



52

Major Stories
of the Bible

Bill Mounce

The 52 Major Stories of the Bible

Dr. Bill Mounce



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52 Major Stories of the Bible
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Overview

Description

Title: 52 Major Stories of the Bible

Speaker: Dr. Bill Mounce

The Bible is one continuous story, from the story of creation to the story of Jesus' future return at the end of time. And yet there are smaller, pivotal stories that make up the basic structure of the one big story. This class is designed for those wanting an overview of the Old and New Testaments, but prefer to learn through story.

Goals

1. To understand the basic structure, themes, and characters of the Bible
2. To understand the flow of thought throughout the entire Bible
3. To be personally challenged by the unifying themes

Requirements

1. 52 sessions
2. 2 hours per week (lesson and discussion)

Prerequisites

None

Format

Audio

BiblicalTraining.org

BiblicalTraining.org is not-for-profit ministry that gives all people access to a world-class Christian education at no cost. Our classes range from new believers to biblical literacy (“Foundations”), deeper Bible study (“Academy”), and seminary-level training (“Institute”).

We are a 501(c)3 not-for-profit and rely solely on the donations of our users. All donations are tax deductible according to the current US tax codes.

DISTINCTIVES

World class. All Bible classes are taught by world-class professors from major seminaries.

Holistic. We want to see students move through content to deep reflection and application.

Configurable. Ministries can use BT lectures as well as their own to design their educational program.

Accessible. BiblicalTraining is a web-based ministry whose content is provided at no cost.

Community-based. We encourage people to learn together, in mentor/apprentice relationships.

Broadly evangelical. Our materials are broadly evangelical, governed by our Statement of Faith, and are not tied to any one church, denomination or tradition.

Partners. We provide the content and delivery mechanisms, and our partner organizations provide the community and mentoring.

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Your Speaker

Dr. Bill Mounce lives as a writer in Washougal, Washington. He is the President of BiblicalTraining.org, a non-profit organization offering world-class educational resources for discipleship in the local church. He also runs BillMounce.com, a site committed to helping people learn biblical Greek..

Formerly Bill was a preaching pastor at a church in Washington state, and prior to that a professor of New Testament and director of the Greek Program at Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary. He also taught at Azusa Pacific University for ten years.

Bill is the author of the bestselling Greek textbook, Basics of Biblical Greek, and many other resources. He was the New Testament chair of the English Standard Version translation of the Bible, and is currently serving on the NIV translation committee.

Robin and Bill have been married since 1983 and have three children.

Education

Ph.D. 1981, in New Testament. Aberdeen University, Aberdeen, Scotland.

M.A. 1977, in Biblical Studies. Fuller Theological Seminary, Pasadena, California.

B.A. 1975, in Biblical Studies, minor in Greek. Bethel College, St. Paul, Minnesota; Western Kentucky University, Bowling Green, Kentucky, 1971-74.

Student's Guide

We are pleased that you have chosen to use materials from BiblicalTraining.org. We trust that you will find them to be of the highest quality and truly helpful in your own spiritual growth and that of your church. Please read through the following guidelines; they will help you make the best use of this guide.

Weekly schedule

Listen or watch the lesson. The lesson for each chapter is designed to be listened to outside of your meeting. Each lesson lasts for an hour. This is a crucial step. If the meeting time with your fellow students is going to be productive and encouraging, everyone in the group needs to have listened to and wrestled with the lesson.

Take notes. This guide has the outline for each lesson with a summary of the teaching for each major point. If you are unable to take notes while listening to the lesson, please work through the guide at some point before your meeting.

Questions. Each chapter closes with a series of questions. Some of the questions are data based, confirming that you understand the information. Other questions are more reflective, helping you move beyond the important accumulation of knowledge to challenging you to think through what you are learning about God, yourself and others, and finally to application. Our encouragement is to think through your answers before your meeting and then use the meeting to share your thoughts and interact with others.

Meeting. Meet together with your group.

Meeting Together

While some people may have to study on their own, we strongly recommend finding a group with which you can study.

A group provides encouragement to finish the class.

Interacting with others, their understanding and insight, is the most effective way to sharpen your own thoughts and beliefs.

Just as you will need the help of others from time to time, so also they will need your help.

Mentor's Guide

If you are leading the group or mentoring an individual, here are some suggestions that should help you.

Your role is to facilitate. This is not an opportunity for you to teach. In fact, the less visible role you take, the better. Your role is to listen and bring out the best in the other people.

Preparation. Be sure to have done your homework thoroughly. Have listened to the lesson and think carefully through the questions. Have an answer for each question that will get the conversation going. A great question is, "What is the Lord teaching you this week?"

Creativity. What works to help one person understand may not help another. So listen to the conversation and pray that the Lord help you bring out the greatest interaction among all the people.

Correct error. This is difficult. If someone says something that isn't right, you don't want to come down on them, telling them they are wrong and shutting down their participation. On the other hand, if you let an obvious error pass, the rest of the group may think you agree and what was said was correct. So look for gracious ways to suggest that perhaps the person's comment was incorrect.

Focus. Stay focused on Jesus and the Bible, not on church or religious traditions.

Lead the discussion. People don't want to listen to a sharing of common ignorance. Lead by asking questions that will prompt others to think.

Silence. Don't be afraid of silence. It may mean nothing more than people are thinking. But if the conversation lags, then ask thought-provoking questions to get the discussion started, and then step out of the way.

Discipleship. Be acutely aware of how you can mentor the people in the group. Meet with them for coffee. Share some life with them. Jesus' Great Commission is to teach people to obey, and the only way this happens is in relationship.

Men and women. Be aware that men and women tend to learn differently. Don't ask the men to become women in how they answer.

Privacy. All discussions are private, not to be shared outside the group unless otherwise specified.

Goal. The goal of this study is not just increased knowledge; it is transformation. Don't be content with people getting the "right" answers. The Pharisees got the "right" answer, and many of them never made it to heaven (Matt 5:20).

Relationships. Share everyone's name, email and phone number so people can communicate during the week and follow up on prayer requests. You may want to set up a way to share throughout the week using Slack or WhatsApp.

Finish well. Encourage the people to make the necessary commitment to do the work, think reflectively over the questions, and complete the class.

Prayer. Begin and end every meeting with prayer. Please don't do the quick "one-prayer-covers-all" approach. Manage the time so all of you can pray over what you have learned and with what you have been challenged. Pray regularly for each individual in the meeting.

1

Creation and God

Genesis 1

1:1-2 IS THE _____

Includes the creation of _____

SIX DAYS OF CREATION

Inhabitable	Inhabited

THREE SIGNIFICANT TRUTHS FROM DAY ONE

1. _____

2. _____

3. _____

MAIN THING WE LEARN: _____

Isaiah 42:8

Attack by the world

HOW BIG IS YOUR GOD

Has he become _____

Or is he the God of creation, who ...

MEMORY VERSE FOR THE WEEK

"In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth"
(Genesis 1:1).

QUESTIONS

In talking about the days of creation, please stay away from the discussion of literal 6 days. Focus on things that we can agree on.

Head

1. Share your experiences in the debate of science and religion over creation. What have been some of the common arguments? Which ones are stronger? Weaker? Have these discussions enlarged your faith? Made you disgusted?
2. Have you ever talked with someone who truly believes in their horoscope? What was it like to talk with them about it? Why do they think that the stars control their lives?

Heart

3. Have you thought much about the relationship between your view of creation and your view of God? What were some of your ideas before listening to this talk?
4. Does the world feel to you like it is orderly, created with purpose? If not, how would it affect you if it were orderly

and purposeful? What would it look like? (We'll be getting more into this topic in two talks.)

5. Does your view of God mesh with the first three days of creation? Is he this big, or is he smaller? If so, what has happened in life to him in your thinking diminish? (It is really important to be honest with this question. Hiding behind a religious mask wouldn't help.)
6. How different would your life be if in fact you were not the rest of God's direct creative work? What if the fish crawled up on the land all by itself?
7. Saying that God is the "Creator of heaven and earth" is such a common phrase. How can we help one another to see the immensity of the statement? God speaks, and time begins.

Hands

8. One of the byproducts of a godless form of evolution is that people feel lost, empty, without meaning, an accident of nature. How could you tell them the biblical story of creation in such a way that it would help them? Perhaps you should do a little role-playing in your group.
9. Many people believe that they are inherently good. In other words, they don't see that their goodness is derived from God's creative activity and proclamation that he makes them good. Have you ever asked them why? It

might be a helpful discussion. Why do they think they are good, especially in light of history that chronicles one devastating war after another?

10. Share some stories about how the world around you, whether it be school or the media, attacks the idea that our God alone created all things. How could you move the conversation to the point that you could tell them they are responding to sin in their hearts (other than very carefully)?

11. Share times in your life when God has become so small that the gods of this world seem stronger and more inviting. Please be honest. What were the effects on you and perhaps on your family? Were you happy?

12. Now share times when God became so great in your eyes that he was your greatest joy and powerful enough to destroy all your enemies. Were you happy?

2

Creation and Us

Genesis 1:24-31

DAY 6

1. Created _____
2. Created _____

THEME

We are not a mistake

WHO IS "US" (1:27)?

"Trinity"

1. The Father _____

2. The Son _____

3. The Spirit _____

IMAGE OF GOD

APPLICATION #1: _____

How does the world measure dignity?

APPLICATION #2: _____

2 Corinthians 3:18

1 John 3:2

MEMORY VERSE FOR THE WEEK

“So God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them” (Genesis 1:27).

QUESTIONS

Head

1. Can you remember the order of creation? Using the chart from last week will help.

Heart

2. Does it make sense to say that the apex of creation was Day 6 and the creation of Adam and Eve? How does the world work against this teaching? How do you feel about animal rights?
3. Have you ever known anyone who believes in evolution and that they are here by some cosmic mistake? Explain to the others in your group how this core belief impacted their beliefs in other areas? How did they look for significance and meaning? What is it like to think your very existence is a fluke?
4. What are some of our human qualities that most help us reflect God’s image to the world? Which of these qualities are you most thankful for?

Hands

5. Learning to derive our dignity and sense of worth from creation can be a difficult task. I shared the story of the young lady with anorexia to help you move into application. What are some other ways in which the world has destroyed your sense of God-given worth? One example that I did not cover was the issue of sexual abuse and its devastating effects on self-image. Are there others?

6. I wanted you to see that we were created in God's image, and some day we will look like him. But in the meantime, the path of discipleship should be seen as a journey towards Christ-likeness. Does this image help? How does it encourage spiritual transformation?

3

The Fall

Genesis 3

THE "FALL"

3:1 What is wrong with Satan's question?

3:2-3 What is wrong with Eve's answer?

3:4-5 What three lies does Satan tell about God?

a. _____

b. _____

c. _____

3:6 Where did Adam and Eve's sin begin?

What did Adam do wrong?

CONSEQUENCES

3:7 Interpersonal

3:8-11 Between God and Creation

3:12-13 Who gets the blame?

CURSE

3:14-15 Snake

3:16 Eve

a. _____

b. _____

3:17-19 Adam

a. _____

b. _____

WHAT DO WE LEARN ABOUT GOD, OURSELVES, AND SIN?

1. _____

2. _____

3. _____

MEMORY VERSE FOR THE WEEK

“I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your offspring and her offspring; he shall bruise your head, and you shall bruise his heel” (Genesis 3:15).

There is a lot to process in Genesis 3. I would really encourage you to spend time together going through these questions this week and asking how they apply to us.

QUESTIONS

Head

1. What are some examples from our own lives where a temptation was clearly based on a misrepresentation of God's goodness and character and motivated by our lack of faith? My guess is that it will be hard to find a temptation that is not based on this misrepresentation.
2. Why ultimately is all temptation trying to remove the distinction between God and creation?
3. What are your thoughts about Adam's passivity?

Heart

4. Sin always moves from the heart to the hands, and yet so much of what we try to do in church is to fix the outward appearances (the hands) and not deal with the real issue (the heart). What would a church or small group look like that took this seriously? What does Jesus say about this?
5. Sin causes us to do silly things; but when we are in the midst of them, they don't appear silly. How can we

become sensitive to the effects of sin and learn to just accept the blame and God's forgiveness?

6. How have you blamed God for your sin? This is a really important question, and it can cut deeply into our hearts, so be careful in how you answer this. Many people have suffered such intense evil done against them that it is almost impossible to see how God could love them.

Hands

7. What are the silliest (and true) examples of you blaming someone else for your own problems?
8. It is easy to think of God in stereotypical terms as an angry father bent on judgment. How can the example of judgment and redemption going hand-in-hand in the Garden encourage us to think of God properly today?
9. The other interpretation of the curse on Eve is that despite the pain of childbirth she will still desire to be with her husband (not just sexually), and the order of creation will still be maintained with Adam as the head of the marriage. Do you prefer this interpretation or the one I gave in the sermon?
10. I don't think of heaven that much. As I get older, I certainly think about it more. How can we encourage one another towards love and good works with the image of heaven in Revelation 21 and 22, and the tree of life?

