this that Jesus was the first to be created and is therefore a created being. God created Jesus first and then used him to created all other things. This is an erroneous (false) concept.

As we have already shown, Jesus is very God and had no beginning. His existence was from eternity past. Again the context is always of utmost importance. If you will go down just a few verses, you will see, “He is also the head of the body, the church; and He is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead, so that He Himself will come to have first place in everything” (Colossians 1:18). This defines what the writer meant by firstborn in verse 15. Notice it says, “He is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead.” So we see that firstborn was referring to Him being the first to rise from the dead, never to die again.

Firstborn is also a title of preeminence in scripture, “So that He Himself will come to have first place (preeminence) in everything.” Jesus being the firstborn of all creation refers to Him being the first to rise from the dead, never to die again, and not the first to be created. Jesus was not a created being but the creator of all things, God the Son!

The Great “I AM”

Jesus was arguing with the Pharisees, as He so often did, and said, “Your father Abraham rejoiced to see My day, and he saw it and was glad. So the Jews said to Him, You are not yet fifty years old, and have You seen Abraham? Jesus said to them, Truly, truly, I say to you, before Abraham was born, I am. Therefore they picked up stones to throw at Him, but Jesus hid Himself and went out of the temple” (John 8:56-59). Again, the penalty for blasphemy was stoning.

They knew what Jesus was asserting. “Before Abraham was born, I am.” He was claiming to be the very same “I AM” God that spoke to Moses through the burning bush, the self-existent one. “God said to Moses, I AM WHO I AM; and He said, Thus you shall say to the sons of Israel, I AM has sent me to you” (Exodus 3:14). Thus, Jesus was God Almighty. Jesus told John, “I am Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the ending, saith the Lord, which is, and which was, and which is to come, the Almighty (Revelation 1:8). Jesus’ claim here is clear, “The Almighty!”

God the Holy Spirit

One of the best proof texts for the divinity of the Holy Spirit is found in the book of Acts. Many in the church were selling what they had and giving it to the Apostles to distribute to those in need. This was done voluntarily and not mandated. Ananias and his wife Sapphira sold their property, but secretly kept back part of what they received.

We read, “A man named Ananias, with his wife Sapphira, sold a piece of property, and kept back some of the price for himself, with his wife’s full knowledge, and bringing a portion of it, he laid it at the apostles feet. But Peter said, Ananias, why has Satan filled your heart to lie to the Holy Spirit and to keep back some of the price of the land? While it remained unsold, did it not remain your own? And after it was sold, was it not under your control? Why is it that you have conceived this deed in your heart? You have not lied to men but to God. And as he heard these words, Ananias fell down and breathed his last; and great fear came over all who heard of it” (Acts 5:3-5).

Notice Peter said, “Why has Satan filled your heart to lie to the Holy Spirit” and then, “You have not lied to men but to God.” First Peter said he lied to the Holy Spirit and then, in the next breath, you didn’t lie to man but God. He was clearly

attributing deity to the Holy Spirit. It is impossible to look at this passage and not see that the Holy Spirit is very God, the third member (person) of the Godhead (trinity).

Another common misconception about the Holy Spirit is that He is just a force and not a real person. The Holy Spirit is more than a force but the third person of the trinity. Below are five characteristics of personality, with scripture references, attributed to the Holy Spirit.

1. Intellect (1 Corinthians 2:11, Romans 8:27).
2. He has a will (1 Corinthians 12:11).
3. Sensibility (Romans 8:26-27, Romans 15:30). This has to do with the ability to feel, be affected emotionally or intellectually, and have a sensitive awareness or responsiveness.
4. He grieves (Ephesians 4:30).
5. He speaks (Acts 13:2, Hebrews 3:7).

The Triune Existence of God

We see that God is one in nature, but three in person and manifestation. This is beyond comprehension to the natural, finite mind. God is infinite and we are finite. We can not expect to grasp the concept of Him in all its totality. We can however, understand it to some degree, knowing that the concept is clearly taught in scripture.

One of Job's Friends said to him, "Can you search out the deep things of God? Can you find out the limits of the Almighty" (Job 11:7)? The obvious answer is no, but we can sure try. The only way we can begin to grasp the greatness of God is through the Holy Spirit (1 Corinthians 2:9-15). Let's explore all the depths of God and ask Him to supernaturally reveal Himself to us.

The Trinity: Illustrations and Examples

In our previous studies on the Trinity we learned that [God is one](#) and there are [three distinct persons](#) within the one God. Each is a separate and distinct person, yet each one being very God. It's impossible to totally grasp this principle with the finite mind. However, we can understand the concept and know it is the clear teaching of the Word of God. Below are several scriptural and non-scriptural illustrations and examples of the Trinity. No illustration is perfect, but these will help us understand our infinite God (Job 11:7).

Scriptural Examples of the Trinity

1. **The birth of Jesus.** In Luke 1:35 an angel appeared to Mary he said, "The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you, and for that reason the holy Child shall be called the Son of God." All three members or persons of the trinity are mentioned in this verse concerning Mary's miraculous conception.
2. **The discourse of Jesus in John 14 and 15.** In these verses all three persons of the trinity are mentioned and often interchangeably. The Father is mentioned in John 14:2, the Son in John 14:7-9, and the Holy Spirit in John 14:15-18 and 15:26.
3. **Creation.** All three persons of the trinity or Godhead are referred to as participating in creation. The Holy Spirit in Genesis 1:2 is seen "Moving over the surface of the waters" just prior to creation. The Son of God is mentioned as being a part of creation, "His Son, through whom also He made the worlds" (Hebrews 1:2).

Both the Father and the Son are involved here. Of the Son it is said, "For by Him all things were created, both in the heavens and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or rulers or authorities, all things have been created through Him and for Him" (Colossians 1:16).

4. **The baptism of Jesus.** Luke 3:21-22 says, "Jesus was also baptized, and while He was praying, heaven was opened, and the Holy Spirit descended upon Him in bodily form like a dove, and a voice came out of heaven, You are My beloved Son, in You I am well-pleased." Here we see the Son being baptized, the Holy Spirit descending upon Him, and the Father speaking out of heaven.

