

Lesson One - The Scriptures

Proverbs 30:5-6 - *“Every word of God proves true; He is a shield to those who take refuge in Him. Do not add to His words, lest He rebuke you and you be found a liar.”*

Charles Spurgeon - “Nobody ever outgrows Scripture; the Book widens and deepens with our years.”

WHAT ARE THE SCRIPTURES?

The Christian Scriptures are made up of 66 separate books (39 Old Testament, and 27 New Testament), written over a period of more than 1,000 years, in three different languages (Hebrew, Greek, and a small amount in Aramaic), on three continents (Asia, Africa, and Europe). The more than 40 authors represent virtually every segment of society: Kings, peasants, philosophers, fishermen, poets, scholars, politicians, and prisoners. Stylistically, the Bible has a wide variety of literary approaches including: History, poetry, sermons, letters, geography, architecture, diaries, statistics, family trees, inventories, hymns, love stories, and numerous legal documents.

- **We do not believe that the Bible _____ the Word of God**
- **We believe that the Bible _____ the Word of God**

SCRIPTURE ON SCRIPTURE

Scripture makes many statements about itself, its purposes, and how it should be received. The following are some of the things that Scripture has to say about Scripture:

- Given, through men, by the inspiration of _____ (2 Timothy 3:16; 2 Peter 1:19-21)
- Not the words of _____, but the very words of _____ (1 Thessalonians 2:13)
- All we need to believe God (Luke 16:29-31)
- A way that guides our life (Proverbs 6:23)
- Pure (Psalms 12:6, 119:40)
- _____ (Psalms 119:160; John 17:17)
- Flawless (Proverbs 30:5-6)
- The Law of the Lord is _____ (Psalms 19:7)
- Effective (Isaiah 55:11)
- Precious (Psalms 19:10)
- Powerful (Hebrews 4:12)
- Not to be taken from, or added to (Deuteronomy 4:2, 12:32)
- For everyone (Romans 16:26)
- To be obeyed (James 1:22)
- Sweeter than honey (Psalms 119:103)
- A _____ to guide us (Psalms 119:105)
- Food for our soul (Jeremiah 15:16)
- A fire and a hammer (Jeremiah 23:29)
- A sword (Ephesians 6:17; Hebrews 4:12)
- A seed for salvation (James 1:21)
- Pure spiritual milk (1 Peter 2:2)

JESUS ON SCRIPTURE

By the time of Jesus' earthly ministry the entire Old Testament had been formed. Jesus often spoke of, and quoted, Old Testament Scripture. His teaching on this topic provides for us an example of how to apply Scripture to our own lives, as well as how we, ourselves, should view the Bible.

JESUS VIEWED OLD TESTAMENT NARRATIVES AS _____ OF _____
AND _____.

- Creation in Genesis 1 & 2 (Luke 11:51, Matthew 19:4-5, Mark 10:6-8)
- Abel (Luke 11:51)
- Noah (Matthew 24:37-39, Luke 17:26-27)
- Abraham (John 8:56), Lot (Luke 17:28-32)
- Isaac and Jacob (Matthew 8:11, Luke 13:28)
- Moses as lawgiver (Matthew 8:4, 19:8; Mark 1:44, 7:10, 10:5, 12:26; Luke 5:14, 20:37; John 5:46, 7:19)
- Sodom and Gomorrah (Matthew 10:15, 11:23-24; Luke 10:12)
- The manna (John 6:31, 49, 58)
- The wilderness serpent (John 3:14)
- The popularity of the false prophets (Luke 6:26)

In matters of controversy, Jesus appealed to the Old Testament (Matthew 5:17-20, 22:29, 23:2-3, 23:23; Mark 12:24)

JESUS VIEWED SCRIPTURE AS A FORM OF _____ IN TIMES OF CRISIS

While on an extended fast in the wilderness, Jesus depended on and drew strength from Scripture to resist the direct temptation of Satan (Matthew 4:1-11). Also, at the moment of His death on the cross, Jesus' thoughts and speech were focused on Old Testament Scriptures (Matthew 27:46, Mark 15:34, Luke 23:46).

FULFILLMENT OF OLD TESTAMENT

Jesus claimed that _____ Scriptures, including the Law, the Prophets, and the Psalms, were fulfilled in Him (Luke 24:25-47), and that the entire purpose of the Old Testament was to reveal Himself (John 5:39). Further, Jesus taught that Old Testament prophecy had been fulfilled in Him (Matthew 11:10, 26:24, 26:31; Mark 9:12-13, 14:21, 14:27; Luke 4:21, 7:27, 18:31-33, 21:22, 22:37, 24:25-27; John 5:39-47, 15:25, 17:12).

AUTHENTICATION OF OLD TESTAMENT AUTHORS

Some unnecessary controversy has arisen about the authorship of some of the Old Testament books. People who are educated beyond their intelligence, and have a low view of Scriptural authority, have questioned whether the authors of some of the Scriptures are telling the truth when they sign their name to their works. Jesus authenticated several of these authors by teaching that Scripture was authored by _____ (Mark 7:10), _____ (Matthew 13:14; Mark 7:6), _____ (Mark 12:36), and _____ (Matthew 24:15).

INFALLIBILITY AND TRUTH OF THE SCRIPTURES

Jesus taught that the Scripture could not be broken, and that every promise in the Old Testament would be accomplished (Matthew 5:1; Luke 16:17; John 10:35).

THE APOSTLES ON SCRIPTURE

The New Testament writers quote the Old Testament as sacred Scripture on roughly 300 occasions. The clear teaching of the Apostles in the New Testament was that the Scriptures are the very words of God. For example, Paul used the word Scripture and referred God's spoken word interchangeably (Galatians 3:8 cf. Genesis 12:3; Romans 9:17 cf. Exodus 9:6). The New Testament repeatedly teaches that what the Bible says is akin to what God says (Matthew 19:4-5 cf. Genesis 2:24; Hebrews 3:7 cf. Psalms 95:7; Acts 4:24-25 cf. Psalms 2:1; Acts 13:34 cf. 97:7; Hebrews 1:7 cf. Psalms 104:4), and Peter and Paul claimed that Scripture has dual authorship by both men and God (1 Corinthians 2:12-13; 1 Peter 1:10-12).

DOES SCRIPTURE CONTAIN ANY ERRORS OR CONTRADICTIONS?

Hebrews 6:18 - *"...it is impossible for God to lie..."*

GOD CANNOT _____ (2 Samuel 7:28; Titus 1:2; Hebrews 6:18). So all Scripture is true and without error or contradiction (Numbers 23:19; Psalms 12:6, 199:89, 96; Proverbs 30:5). The Bible also teaches the following truths:

- God's thoughts are much higher than ours (Isaiah 55:9)
- God has secrets that He, in His wisdom, has not revealed to anyone (Deuteronomy 29:29)
- We, in this life, see dimly (1 Corinthians 13:12)
- We tend to suppress the clear truth of God's Word because of our sin (Romans 1:18-19)

So, if it appears that there is a contradiction in Scripture, we must humbly assume that we (not God's Word) are somehow in error. Remembering that God leaves a provision for seeming "contradictions" by telling us that some things in His Word are very hard for us to understand (2 Peter 3:15-16). However, this does _____ mean that we cannot know truth. What it does mean is that we only know it in part (1 Corinthians 13:9), and must live by faith and trust in God.

HOW WERE THE 66 BOOKS OF THE BIBLE CHOSEN?

The _____, meaning "a measuring rod" is a standard that all Scriptural books must meet. All of the books of the Bible were authoritative, sharing traits which distinguished them from other mere books. There were five criteria that a book had to meet in order to be considered Scripture:

1. Was it written by a prophet of God? (Deuteronomy 18:18-22; 1 Peter 1:20-21)
2. Was the prophet confirmed by an act of God? (Hebrews 2:3-4)
3. Does it tell the truth about God? (Deuteronomy 13:1-5, 18:22; Galatians 1:8)
4. Does it have the power of God? (Hebrews 4:12)
5. Was it accepted by the people of God? (Deuteronomy 31:24-26; Joshua 24:26; 1 Samuel 10:25; Daniel 9:2; Colossians 4:16; 1 Thessalonians 2:13, 5:27; 1 Timothy 5:18; 2 Peter 3:16)

THE OLD TESTAMENT BOOKS

The phrase "thus says the Lord" is repeated hundreds of times throughout the Old Testament by God's prophets. The Old Testament is clear that God spoke through His prophets (1 Kings 14:18, 16:12, 34; 2 Kings 9:36, 14:25; Jeremiah 37:2; Zechariah 7:7, 12), so what the prophet says in God's Name, IS WHAT GOD SAYS (1 Kings 13:21-26, 21:19; 2 Kings 9:25-26; Haggai 1:12). So, to reject what the prophet had said was to reject what God had commanded (Deuteronomy 18:19; 1 Samuel 10:8, 13:13-14, 15:3, 19, 23; 1 Kings 20:35-36).

- o The Old Testament books refer to one another as sacred Scripture:

- ▶ Joshua 1:8 quotes the Pentateuch
- ▶ Daniel 9:2 quotes Jeremiah
- ▶ Ezekiel 14:14 speaks of Noah, Daniel, and Job

APOCRYPHAL BOOKS

The Hebrew canon was closed and settled with the final book of the Old Testament (Malachi) around 400 BC. Malachi concluded with the promise that the next event in redemptive history would be the coming of John the Baptist, who would prepare the way for Jesus (Malachi 3:1, 4:5-6; Matthew 3:1-17, 17:9-13). During the 400 years of silence between the end of the Old Testament and the coming of Jesus, many of the apocryphal works were written.

At the time of Christ, none of the apocryphal (hidden) books or pseudepigraphal (books authored under someone else's name) were considered Scripture by God's people. These books were never recognized by anyone as Scripture until the Catholic Council of Trent, in 1546. At that time the Catholic Church was under great pressure from Protestant reformers, so the Council voted to include some apocryphal books in order to justify their baseless doctrines, such as purgatory. These books contradict each other, have some clearly aberrant doctrines at odds with the rest of God's Word, and do not themselves claim to be inspired.

The most convincing proof, however, comes from Jesus Himself. The real question is: What did Jesus consider to be Scripture? Although these books were in circulation at the time of Jesus' earthly ministry, He clearly did not accept them as Scripture. Jesus summarized the (Old Testament) Bible as existing in three parts: The _____, _____, and _____ (Luke 24:4).

- He accepted the Old Testament canon as it exists today, without any modifications, and came to fulfill it (Matthew 5:17)
- Jesus also spoke of the Old Testament as existing from Abel (Genesis) to Zechariah (Malachi) in Luke 11:51 and Matthew 23:25

THE WORDS OF CHRIST

The Gospels were accepted as sacred Scripture because they contained the words of Jesus, that God's people treasured (Matthew 7:28-29; Luke 2:19; John 6:63). Jesus promised that His people would know His voice, and would recognize His teaching (John 10:27). This is possible because the same Holy Spirit who inspired the writing of the Scriptures also teaches their meaning to God's people, in whom He dwells (1 Corinthians 2:13-14). For example, in 1 Timothy 5:28, Paul quotes Jesus' words in Luke 10:7 and calls them "Scripture".

EYEWITNESS ACCOUNTS

All but a few New Testament writers claim to be eyewitnesses (Luke 1:1-3; John 20:30-31; Acts 1:1-3, 1:9, 10:39-42; 1 Corinthians 15:6-8; 1 Peter 5:1; 2 Peter 1:16; 1 John 1:1-3). Some of the authors who were not eyewitnesses received first-hand information from other reliable witnesses.