4

The Flood

Genesis 6-9

INTRODUCTION

What is the major teaching in Genesis since Adam and Eve?

GOD AS JUDGE (6:5-7)

Sin _____ God.

Is the story of the flood a children's story?

GOD AS REDEEMER

In which ways does God redeem his creation?

How is the flood/ark like the Garden of Eden and the Cross?

NOAH IS A MAN OF FAITH

Hebrews 11:1, 6, 7; 2 Peter 2:5

How do we see Noah's faith showing itself?

STORY OF THE FLOOD

POST-DELUVIAN RE-CREATED WORLD

1. _____

2. _____

3. _____

CONCLUSION

1. When you see rain ...
2. When you see a rainbow ...

MEMORY VERSE FOR THE WEEK

"Noah did this; he did all that God commanded him" (Genesis 6:22).

QUESTIONS

Head

1. Adam and Eve walked in the very presence of God. Eight generations later, the entire earth (except for Noah) was devoid of anything good. How does that happen? Have you ever seen the decay into unrighteousness over even a few generations?
2. How do you think Noah's neighbors reacted when it started to rain? First day of rain, then the second day, etc.
3. What is God asking you to do right now that seems silly, especially to those around you, but you know that he is calling you to respond in faith? Can you think of any

historical characters other than Hudson Taylor and Noah who found themselves in this situation?

Heart

4. When was the last time you thought that a certain sin wasn't that big of a deal (and I am not talking about speeding or not coming to a full stop at a stop sign)? Why did you feel that way? Has anything changed?
5. How can we learn to see rain as a reminder of God's judgment? If any of you have experienced a full storm in the southern parts of the United States, tell the rest of the people what they are like, how horrifying constant thunder can be. Maybe it will help them visualize the Flood story better.

Hands

6. So often God is seen as an unhappy, vengeful old meanie. How would you take the idea of sin "grieving" the heart of God to explain the necessity of punishment to someone?
7. How could you tell the story of the flood to your children and properly balance God's judgment and redemption?
8. This is a good time for a little role playing. One of you is God. One is Noah. Another is his wife (and perhaps children). The rest in your group are Noah's neighbors. Tell the story and bring out the radicalness of Noah's faithful obedience.

5

Abraham's Covenant

Genesis 12,15

GOD'S CALL ON ABRAHAM (GENESIS 12:1-4)

What did Abraham need to do in order to receive God's promises?

What were God's two basic promises?

1. _____

2. _____

What are the two steps to receiving God's promises?

1. _____

2. _____

Abraham has a choice to make. He chooses to _____
God's promises and then _____ by leaving Haran.

COVENANT CEREMONY (GENESIS 15)

Define "Covenant":

What was Abraham's question of faith?

Define "faith"? (hint: Rom 4:21)

What always results from true faith?

WHAT DOES GOD EXPECT OF US?

1. _____

2. _____

Are you fully convinced?

MEMORY VERSE FOR THE WEEK

“Abraham believed the Lord, and he counted it to him as righteousness” (Genesis 15:6).

QUESTIONS

Head

1. What do you think about the connection between faith and faithful action? Think of Abraham as the biblical paradigm for faith, and then think about perhaps what you have been taught or what you have experienced. How do they line up?
2. How would you define “faith”? Use only terminology that a non-Christian would understand.

Heart

3. Have you ever questioned God as an expression of your faith? How were these experiences different from those times you cried out to God because you lacked the faith?
4. What are some of the things we substitute for faith? In other words, what are some of the things that replace faith and keep us from having to really have faith in God?
5. What are some areas in which God is calling you to trust him? What is the world telling you to do instead? Why is trust in God so hard (at least some of the time)?

Hands

6. Much of American Christianity historically has emphasized faith but has had very little to say about faithful obedience. Now that you have thought through some of these issues, how do you think the paradigm of Abraham's faith measures up to yours?
7. Share some times in which you cried out, "I believe. Help my unbelief!" What drove you to this point, and how did it all turn out?

6

Joseph

Genesis 37-50

GOD'S PROMISE TO ABRAHAM

Abraham's son was _____, who married _____. They had twin boys named _____ and _____. _____ married _____ and _____ and they had twelve sons. The story of redemption centers on _____.

STORY OF JOSEPH

Theme: God is so _____ and so _____ to his covenantal promises, that He will keep those promises even if it means working in the midst of human _____.

1. Sold as a slave to Potiphar. What is the main point of 39:2-6?
2. Joseph refuses the advances of Potiphar's wife and is thrown in jail. What is the main point of 39:21-23?
3. Joseph interprets the dreams of the Baker and Cupbearer. What was his one request?
4. Joseph interprets Pharaoh's dreams. How does God keep his promises to Abraham through Joseph?
5. Joseph's brothers come to Egypt

In your own words, what did Joseph tell his brothers about their sinful intentions in selling him, and God's gracious purposes in sending him ahead of them to Egypt?

WHAT DO WE LEARN FROM THE JOSEPH STORY?

1. God is _____ . (Ps 115:3)

2. God's _____ allows him to keep his _____, even in the midst of human _____. (Job 34:10-12)

Summarize Romans 8:28-29

3. We are called to _____ . (Isaiah 55:8-9)

MEMORY VERSE FOR THE WEEK

"You meant evil against me, but God meant it for good"
(Genesis 50:20).

QUESTIONS

Head

1. Have you had any bad experiences with people who emphasized the sovereignty of God? Share them with your group. It is important not to throw the biblical concept away because it is misused by some.

2. How do you feel about the biblical definition of sovereignty: "God does whatever he pleases"? Is that encouraging or discouraging? Do you feel that it contradicts any other beliefs you hold?

Heart

3. When we are in the midst of pain or injustice, there is a tendency to doubt God's goodness, presence, and power. How can the story of Joseph be an encouragement to you in the midst of your struggles?
4. Have you gone through any experiences where you can identify with Joseph? How did your responses compare to his? What can you learn?
5. What would you have done in Joseph's shoes when his brothers stood before him?

Hands

6. What good is God working in your right now as you go through difficult experiences? How are the difficult times helping you look more and more like Jesus?
7. The Joseph story calls us to respond in faith. What would faith look like right now in the midst of the difficulties of your life?

7

Plagues and Glory

Exodus 1-14

INTRODUCTION

How does God's covenant with Abraham (Genesis 15:13-14) prepare the stage for the Exodus?

BURNING BUSH (EXODUS 3)

God's name is spelled with four consonants ___ ___ ___ ___ and includes at least the three ideas of:

1. _____

2. _____

3. _____

MOSES AND AARON HEAD TOWARD EGYPT (4:21-23)

1. 6:6-8. God will keep his: _____

2. 7:3-5. Yahweh will declare: _____

Why did God harden Pharaoh's heart?

TEN PLAGUES (7:14 - CHAPTER 10)

Same scenario:

Final story of the Exodus?

WHAT DO WE LEARN?

1. _____

Exodus 14:13-14

2. God is most interested in _____

Define it in reverse

Why must God be most interested in himself?

Is God fair? (Romans 9:17-21)

MEMORY VERSE FOR THE WEEK

"God said to Moses, 'I AM WHO I AM.' And he said, 'Say this to the people of Israel, 'I AM has sent me to you'''" (Exodus 3:14).

QUESTIONS

Head

1. In what ways does the world attack the doctrine of the uniqueness of God? In what ways does it try to relegate our God to a place of equality with other gods, or even below the gods of this world?
2. I don't spend much time talking about the immutability of God, but it is worth reflecting on. What would it be like if God were changeable? How would it impact our understanding of him and how he relates to us?

Heart

3. God keeps his promises. We talked about this last week, and it is one of the central teachings in this passage as well. How can a knowledge of the exodus encourage us to respond to God in faith, even in the midst of difficult times?
4. What do you think of God hardening Pharaoh's heart? Was he fair to do this and still hold him responsible? (Please do not respond with the quick "churchy" answer, but answer out of your heart and theological convictions.) Does God ever harden your heart or the heart of others that you know? Why did he do that? What was the consequence?

5. Have you ever struggled with the idea of God being most interested in his own glory? As strange as it might sound to some, it is a (if not “the”) central theme of the Bible. How would you explain the idea in your own words? How would you keep God from sounding like an egotistical maniac?

Hands

6. I rarely (if ever) use a movie to illustrate a biblical point, but if you have access to the recent cartoon movie of Joseph, you may want to watch the ending. Be sure to keep the volume turned up. It is a helpful tool to show us the awesomeness of the parting of the Red Sea.
7. How can we help each other remember God’s past faithfulness? When our friends are getting short-sighted and not seeing the glory of God’ past faithfulness, how can we help them look back to God’s faithfulness in their past, and even further to God’s faithfulness on the banks of the Red Sea?
8. No present-day author does this better than John Piper, pastor at Bethlehem Baptist in Minneapolis, Minnesota. If you have read any of his books, help the people you are with to understand his message. If you have not yet read his books, please read “Don’t Waste Your Life.” It is his best book to help you understand this concept. His main book is *Desiring God: Meditations of a Christian Hedonist*. This is a phrase he has developed (out of Jonathan Edwards) to show that God is most glorified in us when we are most satisfied in him.

8

The Ten Commandments

Exodus 20

WHAT IS CONDITIONAL IN THE COVENANT?

CENTER OF THE OLD TESTAMENT

FIRST FOUR FOCUS ON: _____

1. _____ (20:3)

2. _____ (20:4-6)

3. _____ (20:7)

4. _____ (20:8-11)

FINAL 6 FOCUS ON _____

5. _____ (20:12)

6. _____ (20:13)

7. _____ (20:14)

8. _____ (20:15)

9. _____ (20:16)

10. _____ (20:17)

MARK 12:28-31

- 1. _____ (Deut 6:4)

- 2. _____ (Leviticus 19:18)

TWO EXTREMES

- 1. _____

- 2. _____

MEMORY VERSE FOR THE WEEK

“I am the Lord your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of slavery. You shall have no other gods before me” (Exodus 20:2-3).

QUESTIONS

Head

- 1. Why did God give the Israelites the Ten Commandments? What was the purpose?

2. How do the Ten Commandments relate to God's Covenant with Israel?

3. In what way is there a conditional element to the covenant with God? How do Ten Commandments relate to this?

4. In response to God's faithful enacting of his side of the covenant with Israel, what are the expectations as to Israel's response?

Heart

5. Calvin calls all men "manufacturers of idols". What do you think he meant by this?

6. How are all the 10 commandments contained in the summary to 'love the Lord your God with all your heart, mind & soul'?

7. Why should we be glad that God is not willing to share us, that he is in fact jealous?

8. The heart that does not covet does not kill? How do these commandments tie in to each other?

Hands

- 9. What does it mean that Yahweh is a 'jealous' God? How is this relevant to us today?

- 10. Holiness ALWAYS matters. Discuss.

9

The Presence of God

Exodus 33

WHY DID GOD CREATE EVERYTHING?

WHAT DISRUPTED GOD'S PRESENCE WITH HIS CREATION?

1. _____

2. _____

Scripture becomes a record of a _____
dealing with _____ in order to _____ his
full presence with his creation.

TABERNACLE

Divine plans (Exodus 25:1-2, 8)

The party (Exodus 32)

MOSES AS THE FRIEND OF GOD

1. _____ (Exodus 33:11)
2. _____ (Exodus 33:12ff.)

What was Moses' greatest fear?

At the deepest level, what defines the people of God?

HOW DOES EXODUS 34:9 ILLUSTRATE THE ABC'S OF THE GOSPEL?

A. _____

B. _____

C. _____

QUESTION OF THE TABERNACLE

1. _____

2. _____

MEMORY VERSE FOR THE WEEK

"The Lord used to speak to Moses face to face, as a man speaks to his friend" (Exodus 33:11).

QUESTIONS

Head

1. All people, but especially younger people, struggle to know their place in the world. Why are they here? Where do they fit in? What kind of answers would you get if you asked ten people this question (and not especially religious people)?
2. Now ask the same questions to someone who has gone to church. Why are they on earth? What is their purpose? Apart from the religious language they may use, are their answers really any different?
3. How can you explain to a non-religious person that God desires to live in relationship with his creation? What kind of language would you use? What would you expect their answers to be? Have they ever heard of this, or is their view of Christianity basically what people do in buildings called churches?

Heart

4. How do you explain the failure of the Israelites to remain true to Yahweh? How can a person go through a series of miracles as astonishing as the Plagues and the Crossing of the Red Sea and then not remain faithful? And yet, before we get too hard on the Israelites, have we done the same thing?

5. Moses would rather live in the desert with God's presence, than to live in the land flowing with milk and honey yet without God's presence. Need to reflect on this one for a bit. Are you more like Moses or more like the Israelites? Why? Does this affect your thinking about being a friend of God?