5. **Paul's benediction.** In 2 Corinthians 13:14 Paul says to the Corinthians, "The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit, be with you all." He pronounces a blessing on them utilizing all three persons of the Trinity.

6. **The resurrection of Christ.** All three persons of the Trinity are seen as active participants in the resurrection. The Father raised Jesus from the dead, "God raised up His Servant and sent Him to bless you by turning every one of you from your wicked ways" (Acts 3:26).

Jesus claimed He would raise Himself from the dead. He said, "Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up. He was speaking of the temple of His body" (John 2:19 and 21).

The Holy Spirit also is said to have raised Jesus from the dead, "But if the Spirit of Him who raised Jesus from the dead dwells in you, He who raised Christ Jesus from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies through His Spirit who dwells in you" (Romans 8:11).

Each person of the Trinity was equally involved in the resurrection.

Non-Scriptural Examples of the Trinity

1. **Man.** Man was made in the image of God (Genesis 1:26). Man is made up of three parts. He has a body, soul and spirit. Take away any part of him and he ceases to be, yet there are three distinct parts to man. Man has three parts, a trinity, yet he is one man.

2. **The sun.** There are three parts to the sun – heat rays, light rays and chemical rays. Heat rays are felt and not seen, light rays are seen but not felt. Chemical rays have an effect though they are not seen nor felt. All together we have sunshine, three rays and one light.

Without one aspect we would have no sunlight. The same is true of the Trinity or Godhead. God is made up of the three distinct parts or persons, take away any aspect and we cease to have God.

3. **Addition and multiplication.** In addition, $1 + 1 + 1 = 3$. In multiplication three ones multiplied together equals one. Three ones equals one? I don't pretend to be a mathematician, but that doesn't make much sense to me. However, I know it's a mathematical fact. Likewise, we may not be able to completely grasp the concept of three persons in one God, but it's a Biblical fact.

4. **A triangle.** A triangle has three sides. Take away either side and it will cease to be a triangle. It's similar with the trinity (Godhead). Take away one aspect and He ceases to be God.

5. **The universe.** "Uni" means one, yet the universe is made up of space, time and matter. Take away any of the three components and it is no longer a universe. The same is true of God, take away any one of His persons and He ceases to be God.

6. **Water.** In thermodynamics, the triple point of a substance is the temperature and pressure at which three phases (gas, liquid and solid) of that substance coexist in thermodynamic equilibrium. Water under pressure, in a vacuum and at a given temperature below freezing, simultaneously exists as liquid, steam and ice. We see the Trinity (Godhead) in all of creation (Romans 1:20).

7. **United States Government.** The United States Government is one government with three branches: executive, judicial and legislative. There are three distinct parts of the one government. So it is with God, there are three distinct persons within the one God.

Applications of the Trinity

Know Him. In 2 Timothy 1:12 Paul said, "I know whom I have believed." Jesus said, "This is eternal life, that they may know You, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom You have sent" (John 17:3). Let's seek both to know personally and all we can about Him.

Defend the faith. We are to fight for and defend the faith that was delivered to us (Jude 3). There are many false teachers and cults who seek to pervert the pure gospel and Jesus Himself (2 Corinthians 11:3-5, Galatians 1:6-9). This requires you must "Study to show yourself approved" (2 Timothy 2:15). We must be equipped to give an answer for the hope that is in us (1 Peter 3:15).

Disassociate. We are to disassociate ourselves from all who do not hold to solid Biblical doctrine. I'm not talking about peripheral areas of theology but the fundamentals and essentials of our faith.

The Bible makes it clear we should not associate with those who hold and propagate false doctrine (1 Corinthians 15:33). In fact, we are not to let them into our home or even give them greeting. I know this may seem harsh, but God said it not me.

“For many deceivers have gone out into the world who do not confess Jesus Christ as coming in the flesh. This is a deceiver and an Antichrist. Look to yourselves, that we do not lose those things we worked for, but that we may receive a full reward.

Whoever transgresses and does not abide in the doctrine of Christ does not have God. He who abides in the doctrine of Christ has both the Father and the Son. If anyone comes to you and does not bring this doctrine, do not receive him into your house nor greet him; for he who greets him shares in his evil deeds” (2 John 1:7-11).

The Holy Spirit

The Five-Fold Ministry of the Holy Spirit

I was saved in the midst of the Charismatic Movement. There was a lot of good in that movement and it was definitely of move of the Holy Spirit. There were, however, a lot of extremes that rose out of that movement. There are two extremes regarding the ministry of the Holy Spirit resulting from it. One over emphasizes manifestations, while the other denies their existence altogether. Both extremes are equally wrong.

What typically happens is there's a move of the Holy Spirit in the church. People then get excited and take the truth to a far extreme, which becomes error. When attempting to correct the error, people take it to the other extreme, which is also error. Biblical balance is usually found somewhere in the middle.

There were two voices I know of that seemed to find a balance in the extremes of that era – Pastor Chuck Smith and Dr. Paul E. Paino. Both their ministries experienced revival during this movement yet found the Biblical balance in the extremes of that time.

Let's be careful to take full advantage of all that the Spirit of God desires to do within the church and our lives personally. The following teaching, is a very balanced and theologically sound teaching regarding the ministry of the Holy Spirit.

The 5 Ministries of the Holy Spirit

1. The Holy Spirit dwelling with us

“If you love me, keep my commandments. And I will pray the Father, and He shall give you another Comforter, that He may abide with you for ever; Even the Spirit of truth; whom the world cannot receive, because it sees Him not, neither knows Him: but you know Him; for He dwells with you, and shall be in you” (John 14:15-17).

The Holy Spirit is with us prior to salvation drawing us to Jesus. Jesus said the Holy Spirit was with the disciples, but He would soon “dwell in” them. In the Old

Testament the Holy Spirit was with the people of God. He didn't indwell believers until after the day of Pentecost. Before you came to Jesus the Holy Spirit was with you, not in you. He was with you drawing you to a saving knowledge of Jesus Christ.