- Luke received his information from Paul, and numerous eyewitnesses (Luke 1:1-4; 2 Timothy 4:11)
- Mark received his information from Peter (1 Peter 5:13)
- James and Jude were closely associated with the Apostles in Jerusalem, and were Jesus' brothers (Matthew 13:55; Mark 6:3)

Paul claimed that Jesus Christ was speaking through him, and that his letters were to be read in the churches and obeyed (1 Corinthians 14:37; 2 Corinthians 13:13; Colossians 4:16; 2 Thessalonians 3:14). Paul quotes Luke as Scripture in 1 Timothy 5:18, and Peter calls Paul's writings Scripture in 2 Peter 3:15-16. The New Testament writers claim that their writings are the very _____ (1 Corinthians 14:37; 1 Thessalonians 2:13; 2 Peter 3:2).

The early church treated the Apostle's teaching as authoritative (Acts 2:42; Ephesians 2:20; 1 John 4:6). Almost all of the books of the New Testament canon were accepted by the 2nd century. The New Testament canon was finalized after some questions were raised and resolved around the 4th century. There were never any widespread debates on any of the books until the Catholic Council of Trent in 1546.

HAS THE BIBLE BEEN CHANGED?

THREE TESTS FOR DETERMINING THE HISTORICITY OF ANY ANCIENT TEXT

1. The _____ Test (number and quality of manuscripts)
2. The _____ Test (consistency of the text to not contradict itself)
3. The _____ Test (accuracy of the text in relation to other works of history from that period)

TEST #1 – THE BIBLIOGRAPHICAL TEST

The quantity of New Testament manuscripts is unparalleled in ancient literature. There are over 5,000 Greek manuscripts, about 8,000 Latin manuscripts, and another 1,000 manuscripts in other languages (Syriac, Coptic, etc.)

Author	Date Written	Earliest Copy	Time Span	Number of Copies	Accuracy
Homer	850 BC	-	-	643	95%
Herodotus	450 BC	AD 900	1,350 Years	8	Not enough copies to reconstruct the original
Euripedes	440 BC	AD 1100	1,500 Years	9	
Thucydides	420 BC	AD 900	1,300 Years	8	
Plato	380 BC	AD 900	1,300 Years	7	
Aristotle	350 BC	AD 1100	1,400 Years	5	
Caesar	60 BC	AD 900	950 Years	10	
Catullus	50 BC	AD 1500	1,600 Years	3	
Livy	10 BC	-	-	20	
Tacitus	AD 100	AD 1100	1,000 Years	20	
New Testament	AD 60	AD 130	100 Years	About 14,000	

By comparing ancient manuscripts, of Scripture, we find that the vast majority of variations are minor elements of spelling, grammar and style, or accidental omissions or duplications of words or phrases. Only about 400 (less than one page of an English translation) have any significant bearing on the meaning of a passage, and most are footnoted in modern English translations.

Overall, _____% of the New Testament can be reconstructed beyond any reasonable doubt, and no Christian doctrine is founded solely (or even primarily) on textually disputed passages. Scriptures

quoted in the works of the early Christian writers (most 95-150 AD) are so extensive that virtually the entire New Testament can be reconstructed, except for 11 verses (mostly from 2 and 3 John)!

TEST #2 – THE INTERNAL TEST

No other world religion or cult can present any specific prophecies concerning the coming of their prophets. However, in the Bible, we have hundreds of _____ prophecies. These prophecies extended hundreds and sometimes over a thousand years until their fulfillment. As an example, consider the following prophecies about Jesus:

- Born of a woman (Genesis 3:15 cf. Matthew 1:20)
- Descendant of Abraham (Genesis 22:18 cf. Matthew 1:20)
- Born of a virgin (Isaiah 7:14 cf. Matthew 1:18)
- Born in Bethlehem (Micah 5:2 cf. Luke 2:1-7)
- Prophesied by the forerunner John the Baptist (Isaiah 40; Malachi 3:1 cf. John 1:19-52)
- Rejected by His own people (Isaiah 53 cf. John 1:11)
- Presented as a king riding a donkey (Zechariah 9:9 cf. Luke 19:35-37)
- Betrayed by a friend (Psalms 41:9 cf. Matthew 26:50)
- Betrayed for 30 pieces of silver (Zechariah 11:12 cf. Matthew 26:15)
- Blood money thrown on the temple floor, then used to buy a potter's field (Zechariah 11:13 cf. Matthew 27:5-7)
 - Note: The temple was destroyed in 70 AD, so the Messiah would have had to come before then
- Hands and feet would be pierced (Psalms 22:16 cf. Luke 23:33)
 - Note: crucifixion didn't exist until hundreds of years after this Psalm was written
- Crucified with thieves (Isaiah 53:12 cf. Matthew 27:38)
- Forsaken by God (Psalms 22:1 cf. Matthew 27:46)
- Lots cast for His clothing (Psalms 22:18 cf. John 19:23)
- Buried in a rich man's tomb (Isaiah 53:9 cf. Matthew 27:57)
- Resurrected and exalted (Psalms 16:10; Isaiah 52:13, 53:10-12 cf. Acts 2:25-32)
- Ascended into heaven (Psalms 68:18 cf. Acts 1:8; Ephesians 4:8)

These promises show the Divine inspiration of the Bible, and their fulfillment proves that there is a God who rules over human history. Because of these facts, we can trust the internal consistency of the Bible.

TEST #3 – THE HISTORICAL TEST

The historicity of Jesus and the events surrounding the time of His life have been well established by early Roman, Greek, and Jewish sources. Such ancient historians include: Flavius Josephus, Mara BarSerapion, Cornelius Tacitus, Suetonius, Pliny the Younger, Lucian, and the Jewish Talmud. When the New Testament mentions such historical facts as rulers, nations, people groups, political events, and the existence of Jesus, non-Christian historical sources confirm the accuracy of New Testament accounts.

Lesson Two - The Trinity

Isaiah 46:9 - "...I am God, and there is no other; I am God, and there is none like me."

GOD IS INCOMPREHENSIBLE

While the Bible is clear that God has revealed Himself, He also hides Himself (Isaiah 45:15). Because He has revealed Himself to us, we can _____ know God, yet in this world we cannot know Him _____. God is infinite, there is no end to Him, and therefore He can never be known in totality.

HOW IS GOD KNOWN?

God is not known by any instrument or human ability, He can only be known through self-disclosure. This self-disclosure is called revelation. There are two types of revelation by which God has chosen to make Himself known. The first of these is called _____ Revelation, which means that God has revealed Himself in His creation. The second is called _____ Revelation, meaning that God has revealed Himself in the Bible.

HOW MANY GODS ARE THERE?

The Bible makes it abundantly clear that there is only one true God (2 Chronicles 15:3, Jeremiah 10:10, John 17:3, 1 Thessalonians 1:9, 1 John 5:20-21), and therefore all other gods are false and are mere idols that are not "gods" at all (Deuteronomy 32:21; 1 Samuel 12:21; Psalms 96:5; Isaiah 37:19, 41:23-24, 41:29; Jeremiah 2:11, 5:7, 16:20; 1 Corinthians 8:4, 10:19-20). Demons (fallen angels) often pose as gods and elicit worship, even through performing counterfeit signs, wonders, and miracles (Deuteronomy 32:17; Psalms 106:37; 1 Corinthians 10:20; Galatians 4:8). These supernatural beings in no way compare with God in their strength or intellect. Scripture emphatically teaches that there is no one like God (Exodus 8:10, 9:14, 15:11; 2 Samuel 7:22; 1 Chronicles 17:20; Psalms 86:8; 1 Kings 8:23; Isaiah 40:18, 25, 44:7, 46:5, 9; Jeremiah 10:6-7, Micah 7:18), and that any claim to be like God is a satanic lie (Genesis 3:5; Isaiah 14:14, John 8:44).

WHAT ARE GOD'S ATTRIBUTES?

When describing who God is, or His attributes, there are two categories. The first is called the _____ Attributes of God. God is holy; there is no one and nothing like Him, therefore certain aspects of His character belong only to Him. No other creature in all of his creation (natural or supernatural) shares these attributes. The second category is known as the _____ Attributes of God. We are made in the image of God. Therefore, He has created us to share, to a limited degree, some of His qualities and characteristics.

UNSHARED ATTRIBUTES OF GOD

- **Omnipresence** - God is _____ at all times (Psalms 139:7-12; Jeremiah 23:24; Proverbs 15:3, Deuteronomy 31:6; Colossians 1:17)
- **Omniscience** - God has complete and perfect knowledge of all things, including the past, present, future, and everything actual or potential (Psalms 147:5; Isaiah 40:12-13, 46:10; Psalms 139:1-6; Job 42:2; Hebrews 4:13)
- **Omnipotence** - God is _____ - _____ and able to do all that He wills (Job 42:2; Psalms 147:5; Matthew 19:26; Ephesians 3:20)
- **Immutability** - God does not change (Malachi 3:6; Numbers 23:19, Psalms 102:27; Romans 11:29; Hebrews 13:8; James 1:17)

- **Eternality** - God has no beginning or end and is not bound by time, though He is conscious of time and does work in time (Psalms 90:2; 93:2, 102:12; Ephesians 3:21)
- **Sovereignty** - God is supreme in _____ and _____ over all things (Psalms 103:19; 2 Samuel 7:28; 1 Chronicles 29:10-13) Though he does allow some measure of human freedom (Genesis 50:21-22)

SHARED ATTRIBUTES OF GOD

- **Spirit** - God is invisible and immaterial (John 4:19-24; 14:16-17, 16:12-15; 2 Corinthians 3:15-17; 1 Timothy 6:15-16)
 - A Spirit is personal with a mind (Psalms 139:1-4), emotions (Ephesians 4:30), and a will (John 6:40)
- **Holiness** - God is absolutely separate from any evil (1 Peter 1:16; Exodus 3:5; Leviticus 19:2; Psalms 5:4-6, 99:5; Isaiah 6:3, 8:13, 57:15; Habakkuk 1:12-13; 1 John 1:5)
- **Love/Goodness** - God alone is _____ good and loving, and He alone is the source for all goodness and love (1 John 4:8-16; Exodus 34:7; Psalms 84:11; John 3:16; Ephesians 2:4-7; Galatians 5:22)
- **Truth** - God is the source of all truth. He is the embodiment of truth (John 17:17; John 14:6; Titus 1:2; Numbers 23:19; 2 Corinthians 1:20)
- **Justice/Righteousness** - God does not _____ to a standard of right and wrong, but right and wrong flow out of His character (Exodus 34:7; Deuteronomy 32:4; Acts 17:31; Romans 2:11)
- **Mercy** - God does not give some people what they deserve because He is loving and gracious (Titus 3:5; Ephesians 2:4-7; Exodus 34:6-7; Matthew 18:23-35; Romans 12:8)
- **Beauty** - God is beautiful and His creation reflects His beauty. God made men and women in His image and likeness to also create works of beauty (Psalms 27:4, 50:2; Isaiah 33:17; Ecclesiastes 3:11)

IS THE FATHER GOD?

There is no debate about this question. Throughout the Scriptures, the Father is unequivocally called God (John 6:27, 17:3; 1 Corinthians 8:6; 2 Corinthians 1:3; Ephesians 1:3; 1 Peter 1:3).

IS JESUS GOD?