6. Are you defined more by external criteria (like David the tour guide) or more by internal criteria? Again, please be honest. Perhaps I should ask the question this way: how do external criteria still define who you are. "I am a person who goes to church" rather than, "I am a person who longs for the friendship of God and my family."

Hands

7. If we conceived of Christianity primarily as a friendship with God (and hence a friendship with our brothers and sisters), how would it change our language, "church," goals, priorities, activities, and many other things? This is an important question and one that is often ignored because it questions too many of our cherished religious activities. So be honest.

10

The Holiness of God

Leviticus

WHAT IS THE PRIMARY TEACHING IN THE BOOK OF LEVITICUS?

What does the word "holy" mean?

Your part in the sacrifice (Leviticus 1:3-9)?

1. _____

2. _____

3. _____

4. _____

The sinner is _____ for his own sin.

THEME #1:

God's _____ drives the sacrificial system.

THEME #2:

1. _____

Sin ultimately is against _____ .

2. _____

Theme #3:

1. _____

2. _____

3. _____

Leviticus and the Cross

Hebrews 9:22-10:4

MEMORY VERSE FOR THE WEEK

“It is impossible for the blood of bulls and goats to take away sins” (Hebrews 10:4).

QUESTIONS

Head

1. Have you ever read through Leviticus? If not, why? If you have, what were your general impressions?
2. Have you thought about God’s holiness being the root cause of the need to punish sin? If not, why did you think sin had to be punished? What are some other reasons why punishment is necessary?

3. How does a knowledge of the holiness of God and the subsequent necessity of punishment affect how you talk about sin and punishment and judgment to a non-believer?

Heart

4. What it take to really come to an understanding that all sin, ultimately, is against God? How can we so personalize our sin so that we may flee from it?
5. What are we going to do about white lies? Where do we draw the line? Do we shade the truth so as to avoid the consequences? Do we come to a complete stop at a stop sign? What should we do about those times in our lives when we are not “rigorously honest”?

Hands

6. Okay. So maybe the illustration of “Fluffy” is a bit over the top, but how would you convey to your friends the lessons of the sacrificial system in a way that wouldn’t lessen the horror of sin?
7. The Old Testament is full of God’s condemnation of religious rituals done apart from a heart cleansed of sin. It would be foolish, would it not, to assume that this is true of everyone else except our church? How can we come to a deeper and truer understanding that religious rituals undertaken by a heart full of unconfessed sin (gossip, slander, anger, lack of forgiveness, pride, etc.) make God sick to his stomach?

11

Sold Out to God ("Shema")

Deuteronomy 6:4-5

Summary of Exodus through Numbers

The Lord wants to _____ if they will _____.

If they spurn God he will _____.

1. MONOTHEISM

Deuteronomy 6:4 is the "Shema." What does it teach us?

Monotheism leads to a prohibition against _____.

Deuteronomy 4:15-19a, 23-24.

CHALLENGE OF THE SHEMA

1. _____

2. _____

What are your idols?

2. TOTAL DEVOTION – “FULLY-DEVOTED DISCIPLES”

What does the second part of the Shema teach us?

What is the relationship between love and obedience?

What does it mean to “compartmentalize” God?

GOD DESIRES IS TO _____ US.

How has this teaching been perverted?

What is required for the Lord's blessing?

MEMORY VERSE FOR THE WEEK

“Hear, O Israel: The Lord our God, the Lord is one. You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your might” (Hebrews 10:4-5).

Please read Deuteronomy 6:4-5 if you are planning on reading through these Reflection Questions before the sermon. Saying that God is “One” is an affirmation of monotheism, that there is only one God. And if there is only one God, then all idolatry is wrong. Most of the questions come out of this truth as expressed in these verses.

QUESTIONS

Head

1. How would you define “god”? What were the gods of Israel’s day, and what are the gods of today?

Heart

2. Taking an honest look at your heart, day-timer, and wallet, what are the gods (or "idols" if you prefer) that you struggle with? Your friends struggle with?

3. "Fully devoted disciples" of Jesus are those who not only go through the gate but walk the path of discipleship. Is it possible to truly love God and not walk the walk? Is it possible to be a part-time follower of Jesus and end up in heaven? Are you sure? Are you willing to bet your eternity on your answer? You are!

4. Christianity is so often seen as just another set of rules. How can we break this pattern of thinking and see that what God desires is a heart fully committed to him and in love with him, and then see that a heart so inclined is going to show itself in our day-to-day lives?

5. Do you really believe that God's desire is to bless? Take a long look at the image of God that you carry around with you; is he the type of father whose greatest desire is to bless? If so, why do you truly feel that way? If not, why do you think the way you do about him? (By the way, if you answer that first question "Yes," I would ask you if you are being honest. For most of us, our image of God is mixed; I don't know if I have ever met anyone who truly and fully understands that God's desire is to bless and not to curse.)

Hands

6. What safeguards can we put in place to help us worship the one true God and not our modern idols?

7. Many people, if we are honest, probably are not that concerned about their habit of worshipping idols. They do their religious service to Yahweh and then get on with the really fun work of idol worship, thinking that all Yahweh desires is their token appearance at a building on Sunday morning and lip service throughout the week. How can we pray, and how can we act, so as to break this pattern of idolatry?

12

Faith is not Genetic

Judges 1-2

“Covenant Renewal Ceremony”

Joshua 24

What is being renewed in this ceremony?

What do I mean when I say that “Faith is not genetic”?

How does this relate to Deut 6:6-9?

JUDGES: "THE BEST OF TIMES"

What made the beginning of the book of Judges "the best of times"?

JUDGES: "THE WORST OF TIMES"

What happened to make things go bad?

What did Joshua's generation fail to do?

What are the four stages of the cycle we see in Judges?

1. _____

2. _____

3. _____

4. _____

NECESSITY OF COVENANT RENEWAL

What is the responsibility of the older generations?

What is the responsibility of the younger generation?

OBJECT LESSON

Joshua 24:15 "choose this day whom you will serve.... As for me and my house, we will serve the Lord."

Joshua 22:5 "Only be very careful to observe the commandment and the law that Moses the servant of the LORD commanded you, to love the LORD your God, and to walk in all his ways and to keep his commandments and to cling to him and to serve him with all your heart and with all your soul."

Deut 6:4-9

MEMORY VERSE FOR THE WEEK

"And the people served the Lord all the days of Joshua, and all the days of the elders who outlived Joshua, who had seen all the great work that the Lord had done for Israel" (Judges 2:7).

QUESTIONS

Head

1. What are some of the things that you – if you have children – have passed on to your children, both physical and spiritual?
2. Do you know of any families or churches that can be described as, “The Best of Times”? What criteria are you using to measure their “success”? What have they done? What have they not done? What is it about their character that makes them stand out as a model?
3. Do you know of any families or churches that fell, even though the older generation were (or seemed to be) godly? What led to this failure?

Heart

4. We measure what is most important. What measurement tools do you use for your family and your church? What do those measurement tools tell you about your priorities? How do you measure spiritual growth? Is it possible?
5. Who has made the greatest impact on your life spiritually? Why? Are you doing the same for others?

Hands

6. If it is true that I cannot impart (to others) what I myself do not possess, then it starts with me. How can we as a community of believers form a culture in which a person's spiritual growth is the most important thing? What stands in the way? What "churchy" things clamor for attention, clamor to be the more important things? How does the way we "do church" elevate these false goals to a place of pre-eminence?

7. If you are not sure how to answer these difficult questions, ask a young person in your church what he thinks is important to the church. This is not to say that young people have the right answers, but they do tend to pick up what the institution thinks is important. You might be surprised as to their answers. You could also find an older person who is a new believer. This is not a question of what ought to be. It is a question of what appears to be.

13

God is King

1 Samuel 2

STORY OF SAMUEL'S BIRTH

HANNAH'S SONG OF PRAISE

2:1 Praise God with _____.

2:2-3 Praise God for _____.

When you get home, think through what a “wonderfully, radically God-centered life” would look like in your home.

2:4-8a How can God do this? _____

2:9-10 Who does God bless and curse? _____

What does "hesed" mean? _____

What does our hesed God require of us? _____

SAMUEL AND SAUL

Why was the people's request for a king sinful?

Saul starts strong but ends weak. What is the standard by which God judges "strong" and "weak"?

WHAT DID HANNAH LEARN THAT SAUL DID NOT?

What don't the Israelites "get"?

1000 YEARS LATER

Compare Hannah's and Mary's songs and find as many similarities as possible.

Jesus' death did three things:

1. Paid _____

2. Brought about the New _____

3. Made it possible for _____

MEMORY VERSE FOR THE WEEK

"He will guard the feet of his faithful ones, but the wicked shall be cut off in darkness, for not by might shall a man prevail" (1 Samuel 2:9).

QUESTIONS

Head

1. What is your first thought when you read "God is King"?

2. What are ways in which you have praised God for who he is? What he has done?

Heart

3. Do you really, truly, believe that God blesses his faithful ones? What fights against this in your life? What are some examples of blessing in your life (and don't use any examples of prosperity)?
4. How have you learned that protection does not ultimately lie in external realities, but only with God?
5. Why don't people get the point, even when it is preached and taught over and over and over again? What have you been slow to learn? What were the consequences?
6. What lessons do you take away from this story of Hannah, Samuel & Israel's choosing a king?

Hands

7. How in our lives have we denied God's ultimate Kingship to our hurt?

14

David and Goliath

1 Samuel 6-7

INTRODUCTION (1 SAMUEL 16)

How did Saul first meet David?

DAVID AND GOLIATH (1 SAMUEL 17)

1. INITIAL CONFRONTATION BETWEEN GOLIATH AND THE ARMY (VV 1-11)

What was wrong with the Israelites reaction to Goliath? (v 11)

2. DAVID AND THE ARMY, BIG BROTHER, AND SAUL (VV 12-39)

What was different in David's reaction to Goliath?

What was wrong with Saul's initial evaluation of David?

Where did David's greatest strength lie?

3. DAVID AND GOLIATH (VV 40-54)

Background of 1 Samuel 5

What are all the ways David contrasts what he says with what Goliath says? (There are more than what is covered in the lecture.)

How does the Goliath story parallel the account of Dagon (1 Samuel 5)?

THE LESSON OF GOLIATH: STEP OUT IN FAITH

What does it mean when Acts 13:22 says that David was a man after God's own heart?

- 1. Faith drives a person to _____.

- 2. Sometimes we are called to step outside _____.

WHAT ARE THE GOLIATHS IN YOUR LIFE?

MEMORY VERSE FOR THE WEEK

"Then David said to the Philistine, 'You come to me with a sword and with a spear and with a javelin, but I come to you in the name of the Lord of hosts, the God of the armies of Israel, whom you have defied' (1 Samuel 17:45).

QUESTIONS

Head

1. How will you retell the story of David and Goliath and move the attention properly to the main player of the drama, to God?

Heart

2. It's really hard to not look on the outside, isn't it? It is hard to remember that what the Lord values is what is inside, issues of character and faith and not what the world values. Have you discovered any habits that help you not draw quick judgments based on externals?
3. Is the fearful response of the Israelite armies that surprising? Even though they had experienced God's power in the past, their fear overcame them in the present. Has that ever happened to you? Why do you think you weren't able to draw strength from God's past faithfulness?
4. What would it take for you to learn to respond in faith like David? What would it take for you to be the kind of person who does not react in fear?
5. Have you ever played it safe and later realized that you lost a great opportunity to respond in faith? How do you feel about it now?

Hands

6. What are some ways in which God is calling you to step out in faith, but still inside your comfort zone?

a. _____

b. _____

c. _____

7. Is God calling you to step out of your comfort zone?
How?

a. _____

b. _____

c. _____

15

God's Provision and Protection

Psalm 23

BACKGROUND FROM 1 SAMUEL 18-30

1 Samuel 30:6

Central teaching of Psalm 23: _____

IMAGE #1: GOD AS SHEPHERD

What is so different about David's use of the shepherd imagery for God?

What is the first result of David’s faith that God is his shepherd?

WHAT ARE THE FIRST FOUR WAYS THE SHEPHERD PROVIDES?

- 1. _____
- 2. _____
- 3. _____
- 4. _____

How does the discussion of a shepherd lead into the “valley of the shadow of death”?

IMAGE #2: GOD AS HOST

What do the final three provisions of God have in common?

- 1. _____

2. _____

3. _____

What are the final two affirmations of faith?

1. _____

2. _____

JESUS IS OUR GOOD SHEPHERD

John 10:3b-4

Is he your good shepherd?

MEMORY VERSE FOR THE WEEK

“The Lord is my shepherd; I shall not want” (Psalm 23:1).

QUESTIONS

Head

1. Have you ever experienced the kind of betrayal that David did at the hands of Saul? How did it make you feel? What did you want to do? What did you do?