Jesus said, "No man can come to me except the Father which sent me draw him" (John 6:44). The word "draw" literally means to drag. How many of us had to be dragged to a relationship with Jesus Christ? I know we have free will, but I also know we tend to take the path of least resistance. If you are not saved and someone is praying for you, give up!

2. The indwelling of the Holy Spirit

"Not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to His mercy He saved us, by the washing of regeneration, and renewing of the Holy Ghost" (Titus 3:5). "Do you not know that you are the temple of God and that the Spirit of God dwells in you" (1 Corinthians 3:16)?

The Holy Spirit dwelling in us has to do with regeneration or the "new birth." Your human spirit was dead in trespasses and sins prior to coming to Jesus (Ephesians 2:1). The moment you trust Jesus as your only hope of salvation the Holy Spirit comes into your heart, brings your spirit to life, and you are born again (John 3:3-16). This is the Holy Spirit's ministry of regeneration.

3. Being filled with the Holy Spirit

"Be not drunk with wine, wherein is excess; but be filled with the Spirit; Speaking to yourselves in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody in your heart to the Lord; Giving thanks always for all things unto God and the Father in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ; Submitting yourselves one to another in the fear of God" (Ephesians 5:18-21).

The process of "being filled" with the Holy Spirit has to do with character and fruit. No one is constantly filled with the Spirit because we have so many leaks. Any time we sin we are no longer filled with His Spirit at that moment. We must confess our sin (1 John 1:9) and ask God to refill us. As a result, praise flows out of us. For example, when we complain we've sprung another leak and must be refilled (Philippians 2:14).

The main way to be filled with God's Spirit is communion with Him and His Word (compare Ephesians 5:18-19 with Colossians 3:16). One tells us to be filled with the Spirit while the other tells us to allow the Word to dwell in us richly. Both have nearly the same context. One of the ways to be filled with the Spirit of God is to saturate ourselves with His Word and spend time with Him in prayer, seated at His feet (Acts 4:13, Luke 10:38-42, John 7:37-39).

4. The Holy Spirit resting upon us

“But you shall receive power, after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you: and you shall be witnesses unto me both in Jerusalem, and in all Judaea, and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth” (Acts 1:8). Power here is *dunamis* and means strength, power, ability; dynamite and dynamic. Let's ask God for an overflow of His strength, power, ability, dynamite and dynamic in our lives.

The Holy Spirit coming “upon us” has to do with being anointing for service and the task that's before. God anoints and empowers His people and servants to accomplish His calling upon our life. There is no anointing without service. For example, as you share the gospel by witnessing to someone, or serve Jesus through acts of selfless service, the Holy Spirit will empower – overflow you with His strength, power, ability, dynamite and dynamic for the task you embark upon. Find some way to serve Him and you will experience the over flowing of the power of His anointing in your life.

Elisha received a double portion of the anointing Elijah had because he was willing to serve. He first served behind twelve pair of oxen and then in faithful service to Elijah (1 Kings 19:19-21, 2 Kings 2:1-14). If you want to be used by God you must first be a faithful servant under another person's ministry (Luke 16:12).

5. Being baptized with or into the Holy Spirit

“I indeed baptize you with water unto repentance. but He that cometh after me is mightier than I, whose shoes I am not worthy to bear: He shall baptize you with the Holy Ghost, and with fire” (Matthew 3:11). “Gathering them together, He commanded them not to leave Jerusalem, but to wait for what the Father had promised, Which, He said, you heard of from Me; for John baptized with water, but you will be baptized with the Holy Spirit not many days from now” (Acts 1:4-5).

The Baptism of or in the Spirit has to do with the gifts (spirituals or manifestations) of the Holy Spirit. [Baptism in the Holy Spirit](#) means to be immersed in God's Spirit. Many say this is when the Holy Spirit baptizes us into the body of Christ at conversion, but there is a clear distinction between the two.

“For by one Spirit are we all baptized into one body” (1 Corinthians 12:13). In this verse the Holy Spirit is doing the baptizing and is placing us into the body of Christ. The distinction is clear. In the one we are being placed into the Holy Spirit and in the other we are being placed into the body of Christ. 1 Corinthians 12:13 takes place at conversion whereas Matthew 3:11-12 and Acts 1:4-5 is an experience we can have in the Holy Spirit subsequent to that of salvation.

This experience opens us up to the manifestations of the Spirit found in 1 Corinthians 12:1-7. The initial evidence of this experience is [speaking in tongues](#) which has nothing to do with salvation (Acts 2:1-4, Acts 10:44-48, Acts 19:1-6). We receive all of the Holy Spirit at conversion (Romans 8:9). Baptism in the Holy Spirit is an experience separate from that of salvation which we can enjoy in the Holy Spirit who already dwells within us as believers.

Let's cry out for more and more of God and allow the Holy Spirit to have His way in our lives. Let's ask the Holy Spirit to so fill and overflow our lives until we have to ask Him to stay His hand.

How to Receive the Baptism of the Holy Spirit

This is a follow up teaching to, [The Fivefold Ministry of the Holy Spirit](#). To summarize that article, the Holy Spirit is with us prior to conversion drawing us to Christ, He dwells in us for the purpose of regeneration, He fills us to produce character and fruit in our lives, He comes upon us empowering us for acts of service, and Jesus baptizes us with or in the Holy Spirit which opens us up to the gifts, manifestations of the Spirit or spirituals.

John the Baptist said, “I indeed baptize you with water unto repentance. but He that cometh after me is mightier than I, whose shoes I am not worthy to bear: He shall baptize you with the Holy Ghost, and with fire.” – Matthew 3:11

Just prior to His ascension, Jesus “commanded them that they should not depart from Jerusalem, but wait for the promise of the Father, which, saith He, ye have heard of Me. For John truly baptized with water; but ye shall be baptized with the Holy Ghost not many days hence.” – Acts 1:4-5

It is important to distinguish between being baptized into the body of Christ at conversion and the baptism of the Holy Spirit. These are two distinct and separate experiences. The moment we place our faith in Jesus as our only hope of salvation, the Holy Spirit baptizes or places us into the body of Christ.