Jesus Christ is clearly called God throughout the Scriptures (Matthew 28:9; John 1:1-4, 5:17-18, 8:58, 10:30-33, 12:37-41 cf. Isaiah 6:9-11; 20:28-29; Acts 20:28; Romans 9:5; Colossians 1:16-17, 2:8-9; Philippians 2:10-11; Hebrews 1:8; 1 Corinthians 8:4-6; 1 Timothy 6:15; Titus 2:13; 1 John 5:20; Revelation 1:8, 1:17-18, 17:14, 19:16, 22:13-16). Jesus spoke of Himself as God without apology or correction. A fact which is often questioned and debated, however the Jewish leaders of His day recognized Jesus' statements as claims of deity, which is the reason He was executed (Matthew 26:63-65; John 5:17-23, 8:58-59, 10:30-39, 19:7). Had Jesus never claimed to be God, and done so clearly and publicly, He would not have been crucified. The Scriptures are also clear that Jesus was not only fully God, but also became fully human (Isaiah 7:14, 9:16; Romans 8:3; 1 John 4:2).

IS THE HOLY SPIRIT GOD?

The Holy Spirit is repeatedly called God throughout Scriptures, being shown to possess the Unshared Attributes of God: all-powerful (Micah 3:8; Acts 1:8; Romans 15:13, 19), eternal (Hebrews 9:14), all knowing (Isaiah 40:13-14; 1 Corinthians 2:10), creator (Genesis 1:2; Psalms 104:30), and all present (Psalms 139:7). In the New Testament He is declared to be God (Acts 5:3-4; John 14:16; 2 Corinthians 3:16-18). The Holy Spirit is not merely an impersonal force, but a person who can be grieved (Ephesians 4:30), resisted (Acts 7:51), and insulted (Hebrews 10:29).

ARE THE FATHER, SON, AND SPIRIT DIFFERENT PERSONS?

Though one God, the Father, Son, and Spirit are _____ persons. The Father and Son are two persons in frequent salutations (Romans 1:7; 1 Corinthians 1:3; 2 Corinthians 1:2; Galatians 1:3; Ephesians 1:2, 6:23; Philippians 1:2; 1 Thessalonians 1:1; 2 Thessalonians 1:1-2; 1 Timothy 1:1-2; 2 Timothy 1:2; Titus 1:4; Philemon 3; James 1:1; 2 Peter 1:2; 2 John 3), as well as in other Scriptures (John 3:17, 5:31-32, 8:16-18, 11:41-42, 12:28, 14:31, 17:23-26; Galatians 4:4; 1 John 4:10).

THE TRINITY

While the word “Trinity” does not appear in Scripture, the concept very clearly does. Tertullian (155-220 AD) was the first to use the word Trinity. To say that God exists as a Trinity does not mean that there are three Gods. Neither does it mean that one God merely manifests Himself as either Father, Son, or Holy Spirit on various occasions, as is taught by the false teaching of Modalism (often referred to as “Oneness Pentecostalism” – TD Jakes being the most prominent teacher in this movement).

To say that God exists as a Trinity is to say that there is one God with a unified essence who exists in three equal persons (Father, Son, and Holy Spirit). By person it is meant that God thinks, feels, acts and speaks. The Westminster Confession of Faith (1647) summarizes the doctrine by saying, “In the unity of the Godhead there be three persons, of one substance, power, and eternity: God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Ghost.”

THE TRINITY IN SCRIPTURE:

- **Isaiah 48:16** – “And now the Sovereign LORD has sent me, with His Spirit.”
- **Matthew 3:16-17** – As soon as Jesus was baptized, He went up out of the water. At that moment heaven was opened, and He saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove and lighting on Him. And a voice from heaven said, “This is My Son, whom I love; with Him I am well pleased.”
- **Matthew 28:18-20** – Then Jesus came to them and said, “All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age.”
- **Romans 14:17-18** – For the kingdom of God is not a matter of eating and drinking, but of righteousness, peace and joy in the Holy Spirit, because anyone who serves Christ in this way is pleasing to God and approved by men.
- **Romans 15:16** - ...to be a minister of Christ Jesus to the Gentiles with the priestly duty of proclaiming the Gospel of God, so that the Gentiles might become an offering acceptable to God, sanctified by the Holy Spirit.
- **1 Corinthians 2:2-5** – For I resolved to know nothing while I was with you except Jesus Christ and Him crucified. I came to you in weakness and fear, and with much trembling. My message and my preaching were not with wise and persuasive words, but with a demonstration of the Spirit’s power, so that your faith might not rest on men’s wisdom, but on God’s power.
- **1 Corinthians 6:11** – And that is what some of you were. But you were washed, you were sanctified, you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and by the Spirit of our God
- **1 Corinthians 12:4-6** – There are different kinds of gifts, but the same Spirit. There are different kinds of service, but the same Lord. There are different kinds of working, but the same God works all of them in all men.
- **2 Corinthians 1:21-22** – Now it is God who makes both us and you stand firm in Christ. He anointed us, set His seal of ownership on us, and put His Spirit in our hearts as a deposit, guaranteeing what is to come.
- **2 Corinthians 13:14** – May the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you all.
- **Ephesians 2:18** – For through Him we both have access to the Father by one Spirit.
- **Ephesians 3:16-17** – I pray that out of His glorious riches He may strengthen you with power through His Spirit in your inner being, so that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith. And I pray that you, being rooted and established in love...
- **Ephesians 4:4-6** – There is one body and one Spirit – just as you were called to one hope when you were called – one Lord, one faith, one baptism; one God and Father of all, who is over all and through all and in all.

- **Colossians 1:6-8** - ...All over the world this gospel is bearing fruit and growing, just as it has been doing among you since the day you heard it and understood God's grace in all its truth. You learned it from Epaphras, our dear fellow servant, who is a faithful minister of Christ on our behalf, and who also told us of your love in the Spirit.
- **1 Thessalonians 1:3-5** – We continually remember before our God and Father your work produced by faith, your labor prompted by love, and your endurance inspired by hope in our Lord Jesus Christ. For we know, brothers loved by God, that He has chosen you, because our gospel came to you not simply with words, but also with power, with the Holy Spirit and with deep conviction. You know how we lived among you for your sake.
- **2 Thessalonians 2:13** – But we ought always to thank God for you, brothers loved by the Lord, because from the beginning God chose you to be saved through the sanctifying work of the Spirit and through belief in the truth.

SUMMARY OF THE TRINITY

All the attributes of the Trinity are knowable (in part) because they are revealed in Scripture. Each member of the Godhead is fully active and powerful. Each is in full harmony with another, and each can be fully expressed simultaneously with another without conflict. The capacity to understand exactly how all of this is possible is beyond us and belongs to God alone.

THE NAMES OF GOD

In Scripture, a person's name is closely linked to their _____ and _____. This is true of the names of God in Scripture. All of the names of God reveal but a glimpse of God and His character. We know that even with many names of God, there is no name that will ever be able to completely describe or reveal the fullness of God and His character.

PRIMARY OLD TESTAMENT NAMES:

- **YHWH** (Yahweh, Jehovah): “Self-Existent One” (from Exodus 3:14, “I am that I am”).
 - The characteristics of this name are in the relationship between the true God and His people and, when used, emphasize God's holiness, hatred of sin, and love of sinners (Isaiah 12:2, 26:4).
- **Elohim**: “Strong One” (Genesis 1:1)
 - The characteristics of this name are used of the true God and of false gods. It is a plural word and is the plural of majesty. This plural allows for the subsequent revelation of the Trinity in the New Testament, but does not teach the Trinity per se. This name is often used when pertaining to God's sovereignty and work (Isaiah 54:5; Jeremiah 32:27; Isaiah 45:18; Deuteronomy 5:23, 8:15; Psalms 68:7).
- **Adonai**: “Lord” or “Master” (Joshua 5:14; Isaiah 6:8-11)
 - The characteristics of this name are used of men and of God and indicate the master-servant relationship.

COMPOUND OLD TESTAMENT NAMES:

- With the name **El**
 - **El Elyon** - the Most High, exalted one
 - ▶ Literally “the strongest strong one” (Genesis 14:19; Psalms 9:2; Daniel 7:18, 22, 25; Isaiah 14:13-14)
 - **El Roi** - the Strong One who sees (Genesis 16:13)
 - **El Shaddai** - the Almighty God (our sustainer)
 - ▶ Points to His _____ power (Genesis 17:1-20, 28:3, 35:11; Exodus 6:31; Psalms 91:1-2)
 - **El Olam** - the Everlasting God, the unchanging God (Genesis 16:13, Isaiah 40:28)

- With the name **YHWH**

(Note: The following compound names which start with "YHWH" will be shown using "Jehovah." Due to the usage of "Jehovah" in the earliest English translations, the King James Version especially, most people have learned these names in this form.)

- **Jehovah Jirah** - the Lord will provide (Genesis 22:13-14)
- **Jehovah Nissi** - the Lord my banner (Exodus 17:15)
- **Jehovah Shalom** - the Lord is peace (Judges 6:24)
- **Jehovah Sabaoth** - the Lord of hosts (1 Samuel 1:3)
- **Jehovah Mekoddishkem** - the Lord your Sanctifier (Exodus 31:13)
- **Jehovah Raah** - the Lord is my Shepherd (Psalms 23:1)
- **Jehovah Tsidkenu** - the Lord our righteousness (Jeremiah 23:6)
- **Jehovah El Gmolah** - the Lord God of recompense (Jeremiah 51:56)
- **Jehovah Nakeh** - the Lord who smites (Ezekiel 7:9)
- **Jehovah Shammah** - the Lord who is present (Ezekiel 48:35)
- **Jehovah Rapha** - The Lord who heals (Exodus 15:26)

NAMES OF GOD IN THE NEW TESTAMENT

When looking at the names of God in the New Testament, _____ emerges as the predominant name. Jesus claimed to be the revealed name of God (John 17:6), and He is the culmination of the promise that God would dwell with His people.

- **Jesus** - The name Jesus is derived from the Hebrew name Joshua (Y'shua), or Je-Hoshua, meaning Yahweh is Salvation.
- **I AM** - The name I AM is from the Hebrew Old Testament verb "to be" signifying a living, intelligent, personal being. Jesus upset His generation when He took on the name of God, I AM, for Himself; especially when He said, "Before Abraham was, I AM" (John 8:58).
 - Note also His claims to be Yahweh (Jehovah) in such phrases as: "*I AM the Light of the world*" (8:12), "*the Bread of Life*" (6:35), "*Living Water*" (7:37-39), "*the Resurrection and the Life*" (11:25), and "*the Way, Truth, and the Life*" (14:6) in John's Gospel.
- **Christ** - The name Christ is equivalent to the Hebrew Messiah (The Anointed One).

POETIC IMAGES OF GOD IN SCRIPTURE

There are two ways in which God is described of in poetic images. The first is anthropomorphic descriptions, or likening God to some human experience. The second is likening God to experiences taken from creation.