Heart

2. Have you ever experienced the kind of betrayal that David did at the hands of Saul? How did it make you feel? What did you want to do? What did you do?
3. Have you ever thought it couldn't get worse, and then it did? Were you surprised? How did you deal with the pain? How did your faith show itself in the more difficult time?
4. When have you felt most cared for by your Shepherd? What did you learn from the experience?
5. Recount the times when God made you lie down in green pastures? What were those pastures? In what ways was your soul restored?
6. It is easy to feel unprotected, but have you ever had the experience where you thought you were unprotected, but later realized that God was in fact protecting you? In what specific ways will you take that lesson forward

to help you trust him the next time you are in a difficult situation?

7. How has God abundantly provided for you? A friend of mine, who translated the Bible in Africa for two decades, once said that if you have carpet, you are rich. How do you feel about that? Really feel about that?

Hands

8. It would be nice – at one level – if God would keep us out of difficult times, but it is in the midst of the trying times that our faith can really show itself and grow. Do you have any stories of victory in which your faith did grow? Did not grow? What was the difference?

16

Confession and Forgiveness

Psalm 51

TWO MAJOR EVENTS IN 2 SAMUEL

1. 2 Sam 7:12-14

2. David and Bathsheba (2 Sam 11-12)

How is it possible that a “Man after God’s own heart” could do something like this?

a. _____

b. _____

CRY FOR FORGIVENESS (PSALM 51:1-2)

1. True confession _____.

Romans 7:24

2. True confession _____.

Three words for sin/cleansing:

1. _____

2. _____

3. _____

3. True confession _____

REST OF THE PSALM SPELLS OUT THESE POINTS

51:3-6

51:7-12

51:13-17

TIMES OF CONFESSION ARE DEFINING MOMENTS

1. _____

2. _____

MEMORY VERSE FOR THE WEEK

“Create in me a clean heart, O God, and renew a right spirit within me. Cast me not away from your presence, and take not your Holy Spirit from me. Restore to me the joy of your salvation, and uphold me with a willing spirit” (Psalm 51:10-12).

QUESTIONS

Head

1. What are some examples of good people falling into sin? (Don't enjoy this part of the discussion too much, or spend much time on it.) How does seeing their failure help you think about your own failures? (Please, no excuses.)
2. What are some ways in which we paint sin as gray? How can we learn to see sin as it is? Can you think of any times in which God's forgiveness was as complete as your confession?
3. What are some examples of the difference between total forgiveness and ongoing consequences?

Heart

4. Have you ever been confronted in your sin? Who was your Nathan? How did you respond? What have you learned about yourself by how you responded?
5. How have you partially confessed? How does a person admit sin, but not totally?
6. Why do you think you should be forgiven? If you are honest, how have you bargained with God? Be sure to end.

7. Have you ever been so aware of your sin that all you could do was open Ps 51 and read it? What were the effects (short- and long-term) of the experience?

Hands

8. It is sad, isn't it, when a person decides to dig his or her heels in and refuse to confess. Do you know of examples of people (and be kind) whose lives were fundamentally damaged by a refusal to confess what everyone else knew to be true? What were the consequences? And do you know of people whose defining moment was the full confession of sin and the ensuing consequences (be lavish in your praise)?

17

The Wise and the Foolish

Solomon and Proverbs

BACKGROUND OF SOLOMON'S LIFE

Prayer for wisdom (1 Kings 3:9)

Dies a fool (1 Kings 11:1-4)

BOOK OF PROVERBS

Deeper than practical wisdom

SOMETHING TO SAY ABOUT EVERYTHING

1. Laziness (6:6; 20:4)
2. Tranquility (14:30; 15:1; 19:11)
3. Wealth (17:1; 19:17) – What is the deeper truth?
4. Good wife (5:18b-19) and not-so-good (21:9)
5. Adultery (5:3-4) – What is the deeper truth?
6. External beauty (11:22)
7. Pride (16:18)

WHAT IS THE MOST IMPORTANT PROVERB?

What does “fear of the Lord” mean?

TWO KINDS OF PEOPLE IN THIS WORLD

1 _____

What characterizes this person?

2. _____

What characterizes this person?

DO YOU BELIEVE THAT GOD KNOWS BEST?

Proverbs 3:5-6

Wisdom is as wisdom does!

MEMORY VERSE FOR THE WEEK

"The fear of the Lord is the beginning of knowledge; fools despise wisdom and instruction" (Proverbs 1:7).

QUESTIONS

Head

1. If you could ask God for anything, honestly, what would it be?
2. How would you define “wise”?

Heart

3. “Let not steadfast love and faithfulness forsake you; bind them around your neck; write them on the tablet of your heart” (Proverbs 3:3). How would you bind them? If you could have anything “bound” to your heart, would it be “steadfast love and faithfulness,” or something else?
4. We could talk about a lot of the proverbs, but this one is especially convicting. “A tranquil heart gives life to the flesh, but envy makes the bones rot” (Proverbs 14:30). Are you tranquil? How has it impacted your physical health? What about the reverse; how has stress rotted your bones?
5. Are you wise or a fool? In honesty, we are probably a mixture of both. In what ways are you wise? In what ways are you foolish, not listening to God but to your friends?

Hands

6. Do you tend to look at the long term or short term? What have you found to be the disadvantages of short term vision?

7. Do you really believe God knows best? How have your actions shown that, and how have they not shown that?

18

Job and Human Suffering

THE CHALLENGE OF READING JOB

PROLOGUE (1-2)

1. _____

2. _____

Define "theodicy":

DIALOGUES (4-31)

What is Job's friends' basic argument?

At what point did Job sin?

ELIHU (32-37)

According to Elihu, what was Job's central problem?

What do I mean when I say "Job puts himself on the same level as God"?

GOD (38-41)

God appeals to His own _____ and _____ to make His basic point, which is what?

Romans 9:19-21

EPILOGUE (42)

CONCLUSION

1. Job is a theodicy.
2. Is God worthy of our trust and faith?

Is Job's question ever answered?

1. _____
2. _____

MEMORY VERSE FOR THE WEEK

"I know that you can do all things, and that no purpose of yours can be thwarted" (Job 42:2).

QUESTIONS

Head

1. Have you ever read Job before? What did you think of it then?
2. Do you think it is okay to cry out to God? To get mad? To get mad at God? To ask him why? To blame him? To accuse him? At what point do you walk over the line, like Job?

Heart

3. Do you ever wonder if Satan might be right about you? Are you a Christ-follower because he has blessed you? What would happen if you lost all your family and wealth? Hard to know the answer to that.
4. Have you ever been in a situation in which the pain caused you to wonder if God could really be trusted? Share it with the group. What in particular made you question God? What helped you work through it (either in the past or the present)?
5. Has your faith ever been questioned because of the suffering you were experiencing? How did it make you feel? What did you say in that situation? Would you say something different now?

6. How has God – not information about him but a vision of who he is – been the answer for the suffering in your life, or has he?

Hands

7. Have you ever been Elihu to someone? Has anyone been Elihu to you? Share the circumstances. Was it helpful?
8. How can we work toward a vision of God in all his wisdom and power so that when difficult times come, we will respond properly? Like Job we probably would prefer to learn these lessons before the trials come.
9. What stops us from accepting the fact that God owes us nothing and we are not on his level and in fact have no rights before him? Do you agree or disagree with that statement?

19

Elijah and Syncretism

1 Kings 17 - 18

DEFINE THESE TERMS:

"United Monarchy" _____

"Divided monarchy" _____

"Judah" _____

"Israel" _____

"SYNCRETISM"

What does "syncretism" mean?

STANDARD OF JUDGMENT

Southern Kingdom

Rehoboam (1 Kings 14:23-24)

Asa (1 Kings 15:11, 14)

Northern Kingdom

Ahab (1 Kings 16:30-33)

ELIJAH (870 B.C.; 1 KINGS 17-18)

What does his name mean?

What is Elijah's challenge in 18:20-21a?

ELIJAH'S MESSAGE IN THE NEW TESTAMENT

Matthew 6:24

Revelation 2:19-23

Revelation 3:15-16

IN WHAT WAYS HAS THE CHURCH MIXED THE GOSPEL MESSAGE WITH THE TEACHING OF THE WORLD?

Challenge: In what ways have I mixed the gospel message with the teaching of the world?

MEMORY VERSE FOR THE WEEK

"How long will you go limping between two different opinions? If the Lord is God, follow him; but if Baal, then follow him" (1 Kings 18:21).

QUESTIONS

Head

1. Review the terms we learned and be able to locate them on a map.
2. Review the ways on which Jeroboam altered Mosaic religion but kept some of its forms.
3. What are ways in which the world belittles God's standards of success?
4. Can you think of any modern examples where it started with syncretism but slid down the hill to paganism?
5. Can you think of any other verses in the Bible that emphasize that mixing anything with true worship is wrong? In other words, are there any other anti-syncretistic verses?

Heart

6. What are standards of success that we may tend to use that do not agree with God's standards?

Hands

7. What do you think of Elijah's rather crass verbal attack on the prophets of Baal in 1 Kings 18:20-21? I am sure we would agree that it was accurate, but was it appropriate? Is there ever a time in which we can mock false teaching and its teachers?

8. In what ways have you seen the purity of the gospel message diluted and watered-down by the teachings of the world? I am thinking here specifically of things taught in the church.
 - a. _____
 - b. _____
 - c. _____
 - d. _____
 - e. _____
 - f. _____

20

Isaiah and the Holiness of God

Isaiah 6

INTRODUCTION

Downfall of the Northern Kingdom (721 B.C.)

Woes of the Southern Kingdom

Remember “syncretism”?

Azariah (Uzziah), Jotham, Ahaz, Hezekiah (792-686 B.C.)

VISION OF GOD'S THRONE ROOM

Isaiah 6:1-4

How would you describe God's majesty and power to someone only with words?

What is the significance of the Seraphim covering their feet and eyes?

GOD OF GLORY (6:5)

Define "holy" when applied to people.

Define "holy" when applied to God

Glory is the _____ representation of _____.

GOD OF JUDGMENT

How does Isaiah respond when he sees God in all His glory?

GOD OF SALVATION (6:6-8)

MEMORY VERSE FOR THE WEEK

“Woe to me!” I cried. “I am ruined! For I am a man of unclean lips, and I live among a people of unclean lips, and my eyes have seen the King, the Lord Almighty” (Isaiah 6:5).

QUESTIONS

Head

1. What is the main point of this lesson?
2. What are some ways that we can describe the might and authority and power of God? Avoid using “religious” language that may be so familiar that it means almost nothing.
3. Try to describe the “glory” and “holiness” of God without using those same words. What pictures can we paint in our mind’s eye that will help?

Heart

4. How big is your God? What personal tendencies do you have that make God seem small? Worry? Busyness? Past hurts? What are you going to do about it?

5. Have you ever been faced with the glory and majesty of God so that all you could see is your sin? What happened? Are you still as keenly aware of your sin, or have the images and feelings drifted into the past?

Hands

6. God's glory is all around us, in the infinite variety and splendor of his creation. Go out in nature, even if it is your back yard, and identify 20 things you see, hear, smell, and touch, all of which are common, but if seen through the attentive eyes of faith, proclaim the glory of God. Don't keep it to yourself, but share it with a friend, co-worker, or family member.
7. Share the story of your conversion with someone. Do your children know? Neighbors? Friends? Have you thanked God recently for the knowledge that you have been forgiven, saved, and restored? Has your salvation propelled you into a life of service to the King, regardless of your specific job? What would it look like if you said to God, "Here I am. Send me," and he did?

21

Isaiah and the Suffering Servant

Isaiah 52:13 – 53:12

INTRODUCTION

Gen 3:15; 12:13; 2 Sam 7:13; Isa 6:13; 7:14; 9:6; 11:1-3

Four Servant Passages (42:1-7; 49:1-7; 50:4-9; 52:13-53:12)

EXALTATION OF THE SERVANT (52:13-15)

Philippians 2:9-11

HUMILIATION OF THE SERVANT (53:1-5)

WORK OF THE SERVANT (53:4-6)

1. Borne ... carried"

2 Corinthians 5:21

2. Rejected by the people He came to save

"Crushed"

3. Chastisement "brought us peace ... we are healed"

"Sufficiency" (Hebrews 10:10, 14)

You can be at peace and be healed

Who brings the peace and healing?

4. Universality of human sin

FINAL TWO STANZAS (53:7-9, 10-12)

Fulfillment of prophecy

AS CLEAR AS THE GOSPEL GETS

A. _____

B. _____

C. _____

MEMORY VERSE FOR THE WEEK

“All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned – every one – to his own way; and the Lord has laid on him the iniquity of us all” (Isaiah 53:6).

QUESTIONS

Head

1. What was the main point of the sermon today?

2. It is helpful to check your cross references and see how Jesus fulfilled every verse in the Servant passages. How do you think your friends would respond to the claim that 700 years before Jesus died, Isaiah saw it?