“For by one Spirit we were all baptized into one body” (1 Corinthians 12:13). John the Baptist stated concerning Jesus, “He that cometh after me...He shall baptize you with the Holy Ghost, and with fire” (Matthew 3:11).

In Matthew 3:11 Jesus is doing the baptizing and He is placing us into the Holy Spirit. In 1 Corinthians 12:13 the Holy Spirit doing the baptizing and He, the Holy Spirit, is placing us into the body of Christ. The distinction is clear. In the one, we are being placed into the body of Christ and in the other, we are being placed into the Holy Spirit. 1 Corinthians 12:13 takes place at conversion whereas Matthew 3:11-12 and Acts 1:4-5 is an experience we can have in the Holy Spirit subsequent to that of salvation.

The gifts God gives to the body of Christ can be divided into three categories or divisions. “Now there are diversities of gifts, but the same Spirit. And there are differences of administrations, but the same Lord. And there are diversities of operations, but it is the same God which worketh all in all” (1 Corinthians 12:4-6). Another good outline for the gifts God gives His people would be as follows:

Motivational gifts (Roman 12:1-8)

After conversion each believer is given a motivational gift to be used to strengthen, encourage and edify the body of Christ. These are gifts that a believer is naturally motivated toward after he/she has been born again. These gifts may be fine tuned and sharpened by the Holy Spirit and use over time but they are what a person is naturally inclined toward after conversion.

Ministers (Ephesians 4:11-16)

This is often referred to as the Five-Fold Ministry and are office gifts. “For as we have many members in one body, and all members have not the same office” (Romans 12:4). These are men or women whom God has gifted and placed in one of these offices for the church. In actuality, the people themselves are the gifts to the body of Christ. It would do God’s people well to understand that the person God has placed over them is a gift from God to that particular local body.

Manifestations (1Corinthians 12: 4-11)

Paul referred to these as both spirituals and manifestations. “Now concerning spiritual gifts, brethren, I would not have you ignorant” (1 Corinthians 12:1). “Gifts” here is in italics and was added by the translators. It should more accurately be “Now concerning spirituals, brethren.” He goes on to refer to these spirituals as manifestations. He says, “The manifestation of the Spirit is given to each one for the profit of all” (1 Corinthians 12:7).

These are non-abiding gifts. These are to be used by an individual believer only when the Holy Spirit chooses. “But one and the same Spirit works all these things, distributing to each one individually just as He wills” (1 Corinthians 12:11). These are to operate only as He, the Holy Spirit, wills and not at our choosing. You may be used in one of the manifestations once or numerous times. They are to operate

only as “He wills.” We must simply be a willing vessel. If we are willing vessels, the Holy Spirit will operate through us and use us in the manifestations of the Spirit.

I will get into this further when dealing with the gifts. It is the experience of the Baptism of the Holy Spirit that opens us up to being used in the spirituals or manifestations of the Spirit. In a practical sense, how many churches do we see the manifestations of the Spirit or spirituals listed in 1 Corinthians 12:7-11 in operation which do not believe in the experience of the Baptism of the Holy Spirit? Very few I’d imagine. There are always exceptions to the rule, which only proves the rule.

Five Keys to Receiving the Baptism of the Holy Spirit

1. There must be a hungering and thirsting after God

“Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, For they shall be filled” (Matthew 5:6). Jesus said, “If any man thirst, let him come unto Me, and drink. He that believes on Me, as the scripture hath said, out of his belly shall flow rivers of living water. This spake He of the Spirit, which they that believe on Him should receive” (John 7:37-39). We will be filled in direct proportion to our thirst for Him.

2. Ask and seek (Luke 11:5-13):

- **Persistently seek until you receive.** “Ask, and it will be given to you; seek, and you will find; knock, and it will be opened to you. For everyone who asks receives, and he who seeks finds, and to him who knocks it will be opened” (Luke 11:9-10). This is in the present continual sense. It means to ask and keep on asking, seek and keep on seeking, knock and keep on knocking. Don’t give up until you have what you are seeking.
- **Pursue with confidence in the Father’s goodness, care and protection.** “If a son asks for bread from any father among you, will he give him a stone? Or if he asks for a fish, will he give him a serpent instead of a fish? Or if he asks for an egg, will he offer him a scorpion? If you then, being evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to those who ask Him” (Luke 11:11-13).

Serpents and scorpions in the scripture are symbolic of demons or devils. Jesus is saying, you don’t have to worry about getting something from the

devil that you are asking the Father for. He won't allow the devil to give you a counterfeit version of what God has promised.

Many have suggested that it is the devil that is giving us the gift, particularly tongues. Jesus is clearly saying our Heavenly Father will not allow this to happen. God will not allow the devil to give us a false demonic version of what we are seeking God for. We can proceed with confidence and faith knowing it is the Father's overwhelming desire to give us this precious experience in the Holy Spirit.

3. Wait expectantly

"Gathering them together, He commanded them not to leave Jerusalem, but to wait for what the Father had promised, Which, He said, you heard of from Me" (Acts 1:4). Many groups have had what they refer to as tarrying meetings to receive the Baptism of the Holy Spirit. They would gather together and wait and wait hoping to be Baptized in the Holy Spirit. You would hear people praying over someone, "hold on, let go, fill him Lord, empty him."

The early church was to wait in Jerusalem until the Holy Spirit was given to or poured out on them – the church. On the Day of Pentecost the Holy Spirit was given to the church once and for all. We don't have to wait hours on end any longer but merely receive what has already been given to the church. We merely wait expectantly, expecting to receive and experience that which has already been given to us – His church.

4. Receive in faith

"He (Jesus) breathed on them, and saith unto them, Receive ye the Holy Ghost" (John 20:22). In this verse Jesus breathed on His disciples and said, "receive ye the Holy Ghost." How many believe that if Jesus told them to receive the Holy Spirit, they surely did? Yet, the Holy Spirit was poured out on the Day of Pentecost.