THE ANTHROPOMORPHIC (HUMAN) POETIC IMAGES OF GOD:

- Bridegroom (Isaiah 61:10)
- Husband (Isaiah 54:5)
- Father (Deuteronomy 32:6)
- Judge and King (Isaiah 33:22)
- Man of War (Exodus 15:3)
- Builder and Maker (Hebrews 11:10)
- Shepherd (Psalms 23:1)

THE POETIC IMAGES OF GOD FROM CREATION:

- Lion (Isaiah 31:4)
- Eagle (Deuteronomy 32:11)
- Lamb (Isaiah 53:7)
- Hen (Matthew 23:37)

- The sun (Psalms 84:11)
- The morning star (Revelation 22:16)
- A light (Psalms 27:1)
- A torch (Revelation 21:23)
- A fire (Hebrews 12:29)
- A fountain (Psalms 36:9)
- A rock (Deuteronomy 32:4)
- A shield (Psalms 84:11)

THE POETIC IMAGES OF JESUS CHRIST:

- Shepherd of the Sheep (1 Peter 5:4)
- Master (John 13:13)
- _____ and _____ (Revelation 19:16)
- Bishop and Guardian of our Souls (1 Peter 2:25)
- Daystar (Revelation 2:28)
- Deliverer (Romans 11:26)
- Advocate (1 John 2:1)
- Second Adam (1 Corinthians 15:45, 47)
- Ancient of Days (Daniel 7:13)
- Vine (John 15:5)
- Chief Cornerstone (Ephesians 2:20)
- Immanuel, God with us (Isaiah 7:14)
- Firstborn (Romans 8:29)
- Head of the Body (Colossians 1:18)
- Physician (Luke 4:23)
- Rock and Stone (1 Corinthians 10:4)
- Root of Jesse (Romans 15:12)
- Ruler (1 Timothy 6:15)
- Chief Apostle (Hebrews 3:1)
- Great High Priest (Hebrews 3:1)
- Author and Finisher of our Faith (Hebrews 12:2)
- Lamb of God and Lamb Slain before the Foundation of the World (John 1:36, Revelation 13:8)
- Lord God Almighty (Revelation 4:8)

Lesson Three - Jesus

John 1:14 - *“And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we have seen his glory, glory as of the only Son from the Father, full of grace and truth.”*

DID JESUS EVER CLAIM TO BE GOD?

C.S. Lewis - "I am trying here to prevent anyone saying the really foolish thing that people often say about Him: 'I'm ready to accept Jesus as a great moral teacher, but I don't accept His claim to be God.' That is the one thing we must not say. A man who was merely a man and said the sort of things Jesus said would not be a great moral teacher. He would either be a lunatic - on the level with the man who says he is a poached egg - or else he would be the Devil of Hell. You must make your choice. Either this man was, and is, the Son of God: or else a madman or something worse. You can shut Him up for a fool, you can spit at Him and kill Him as a demon; or you can fall at His feet and call Him Lord and God. But let us not come with any patronizing nonsense about His being a great human teacher. He has not left that open to us. He did not intend to."

TWELVE CLAIMS JESUS MADE, SHOWING HE IS THE ONLY GOD:

1. Jesus said He came down from heaven (John 6:38-42)
2. Jesus said He was more than just a good man (Mark 10:17-18)
3. Jesus said He was the Son of Man (Mark 13:26 cf. Daniel 7:13-14)
4. Jesus performed miracles claiming they were proof of His divinity (John 10:36-39)
5. Jesus said He was God (Mark 14:61-64; John 8:58-59, 10:30-33)
6. Jesus confirmed others when they said He was God (Matthew 26:63-65)
7. Jesus said He was _____ (John 8:46)
8. Jesus forgave sin (Mark 2:5)
9. Jesus taught people to pray to Him as God (John 14:13-14, 15:7)
10. Jesus promised to judge all people as God (John 5:22-24)
11. Jesus said He was the _____ to Heaven (John 14:6, 11:25)
12. Jesus claimed authority and supremacy over everything (Matthew 28:18)

WAS JESUS FULLY HUMAN?

Philippians 2:5-11 - *“Have this mind among yourselves, which is yours in Christ Jesus, who, though He was in the form of God, did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped, but made Himself nothing, taking the form of a servant, being born in the likeness of men. And being found in human form, He humbled Himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross. Therefore God has highly exalted Him and bestowed on Him the name that is above every name, so that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.”*

The Council of Chalcedon, in 451, was held as a response to certain heretical views concerning the nature of Christ. It established, through what is known as The Chalcedonian Creed, the orthodox view that Christ has two natures (human and divine) that are unified in one person. The Creed also clarified that Jesus Christ is both fully God and fully man. In theological terms, this is known as the *hypostatic union*, and is commonly referred to as the *incarnation* (from the Latin meaning “becoming flesh”).

The prophet Isaiah spoke of the coming of Jesus, saying “*He had no form or majesty that we should look at Him, and no beauty that we should desire Him*” (Isaiah 53:2). In other words, Jesus is like us in every respect (human body, heart, mind, and will) except for sin (Hebrews 2:17; 4:15). Jesus was born (Galatians 4:4). He had a normal body of flesh and bones (Luke 24:39), and grew up as a boy (Luke 2:52). He had a family (Matthew 13:54-58; 1 Corinthians 9:5), and obeyed His parents (Luke 2:51). Jesus worshipped God (Luke 4:16) and prayed (Mark 1:35; 6:46). He worked a job (Mark 6:3), got hungry and thirsty (Matthew 4:2, 21:18; John 4:7, 19:28), and asked for information (Mark 9:16-21; John 11:34, 18:34). He expressed the full range of human emotions: He was stressed (John 13:21), astonished (Mark 6:6; Luke 7:9), happy (Luke 10:21-24; John 15:11, 17:13; Hebrews 12:2, 22), “*sorrowful, even to death*” (Matthew 26:38), and had compassion (Mark 1:41; Luke 7:13). Jesus had male and female friends that He loved (John 11:3-5), gave compliments (Mark 12:41-44), loved children (Matthew 19:13-15), celebrated holidays (Luke 2:41), went to parties (Matthew 11:19), and loved His mom (John 19:26-27).

JESUS CHOSE TO COME INTO OUR FALLEN WORLD AND SUFFER _____ US AND _____ US

During His life Jesus was tempted (Matthew 4:1-10) in every way just as we are (Hebrews 4:15). He was poor (2 Corinthians 8:9), homeless (Matthew 8:20), got ripped off (John 12:6), and didn’t have enough money to pay His taxes (Matthew 17:27). He was the subject of lies and vicious rumors (Matthew 26:57-60), abandoned by friends in times of crisis (Matthew 26:36-46), denied by friends who turned their backs on Him (Matthew 26:69-75), and betrayed by a close friend (Matthew 26:47-50). Jesus was physically abused, mocked, and spit on (Matthew 26:67-68; 27:27-31). He was at times lonely (Mark 14:32-34, 15:34), deeply sorrowed (Matthew 26:37), exhausted (Matthew 8:24), and sad to the point of weeping (Luke 19:41, John 11:35). On top of all of this suffering, for much of His life Jesus was not even supported by His family (John 7:5). Jesus did not have all His prayers answered as He hoped, yet surrendered His will to the will of His Father (Matthew 26:42). He bled (Luke 22:44; John 19:34) and was publicly executed (Luke 23:46). Yet He forgave those who destroyed Him (Luke 23:34).

WHAT DID JESUS ACCOMPLISH ON THE CROSS?

PENAL SUBSTITUTION:

1 Corinthians 15:3-4 - “*For I delivered to you as of first importance what I also received: that Christ died for our sins in accordance with the Scriptures, that He was buried, that He was raised on the third day in accordance with the Scriptures.*”

The word “*for*” in theological terms means that Jesus’ death was _____, or vicarious, and in our place solely for our benefit without any benefit for Himself. Scripture repeatedly stresses this point:

- o **Isaiah 53:12** - “*He poured out His life unto death, and was numbered with the transgressors. For He bore the sins of many, and made intercession for the transgressors*”
- o **Romans 5:8** - “*But God demonstrates His own love for us in this: While we were yet sinners, Christ died for us*”
- o **1 Peter 3:18** - “*For Christ died for sins once for all, the righteous for the unrighteous, to bring you to God*”
- o **1 John 2:2** - “*He is the atoning sacrifice for our sins...*”

PROPITIATION:

Propitiation is a theological term that means that the outpouring of God’s wrath, which is mentioned more than 600 times in Scripture, is _____ onto Jesus instead of us.

Scripture speaks of both God's wrath and Jesus' propitiation in many places, including the following:

- o **Romans 5:9** - "...we are saved from God's wrath through Him!"
- o **1 Thessalonians 1:10** - "...Jesus, who rescues us from the coming wrath."
- o **Romans 3:23-25** - "...all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, and are justified by His grace as a gift, through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus, whom God put forward as a propitiation by His blood, to be received by faith."
- o **Hebrews 2:17** - "Therefore He had to be made like His brothers in every respect, so that He might become a merciful and faithful high priest in the service of God, to make propitiation for the sins of the people."
- o **1 John 2:2** - "He is the propitiation for our sins, not ours only but also for the sins of the whole world"
- o **1 John 4:10** - "...this is love, not that we have loved God but that He loved us and sent His Son to be the propitiation for our sins."

EXPIATION:

Expiation is the theological term for the _____ removal of the stain of sin from our lives. This is spoken of many times in Scripture (including the many references to God's people wearing white) a few examples are:

- o **Leviticus 16:30** - "...on this day atonement will be made for you, to cleanse you. Then, before the LORD, you will be clean from all your sins."
- o **Jeremiah 33:8** - "I will cleanse from them all the sin that they have committed against Me and will forgive all their sins of rebellion against me."
- o **Zechariah 13:1** - "On that day a fountain will be opened in the house of David and the inhabitants of Jerusalem, to cleanse them from sin and impurity."
- o **1 John 1:7-9** - "But if we walk in the light, as He is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus, His Son, purifies us from all sin. If we claim to be without sin, we deceive ourselves and the truth is not in us. If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness."

DID JESUS RISE FROM DEATH?

The resurrection of Jesus is the most known and celebrated miracle in the history of the world. Perhaps the lengthiest account of Jesus' resurrection is found in 1 Corinthians 15. There we are told that if Jesus did not rise in victory over death, then Christianity is nothing more than a cruel hoax giving false hope to gullible fools. We will seek to answer the question "Did Jesus rise from death?" by examining the _____ evidence, the _____ evidence, and the _____ - _____ evidences for the resurrection.

BIBLICAL HISTORICAL EVIDENCE FOR JESUS' RESURRECTION:

Jesus' own predictions of His death

Jesus, on numerous occasions, predicted His own death and resurrection (Matthew 12:38-40; Mark 8:31, 9:31, 10:33-34; John 2:18-22). This shows the supernatural insight and trustworthiness of Jesus. In other words, the things He said would happen did happen.

The _____

Jesus was buried in the tomb of a wealthy and well-known man named Joseph of Arimathea. He was a member of the Sanhedrin, and could have easily been located to identify the location of Jesus' burial. If Jesus had not risen from the dead, it would have been very easy to open up the tomb and show people His body

Early church creeds

In 1 Corinthians 15:3-5 Paul says, “...that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, that He was buried, that He was raised on the third day according to the Scriptures, and that He appeared to Peter, and then to the Twelve.” This creed began circulating as early as AD 30-36 shortly following Jesus’ resurrection and the witnesses mentioned in it were still alive. If this were a lie, certainly ONE of them would have said so.

Eyewitness Testimony

Unlike myths and legends, the Biblical account of Jesus’ resurrection is full of _____ and eyewitnesses such as: Mary Magdalene (John 20:10-18), other women (Matthew 28:8-10), Cleopas and another disciple (Luke 24:13-32), eleven disciples and others (John 20:19-23), Thomas and other apostles (John 20:26-30), seven apostles (John 21:1-14), the disciples (Matthew 28:16-20), the apostles (Luke 24:50-52; Acts 1:4-9), Peter (1 Corinthians 15:5), a crowd of more than 500 people (1 Corinthians 15:6), Jesus’ brother James (1 Corinthians 15:7), and Paul (1 Corinthians 15:8). The preaching of Jesus’ resurrection in the early church repeatedly relies on the consistent eyewitness testimony. These people were not only clearly identified, but also living and therefore able to refute these accounts if they had been misrepresented (Acts 2:32, 3:15, 10:41, and 13:31).