3. What are some ways in which the exaltation of Jesus is made even greater when compared to his humiliation? What specific events in the New Testament may make this clearer for you? For me, it is being beaten by the soldiers before the crucifixion.

4. Can you think of any other ways to help understand what it means that Jesus died “for” my sins?

Heart

5. Do you know of any stories of people who think their past sins were so bad that God could not forgive them? Have you ever done the same sin over and over to the point that you give up asking for forgiveness?

Hands

6. Without becoming morbid, how can you help yourself and others understand the horribleness of Jesus being “crushed” for our sins?

7. What are ways in which people try to pay the penalty for their own sins? How can you help them see that God’s chastisement was laid on Jesus, not them, and that Jesus became their sin?

22

External Religion

Micah

INTRODUCTION

Define “woe” and “weal.”

WOE AND WEAL #1 (CHAPTERS 1-2)

What are the two causes for the coming destruction?

1. _____

2. _____

Define "external religion": _____

1. God requires _____.

2. At other times we can _____.

What is the purpose of God's patience? _____

Define "remnant": _____

WOE AND WEAL #2 (CHAPTERS 3-5)

Who is the Messiah and what will he do?

WOE AND WEAL #3 (CHAPTERS 6-7)

What do 6:6-8 teach us about external religion?

CONCLUSION

1. God will always _____.
2. With judgment comes _____.

MEMORY VERSE FOR THE WEEK

“He has told you, O man, what is good; and what does the Lord require of you but to do justice, and to love kindness, and to walk humbly with your God?” (Micah 6:8).

QUESTIONS

Head

1. Although I did not spend a lot of time on the topic, God’s punishment for social injustice is a dominant theme in Micah. The prophets often speak about injustice in terms of oppression of the fatherless and widows. Look at James 1:27 and spend time reflecting on how this might affect you.
2. Reread Isaiah 1:11-7 and ask yourself if the prophet’s message has any application to you or to someone you know.

Heart

3. The human tendency is to think that Scripture applies to the “other” person but not to yourself. Is there a possibility that you think, at least in some areas of your life, that God will ignore sin because you are doing religious things in other areas of your life? This is a good time for self-examination.
4. Is it possible that you think you are somehow special and not subject to God’s judgment when you sin?
5. Have there been any events in your life when you thought certain sins would be ignored because you go to church?

Hands

6. How can we hold out hope to those in the midst of God’s judgment, to let them know that someday it will be over and there will once again be joy?

23

Unfaithfulness to God

Hosea

INTRODUCTION

Hosea contains a strong message of punishment for _____ as well as a graphic portrayal of God's _____ and _____ love for His people.

GOMER

What is the point of God telling Hosea to marry a prostitute?

How does Hosea model God to the unfaithful Israelites?

PORTRAIT OF THE DOWNWARD SPIRAL OF SIN

1. Starts with _____.
2. Acts of sin lead to _____.
3. Downward spiral is sped by _____.
4. Who are caught in our downward spiral? _____
5. How does Hosea describe people who have become thoroughly sinful?
6. Eventually, _____ becomes impossible. Why?

WHAT NEW TESTAMENT IMAGERY CARRIES HOSEA'S IMAGERY FORWARD?

2 Cor 11:2

Eph 1:4

Revelation 19:6-9

QUESTION OF HOSEA

1. _____
2. _____

MEMORY VERSE FOR THE WEEK

“Come, let us return to the Lord; for he has torn us, that he may heal us; he has struck us down, and he will bind us up” (Hosea 6:1).

QUESTIONS

Head

1. What are some other object lessons other than marrying a prostitute that can help drive home the point of our faithlessness and God’s willingness to forgive?

Heart

2. How did you feel as Hosea goes back and forth between judgment and forgiveness? Did the rhythm show you anything?
3. Think back over those times when you have not been willing to forgive. What did it feel like? What drove you

to that point? How did you feel as you continued in that state?

4. In contrast to our lack of willingness to forgive, think back over those times when God surprised you with his willingness to forgive. What was different between your situation and God's behavior?

5. I am sure we have all experienced the downward spiral of sin. As I list the different stages, what did each feel like? What kept you from breaking out of the spiral into forgiveness?
 - a. Idolatry

 - b. Luxury

 - c. Children

 - d. "Useless"

 - e. Forgiveness is impossible without judgment

Hands

6. Have you ever seen a perfect husband (or wife) who is willing to forgive anything? How do your situations here help the group understand the character of God?

7. Individually we are not married to Christ, but together we are the bride of Christ. Ladies, help the men understand what this is like.

24

Righteousness and Faith

Habakkuk

INTRODUCTION

What are the dates of Habakkuk's ministry?

HABAKKUK'S FIRST QUESTION (1:2-11)

What is his question?

What is God's answer?

What bothered Habakkuk about God’s answer?

HABAKKUK’S SECOND QUESTION (1:12-2:1)

What is God’s answer?

What is the important and difficult part of God’s answer in 2:3?

WHAT IS THE CENTRAL QUESTION OF THE BOOK?

What do I mean by “promise”? _____

What do I mean by “fulfillment”? _____

WHAT IS THE CENTRAL ANSWER OF THE BOOK?

How do we generally think of “faith”?

Romans 1:17; Galatians 3:11

What does God mean when He talks not about “faith” but “faithfulness”?

Hebrews 10:36-39

WHAT IS THE MOST BASIC, FUNDAMENTAL THING THAT GOD REQUIRES OF HIS DISCIPLES?

MEMORY VERSE FOR THE WEEK

“The righteous shall live by his faith” (Habakkuk 2:4).

QUESTIONS

Head

1. What is the “Problem of Evil”? What are some examples you have personally experienced?
2. Have you ever seen God use an evil person/thing to punish another evil person/thing? What did you think of it at that time? After reflection, would you think differently of it now?

Heart

3. Has God ever asked you to believe something, even though years later you still have not seen the fulfillment of his promise? What are some things you can do to help yourself continue in your faith over the years?
4. What are some ways in which you have struggled to be faithful to God?

Hands

5. What are ways in which the world tells us God is wrong and we are challenged to believe God is right? This is the hard question. Try to be specific, thinking of whatever situation you live in – school, neighborhood, work, etc.
6. What does a life permeated with faith look like?

25

The New Covenant

Jeremiah and Ezekiel

INTRODUCTION

JEREMIAH'S THEME OF THE _____

In dealing with sin, Jeremiah understands that you must start with the _____ and that _____ is important but secondary.

What does Jeremiah understand about the heart:

NEW AND OLD COVENANTS

How are they similar?

How are they different?

1. Power to:

2. Power to:

EZEKIEL AND GOD'S SPIRIT

How does Ezekiel's teaching on God's Spirit help us understand the New Covenant?

How does the valley of dry bones help us understand God's Spirit?

Why are the bones "dry"?

NEW COVENANT AND JESUS

What is the relationship between the Lord's Supper (Communion) and the Passover?

When was God's Spirit poured out?

THE NEW COVENANT IS ABOUT _____

MEMORY VERSE FOR THE WEEK

"I will put my law within them, and I will write it on their hearts. And I will be their God, and they shall be my people" (Jeremiah 31:33).

QUESTIONS

Head

1. What are some examples in your own life that show how the heart is primary, and that actions follow the heart? Does your family understand this concept?

Heart

2. It is hard to think that apart from Christ the heart – the center of our will and emotions – is wicked. For those

who are Christians, look back to what you were like and reflect on this truth.

3. If God's Spirit has the ability to breathe life into a valley of dry bones, he has the power to breathe spiritual life into your friends, especially those for whom you have been praying for a long time or perhaps seem unapproachable. How does Ezekiel give you new strength to continue in your prayer and witnessing to them?
4. How did Christ's work on the cross and the Spirit's work at Pentecost bring about the New Covenant? How is that work replicated in your own life?

Hands

5. While it is the Holy Spirit's job to convict the non-Christian of their sin – the evilness of their heart – how would you go about discussing this fact with a non-believer? Without acknowledging this, it is doubtful they will ever accept the necessity of a new heart.
6. Only God has the power to truly change the human heart, and without that change everyone is doomed to hell. How can you explain this to others?
7. How does God want you to be involved in his work of changing people's hearts and lives?

26

Confession and Faith

Lamentations

WHAT IS A LAMENT?

What is the primary thing being said in the lament?

What is the basic structure of Lamentations?

AUTHENTIC CONFESSION BEGINS WITH _____.

The other word we use for this is _____.

AUTHENTIC CONFESSION INCLUDES HONESTY ABOUT _____

What must happen before someone can confess sin?

Who is never blamed for the sin and punishment?

THE CENTER OF THE LAMENT IS _____

Our hope is not based on _____ but on what we _____
_____ to be true.

WHAT ABOUT GOD GIVES JEREMIAH HOPE?

- 1. _____
- 2. _____
- 3. _____
- 4. _____

CONFESSION IN THE MIDST OF PAIN

MEMORY VERSE FOR THE WEEK

"The steadfast love of the LORD never ceases; his mercies never come to an end; they are new every morning; great is your faithfulness" (Lamentation 3:22-23).

QUESTIONS

Head

1. Have you ever known sin to go unpunished? Has there ever been sin without consequences? We know ultimately all sin will be fully punished at judgment, but doesn't most of it get punished to some degree while the person is still alive?
2. What happens when you are not honest about sin and its obvious devastation? Can you think of a time in which you tried to ignore it and it wouldn't go away?

Heart

3. Have you ever seen true lamenting? How did it make sin and confession more real to you?

4. Have you ever sat down and given thought and structure to your pain before expressing it? If you have been a little more deliberate, would it have had any different impact on you?

5. It is part of our basic makeup to play the victim, to blame anyone and anything except for ourselves. How can we learn to be absolutely, painfully honest about our own responsibility in our own sin and the God-ordained punishment?

Hands

6. Has blaming God ever helped you? How can you help someone who is in the midst of pain and blaming God to direct attention to himself or herself?

7. Think through some difficult time in your life, perhaps even right now, and discuss how affirming your faith in God in the midst of pain would be the right and best and most helpful thing to do.

27

Jesus' Birth

Luke 2:1-14

<i>Promise</i>	<i>(content)</i>	<i>Fulfillment</i>
Adam & Eve		
Abraham		
David		
Micah		
Isaiah		

MARY DOES BECOME PREGNANT

Luke 1:50

JESUS' BIRTH

Luke 2:1-7

Announced to angels (Luke 2:8-14)

Distinction of 2:14?

WHO THEN IS THIS BABY JESUS?

1. _____

2. _____

NOT ENOUGH TO KNOW THE FACTS

A. _____

B. _____

C. _____

MEMORY VERSE FOR THE WEEK

"Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace among those with whom he is pleased!" (Luke 2:14).

QUESTIONS

Head

1. Do you or anyone you know struggle with the idea of the virgin birth? If you or they believe in God, why do you think this is an obstacle for some?
2. Jesus came to save us from our sins. Do you think you need to be saved from your sins? If not, then what can you give in exchange for your sin and soul?
3. In what ways is the presence of God a blessing beyond compare?

Heart

4. How does it encourage you to know that God made promises centuries before Jesus was born, and that he kept his word?
5. How can you know for sure that you have received God's mercy and are now at peace with him?

Hands

6. What has Jesus done for you that was possible only because he is both God and human?

28

John the Baptist

Matthew 3

JOHN THE BAPTIST

What is the significance of John growing up in the wilderness?

What is the significance of John's clothing?

Why would the Jewish leaders not like his message of repentance and be baptized?

JOHN'S BAPTISM

What is a proselyte? _____

What is the significance of a proselyte's baptism? _____

JOHN'S CONFLICT WITH THE JEWISH LEADERS

What is the connection between repentance and good fruit?

Why would the Jewish leaders not have thought repentance is important?

JOHN WAS PREPARING THE WAY FOR ANOTHER

WHAT ARE THE TWO KINDS OF PEOPLE?

1. _____

2. _____

CHALLENGE: WHICH ONE ARE YOU?

MEMORY VERSE FOR THE WEEK

"I baptize you with water for repentance, but he who is coming after me is mightier than I, whose sandals I am not worthy to carry. He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and with fire" (Matthew 3:11).

QUESTIONS

Head

1. Every one of us, probably, to one extent or another, thinks that we deserve to be saved. What could some of those reasons be?
2. If you do not think that you deserve to be saved, what events in your life and what teachings helped you understand this?
3. How is John's baptism like Christian baptism? (I didn't say it in the sermon, but John's baptism is the model for Christian baptism.)

Heart

4. What promises from Scripture are especially important to you? How does knowing what God has promised to do affect how you live your life here and now?
5. Have you ever experienced “true repentance” and it hasn’t shown, in one way or another, in your life? What are ways that true repentance has shown itself in your life?