They no doubt experienced the Holy Spirit in a different and unique way at Pentecost. Even so, we receive all of the Holy Spirit at conversion (Romans 8:9), yet there is this experience we can receive in the Holy Spirit that is separate from and subsequent to that of salvation. We must receive the experience of the Baptism in the Holy Spirit by faith, knowing it is God's will for us.

5. Exercise faith

Everything we get from God is received by faith and faith must be exercised. “Even so faith, if it hath not works, is dead, being alone” (James 2:17). “For unto us was the gospel preached, as well as unto them: but the word preached did not profit them, not being mixed with faith in them that heard it” (Hebrews 4:2). On Pentecost, “they were all filled with the Holy Ghost, and began to speak with other tongues, as the Spirit gave them utterance” (Acts 2:4).

Notice, they spoke with other tongues. It wasn't the Holy Spirit speaking through them, He merely gave them the utterance or prompted their speech. They were the ones who spoke, they had to do something. We too must speak in faith. It is something we must do in faith. When we ask Jesus to baptize us in the Holy Spirit and seek Him for it, we must be ready and willing to speak out in faith as the Spirit gives us the utterance, even if it may seem foolish in the natural.

Someone might wonder, what if it is just me speaking? It is you speaking! The Holy Spirit prompts our speech but you're the one who is speaking. “They...began to speak with other tongues” (Acts 2:4). Paul said, “I will pray with the spirit, and I will also pray with the understanding. I will sing with the spirit, and I will also sing with the understanding” (1 Corinthians 14:15).

It may start with syllables forming in your mind or spirit that you don't understand. You must, in faith, speak forth what is being given you. It begins with us speaking in faith and continuing to use and exercise our new found language and experience. Paul said he chose, as an act of his will, to continue to exercise what God had given him. We must do no less. “Faith, if it hath not works, is dead” (James 2:17).

Prayer: Jesus, You are the baptizer in the Holy Spirit (Matthew 3:11 and Acts 1:4-5). I ask you to baptize me in your precious Holy Spirit right now. I know it is something you desire for me. I receive it by faith and choose to speak by faith in my new found language as You enable me and prompt my speech. In Jesus name, Amen!

How to Pray in the Spirit

Praying in the Spirit has always been a topic of dispute and controversy. The scriptures say we should be “praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit” (Ephesians 6:18). Prayer is the responsibility of every born-again believer. That said, we don’t always pray as we should. We need God’s help to know how to pray and what to pray for.

Romans 8:26 – “The Spirit also helps our weakness; for we do not know how to pray as we should, but the Spirit Himself intercedes for us with groanings too deep for words.”

Four Ways to Pray in the Spirit

1. Pray with dependency upon the Holy Spirit

One of the first things we must ask in our prayer time is for the Holy Spirit’s help. Praying in the Spirit is praying with complete and absolute dependency upon the Spirit of God to guide us as to what to pray and how we should pray.

We are in need of His assistance if we want to pray as we should. Jesus said, “Apart from Me you can do nothing” (John 15:5). Jesus helps us through the agency of the Holy Spirit to pray as we should. We must be in complete dependence upon Him when we seek the face of God.

2. Being “borne along” in your prayers by the Holy Spirit

“But you, beloved, building yourselves up on your most holy faith, praying in the Holy Ghost” (Jude 20). This verse is talking about those times when you pour your heart out to God and as you do words begin flowing from your lips effortlessly. This is when the Holy Spirit takes over and it is no longer you praying, but the Holy Spirit crying out to God through you (Romans 8:15).

This kind of prayer usually only takes place after we have already spent considerable time talking with God. It seldom happens when we first begin to pray. Few people ever experience being “borne along” in their prayers by the Holy Spirit. It takes discipline and commitment in our time of prayer before the Spirit of God

takes over and we fade into the background. Let's commit ourselves to concerted, concentrated and fervent praying until it is no longer us, but the Holy Ghost praying through us.

3. Praying in tongues

“He that speaketh in an unknown tongue speaketh not unto men, but unto God: for no man understandeth him; howbeit in the spirit he speaketh mysteries” (1 Corinthians 14:2). This is not the Holy Spirit praying, but our human spirit moved upon by the Spirit of God. Our human spirit begins speaking directly to God in a language we do not understand (1 Corinthians 14:15).

The most powerful forms of prayer and praise for two reasons:

1. We cannot have unbelief about what we are praying for, because we do not understand what we are praying.
2. We are speaking mysteries to God. When we are facing a situation where we are at a loss as to how to pray, we begin praying with our spirit (tongues), by-passing our understanding, and praying directly to God.

4. “Groanings too deep for words” (Romans 8:26)

This is prayer that is not vocalized in understandable words, human or spiritual. Notice it says, “too deep for words” – even tongues. This takes place only when we are so intensely burdened in prayer that our spirit (or the Holy Spirit within us) begins to utter “groanings too deep for words.” Sadly, few rarely enter such depths of prayer.

Prayer: Precious Holy Spirit, we need of your help. Without your assistance we are merely uttering empty words. Please take control of our prayer life and help us pray as we should. In Jesus name, amen!

Q & A on Speaking in Tongues

Below are a few answers to questions we've received about speaking in tongues. Speaking in tongues is real, and many great men and women throughout history have testified that God so filled or baptized them with the Holy Spirit they had to ask Him to hold back or "stay" His hand.

Q & A

Have you ever spoken in tongues?

Answer: Yes, I do daily.

Do you think it is something Christians should want to do?

Answer: Yes. As believers we should desire all that God has provided for us.

Do you think speaking in tongues is something God wants us to do?

Answer: Yes. 1 Corinthians 14:5 says, "I wish you all spoke in tongues" signifying it is God's desire.

Why do you think some Christians do not speak in tongues?

Answer:

- **Man-made traditions.** Being told that it is not for today, etc.
- **Pride.** We must humble ourselves and become like little children to speak in tongues. It is an insult to our intellect. For an intelligent person to begin

saying things they do not understand is very humiliating and an insult to our ego.