Paul’s _____

Previous to his conversion, Paul was a devout Jewish Pharisee (Philippians 3:4-6), who routinely persecuted and killed Christians (Acts 7:54-60). After an encounter with the risen Jesus, Paul was converted and became the most dynamic defender and expander of the Church (Acts 9; 1 Corinthians 9:1, 15:8). This dramatic shift is no less shocking than if Osama Bin Laden had surrendered, announced that he loved the United States, and then sang a duet of Lee Greenwood’s “God Bless the USA” with President of the United States in the White House Rose Garden.

Jesus’ family

James, Jesus’ half-brother, was opposed to Jesus’ claims (John 7:5), until he saw Jesus risen from death (1 Corinthians 15:7). James went on to pastor the church in Jerusalem and author the New Testament book that bears his name (James 1:1). Jesus’ mother, Mary, was part of the early church that prayed to and worshipped her son as God (Acts 1:14). As was Jesus’ other brother, Jude, who also wrote the New Testament book bearing his name (Acts 1:14; Jude 1). It is safe to say (given the fact that they previously did not believe in Him) that Jesus’ mother and brothers would not have worshipped Him as God unless they were absolutely convinced that He had risen from the dead, and was who exactly He said He was.

CIRCUMSTANTIAL EVIDENCE FOR JESUS’ RESURRECTION

The _____ of the disciples

Prior to the resurrection, the disciples were timid. Following His resurrection, when Jesus first appeared to them, they were hiding in a locked room (John 20:19). From that moment on, they were all transformed into bold witnesses. They were no longer afraid of men, but were even willing to die for their faith in Jesus and the truth of His resurrection. Even their character had been permanently changed. After the resurrection, the disciples gave their lives to feeding the poor, caring for widows and orphans, and helping the needy

(Acts 6:1; 1 Timothy 5:16; James 1:27). These changes are powerful evidences to refute the claims that these men had perpetrated a massive hoax. Not a single one recanted under torture, even execution.

The day of worship

The early church stopped worshipping on Saturday, as Jews had done for thousands of years. They suddenly began worshipping on Sunday in memory of Jesus' Sunday resurrection (Acts 20:7; 1 Corinthians 16:1-2). The Sabbath was so sacred to the Jews, that orthodox Jews would never have changed their day of worship unless Jesus had risen from death in fulfillment of their Old Testament Scriptures.

The _____ of worship

Not only was the day of worship changed after Jesus' resurrection, so was the object of worship. Jews were commanded to worship no one but the God of the Bible (Exodus 20:3, 23:13; Deuteronomy 5:7, 6:14; 1 Kings 9:6). It is impossible to conceive of devote Jews worshipping Jesus as the One True God without proof of His resurrection.

Theological changes in the church

Both baptism and communion are related to the resurrection. Baptism shows that we have been buried and raised with Jesus, and communion remembers Jesus' body and blood, shed in our place, for the forgiveness of our sins. The torture, shedding of blood, death, and burial of Jesus are not good news apart from the resurrection.

The early church even rejected the Old Testament law, because they saw that it was fulfilled in Jesus. Instead of the Law, Jesus' resurrection was repeatedly preached in the early church. Twelve out of the twenty-eight chapters in the book of Acts speak of the resurrection.

The tomb was not _____

It was common in that day for the tombs of holy men to be enshrined. In Palestine, at that time, the tombs of at least 50 prophets or other religious figures were enshrined as places of worship and veneration. Yet, there is no trace of any veneration of Jesus' tomb, because His body had risen and was no longer there.

Growth of the church

From the very beginning, the Church of Jesus Christ was marked by rapid growth and extraordinary commitment. Sometimes thousands were converted at one time and were added to the church. All of this happened with the very real threat of persecution, and even death.

NON-CHRISTIAN HISTORICAL EVIDENCE OF JESUS' RESURRECTION:

Josephus (AD 37-sometime after 100)

Josephus was a Jewish historian born just a few years after Jesus died. He was not a follower of Jesus himself, but spoke of the amazing impact of Jesus and His church. His most celebrated passage, the "*Testimonium Flavianum*" from *The Antiquities* says:

"About this time there lived Jesus, a wise man, if indeed one ought to call Him a man. For He was one who wrought surprising feats and was a teacher of such people as accept the truth gladly. He won over many Jews and many of the

Greeks. He was the Christ. When Pilate, upon hearing Him accused by men of the highest standing amongst us, had condemned Him to be crucified, those who had in the first place come to love Him did not give up their affection for Him. On the third day He appeared to them restored to life, for the prophets of God had prophesied these and countless other marvelous things about Him. And the tribe of Christians, so called after Him, has still not to this day disappeared.” (18.63-64)

- o Note: this passage has almost certainly been tampered with (as Josephus was not a Christian), but it is undisputed that Josephus reported that Jesus was claimed to be resurrected.

Suetonius (AD 70-160)

Suetonius was a Roman historian and annalist of the Imperial House. In the Vita Nero (Nero ruled from AD 54-68), Suetonius mentions the persecution of Christians by indirectly mentioning the resurrection - *“Punishment was inflicted on the Christians, a class of men given to a new and mischievous superstition [the resurrection]”* (16.11-13)

Pliny the Younger (AD 61 or 62-113)

Pliny the Younger was a nephew of encyclopedist Pliny the Elder. He became governor of Bithynia (northwest Turkey) in the early second century. In a letter written around 111 to Emperor Trajan (who had apparently asked him some questions about how he should “investigate” and “punish” Christians) , to explain early Christian worship gatherings, he said:

“I have never been present at the examination of Christians. Consequently, I do not know the nature of the extent of the punishments meted out to them, nor the grounds for starting an investigation and how far it should be pressed ... They also declared that the sum total of their guilt or error amounted to no more than this: they had met regularly before dawn on a fixed day [Sunday, in remembrance of Jesus’ resurrection] to chant verses alternately amongst themselves in honor of Christ as if to a god ...”

The Jewish explanation

Common modern arguments against the resurrection are that either:

1. The tomb was not empty in the first place
2. They had the wrong tomb
3. It was a hoax, and the body was stolen

The earliest attempts to deny the resurrection of Jesus did not deny that the tomb was empty (Matthew 28:15). They claimed the body had been stolen, which means that everyone knew that the tomb was empty. Their own claims that the body had been stolen are undone by the fact that they, themselves, sealed the tomb and placed a temple guard to watch over it, because Jesus had predicted his resurrection on the third day (Matthew 27:62-66). For that to be true, the disciples would have had to overpower trained, armed, professional soldiers. Their claims that the body had been stolen, though utterly implausible, establish that they knew they had the right tomb and that that tomb was empty.

WHY DID JESUS COME TO EARTH?

Jesus said that His mission was to fulfill every part of the Old Testament (Matthew 5:17-18). For God’s people in the Old Testament there were three major offices: _____, _____, and _____.

JESUS AS PROPHET:

Jesus reveals God to us and speaks God's word to us. He is the fulfillment of a promise that a great prophet was coming (Deuteronomy 18:15-18; Acts 3:22-24). Jesus said He came to preach (Mark 1:36-42), and to teach us how to be born again (Mark 3:1-3).

JESUS AS PRIEST:

Jesus reconciles us to God by sacrificing Himself for our sin (Hebrews 9:26). He lives to intercede for us continually (Romans 8:34; Hebrews 7:25). Jesus said that He came to save lost people (Luke 19:10), came to save the world (John 12:46-47), and came to call sinners to repentance and to Himself (Luke 5:31-32; Matthew 9:9-14). Jesus also said that He came to die (John 12:27-33) and came to serve through His death (Matthew 20:25-29).

JESUS AS KING:

Jesus rules over all peoples, times, and places, as well as every aspect of our lives (Luke 19:38). He said that He came to reveal His kingdom (John 18:36-38). Jesus came to rule over Satan and demons (Luke 11:19-21). It is Jesus Himself who rules over our new life as believers (John 10:9-10).

Lesson Four - Creation and Sin

Genesis 1:1 - *“In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth.”*

WHAT DO THE SCRIPTURES SAY ABOUT CREATION?

Exodus 20:11 - *“For in six days the LORD made the heavens and the earth, the sea, and all that is in them, but He rested on the seventh day. Therefore the LORD blessed the Sabbath day and made it holy.”*

Nehemiah 9:6 - *“You alone are the LORD. You made the heavens, even the highest heavens, and all their starry host, the earth and all this is on it, the seas and all that is in them. You give life to everything, and the multitudes of heaven worship You.”*

Psalms 19:1 - *“The heavens declare the glory of God; the skies proclaim the works of His hands.”*

Ecclesiastes 11:5 - *“As you do not know the path of the wind, or how the body is formed in a mother’s womb, so you cannot understand the work of God, the Maker of all things.”*

Hebrews 11:3 - *“By faith we understand that the universe was formed at God’s command, so that what is seen was not made out of what was visible.”*

Old Testament References:

Genesis 1:1-28	Genesis 1:31	Genesis 2:1-25	Genesis 5:1-2	Genesis 9:6
Exodus 20:11	1 Samuel 2:8	2 Kings 19:15	1 Chronicles 16:26	Nehemiah 9:6
Job 9:8-9	Job 10:3	Job 10:8	Job 12:7-9	Job 26:7-13
Job 28:23-26	Job 37:16	Job 37:18	Job 38:4-38	Psalms 8:3
Psalms 19:1	Psalms 19:4	Psalms 24:1-2	Psalms 33:6-7	Psalms 33:9
Psalms 65:6	Psalms 74:16-17	Psalms 78:69	Psalms 89:11-12	Psalms 89:47
Psalms 90:2	Psalms 95:4-5	Psalms 96:5	Psalms 102:25	Psalms 103:22
Psalms 104:2-3	Psalms 104:5-6	Psalms 104:24	Psalms 104:30-31	Psalms 119:90-91
Psalms 121:2	Psalms 124:8	Psalms 136:5-9	Psalms 146:5-6	Psalms 148:5-6
Proverbs 3:19	Proverbs 8:26-29	Proverbs 22:2	Proverbs 26:10	Proverbs 30:4
Ecclesiastes 3:11	Ecclesiastes 7:29	Ecclesiastes 11:5	Isaiah 17:7	Isaiah 37:16
Isaiah 40:12	Isaiah 40:26	Isaiah 40:28	Isaiah 42:5	Isaiah 44:24
Isaiah 45:7	Isaiah 45:12	Isaiah 45:18	Isaiah 48:13	Isaiah 51:13
Isaiah 51:16	Isaiah 66:2	Jeremiah 5:22	Jeremiah 10:12	Jeremiah 10:13
Jeremiah 10:16	Jeremiah 27:5	Jeremiah 31:35	Jeremiah 31:17	Jeremiah 33:2
Jeremiah 51:15-16	Jeremiah 51:19	Amos 4:13	Amos 4:8	Amos 9:6
Jonah 1:9	Zechariah 12:1			

New Testament References:

Mark 10:6	Mark 13:19	Acts 4:24	Acts 7:50	Acts 14:15	Acts 17:24-26
Romans 1:20	Romans 11:36	1 Corinth. 8:6	1 Corinth. 11:12	2 Corinth. 4:6	2 Corinth. 5:5
2 Corinth. 5:18	Ephesians 3:9	1 Timothy 6:13	Hebrews 1:1-2	Hebrews 2:10	Hebrews 3:4
Hebrews 11:3	Hebrews 11:10	Revelation 4:11	Revelation 10:6	Revelation 14:7	

THE TRINITY AND CREATION

Every member of the Trinity was involved in the creation of the universe. God the Father devised the plan, God the “Word” orchestrated His plan, and God the Spirit brought it forth with the power of His might. The Scriptures clearly teach that both: _____ (John 1:3, 1:10; 1 Corinthians 8:6; Ephesians 3:9; Colossians 1:16-17; Hebrews 1:2, 1:10; Revelation 3:15) and the _____ (Genesis 1:2; Psalms 33:6, 104:30; Isaiah 40:12-14) created everything.