Hands

6. How can we talk about the necessity of fruit without becoming a legalistic church? How can we keep from thinking our “fruit” earns us favor with God?
7. Many people in the church have been taught that it is okay to be a “carnal” Christian, that it is okay to live in sin because you did, at one time, raise your hand or prayed the “sinner’s prayer.” How can we start to fix this problem, again, without becoming legalistic and judgmental?

29

Nicodemus and Rebirth

John 3:1-16

3 THINGS WE KNOW ABOUT NICODEMUS

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____

NECESSITY OF REBIRTH (3:3)

What would Nicodemus believe about entering God's kingdom?

In your own words, summarize what it means to be "born again."

CLARIFICATION OF REBIRTH (3:5)

Define "Born of water": _____

Define "Born of the Spirit": _____

FLESH AND SPIRIT (3:6)

Define "flesh": _____

Define "spirit": _____

Why is it important to emphasize the difference between the two?

DRIVE THE POINT HOME (3:7-8)

What is the pun with “wind” and “sound”?

HOW IS THIS POSSIBLE? (3:16)

Define the following:

“Only Son” _____

“Whoever” _____

“Believes in(to)” _____

“Eternal life” (“life of the age”) _____

MEMORY VERSE FOR THE WEEK

“For God so loved the world, that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life” (John 3:16).

QUESTIONS

Head

1. What are some practical illustrations of how people think they can move smoothly into God's kingdom?
2. Being "born again" is such a common metaphor that people often forget how powerful an image it is. What are some ways in which you can be reminded of its basic message – that life must start over?
3. What are some examples of God's cleansing power in conversion?
4. What are some examples of God's renewing power in conversion?

Heart

5. What characteristics of the "life of the age" do you most relish on earth? Which ones do you look forward to the most in heaven?

Hands

6. How can we help people see that they can never move from flesh to spirit without God?

7. How can we help people think of “believing in(to)” Christ not as an isolated event but more in terms of “abiding” in Christ?

30

Beatitudes

Matthew 5:1-10

INTRODUCTION

What is the essence of the sermon? _____

Define "blessed" _____

1. BLESSED ARE THE _____ (5:3)

Define "poor in spirit": _____

Why is this the fundamental characteristic of disciples? _____

Why is this the characteristic of every disciple? _____

Define "Kingdom of God" _____

**DEFINE THE ESSENCE OF THE REMAINING
BEATITUDES IN THE "GOLDEN CHAIN"**

2. Blessed are the _____ (5:4)

3. Blessed are the _____ (5:5)

4. Blessed are those who _____ (5:6)

5. Blessed are the _____ (5:7)

6. Blessed are the _____ (5:8)

7. Blessed are the _____ (5:9)

8. Blessed are you when you are _____ (5:10)

IS THIS TOO DIFFICULT?

MEMORY VERSE FOR THE WEEK

“Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven” (Matthew 5:3).

QUESTIONS

Head

1. Define “poor in spirit” in your own words. What does it look like in day-to-day living?
2. Give examples of the difference between confession and contrition.

Heart

3. Are you truly willing to be counter-cultural? Are you willing to come out from among the people and be different? What would stop you?
4. In your own life, how does the first beatitude show itself to be fundamental, basic, to all you do?

5. What does “hungering” and “thirsting” after God’s righteousness look like in daily living? Are you satisfied in God? Are you nibbling and sipping?

Hands

6. Think of some situations in your daily life where you are called to be a peacemaker, but you are struggled knowing whether it was peace at all costs.
7. What would motivate you to “rejoice and be glad” when you are persecuted because of your hunger and thirst for God’s righteousness? What might this look like, practically?

31

The Lord's Prayer

Matthew 7

PRAYER STARTS WITH A PROPER VIEW OF GOD

"Our"

"Father" (Abba)

Balance with "in heaven"

PRAYER FOCUSES FIRST ON GOD

First of two basic truths:

1. "May your name be holy" _____
2. "May your kingdom come" _____

Personal meaning

"Maranatha"

3. "May your will be done ..." _____

Why are these frightening imperatives?

PRAYER FOCUSES NEXT ON OUR DEPENDENCE

4. Physical needs: _____

5. Spiritual needs: _____

What must I do to be forgiven?

6. Moral needs: _____

WITH WHOM ARE YOU OBSESSED?

HOW CAN WE PRAY "LIKE THIS"?

MEMORY VERSE FOR THE WEEK

"Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name. Your kingdom come, your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread, and forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors. And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil" (Matthew 6:9-13).

QUESTIONS

Head

1. As we look at our own prayers, what are we saying about the character of God? Who do our prayers show him to be? List both positive and negative examples.

Heart

2. Do you struggle with the idea of God being a father? Why? What can we do to help you have a helpful, positive view of God?
3. Do you struggle with the idea of God being majestic and awe-inspiring? Why? What can we do to help you have a balanced view of God?
4. Is there anyone I have not forgiven? Is there anyone who has sinned against me, who hasn't even admitted the sin, but yet one whom I am called to forgive, as Christ forgave those crucifying him and as Stephen forgave those stoning him?

Hands

5. What am I doing in my day-to-day life that proclaims God's holiness, reign, and perfect will to those around me?
6. What am I doing in my day-to-day life that runs counter to my prayer for God's holiness, reign, and perfect will?
7. How do I balance working hard and yet trusting God to give me what I need?

32

Seeking God

Matthew 6:25-34

WE CAN WORRY ABOUT ANYTHING!

Nutshell: "A person who recognizes his spiritual poverty and therefore trusts in God's righteousness will replace worry with faith as he seeks hard after God."

MATTHEW 6:25

Why "therefore"?

Logic: because God has given us _____, He will
certainly _____ us.

TWO ILLUSTRATIONS FROM NATURE

1. _____

2. _____

On what fundamental truth are these illustrations based?

Do you and I see God at work in creation?

TWO MORE REASONS (VV 31-32)

1. _____

2. _____

Anxiousness can be "concern."

When is anxiousness wrong?

“SEEK FIRST” (V 33)

What is the promise?

LET’S NOT BE PRACTICING ATHEISTS

MEMORY VERSE FOR THE WEEK

“But seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things will be added to you” (Matthew 6:33).

QUESTIONS

Head

1. Give ten examples of times when you worried about something, and the worrying actually worked. Give ten examples of times when you worried about something, and it only made it worse.
2. How can we come to a deeper understanding of the fact that if we are the right type of person (e.g., “poor in spirit”), that “therefore” we will be able to live a life free from faithless worry?
3. What are ways in which God supernaturally sustains his creation in both mundane and unexpected ways?

Heart

4. What are some practical ways in which we seek for God? What tends to distract and discourage us from doing so?

Hands

5. How can we learn to see God in creation? What practical steps can we take? How does the secular world fight against us doing this?
6. Why do non-Christians (i.e., the "Gentiles") worry so much about the necessities of life? Does this give us any inroads in witnessing to them?
7. Have you ever known a believer for whom God did not provide sufficient food and clothing? Is there ever a time when God will not do so, and if so how would you deal with the situation?

33

The Deity of Christ

John 10:30

BACKGROUND OF JOHN 10

JOHN 10:30 "I AND THE FATHER ARE ONE"

What does Jesus not mean?

1. _____

2. _____

What does Jesus mean?

"TRINITY"

1. We believe God is _____

2. We believe God is _____

Different terms:

HELPS US UNDERSTAND OTHER PASSAGES

John 8:58

John 1:1

John 20:28

MORE THAN THEOLOGICAL CURIOSITY

Do we really believe this?

Life is a journey

MEMORY VERSE FOR THE WEEK

"I and the Father are one" (John 10:30).

QUESTIONS

Head

1. Although it is not a central part of the sermon, it is interesting to think about election. Some of you may come from traditions that don't preach it, but it is throughout the Bible. Think through all the advantages of knowing that God's sheep were given to Jesus to save and that no one lives unprotected.
2. In what ways are Jesus and his Father different? It is helpful to read John 5-10 to answer this question and Tuesday's.
3. In what ways are Jesus and his Father the same?

4. How can you try to describe the Trinity? How will you make allowances for the inadequacy of all language and analogy to describe God?

5. How does the fact that Jesus is the Great "I AM" help us understand the truth of the "I am" sayings?

Heart

6. What are some things that have happened in your life to help you see the greatest and wonder and divinity of Christ?

Hands

7. How would our lifestyles change if we really believed Jesus is God, and our sin wasn't sanding at the door fighting against this belief?

34

Discipleship

Mark 8:31-38

PETER'S CONFESSION (8:31-33)

THESIS STATEMENT (8:34)

"COME AFTER ME ... FOLLOW ME"

"DENY HIMSELF"

What does it not mean? _____

What does it mean? _____

"TAKE UP YOUR CROSS"

JESUS CONTINUES IN VV 34-37

WHAT WILL A SELF-CENTERED LIFE COST YOU? (V 38)

What does it mean to be ashamed of someone?

What does it mean for Jesus to be ashamed of you at judgment?

DON'T WATER DOWN THE IDEA OF "ASHAMED"

MEMORY VERSE FOR THE WEEK

"If anyone would come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross and follow me" (Mark 8:34).

QUESTIONS

Head

1. I believe this is one of the most important set of reflection questions I will ever hand out. Please be sure to think through the issues raised by the biblical passage.
2. What terminology do you use to describe the process of becoming, being, and dying as a Christian? Are they biblical? Are they accurate?
3. How can we help ourselves and others think through the fact that as Christians and believers we are primarily "disciples," "follower"?

Heart

4. What are the hardest things in your life to deny?
5. Discipleship is a matter of life and death (Mark 8:36-37). Why do you think we tend to gamble with our life by sloughing off on our discipleship?

6. How can this type of passage lead you to despair? How will you prevent that?

Hands

7. What does it look like to “take up your cross”? Do you think we really do this?
8. I am sure that in all of us there are unbiblical notions floating around, especially when it relates to this issue of discipleship and salvation. How can we become sensitive to this?

35

The Greatest Commandment

Mark 12:28-34

INTRODUCTION

GREATEST COMMANDMENT

Quotes the _____ (Deut 6:4-9)

1. IS YOUR LOVE OF GOD _____ ?

Differences

What does it look like?

Love and obedience (John 14:15) "Love," not " _____ ."

2. IS YOUR LOVE OF GOD _____ ?

Our tendency is to _____ .

1. Loving the _____ is not loving God.

2. Loving _____ is not loving God.

WHICH COMMANDMENT (SINGULAR)?

You can't love God without at the same time

_____ (John 12:31b)

Our tendency is to love _____ .

"The text this morning is, " _____ ."

The greatest commandment is to _____ .

MEMORY VERSE FOR THE WEEK

“You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind and with all your strength,” and “you shall love your neighbor as yourself” (Mark 12:30-31).

QUESTIONS

Head

1. Ask yourself (or your family) what is the most important thing you can possibly do. This may be a moot point after the sermon, but walk through the discussion. Encourage them to be honest. Have they even thought about their priorities?
2. When you think of love being an emotion (along with other things), what ideas do you associate with it? Good or bad associations?
3. Define what it means to love a spouse, child, parent, or good friend. Try to get some definition to the idea of “love.”
4. Define what it means for God to love you. You will probably want to use a concordance.

Heart

5. What does it specifically look like for you to love God?

Hands

6. What good things related to God do you tend to love instead of God himself?
7. How will God's love for you move through your love to him and out to other people? How will you love your neighbor, friends, brothers and sisters?

36

Eschatology

Matthew 24-25

WHAT ARE THE DISCIPLES' TWO QUESTIONS?

1. _____
2. _____

ANSWER TO QUESTION 1 (TEMPLE'S DESTRUCTION)

False signs _____ (24:4-8)

First sign _____ (24:9-14)

Second sign _____ (24:15-20)

Temple's destruction _____ (24:15-20)

Difficulty of vv 21-22: _____

False prophets and Jesus' public return _____ (24:23-28)

ANSWER TO QUESTION 2 (JESUS' RETURN)

Tribulation will end without warning (24:29-31).

What has to happen before Jesus comes back?

REVIEW OF THE SIGNS OF THE TWO EVENTS

1. Destruction of temple (24:32-35)

2. Jesus return (24:36)

SERIES OF THREE PASSAGES ABOUT JESUS' RETURN

1. Unawares (24:37-44)
2. Sooner than you think (24:45-51)
3. Later than you think (24:45-51)

HOW WILL YOU PREPARE FOR HIS COMING?

1. Parable of the Talents (25:14-30)
2. Final Judgment (25:31-46)

ARE YOU READY?

MEMORY VERSE FOR THE WEEK

"Well done, good and faithful servant. You have been faithful over a little; I will set you over much. Enter into the joy of your master" (Matthew 25:21).