- **Faith.** It takes faith to speak in tongues. We have to (by faith) say words we do not understand.
- **They think it is evil.** People for ages have blamed speaking in tongues on the devil. However, Jesus said, “If a son asked his father for bread he will not give him a stone, If he asks him for fish he will not give him a serpent will he? Or if he asks him for an egg he will not give him a scorpion will he? If you know how to give good gift to your children how much more will your heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to them who ask him” (Luke 11:11-13)? Scorpions and serpents always represent the devil or demons in the Bible. Jesus was saying, if you ask God for something, He will not let the devil give you a counterfeit.
- **Speaking in tongues was only for the apostolic age.** Religiosity has taught people that tongues passed away once the Bible was completed and the apostolic age was over. They use 1 Corinthians 13:8 and 10 ~ “If there are gifts of prophecy, they will be done away; if there are tongues, they will cease; if there is knowledge, it will be done away... but when the perfect comes, the partial will be done away.”

These religious zealots pick out “if there are tongues, they will cease” and say, “when the perfect comes, the partial will be done away.” They claim “the perfect” is the Bible and once the scriptures were completed there was no longer any need for tongues. However, they do not throw out “prophecy” or preaching as they apply it, nor do they throw out knowledge, we are still learning and growing in knowledge. The argument they use here against tongues is completely absurd and invalid.

Is speaking in tongues always an earthly language?

Answer:

Tongues are merely an unknown dialect to the one speaking. They at times may be in a known dialect as on the day of Pentecost (Acts 2) or a spiritual language known only to God Himself (1 Corinthians 14:2). The point is they are speaking in a language that is unknown to the one speaking, which is what makes it so powerful.

“He that speaks in an unknown tongue speaks not unto men, but unto God: for no man understands him; howbeit in the spirit he speaks mysteries” (1 Corinthians 14:2).

When one speaks in tongues, they are edifying themselves. When we are speaking in tongues, we are in essence exercising our spiritual man. As such, we are building up, strengthening, edifying and making our spirit man stronger. The more we exercise this gift in our personal time of prayer and praise, the stronger our spirit becomes. “He who speaks in an unknown tongue edifies himself” (1 Corinthians 14:4). This is one reason we should practice this gift regularly.

What about tongues and interpretation of tongues?

Answer:

There is a difference in application in the use of tongues in prayer, praise and worship and a public display in the congregation. If a group is together in prayer time and some are praying in tongues that typically doesn't need to be interpreted because they are clearly speaking to God.

Interpretation is to take place when in a church service and a person speaks out loud, clear and distinctly in tongues. Interpretation is to be given so that the entire church is edified and built up and not just the one speaking. The interpretation is often similar to that of a prophecy (1 Corinthians 14:3-4). It may be often interpreted as praise to God as well (1 Corinthians 14:17).

In a time of group prayer and there are those praying in tongues, at times it may need to be interpreted if there is a clear and distinct utterance in tongues. You can usually tell the difference. It will usually come across as being distinctive and different from those praying or worshiping in tongues.

A few facts about speaking in tongues

- **You receive all of the Holy Spirit the moment you trust Jesus as your Lord and Savior.** “If any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of His” (Romans 8:9). The baptism of the Holy Spirit is a separate and distinct experience believers can have with the Holy Spirit that already dwells within them as a born again believer (Matthew 3:11, Act 1:5).
- **It is God’s desire for all believers to speak in tongues.** Paul said, “I would that you all spoke with tongues” (1 Corinthians 14:5). It is clearly God’s will to give this gift to His people.
- **Tongues are mainly directed toward communion with God.** “He that speaks in an unknown tongue speaks not unto men, but unto God: for no man understands him; howbeit in the spirit he speaks mysteries” (1 Corinthians 14:2). Tongues can be directed in a message to God’s people, but their primary function is speaking to God. God gives us our own unique language to talk to Him. How cool is that?
- **Tongues are for praise, thanksgiving and worship of God (1 Corinthians 14:14-16).** When you have given thanks to God for all the good things He has done, and for who He is, and you don’t have any more words to express your gratitude, you can continue your worship and praise of Him through your new spiritual language.
- **It’s a wondrous form of prayer (1 Corinthians 14:14-16).** When you have prayed about certain things and don’t know what else to say, or how to pray, you can then use your prayer language – tongues. You are speaking mysteries to God (1 Corinthians 14:2). You are speaking to God directly from your human spirit, bypassing your understanding.
- **Tongues edifies or builds up your spirit.** “He who speaks in an unknown tongue edifies himself; but he that prophesies edifies the church” (1 Corinthians 14:4). You are exercising your spirit. The more you exercise your spirit through speaking in tongues, the stronger your human spirit becomes. This is not a substitute for reading the Word of God, but it definitely helps.
- **It is something you do (Acts 2:4).** On the Day of Pentecost “they were all filled with the Holy Ghost, and (they) began to speak with other tongues, as

the Spirit gave them utterance.” The Holy Spirit didn’t speak through them, He merely gave them the utterance or prompted their speech, but they were the ones who spoke. Someone may ask, “what if it’s just me speaking?” It better be. You are the one speaking. It is your human spirit or spirit man speaking directly to God (1 Corinthians 14:2).

- **It is received by faith.** Everything we get from God is received by faith. Faith is expressed in actions (Mark 2:5, James 2:17, Hebrews 4:2). Ask God to baptize you in or with His Holy Spirit with the evidence of speaking in tongues. Accept by faith that if you ask Him for something He will give it to you (Luke 11:11-13).

After asking Him for this experience in the Holy Spirit, act in faith and begin speaking. At first, you may simply hear one or a few syllables in your head that you don’t understand. Just start speaking in faith! Like a child when they first begin talking, they say one or two things and keep saying them until they begin to speak fluently.

Some may speak out fluently right away and others may not. Everyone’s experience is different. That’s what makes it personal. We serve a personal God Who deals with us all on an individual basis. Also, each of us come to the Lord with different levels of faith. Our responsibility is simply to act or speak in faith and allow the Spirit of the Lord to work in and through us.