WHAT IS THE FALL?

God created the world in a perfect state. Upon creation of the man and woman God declared His entire creation “very good” (Genesis 1:31). This intended state of perfect beauty in all things is described in the Old Testament as “Shalom” (Isaiah 2:2-4, 11:1-9, 32:14-20, 43:1-12, 60:1-22, 65:17-25; Joel 2:24-29, 3:17-18).

Surveying the condition of our planet and human life (including death, suffering, injustice, boredom, annoyances, miseries, fears etc.) it is obvious that something has gone terribly wrong. That something is _____. All of the individual and corporate shortcomings of God’s perfect intentions for all of creation, whether intentional or unintentional or through omission or commission, qualify as sin. Scripture teaches that God clearly commanded the first man and woman not to eat from the tree of knowledge of good and evil or they would die (Genesis 2:16-17), but the man and the woman sinned against God.

Because Adam was the head of the human race, when he sinned everyone who would ever live (other than Jesus Christ who was conceived miraculously of the Holy Spirit) was implicated in his sin (Genesis 3:1-6; Hosea 6:7; Romans 5:12-21; 1 Corinthians 15:21-22, 15:45-50). Everyone (except Jesus) is from the moment of conception sinful by nature and corrupted to the very core of their being, and are therefore incapable of doing anything that pleases God (Psalms 51:5; Romans 3:10-18, 8:7-8). Thus everyone (except Jesus Christ) sins by breaking God’s holy laws, because they are sinners by nature and are simply showing forth their hearts (Psalms 14:1-3; Isaiah 53:6; Romans 3:10, 3:23; 1 John 1:8, 3:4; Proverbs 4:23, 17:19, 20:9; Matthew 5:21; Luke 6:45).

The fall was the descent of the human race and the rest of God’s creation (Romans 8:18-27) into a state of rebellion against God. Despite his depravity, man continues to have dignity because He still remains an image bearer of God, although that image is marred by sin (Genesis 1:26, 9:6; James 3:9).

IS EVERYONE TOTALLY SINFUL?

_____. While people are not absolutely sinful (they could do evil things with greater degree and frequency); all people are totally sinful in that their every motive, word, deed, and thought is for their own glory rather than God’s (Psalms 29:2; Romans 3:23, 11:36, 16:27). Those who do not belong to God are utterly incapable of pleasing God and doing things for His glory (Matthew 7:17-18; Romans 8:7-8).

There remains a vestige of moral sense in people because of the conscience that God gave them (Romans 2:14-15). But, even the seemingly good deeds done from the moral conscience are mere filth to God if done apart from loving obedience to Him. They are an attempt at meriting our own righteousness (which is the heart of pride), and they are the enemy of the humble grace in which one receives the righteousness of God as a free gift (Isaiah 64:6). Man is totally sinful in the fact that his entire person is marred by sin. This includes the mind (Ephesians 4:18), the will (Romans 6:16-17), the emotions (Titus 3:3), and the physical body (Romans 8:10).

DOES GOD CAUSE SIN?

The Bible is clear that God is _____ and in Him is no darkness at all (1 John 1:5). God does not take any delight in sin, He hates and detests it, and hides His face from sinful people (Psalms 5:4; Proverbs 6:16; Isaiah 59:2, 64:7; Zechariah 8:17). Therefore, God does not in any way cause sin, and sin is a perversion of His good creation.

WHERE DOES SIN COME FROM?

God does not tempt us to sin; the temptation arises from within our own _____. Therefore, mere behavioral change is not sufficient to remedy the human condition. We need a new heart and nature for any true victory over sin in our lives.

- **James 1:13-15** - *“When tempted, no one should say, ‘God is tempting me.’ For God cannot be tempted by evil, nor does He tempt anyone; but each one is tempted when, by his own evil desire, he is dragged away and enticed. Then, after desire has conceived, it gives birth to sin; and sin, when it is full-grown, gives birth to death”*
- **Proverbs 27:19** - *“As water reflects a face, so a man’s heart reflects the man”*
- **Proverbs 4:23** - *“Above all else, guard your heart, for it is the wellspring of life”*
- **Matthew 12:34** - *“For out of the overflow of the heart the mouth speaks”*
- **Proverbs 20:9** - *“Who can say, ‘I have kept my heart pure; I am clean and without sin’?”*
- **Jeremiah 17:9** - *“The heart is deceitful above all things and beyond cure. Who can understand it?”*
- **Mark 7:21-23** - *“For from within, out of men’s hearts, come evil thoughts, sexual immorality, theft, murder, adultery, greed, malice, deceit, lewdness, envy, slander, arrogance, and folly. All these come from inside and make a man ‘unclean’”*
- **Luke 6:45** - *“The good man brings good things out of the good stored up in his heart, and the evil man brings evil things out of the evil stored up in his heart. For out of the overflow of his heart his mouth speaks.”*

WHAT ARE THE CONSEQUENCES OF SIN?

DEATH

- **Genesis 2:16-17** - *“And the LORD God commanded the man, ‘You are free to eat from any tree in the garden; but you must not eat from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, for when you eat of it you will surely die.’”*
- **Romans 6:23** - *“For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.”*
- **Ephesians 2:1** - *“As for you, you were dead in your transgressions and sins...”*
- **Colossians 2:13** - *“When you were dead in your sins and in the uncircumcision of your sinful nature, God made you alive with Christ. He forgave us all our sins.”*

DISCONNECTED FROM GOD

- **Matthew 13:14** - *“In them is fulfilled the prophecy of Isaiah: ‘You will be ever hearing but never understanding; you will be ever seeing but never perceiving.’”*
- **John 8:43** - *“Why is my language not clear to you? Because you are unable to hear what I say”*
- **1 Corinthians 1:18** - *“For the message of the cross is foolishness to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God.”*

WHAT IS THE UNPARDONABLE SIN?

The unpardonable sin is one of the most feared, and least understood, warnings in all of Scripture. It is only mentioned once, in Matthew 12:31-32, and appears to be the rejection of the Holy Spirit of God. Man’s proclivity is towards this rejection, and we are in need of regeneration in order to “choose” God

(Acts 16:14). When the Pharisees were confronted with the choice to attribute Christ's miracles to the Holy Spirit or Satan, in their disbelief they chose Satan. Their choices were congruent with their belief (Matthew 12:22-32 cf. Hebrews 6:4-6, 10:29). Because it is the Holy Spirit who testifies on behalf of Christ (John 15:26, 16:14-15); any rejection of Him is a rejection of Christ. The only sin that cannot be forgiven is unbelief in Jesus Christ.

HOW CAN I STOP COMMITTING A SIN?

Romans 8:13-16 - *“For if you live according to the sinful nature, you will die; but if by the Spirit you put to death the misdeeds of the body, you will live, because those who are led by the Spirit of God are sons of God. For you did not receive a spirit that makes you a slave again to fear; but you received the Spirit of sonship. And by Him we cry, ‘Abba, Father.’”*

Even as Christians, we are guilty of daily sin in word, thought, and deed. The question is not whether or not we will sin (we will), the real question is “what do I do with my sin?” The great Puritan theologian John Owen rightly summarized Romans 8:13 by saying, “be killing sin or sin will be killing you.” The theological term for joining with the Holy Spirit in putting sin to death is _____.

- _____ – I am guilty...
 - Recognizing our sin through the ministry of the Holy Spirit and truth of Scripture
- _____ – I am wrong...
 - Agreeing with the Holy Spirit and Scripture about our sin
- _____ – I want to change...
 - Turning from sin to God, and obedience to Him, out of love
- _____ – I can change...
 - Believing God's faithfulness to His promises, made possible by His power
- _____ – I have a reason to change...
 - Worshipping Jesus, instead of self
- _____ – I have a plan...
 - Replacing a sinful habit with a Godly one, identifying your resources (Holy Spirit, prayer, Scriptures, elders, Christian friends, books, etc.), and a plan for using your resources
- _____ – I will never turn back...
 - Use any failures as learning opportunities to grow in your sanctification

Lesson Five - Salvation

Exodus 6:7 - *“I will take you to be my people, and I will be your God”*

WHAT IS SALVATION?

SALVATION DEFINED:

Salvation can be defined as deliverance _____ God _____ God and His wrath (Romans 5:9-10). God is holy and righteous and our sins against Him cause His wrath to burn against us. Despite much popular false teaching, this wrath is very real, and can endure forever (Exodus 34:6-8; Deuteronomy 29:24-29, 32:21-22; Psalms 11:4-7; John 3:36; Romans 1:18-32, 5:5-8; 2 Corinthians 5:18-20; Ephesians 5:6; Colossians 1:21-22, 3:6; Revelation 14:9-11, 14:18-20, 19:11-15).

MADE POSSIBLE THROUGH JESUS CHRIST ALONE:

Jesus Christ, our Priest, laid down His life as the substitutionary sacrifice for the sins of His people (Isaiah 53:6-12; John 11:50, 15:13; Romans 5:17-19; 2 Corinthians 5:14-15, 5:21; Galatians 3:13; Hebrews 10:10, 10:12; 1 Peter 3:18). There is no possibility of salvation apart from Him (John 1:29, 3:17-18, 4:42, 5:19-23; Acts 4:12; Titus 1:15; 1 John 2:2; Revelation 5:9). Jesus’ death and resurrection were a propitiation (appeasing God’s wrath, cleansing us from sin, and granting us mercy from God) for His people (Romans 3:25; Hebrews 2:14; 1 John 2:2, 4:10).

REDEMPTION:

We were _____ to sin (John 8:34; Romans 6:6), and consequently to Satan and death (Colossians 2:15). But then we were redeemed, or purchased, by Jesus’ death and resurrection. As a result, we no longer belong to sin; but to God, righteousness, and life (Exodus 6:6; Deuteronomy 7:8, 15:15; 2 Samuel 7:23; 1 Chronicles 17:21). God’s people are now reconciled to God and each other (Romans 5:10-11; 2 Corinthians 5:18-21; Ephesians 2:16; Colossians 1:20-21). We are also given Jesus’ triumph over the world, sin, death, and Satan and his demons (Psalms 110:1; 1 Corinthians 15:21-28; Ephesians 1:20-23, 2:16; Colossians 1:20-21, 2:13-15).

PROCESS OF SALVATION

SALVATION IS GOD’S PROCESS IN A BELIEVER’S LIFE. God initiates, marks out, and secures our salvation. What He begins, He is sure to end (Philippians 1:6).