QUESTIONS

Head

1. Read Matthew 24-25 with your sermon notes. Mark your Bibles as to what question is being answered or discussed.
2. Are you experiencing tribulation for your faith? If not, it is helpful to read about the fate of Christians in other countries where they are dying for Christ. If you have children, make sure they know about this.
3. How can we avoid being tricked by false prophets and false Christ's? (Hint: the latter question is easier than the former.)

HEART

4. How will your master respond to your handling of his wealth?
5. How will your master respond to your handling of the time he has given you?

Hands

6. Try to imagine what it will be like when God's angels comes, without warning or advance notice, to gather you to Christ. How will you feel about your neighbors and friends?
7. What can we as a church do to encourage one another to be faithful stewards? What do you think about the 10% we tithe to outreach and missions as a church?

37

The Holy Spirit

John 14

UPPER ROOM DISCOURSE

JOHN 14:16-17

What does "Paraclete" mean? _____

World cannot recognize the Holy Spirit.

So how can they learn?

How does the Holy Spirit do this?

JOHN 14:25-26

1. Speaks _____

2. Through _____

Special promise for the 11 disciples: _____

John 16:4b-15

CONVICT THE WORLD

1. Convict the world of _____

2. Convict the world of _____

3. Convict the world of _____

WHEN WE BECOME DISCIPLES OF JESUS

MEMORY VERSE FOR THE WEEK

“When he comes, he will convict the world concerning sin and righteousness and judgment” (John 16:8).

QUESTIONS

Head

1. Do you think of the Holy Spirit as God, as equal in essence and perfection with the Father and the Son? Or do you think of him as an impersonal force? How can we change this?

Heart

2. How does it help you deal with the issues of life knowing that the Holy Spirit is on your side, fighting for you, and will never leave?
3. How does it free you up knowing that it is not your job to convict the world of sin? In what ways do we try to do the Holy Spirit's job?
4. When has the Holy Spirit whispered to you? Were you listening? Did you obey?

5. When has the Holy Spirit hit you over the head? Were you listening? Did you obey?

Hands

6. Share how you have seen the Holy Spirit convict someone of their sin.
7. Share how you have seen the Holy Spirit convict someone of their need for Christ' righteousness.

38

The Lord's Supper

1 Corinthians 11:23-26

BACKGROUND OF THE PASSOVER

Exodus 12:3-4, 6-8, 11-13

Covenant (agreement) at Mount Sinai

PROMISE OF A "NEW" COVENANT

Jeremiah 31:31-34

Ezekiel 36:26-27

JESUS REINTERPRETS THE PASSOVER

1 Corinthians 11:23-26

CONTROVERSIES

1. "This is my body"

"Transubstantiation" _____

"Consubstantiation" _____

"Spiritual presence" _____

2. Name

a. _____

b. _____

c. _____

3. How to celebrate it

THREE TIME FRAMES OF COMMUNION

1 Cor 11:26

a. _____

b. _____

c. _____

PICTURE OF THE CHRISTIAN LIFE

1. _____ part

2. _____ part

3. _____ part

MEMORY VERSE FOR THE WEEK

“For as often as you eat this bread and drink the cup, you proclaim the Lord’s death until he comes” (1 Cor 11:26).

QUESTIONS

Head

1. What are some specific ways in which we can use the Lord’s Supper as a time to teach our children (and ourselves) of God’s faithfulness and salvation?
2. How often do you think we should celebrate Passover? Don’t answer from tradition but from a theological understanding of the event.

Heart

3. In practical terms, what does it look like for God’s Spirit to have written God’s law on our hearts?
4. How does communion help you look to the past, present, and future, practically speaking?

HANDS

5. How can we conduct Communion such that it does not become a meaningless ritual? How can we encourage one another to look through the bread and cup to the body and blood of Christ?

6. It is easy to over-emphasize one aspect of the gospel over another. The picture in Communion helps us balance God's work and our participation. What does that look like in everyday terms for you?

39

Jesus' Death and Resurrection

ALL HISTORY IS HEADING TOWARD GOOD FRIDAY

Creation, Leviticus, and Abraham

Isaiah (53:4-6), Jeremiah and Ezekiel

Passover

DEATH AND RESURRECTION

What is the significance of the ripped veil?

Why could the grave not hold Jesus?

WHAT DOES THIS RESURRECTION LIFE LOOK LIKE?

1. _____

1 Corinthians 15:17

2. _____

1 Peter 1:3

3. _____

Romans 7:4

4. _____

1 Corinthians 6:14

1 Corinthians 15:54-57

5. _____

Hebrews 9:28

Revelation 21:1-4

ARE YOU READY?

A. _____

B. _____

C. _____

MEMORY VERSE FOR THE WEEK

“If Christ has not been raised, your faith is futile and you are still in your sins” (1 Corinthians 15:17).

QUESTIONS

Head

1. List as many Old Testament promises as you can that were fulfilled by Jesus on the cross.

Heart

2. How does Jesus' resurrection help you understand that fact that you are can be forgiven?
3. How does Jesus' resurrection help you understand that fact that you can be born again?
4. How does Jesus' resurrection help you understand that fact that you can become more like Jesus?
5. How does Jesus' resurrection help you understand that fact that you also can be raised from the dead and live forever with your Creator?

Hands

6. Think of the temple veil being torn in two. How does that impact how you live your daily lives?
7. What are the "ABC's" of salvation?

40

Great Commission

Matthew 28:16-20

BACKGROUND

What is the dominant emphasis of this paragraph?

"ALL AUTHORITY HAS BEEN GIVEN TO ME"

"GO THEREFORE AND MAKE DISCIPLES"

God's will?

What does "therefore" mean?

Does the Great Commission apply to you?

1. "BAPTIZING THEM"

Evangelism: people _____ disciples

Are you an evangelist?

2. "TEACHING THEM TO OBSERVE ALL"

Starts with _____

"All things _____"

_____ as well as doctrine

GREAT COMMISSION STARTS:

1. _____

2. _____

3. _____

4. _____

JESUS' ENCOURAGEMENT

MEMORY VERSE FOR THE WEEK

"All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age" (Matthew 28:18-20).

QUESTIONS

Head

1. What would it take for you to teach "all" that Jesus has taught? Or to be honest, do we think that is the role of the pastor and elders?

Heart

2. So often we become fearful when presented with the opportunity to share Christ with someone. How would the statement of Jesus' authority encourage you?

3. Do we really see God as sovereign, even over the little things? Aren't there things out of control in our world? Please don't give the "churchy" answer.

4. Have you rationalized the Great Commission such that you feel making new disciples doesn't apply to you? How can you be an evangelist even without the gift of evangelism?

Hands

5. How have you seen God's sovereignty over:
 - a. the natural world?

 - b. the spiritual world?

 - c. world religions?

 - d. every person?

6. In light of that, why do we still question his sovereignty when we are in the midst of challenging times?

7. How have you taught people to observe? What experiences have you had modeling this part of the Commission?
 - a. Family

 - b. Friends

 - c. Nations

41

Pentecost

Acts 2

INTRODUCTION TO ACTS 2

FULFILLMENT OF JESUS' PROMISE (ACTS 2:1-4)

What is the difference in how the Holy Spirit was given before and after Pentecost?

What are the three signs of the giving of the Spirit?

1. _____

2. _____

3. _____

PEOPLES' AMAZEMENT (2:5-11)

Why does Luke emphasize all the different languages and dialects? How does it relate to Acts 1:8?

SECULAR EXPLANATION (1:12-13)

Why was the solution of drunkenness so obviously wrong?

PETER'S EXPLANATION (2:14-21)

"KERYGMA" (1:22-39)

1. _____

2. _____

3. _____

4. _____

WORLD'S ANSWERS TO THE QUESTION

1. _____

2. _____

EVANGELICAL ANSWER

What does "evangelical" mean? _____

Define repentance

1. _____

2. _____

What is baptism?

MEMORY VERSE FOR THE WEEK

“Repent and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins, and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit” (Acts 2:38).

QUESTIONS

Head

1. How are you with the speaker’s exegesis that the tongues in Acts 2 are unlearned, human languages? If not, explain to the group (if you are in one) as to why.

2. It is critical that you remember the four parts to the kerygma. It will inform much of what you believe and do. For review, they are:

a. _____

b. _____

c. _____

d. _____

3. How would you tell someone unfamiliar with the gospel what each of these four parts mean? Don't use Christian-type language; your audience may not understand it.

a. _____

b. _____

c. _____

d. _____

Heart

4. In your own words, what does it mean to repent of who you thought Jesus was (before conversion)? So often we think of "repentance" as being from bad actions, but here Peter is primarily concerned with who we think Jesus is. What are the ramifications in your own life and understanding of the gospel?

Hands

5. If someone objects to the notion that they have to repent, that who they are isn't good enough to gain access to God, what would you say?

42

The Church

WHAT IS THE "CHURCH"?

The church is not _____

Working definition: _____

1. CHRIST IS THE _____ OF THE CHURCH

Colossians 1:18

Ephesians 1:20-22

Emphasis of this metaphor is that Jesus is:

Often forgotten

2. WE ARE THE _____ OF CHRIST

1 Corinthians 12

Why does Christ's body have different parts?

We work together for the _____

This leads to _____ (Ephesians 4:1-6,13)

How to do this? _____ (Romans 8:5-6)

3. THE CHURCH IS A _____

Qualification:

God is into:

a. _____

b. _____

Look like? _____ (Hebrews 10:24)

4. WE ARE THE _____ OF GOD

1. _____

2. _____

What does worship look like? (Revelation 5:6-14)

What does holiness look like?

We work together for the _____ .

MEMORY VERSE FOR THE WEEK

“There is one body and one Spirit—just as you were called to the one hope that belongs to your call— one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of all, who is over all and through all and in all” (Ephesians 4:4-6).

QUESTIONS

Head

1. What are some ideas or terms that you have used to describe the church that are not based in the New Testament? How does thinking the building is the church move you away from biblical thinking?
2. How have you seen the headship of Christ in a church maintained or ignored? How could a biblical understanding of church have helped to solve the problem?
3. List all the different needs of Christ’s body that are currently being met. This should encourage you.
4. List all the different needs of Christ’s body that are currently not being met. This should challenge you.

Heart

5. What will help you move into the worship service of Revelation 5? What keeps you from it?

Hands

6. What are some practical steps we can take to “stir up one another to love and good works”? How can we encourage one another not to set our mind on the things of the flesh – give examples other than TV and movies – and how can we encourage one another to set out mind of the things of the Spirit? What dog are you going to feed?

43

Justification by Faith

Romans 1 - 3

HISTORICAL CONTEXT

THESIS – ROMANS 1:16-17

“Gospel” _____

“Power of God” _____

“Salvation” possible _____

"Everyone who believes" _____

Why would I be ashamed?

"Righteousness"

1. _____

2. _____

How are we made righteous?

NONE IS RIGHTEOUS APART FROM CHRIST (1:18-3:20)

"General revelation" _____ (1:18-32)

Includes the Jews _____ (2:1-3:8)

Conclusion _____ (3:9-20)

HEART OF THE GOSPEL (3:21-26)

Gospel shows we are made righteous by:

a. _____

b. _____

c. _____

"Redemption":

a. _____

b. _____

"Propitiation" (*hilasterion*):

a. _____

b. _____

c. _____

Received by faith

MEMORY VERSE FOR THE WEEK

“For I am not ashamed of the gospel, for it is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes, to the Jew first and also to the Greek. For in it the righteousness of God is revealed from faith for faith, as it is written, ‘The righteous shall live by faith’ ” (Romans 1:16-17).

QUESTIONS

Head

1. What does God’s righteousness look like? How would you describe it to a child or non-Christian?
2. Why is there salvation in no other name than Jesus?

Heart

3. What is there about the gospel that causes us to be embarrassed? How does that embarrassment show itself in daily life, especially in the little things?

4. How does knowing that the resurrecting power of God is flowing through the words of the gospel encourage you in your life and sharing?

Hands

5. What are ways in which you have seen others, perhaps subconsciously, trying to earn their salvation by works and not by faith? What about you?
6. What are some success stories of people who have relied on faith to be made righteous? What does that look like in day-to-day existence?
7. How will you explain to the “nice non-Christian” that their heart is dark and ugly in Christ’s eyes? When you answer, be thinking of a specific person.

44

The Grace of Giving

2 Corinthians 8 - 9

INTRODUCTION

Define "grace": _____

1. Grace that: _____

Ephesians 2:8-9

2. Grace that: _____

1 Corinthians 15:10

Titus 2:11-14

ONE WAY GOD'S GRACE SHOWS ITSELF: _____

2 Corinthians 8-9

SETS THE STAGE (8:1)

Macedonian's testing (8:2-4)

How were they tested?

a. _____

b. _____

How had they proved themselves?

a. _____

b. _____

Paul us to "Prove it!" (8:8)

HOW WERE THEY ABLE TO GIVE GENEROUSLY?

2 Cor 8:5

2 Cor 9:10

2 Cor 9:13

ULTIMATE GOAL?