Let’s be careful not to put God or the Holy Spirit in our religious or traditional box. Our God is so much bigger than man made ideologies. Let’s get back to “Thus saith the Lord!”

How to Know if You are Led by the Spirit

The Holy Spirit teaches and guides us according to God's plan and purpose for our lives. One of the ways He does this is by convicting us of sin. Another way is by speaking to our heart and the witness of the Spirit. "The Spirit Himself bears witness with our spirit" (Romans 8:16).

As Christians, we learn to listen to the voice of the Spirit as we grow in our faith. Being led by the Holy Spirit is a major characteristic of all believers and a practical part of living the Christian life. To be led by the Holy Spirit is to be obedient to Him as we hear His voice and sense His urgings in our spirit.

Six Ways to Know You are Being Led by the Holy Spirit

1. Is it consistent with the Word of God?

The Holy Spirit won't direct us contrary to God's Word (2 Timothy 3:16, 2 Peter 1:20-21). We must study, know and hide the Bible in our heart to have His discernment and wisdom.

2. Does the leading of the Spirit contradict or oppose our flesh?

Romans 8:13-14 says, "If you live according to the flesh you will die, but if by the Spirit you put to death the deeds of the body, you will live. For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, these are sons of God." The flesh is contrary to the Spirit. Galatians 5:17 says, "The flesh sets its desire (wars) against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh, for these are in opposition to one another." The Holy Spirit's leading will almost always go against our flesh.

3. The witness of His Spirit

Romans 8:14-16 says, "For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, these are sons of God. For you did not receive the spirit of bondage again to fear, but you received the spirit of adoption by whom we cry out, 'Abba, Father.' The Spirit Himself bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God." The Holy Spirit will cry from within us saying, "This is the way, walk in it."

4. Taking the hard road

My mentor in the ministry taught us if there were two roads to choose from, one road hard and the other easy, the direction of the Holy Spirit will almost always be the hard road. Jesus said in Matthew 7:13-14, “Enter through the narrow gate for the gate is wide and the way is broad that leads to destruction, and there are many who enter through it. For the gate is small and the way is narrow that leads to life, and there are few who find it.”

5. Open doors and circumstances

Jesus said to the church of Philadelphia, “Behold, I have put before you an open door which no one can shut” (Revelation 3:8). This must be balanced with the witness of the Spirit and the hard road scenario. Circumstances should only be a small indicator of whether we are being led by the Holy Spirit. At times adverse circumstances come from the enemy because we are going in the right direction. Only the voice of the Holy Spirit can give us discernment.

6. Faith and assurances

There are no assurances when living a life of faith. 2 Corinthians 5:7 says, “We walk by faith, not by sight.” Even after Paul had a vision about going to Macedonia he said, “Concluding that the Lord had called us to preach the gospel to them” (Acts 16:10). Even after receiving a vision, they had to step out in faith believing the Holy Spirit was directing them. Hebrews 10:38 says, “Now the just shall live by faith, but if any man draw back, my soul shall have no pleasure in him.”

Prayer: Lord God, I pray you would help me to be sensitive to your Spirit in every situation. Help me know when I’m being directed by you and give me the faith to obey the leading of the Holy Spirit. In Jesus name, Amen!

Eternal Security:

Does the Holy Spirit Ever Leave a Believer?

Genesis 6:3 – “And the Lord said, My Spirit shall not always strive with man, for that he also is flesh.” Is there a point in which God’s Spirit ceases to deal with man? Does the Holy Spirit ever give up on us, stop convicting us and leave us to our own devices? This scripture indicates that there is indeed a place where He could possibly withdraw Himself from man.

King David had a similar concern after his sin with Bathsheba. He cried out to God saying, “Cast me not away from Thy presence; and take not Thy Holy Spirit from me” (Psalms 51:11). This should be the cry of every believer. We should yearn continually for His presence. But even though David cried thus, and struggled with things at times, we know from scripture that the Lord never really withdrew His Spirit from him.

From the basics and fundamentals of theology and pneumatology we know that in the Old Testament the Holy Spirit did not actually indwell a believer. God’s Spirit was merely with them and came upon them for certain tasks, but He did not indwell the believer. It was not until the coming of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost that He began to dwell within us. Jesus told the disciples,

“And I will pray the Father, and He shall give you another Comforter, that He may abide with you for ever; Even the Spirit of truth; Whom the world cannot receive, because it seeth Him not, neither knoweth Him: but ye know Him; for He dwelleth with you, and shall be in you” (John 14:16-17). Since Pentecost, the Holy Spirit now indwells all born again believers. Paul said, “Know ye not that ye are the temple of God, and that the Spirit of God dwelleth in you” (1 Corinthians 3:16)?

Man Versus Mankind

It must be noted that Genesis 6:3 was said in the context of mankind’s sin and waywardness in general and not men as individuals. There is a difference in God dealing with mankind in general and His dealings with men as individuals. This verse was said concerning the impending judgment of God through the flood

(Genesis 6-9). There is indeed a place in which God will get fed-up as it were with mankind and will execute His judgment on this world once again.

The Bible says,

“For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who hold the truth in unrighteousness. Wherefore God also gave them up... And even as they did not like to retain God in their knowledge, God gave them over to a reprobate mind, to do those things which are not convenient” (Romans 1:18, 24 and 28).

Sin and the Believer

Does the Holy Spirit ever leave a sinning believer? Can we go so far and fall away from the Lord to a place where His Spirit actually leaves us? If He does leave us, at what point does He do so? This is a theological concern or debate that has plagued the church for generations. I feel the Lord has given me a very solid and balanced approach and answer to this from the Word and Spirit of God, which I will attempt to answer.

Sealed by the Spirit

Once a person is saved, born again and sealed by the Holy Spirit, there is little we can do to push Him out of our life. (Though He is a gentleman and will not remain where He is unwanted.) When we get saved and are born of the Spirit (John 3:3), we are “sealed with the Holy Spirit of promise, who is the earnest (guarantee) of our inheritance until the redemption of the purchased possession” (Ephesians 1:13-14).