Romans 8:28-30 - *“And we know that in all things God works for the good of those who love Him, who have been called according to His purpose. For those God foreknew He also predestined to be conformed to the likeness of His Son, that He might be the firstborn among many brothers. And those He predestined, He also called; those He called, He also justified; those He justified, He also glorified.”*

-
- God’s intimate knowledge of events and His people (Acts 2:23; Romans 11:2; 1 Peter 1:2, 1:20)
 - Predestination literally means “to mark out beforehand” (Acts 4:28; 1 Corinthians 2:7; Ephesians 1:5, 11)

-
- Converting or a bringing to faith (Matthew 22:14; Romans 1:6, 9:24; 1 Corinthians 1:24, 1:26, 7:18, 7:21; Galatians 1:15; Ephesians 4:1, 4:4)

-
- o Salvation in past time (accomplished in Jesus' death and resurrection)
 - o To be legally acquitted from wrongdoing (Romans 1:17, 3:21-5:21; Galatians 3:11; Ephesians 2:8-9)

(*"Conformed to the likeness of His Son"*)

- o Salvation in present time
- o The process of maturity as God transforms us (Romans 8:12, 29; 12:1-2; 1 Corinthians 6:11, 19-20; 2 Corinthians 3:18; Colossians 1:28; Hebrews 13:20-21)
- o Fuses man's responsibility, God's work, and the church's equipping in the process of a believer's growth in Christ (Ephesians 4:11-16; Philippians 2:12-13)

-
- o The final completion of God's purpose in salvation, which includes our death and resurrection (Romans 8:17, 29; 1 Corinthians 15:1-58; Colossians 1:27, 3:4)

The saving grace of God is given solely because of God's good pleasure, which remains for us a mystery to be adored (Isaiah 53:10; Ephesians 1:3-14; Hebrews 12:2).

WILL EVERYONE BE SAVED?

_____ . Hell does exist, and sin against an eternal God is an eternal offense requiring an eternal payment to be made by God's enemies (Daniel 12:1-2; Isaiah 66:22-24; Matthew 5:22-30, 10:28, 25:46; John 3:36; Romans 1:18-32; 2 Peter 2:4-22). When the Bible says: that God desires that all would be saved (1 Timothy 2:4; 2 Peter 3:9), that Jesus Christ died for all (1 Timothy 2:6; Hebrews 2:9; 1 John 2:2), and that all are invited to salvation (Matthew 28:18-20; John 3:15; Acts 16:31); it cannot mean that all will be saved. The Scriptures are clear regarding the eternal state of punishment for unbelievers.

Some will argue that God *should* save all people, but God has the right to give grace as He determines (Matthew 20:12-15; Romans 9:20-21), and He has done so throughout history (John 15:16; Acts 9:9, 15; Romans 3:1-2). Some will accuse God of being unfair, but if God were completely fair and just, rather than merciful, then all would go to hell and none would go to heaven.

God has the right to create people for His purposes (Romans 9:22-25). Therefore, the Scripture teaches that some are chosen for salvation (Acts 13:48; Ephesians 1:3-11; 2 Thessalonians 2:13), and that salvation is solely a work of God (John 1:13, 6:44, 10:26; 1 Corinthians 1:30, 10:30; James 1:18).

IS SALVATION POSSIBLE AFTER DEATH?

NO! Hebrews 9:27 clearly states, "*It is appointed for a man to die once, and then comes the judgment.*" According to Jesus, those that reject Him go into eternal punishment (Matthew 25:46). There is no second chance for salvation or reincarnation in the Scriptures.

ABERRANT VIEWS OF THE AFTERLIFE

REINCARNATION

Many eastern religions and new age teachings try to infuse reincarnation interpretations into verses relating to John the Baptist and the coming of Elijah (Matthew 17:10-12; Mark 9:11-13). Yet Luke 1:17 reminds us that John came "*in the spirit*" of Elijah. He came with the same prophetic

office as Elijah, but he is not in any way Elijah. This idea is contrary to Christ's statement about eternal life and judgment, and Hebrews 9:27 (see above).

The Bible does not teach reincarnation, but reminds us that we have great confidence in knowing that we have access to God (Ephesians 3:12; Hebrews 10:19-23). Reincarnation is a degrading and hopeless circle of man working toward god/nirvana on the bases of his own merit/karma. This is the antithesis of God's grace that saves us by faith (Ephesians 2:8-10) through Christ's sacrifice once and for all (Hebrews 4:14-16, 8, 9; 1 Peter 3:18).

POSTHUMOUS SALVATION

The Mormons utilize verses such as 1 Peter 3:19-20 coupled with 1 Corinthians 15:29 to formulate their doctrine of posthumous salvation through the proxy baptism of the dead. Neither practice is Biblical, and both are based on invalid proof text. 1 Corinthians 15:29, in context, is being used to prove a point, not dictate a doctrine. The practice of baptism for the dead was never used in the early church, and is contrary to the rest of the New Testament teaching about baptism and those who are dead. The 1 Peter reference most likely refers to Christ preaching through Noah prior to the flood (1 Peter 3:20-22; 2 Peter 2:5). Or possibly Christ making a triumphant proclamation of facts, but there is no indication contextual or otherwise that this refers to a second chance after death.

WHAT IS REPENTANCE?

Repentance is a gift that God gives his people. It comes as a result of conviction from the Holy Spirit in a deep desire to change one's heart and life by God's grace. This includes forsaking sin and turning to Jesus Christ for forgiveness and salvation (Acts 3:19, 11:21, 14:15, 20:21, 26:18, 26:20; 1 Thessalonians 1:9; James 5:20).

WHAT IS FAITH?

Hebrews 11:1 - *"Faith is the assurance of things hoped for the conviction of things not seen"*

Hebrews 11:6 - *"Without faith, it is impossible to please God"*

The word faith is used 232 times in the Bible, and is the primary way that man enters into a relationship with God. God is not found through _____, because man's reason is flawed and incapable of knowing God in this way (1 Corinthians 1:21). Because of our inability to find Him on our own, God, rich in mercy, and according to His grace, saved us through faith; a faith that He gave us (Acts 3:16, 14:27; Ephesians 2:8). So, it is not a matter of the **quantity** of faith, but the **object** of faith; which is always God (Ephesians 2:8-10).

Proverbs 3:5 - *"Trust in the Lord with all your heart, and lean not on your own understanding"*

Faith takes us beyond our reason and empirical abilities, and allows us to see the spiritual world that God has revealed. He gives us faith in order for us to experience the world as He sees it and trust Him (Romans 10:9-10). This knowledge is not exhaustive, but it is adequate to know God intimately (Deuteronomy 29:29; Isaiah 55:8-9; 1 Corinthians 13:12; John 17:3). Faith gives us a better understanding of reality as it really is, and as it has been revealed by God.

WHAT IS GRACE?

Grace (from the Greek – *Charis*), means _____ from _____ (Acts 15:11; Romans 4:5, 11:5-6; Galatians 2-3, 5:1, 5:13; Ephesians 2:1-10; Philippians 1:6). It reminds us that we were saved only by God's gift

to us, and that our salvation has nothing to do with human works (religious or otherwise) (John 1:13; Romans 9:16; Ephesians 2:8-10; Titus 3:5-6). God's grace is His continuing gift to His people, and it is a completely undeserved act of mercy that He bestows as He sees fit.

Grace not only saves us, but we are established and empowered by God's grace in our lives (Acts 4:33, 6:8, 13:43; Romans 3:24, 5:15, 12:16, 15:15; 1 Corinthians 15:10; 2 Corinthians 9:8, 12:9). We are also given life and cleansing from sin by God's grace (Romans 6:1, 6:14-17; 2 Corinthians 6:1; Ephesians 1:7, 2:5-8). God's grace also comes to His people by means of spiritual gifts - unique abilities that enable Christians to serve God fruitfully (Romans 12:6; 1 Peter 4:10). Therefore, Christians know that whatever good comes from their works is ultimately the fruit of God's grace working in and through them, and not as a result of their own goodness or merit (1 Corinthians 15:10).

CAN A CHRISTIAN LOSE THEIR SALVATION?

Salvation does not belong to _____, it belongs to _____ (Jonah 2:9). The real question is not whether or not a Christian can lose their salvation, but rather: "Can Jesus lose a Christian?" Jesus answered that for us in saying that He does not lose anyone that God given to Him, that those who belong to Him can never be snatched out of His hand, and that He will never throw them away (John 6:37, 6:39, 10:28).

If being born again is something done to you, how can you be unborn? Salvation is a gift that we do not deserve (Ephesians 2:8). If we did not deserve it in the first place; we can't UN-un-deserve it. Now of course, if by salvation you mean walking forward for an alter-call at a crusade, LOTS of people seem to lose that. But, a superficial "decision for Christ" is what not what constitutes a Christian.

Paul, in Romans 8:30, says, "*Those whom He justified He also glorified.*" In other words, between the event of justification by faith (salvation), and the event of glorification at the resurrection of our bodies (Philippians 3:21), there will be no dropouts; and no one will slip through the cracks. "*Those whom he justified, he also glorified*" – all of them. God is not like a sport-fisherman, and will not be throwing anyone back. He will keep and sanctify those whom He has justified, and He will make sure they keep the faith and endure to the end and are saved.

1 John 2:19 describes how we should understand the apparent dropouts: "*They went out from us, but they were not of us; for if they had been of us, they would have remained with us; but they went out, in order that it might be shown that they all are not of us.*" In other words, the failure to persevere is not a sign that you can be truly born again and justified and then be lost, just the opposite. The failure to persevere is a sign that you were never truly part of the regenerate people of God. That's the explicit point of 1 John 2:19. Hebrews 3:14 makes the exact same point, "*For we have come to share in Christ, if indeed we hold our original confidence firm to the end.*" The first half of this verse (we have come to share in Christ) points to something that has already happened; however, the second half (if we hold firm to the end), says that the way to know if we "*share in Christ*" is if we persevere to the end.

The Bible's teaching on the "*book of life*", has powerful implications on how we understand the Doctrine of Salvation. In Revelation 3:5, the Lord Jesus says, "*The one who conquers will be clothed thus in white garments, and I will never blot his name out of the book of life. I will confess his name before my Father and before His angels.*" Some have taken this promise to "*never blot his name out of the book of life*", as an implication that some DO have their names blotted out. That interpretation is a stretch, at best. This verse simply says to the one who is in the book and who conquers in faith: I will

never wipe out your name. It does not say that those who fail to conquer and fall away from Christ had been penciled into the book, but then got erased.

In fact, there are two other verses in Revelation that teach that to have your name written in the book means that you will most definitely persevere and conquer. Consider Revelation 13:8. *“And all who dwell on earth will worship it (the beast), everyone whose name has not been written before the foundation of the world in the book of life of the Lamb who was slain.”* Similarly, consider Revelation 17:8, *“The beast that you saw was, and is not, and is about to rise from the bottomless pit and go to destruction. And the dwellers on earth whose names have not been written in the book of life from the foundation of the world will marvel to see the beast, because it was and is not and is to come.”* These verses establish that having your name written in the Lamb’s book of life from the foundation of the world **guarantees** that you will not worship or marvel at the beast. John does not say, “If you worship the beast, your name is erased.” He says, “If your name is written, you WILL NOT worship the beast.”

This fits with Revelation 3:5, *“He who overcomes ... I will never blot his name out of the book of life.”* The triumph **required** in 3:5 is **guaranteed** in 13:8 and 17:8. The practical impact of this truth is not that we should be cavalier about faith, love, and holiness. There is necessary vigilance (Hebrews 3:12) and striving (Luke 13:24) and pursuit (Hebrews 12:14) in the Christian life. Instead, we should glory in the assurance that we are not left to ourselves in this *“fight of faith”* (1 Timothy 6:12). The God who called us is faithful to *“sustain you to the end, guiltless in the day of our Lord Jesus Christ”* (1 Corinthians 1:8). Paul prayed, *“Now may the God of peace Himself sanctify you completely, and may your whole spirit and soul and body be kept blameless at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. He who calls you is faithful; He will surely do it”* (1 Thessalonians 5:23-24). We are kept by the power of God (1 Peter 1:5), and He will complete the salvation He began (Philippians 1:6).