MEMORY VERSE FOR THE WEEK

"God is able to make all grace abound to you, so that having all sufficiency in all things at all times, you may abound in every good work" (2 Corinthians 9:8).

QUESTIONS

Head

1. Have we set discussion of wealth and possessions to the side and made it an untouchable? Are you sure? If so,

why, and how can we reverse this situation?

2. How do you feel about “proving” your faith? To whom do we prove it? Should we?

Heart

3. Give examples in your life of how God’s grace saves. Do the same with God’s sustaining grace. Make sure you understand the concept.
4. We often use our own lack of money as an excuse not to give. How can we forever dismiss this excuse?
5. Are you taking, or taking and giving?

Hands

6. How can we stir up one another to the good work of understanding our need of God’s sustaining grace?
7. How can we, like the Macedonian Christians, learn to give generously, using the biblical principles in 2 Corinthians 8-9?

45

Christian Joy

Romans 5-8

INTRODUCTION

What is the connection between chapters 1-4 and 5-8?

Romans: Joy of our Reconciliation

1. _____

2. _____

“Hope”

“Glory”

a. _____

b. _____

3. _____

ROMANS 6: SANCTIFICATION

4. _____

5. _____

ROMANS 7: FREEDOM

6. _____

ROMANS 8: HOLY SPIRIT

7. _____

8. _____

9. _____

MEMORY VERSE FOR THE WEEK

“For I am sure that neither death nor life, nor angels nor rulers, nor things present nor things to come, nor powers, nor height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord” (Romans 8:38-39).

QUESTIONS

Head

1. Give practical examples of how our hope, our “confident anticipation,” helps us endure through difficult times.
2. It is easy to turn chapter 6 into a negative set of Do’s and Don’ts. How can we express the fact that we have been set free from sin and have become slaves of Jesus as a positive, joyous thing?
3. How can we change our way of thinking such that we see ourselves as part of God’s family, groaning for the finalization of the adoption process?

Heart

4. How can the objective reality of peace and reconciliation cut through the emotions of your life to give you stability in difficult times?
5. Why do we so often forget that God is for us, so who cares who is against us?

Hands

6. What are ways in which it is easy to get the order of justification and sanctification mixed up? How are you going to show people who say justification doesn't necessarily lead to sanctification that they are wrong?
7. How can you explain the concept of "glory" to other people? What is the difference between my glory and God's glory?

46

Humility

Philippians 2

INTRODUCTION

What was the problem in the Philippian church?

PHILIPPIANS 1:27

What does it mean to live “worthy” of the gospel?

Stand firm

How do we “stand firm”?

PHILIPPIANS 2:1-4

Define “same mind”

1. Agree on _____

2. Our lives must be characterized by _____

What is not humility?

What is humility?

HUMILIATION (2:6-8)

EXALTATION (2:9-11)

APPLICATION (2:12-13)

1. What does it mean to “work out your salvation”?
2. Why are we able to work it out?

MEMORY VERSE FOR THE WEEK

“Work out your own salvation with fear and trembling, for it is God who works in you, both to will and to work for his good pleasure” (Philippians 2:12-13).

Head

1. Share what it was like when you tried to live a life “worthy” of the gospel on your own strength. How does this look different from relying on the Lord’s strength?

Heart

2. Share what it was like when you tried to live a life “worthy” of the gospel on your own strength. How does this look different from relying on the Lord’s strength?
3. How does seeing Christ’s humiliation and exaltation encourage you toward humility?

Hands

4. What are some examples of how a church can lose focus on God and the gospel?
5. How can Tozer's metaphor of the tuning fork be applied at our church?
6. How can we help each other understand biblical humility, not a false servility but an honest desire to set the needs of others ahead of our own?
7. What are practical ways in which we can work out the consequences of our salvation, understanding that God has given us the desire and the ability to do so?

47

Scripture

2 Timothy 3:14 - 4:2a

"INSPIRATION OF SCRIPTURE"

"All"

"Scripture"

"Breathed out by God"

TWO IMPLICIT POINTS

1. _____

2. _____

DO YOU REALLY BELIEVE THIS? WHY?

1. _____

2. _____

3. _____

4. _____

SCRIPTURE IS THEREFORE PROFITABLE FOR:

1. _____

2. _____

3. _____

4. _____

ULTIMATE RESULT?

TWO APPLICATIONS

1. _____

2. _____

MEMORY VERSE FOR THE WEEK

"All Scripture is breathed out by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness, that the man of God may be competent, equipped for every good work" (2 Timothy 3:16-17).

QUESTIONS

Head

1. What parts of Scripture are easy for you to believe, and which ones are difficult?

2. Why do you believe the Bible comes from the very mouth of God? Do you? What do you think about these four reasons?
 - a. Who we learned it from

 - b. Convinced through life's experiences

 - c. Makes better sense than the alternatives

 - d. I simply believe it

Heart

3. Are there any personal actions, beliefs, or attitudes that might suggest you really don't believe all the Bible is from God?

4. Is it possible to believe the Bible comes from God and not let it be the authority in your life?

Hands

5. How would you explain the origin of Scripture to a non-Christian? In other words, how would you describe “breathed out by God”?
6. Will you rise to the biblical challenge and preach the word? What might this look like in your situation?

48

Assurance and Perseverance

Hebrews

SOLUTION TO THE PROBLEM

1. Teacher: _____

2. Pastor: _____

SUMMARY OF MESSAGE (1:1-3)

GREATER THAN ANGELS (1:4-14)

First warning (2:1)

GREATER THAN MOSES (3:1FF.)

Second warning (3:6b-14)

1. "Assurance"
2. Implicit warning

GREATER THAN THE HIGH PRIEST (4:14FF.)

Third warning (5:11ff.)

Basis of our assurance?

1. _____
2. _____

ENCOURAGEMENT OF 10:19-25

Fourth warning (10:26-31)

WHAT'S THE POINT?

1. Jesus is _____

2. Can have full _____

(John 10:27-29; Eph 1:13-14; 1 John 2:3-6; 3:6)

3. How do we relate to those whose lives are characterized by sin?

WHAT IF SOMEONE IS NOT SURE?

IS THIS A LIFE OF DRUDGERY OR JOY?

MEMORY VERSE FOR THE WEEK

“We share in Christ, if indeed we hold our original confidence firm to the end” (Hebrews 3:14).

QUESTIONS

Head

1. Can you come up with your own wording for the doctrines of perseverance and assurance?
2. What are some specific examples of how people have “drifted away” from their faith?

Heart

3. Review again the two bases of our assurance from Hebrews. What do these look like in your day-to-day life?
4. What were the other bases of assurance? What do they look like in your day-to-day life?

Hands

5. How can we encourage ourselves and others to see the glory and magnificence and pre-eminence of Christ such that to set our hearts on something else would be just plain foolish?

6. How are you going to balance your presentation of the believer's assurance, while at the same time showing the implicit warning?

7. Who in your life is drifting away from Christ? How are you going to talk with them? What objections will they raise? How will you answer them? I encourage you to role-play.

49

The Tongue

James

HOW DO PAUL AND JAMES USE "WORKS"?

1. Paul
2. James

THE TONGUE

How does James describe it?

Why is it so powerful?

WAYS TO RATIONALIZE GOSSIP AND SLANDER

1. It is _____

2. He _____ me

3. Feign _____

4. Pretend to be really _____

Cymbala, *Fresh Wind; Fresh Fire* (page 160)

SOLUTION

1. Start with our _____

2. Take every thought _____ (2 Cor 10:5)

3. Is a time and place to _____

One of the central struggles of the Christian walk

MEMORY VERSE FOR THE WEEK

“Faith by itself, if it does not have works, is dead” (James 2:17).

QUESTIONS

Head

1. Is it clear how Paul and James use the term “works” to mean different things? Define how each man uses it.
2. What are some examples of a tongue being “a world of unrighteousness ... restless evil, full of deadly poison”?
3. What are some examples of the tongue significantly affecting the entire course of a person’s life? Give both good and bad examples.

Heart

4. Has your tongue ever betrayed your heart? Share examples, and please be honest.

5. How can we work toward our hearts being full of grace, thankfulness, and humility? What are some examples of how this will affect our tongue?

Hands

6. Without falling into gossip and slander, what are some examples of things we have said that were true but hurtful? Have you ever responded to someone who hurt you by slandering them? How did it make you feel? Did it accomplish what you wanted it to do?
7. Share a time when you dealt with a person or situation without gossip, and in looking back realize that you did the right thing in the right way.

50

Suffering and Heaven

1 Peter

FUNDAMENTAL QUESTION OF LIFE

WE ARE _____ (1:1-2)

WHY ARE WE EXILES? (1:3A)

BENEFITS OF BEING BORN AGAIN

1. _____

2. _____

3. _____

What's the point?

THIS IS HOW WE HANDLE SUFFERING (1:6-9)

1. _____

2. _____

MEMORY VERSE FOR THE WEEK

"Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ! According to his great mercy, he has caused us to be born again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead" (1 Peter 1:3).

QUESTIONS

Head

1. Try to work through the emotion of the testimonial and list the basic points that Rick and Shelly make in their story of Scott. Notice that they did not dwell on his death but moved through it to evangelism and faith in God.
2. If you knew your green card (since you are a resident alien) was going to be cancelled next year and you were going to be deported, how would your life change today?

Heart

3. Are your “hopes” – the things you are confident in Christ that lie ahead for you – about which you are the most excited? Bless one another by sharing your hopes.
4. In what ways have you seen yourself guarded by God?
5. Are you living as if the earth is your home? How can that change?

Hands

6. While we are in the midst of pain, how can we remind ourselves that life (and its pain) is but for a moment?

7. What have you learned through painful experiences that probably could not have been learned any other way? As you look back on the event, perhaps years later, can you see how you were blessed in the midst of the pain and suffering?

51

Christian Love

1 John

WE ARE CALLED TO LOVE ONE ANOTHER (4:7-8)

World's definition: _____

How does the church define "love"?

Where do we start to define love?

"LOVE" IS DEFINED BY GOD (4:9-10)

"God is love"

Defined by 4:9 (John 3:16; 1 John 3:16)

Defined by 4:10 (*hilasterion*)

Not mystical but concrete

JOHN CALLS US TO LOVE AS GOD LOVES (4:11)

God's love _____ flow through us

What does it look like to have God's love flow through us?

1. _____

2. _____

3. _____

4. _____

JOHN SEES THE WORLD IN BLACK AND WHITE

MEMORY VERSE FOR THE WEEK

“No one born of God makes a practice of sinning, for God’s seed abides in him, and he cannot keep on sinning because he has been born of God” (1 John 3:9).

QUESTIONS

Head

1. How do you define “love”? How do you keep it separate from sentimentality?
2. What is God’s definition of “love”? How does that compare to our normal definition?
3. When the speaker say that love has a “concrete” definition, what does he mean?

Heart

4. “God’s love flows through us; it *must* flow through us.” How do you respond to this statement?

Hands

5. In the church, how do we keep “love” from being watered down to “like”?

6. This is such an easy topic to superficially pass over, so please be as concrete as possible. And as honest as possible. What are some concrete ways in which we should love one another?

52

Revelation

BIBLE IS ONE CONTINUOUS STORY

Genesis,. Sin, and Redemption

LAST BOOK OF THE DRAMA: REVELATION

"Apocalyptic"

Controversial

JOHN'S VISION ON PATMOS

Message

1. _____

2. _____

3. _____

"Eschatology is ethical"

VISION OF THE FUTURE

Throne room scene (4-5)

Seven seals (6)

Interlude (7)

a. Sealing of the 1440,000

b. Final judgment

Two more cycles (trumpets; bowls)

FINAL JUDGMENT (19-20)

WHAT ARE WE WAITING FOR? (21-22)

WE WERE CREATED FOR FELLOWSHIP

MEMORY VERSE FOR THE WEEK

“Behold, the dwelling place of God is with man. He will dwell with them, and they will be his people, and God himself will be with them as their God” (Revelation 21:3).

QUESTIONS

Head

1. Work through the overall structure of the Bible. Think of the major events and how they fit into the flow of the drama.
2. How can you describe something that has no earthly analogy? How can you describe something as magnificent as heaven? You have to make partial and incomplete comparisons. Look at some of the imagery in Revelation and see if you can figure out the realities that lies behind the images.
3. What are the three points I made about the central message of Revelation? Which of these truths have you already experienced in life? Can you picture yourself in the midst of Revelation?

Heart

4. How did it impact you when you heard that Jesus has sealed you, that he has set his mark of ownership and protection on each of his children?
5. Do you really believe in hell?

6. Who are you in love with? A God who is coming again, or this world? What is your most precious possession that is going to burn?

Hands

7. Is someone persecuting you right now? How do you feel about them burning in the lake of Fire?
8. Who do you know and care for that may end up in the Lake of Fire? How does that make you feel?