Saved by Grace

We are saved by grace (God’s unmerited favor) through faith, and not of works (Ephesians 2:8-9). If we are saved apart from anything we do, forgiven of all our sins and declared the righteousness of God in Christ Jesus (2 Corinthians 5:21), then how can we possibly do anything to lose it or cause the Holy Spirit to give up on us and leave us? This, I’m sure, is possible but not probable. The Holy Spirit will go after us, even when we are running from Him, and go to great lengths to bring

us back from the brink of sin and rebellion, before ever giving up on us or leaving us.

Our salvation is all of grace and does not depend on us any at all. “Of His fullness have all we received, and grace for grace” (John 1:16). “Unto every one of us is given grace according to the measure of the gift of Christ” (Ephesians 4:7). If it doesn’t depend on us but is totally and completely all dependent upon Him and His grace, then can we ever do anything to lose it or cause the Holy Spirit to leave and withdraw Himself from us?

“And if by grace, then is it no more of works: otherwise grace is no more grace. But if it be of works, then it is no more grace: otherwise work is no more work” (Romans 11:6).

Losing Our Salvation?

Many have used Hebrews 6:4-6 and Hebrews 10:26 to point out that believers can easily, through willful sin and rebellion, fall away from the Lord and lose their salvation. According to Hebrews 6:4-6, if we have lost our salvation and the Holy Spirit has ceased to go after us, “it is impossible... to renew them again unto repentance.” Therefore, we’d have to acknowledge, it is impossible for such a one to ever get saved again.

Hebrews 10:26 says, “if we sin willfully after that we have received the knowledge of the truth, there remain no more sacrifice for sins.” If we take this at face value and out of context, there is no hope for any of us, because, most every sin is done willfully. Therefore, there would be no sacrifice or payment for any of our sins and we would remain without hope and still in our sins.

As we study the context of each of the above passages, they are not referring to losing our salvation or the Holy Spirit ceasing to go after and leave us at all.

The context of Hebrews 6:4-6 is dealing with us not continuing to lay the same old foundation over and over but going on unto maturity in Christ. “Therefore leaving the principles of the doctrine of Christ, let us go on unto perfection – maturity; not laying again the foundation of repentance from dead works, and of faith toward God” (Hebrews 6:1). “But, beloved, we are persuaded better things of you, and

things that accompany salvation, though we thus speak” (Hebrews 6:9). We do not get saved over and over – Get saved, lose our salvation and get saved all over again. We are either saved or we are not.

The context of Hebrews 10:26 deals with us not losing our faith or rejecting our faith in Christ. We are saved by faith and therefore, the only way we can lose our salvation or the only way the Holy Spirit will ever cease convicting, going after and pursuing us is for us to reject faith in Christ. “Cast not away therefore your confidence, Now the just shall live by faith: but if any man draw back, My soul shall have no pleasure in him. But without faith it is impossible to please Him: for he that cometh to God must believe that He is, and that He is a rewarder of them that diligently seek Him” (Hebrews 10:35, 38 and Hebrews 11:6).

The Hardening of the Heart

The Bible says, “Wherefore as the Holy Ghost saith, To day if ye will hear His voice, Harden not your hearts” (Hebrews 3:7-8).

We all struggle with doubt and unbelief at times, but is it possible to come to a place where all faith is gone? Is it possible to be so hardened of heart that we lose our faith and actually reject Christ? Is it possible to go so far and come to a place where the Holy Spirit ceases to work in our life and leaves us? From a thorough examination of scripture, we have to acknowledge that this is possible but not very probable.

Sin does, over time, have an hardening effect on us. We must conclude that at least there is the possibility, however remote, that after continuing in sin for an extended period, our hearts become so hardened toward God, that we reject our faith in Christ and the Holy Spirit removes His hand from our life and leaves us. This is indeed possible but not very probable. This is, without a doubt, something that would take place over a long period of time. Only God knows if and when this would take place.

The Holy Spirit was Given Because of Sin

The Holy Spirit doesn't leave us as a result of sin(s) but was given to us because of sin. The whole point of Jesus coming and dying for us, taking our place, and becoming sin for us (2 Corinthians 5:21) is because we sin and are in need of a Savior. The Holy Spirit was given to convict us of sin and show us our need of a savior. Jesus said,

“When He (the Holy Spirit) is come, He will reprove (or convict) the world of sin, and of righteousness, and of judgment: Of sin, because they believe not on Me” (John 16:8-9). He does the same when we are straying because of sin.

The Holy Spirit will always go above and beyond the call of duty. He will woo us, convict us (John 16:8), and even execute God's chastening – discipline on us (Hebrews 12:5-10) to produce fruit in us and cause us to live whole heartily for Him. He purges or prunes us as needed to produce the necessary fruitfulness He desires (John 15:1-9).

Only God knows how far He will go and when He will give up on a person, if He ever does. Only He knows when the Holy Spirit will cease to work in someone's life. The very one I have been convinced has surely gone beyond the brink and beyond the point of no return, lo and behold, when I least expected it, they return to the Lord.

All I know is that we serve a loving and gracious God Who I doubt ever gives up on us. “Now the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, that ye may abound in hope, through the power of the Holy Ghost” (Romans 15:13).

Find comfort and hope in the following scriptures:

“All that the Father gives Me shall come to Me; and he that comes to Me I will in no wise cast out” (John 6:37).

“This is the Father's will which hath sent Me, that of all which He hath given me I should lose nothing, but should raise it up again at the last day.” (John 6:39).

“And I give unto them eternal life; and they shall never perish, neither shall any man pluck them out of My hand. My Father, which gave them Me, is greater than all; and no man is able to pluck them out of My Father’s hand” (John 10:28-29).

“Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword? As it is written, For Thy sake we are killed all the day long; we are accounted as sheep for the slaughter.

Nay, in all these things we are more than conquerors through Him that loved us.

For I am persuaded, that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, Nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord” (Romans 8:35-39).

Let's end this study with a quote from a man of God I have highly respected over the years of my ministry and Christian life.

Pastor Chuck Smith ~ “You're eternally secure as long as you're trusting in Jesus.”