Lesson Six - The Gifts of the Holy Spirit

1 Peter 4:10 - *“As each has received a gift, use it to serve one another...”*

SPIRITUAL GIFTS IN SCRIPTURE

- **1 Corinthians 12:8-10** - *“To one there is given through the Spirit the message of wisdom, to another the message of knowledge by means of the same Spirit, to another faith by the same Spirit, to another gifts of healing by that one Spirit, to another miraculous powers, to another prophecy, to another distinguishing between spirits, to another speaking in different kinds of tongues, and to still another the interpretation of tongues.”*
- **1 Corinthians 12:28-31** - *“And in the church God has appointed first of all apostles, second prophets, third teachers, then workers of miracles, also those having gifts of healing, those able to help others, those with gifts of administration, and those speaking in different kinds of tongues. Are all apostles? Are all prophets? Are all teachers? Do all work miracles? Do all have gifts of healing? Do all speak in tongues? Do all interpret? But eagerly desire the greater gifts.”*
- **Romans 12:6-8** - *“We have different gifts, according to the grace given us. If a man's gift is prophesying, let him use it in proportion to his faith. If it is serving, let him serve; if it is teaching, let him teach; if it is encouraging, let him encourage; if it is contributing to the needs of others, let him give generously; if it is leadership, let him govern diligently; if it is showing mercy, let him do it cheerfully.”*
- **Ephesians 4:11-13** - *“It was He who gave some to be apostles, some to be prophets, some to be evangelists, and some to be pastors and teachers, to prepare God's people for works of service, so that the Body of Christ may be built up until we all reach unity in the faith and in the knowledge of the Son of God and become mature, attaining to the whole measure of the fullness of Christ.”*
- **1 Peter 4:10-11** - *“Each one should use whatever gift he has received to serve others, faithfully administering God's grace in its various forms. If anyone speaks, he should do it as one speaking the very words of God. If anyone serves, he should do it with the strength God provides, so that in all things God may be praised through Jesus Christ. To Him be the glory and the power forever and ever. Amen.”*

HOW DO YOU GET A SPIRITUAL GIFT?

Spiritual gifts are given by the Holy Spirit to Christians. Every Christian has at least one spiritual gift, and some people may have many (1 Corinthians 12:11, 18; Hebrews 2:4; 1 Peter 4:10). Christians are given spiritual gifts solely by God's grace and can do _____ to earn or get a different gift (Romans 12:6; 1 Corinthians 12:4-7, 11). God has appointed people in churches the specific gifts that are needed for the overall health of the church, so, if people are dissatisfied with their gift: They are sinning by coveting the gift of their Christian brother or sister, and they are being selfish and thinking only about their wants rather than the needs of the entire church (which required all the gifts to be in operation).

WHAT ARE THE PURPOSES OF THE GIFTS OF THE HOLY SPIRIT?

Ephesians 4:11-16 - *“It was He who gave some to be apostles, some to be prophets, some to be evangelists, and some to be pastors and teachers, to prepare God's people for works of service, so that the body of Christ may be built up until we all reach unity in the faith and in the knowledge of the Son of God and become mature, attaining to the whole measure of the fullness of Christ. Then we will no longer be infants, tossed back and forth by the waves, and blown here and there by every wind of teaching and by the cunning and craftiness of men in their deceitful scheming. Instead, speaking the truth in love, we will in all things grow up into him who is the Head, that is, Christ. From him the whole body, joined and held together by every supporting ligament, grows and builds itself up in love, as each part does its work.”*

The gifts of the Holy Spirit are given: “So that the _____ may be built up.”

The Scriptures often refer to the interrelatedness, and mutual need for every person in a church, like the parts of a human body (Colossians 1:18, 24, 2:19; Ephesians 1:22-23, 4:4, 12, 16, 5:30; 1 Corinthians 12:12-31; Romans 12:5). Every Christian is vitally important to the work of the Gospel in and through the local church.

Therefore, using your spiritual gifts will accomplish the following:

- Help build up the church (Ephesians 4:12, 16)
- Establish fellow Christians (Romans 1:11)
- Encourage fellow Christians (Romans 1:12)
- Enhance the effectiveness of the whole church (1 Corinthians 12:7)
- Expand the mission of the church beyond its present state (Ephesians 4:16)
- Honor the chief shepherd of the church, Jesus Christ (1 Peter 4:11, 5:4)

WHAT ARE THE SPIRITUAL GIFTS?

APOSTLES

Place in Scripture - 1 Corinthians 12:28; Ephesians 4:11

Shown in Jesus’ Ministry - Hebrews 3:1

Defined - An apostle is someone who has a mixture of gifts that enables him to proclaim the Gospel with boldness and plant new churches (Acts 13:3-4)

- This gift also includes the capacity to minister cross-culturally (Acts 10:34-35; Ephesians 3:7-8)

* NOTE: *This gift (as well as the other “sign-gifts”) is analogous to, but not identical to the divinely authoritative gifts exercised by the Apostles in the New Testament.*

General makeup - These people often have a number of gifts, such as: evangelism, teaching, leadership, faith, and exhortation and are motivated by difficult new tasks.

Illustrated Biblically - Paul (Acts 14:21-28)

Illustrated Historically - Hudson Taylor (1832-1905)

- He did not have a theological degree. He was physically small, weak, and frail. He gave up a well-paying and respected career as a physician in England to live in poverty, obscurity, and controversy in China. He refused to let money get in the way of ministry, to the point of even refusing to take an offering at meetings and funding ministry out of his own pocket. He worked at a feverish pace, at one point preaching in 58 Chinese cities in 25 days, 51 of which had never been visited by a Protestant missionary. Despite his critics, he adopted the clothing and cultural styles of China. Today, every Christian in China can trace their spiritual roots back to the efforts of Hudson Taylor.

Do you have this gift?

- Do you meet the Biblical qualifications to be an elder? (1 Timothy 3, Titus 1)
- Can you start a ministry from nothing by raising such things as leaders, money, etc.?
- Are you burdened for lost people?
- Do you love the church?
- Are you able to work well in chaos and uncertainty?
- Are you unashamed of the Gospel?
- Are you a gifted leader that people naturally follow?

Dangers to be aware of - The failure rate among church planters is staggering, and it is imperative that you be assessed, trained, and sent by mature and experienced church planters.

PROPHETS / PROPHECY

Place in Scripture - Romans 12:6; 1 Corinthians 12:10, 12:28

Shown in Jesus' Ministry - Jesus is the Word of God through whom the Father speaks (John 1:1-2, 14; Hebrews 1:1-3)

Defined - A prophet has a twofold ministry. First, they proclaim the Word of God, and second, to speak words that God has brought to their mind (although these words are not authoritative, and are always to be considered as merely human words to be measured by the teaching of the only infallible and authoritative Word of God, Scripture). The prophet has the ability to recognize sinful behavior and a driving compulsion to confront individuals, groups, and/or cultures by proclaiming God's Word without compromise.

General makeup - They will easily spot compromise, sin, and error, and desire immediate change and action for Christ. They tend to be bold, sensitive to sin, and place a very high value on Biblical behavior.

Illustrated Biblically - John the Baptist (Matthew 11:7-11), Judas and Silas (Acts 15:27:35), Paul (Acts 28:30-31; 2 Timothy 4:2), Agabus (Acts 21:10-11)

Illustrated Historically - Charles Spurgeon (1834-1892)

- One of the greatest preachers in the history of the church. The combination of his clear voice, his mastery of language, his sure grasp of Scripture and a deep love for Christ produced some of the finest preaching of any age. Spurgeon was converted at age 16 and entered his first pastorate at age 17. At age 19 he was called to a prominent church which seated 1,200, but had deteriorated to 200 members. He pastored that church for 38 years, growing the congregation to over 6,000 and them moving to a new facility which grew to over 20,000 members. He often preached ten times a week. Dozens of times throughout his ministry, Spurgeon would pause in the middle of preaching, point out an individual in the congregation whom he had never met, and speak a word directly to them about some area of sin in their life that God was calling them to repent of. Spurgeon continued to preach several times a week right up to the time of his death; his funeral lasted for five days and at least 100,000 people attended.

Do you have this gift?

- Do you delight in the Word of God?
- When you see sin or errors do you feel compelled to confront them?
- Do you tend to see more evil, sin, and error than others?
- Are you capable of detecting and refuting false teachings?
- Are you bold for Christ?
- Do you love people and seek their best in Christ?

Dangers to be aware of - Remember that not all issues are equally important, and you must stick closely to the gracious Gospel of Jesus at all times. Remember not to neglect the love of God as you confront others. Remember not to become too critical and judgmental. Remember that any "words" given to us by the Holy Spirit (outside of Scripture) are not authoritative, and should never be spoken with a "thus says the Lord". Paul says that the "spirits of prophets are subject to prophets" (1 Cor. 14:32), so even if a you have a genuine prophetic word from the Lord, if the timing or setting are not appropriate for that word to be shared, you should keep the word to yourself.

EVANGELISTS

Place in Scripture - Ephesians 4:11

Shown in Jesus' Ministry - Luke 19:10

Defined - The gift of evangelism is the ability and desire to boldly and clearly communicate the Gospel of Jesus Christ (Romans 1:16-17; 1 Corinthians 15:1-4)

General makeup - Evangelists often care passionately about lost people and have a strong desire to see them come to faith. They feel compassion for the lost and seek to understand their questions and doubts. Evangelists often prefers being with people in the world rather than in meetings, an office, or dealing with paperwork.

Illustrated Biblically – Philip (Acts 21:8), Timothy (2 Timothy 4:5)

Illustrated Historically - George Whitefield (1714-1770)

- During Whitefield's life, about 80% of all American colonists heard him preach at least once. He would travel from town to town on horseback to preach the Gospel, often more than a dozen times a week. During his lifetime, Whitefield preached at least 18,000 times. He addressed perhaps 10,000,000 hearers in person, before modern media. God also gave him the natural talent of a strong voice, he could be heard by up to 30,000 at one time without a microphone. Whitefield once said, "God forbid that I should travel with anybody a quarter of an hour without speaking of Christ to them."

Do you have this gift?

- Do you enjoy being with non-Christians and sharing the Gospel?
- Are you able to effectively communicate to non-Christians?
- Does the conversion of a soul bring you profound joy?
- Do you feel frustrated when you have not shared your faith for a long time?
- Do you enjoy teaching others how to share their faith?
- Do you find it easy to direct a conversation toward the topic of Jesus Christ?
- Have you been fruitful in witnessing and seeing people become Christians?

Dangers to be aware of - Remember that you'll want to see people not only connected to Jesus, but also to the local church where they can be trained and grow. Remember to spend time with non-believers and bring other Christians along so that you can train them.

PASTOR-TEACHER

Place in Scripture - Ephesians 4:11

Shown in Jesus' Ministry - 1 Peter 5:1-4

Defined - The gift of pastor-teacher is associated with the office of elder, and the qualifications of bishop (Acts 20:17, 28; 1 Peter 5:1-4; Titus 1:5-9). The pastor-teacher shepherds a local flock (church) and oversees its growth by teaching the Word of God.

General makeup - The pastor-teacher must have a love for both studying God's Word, and caring for God's people. They find great joy in the spiritual growth of others by equipping them to do ministry.

Illustrated Biblically - Paul (Acts 20:17-35)

Illustrated Historically - Richard Baxter (1615-1691)

- Puritan Richard Baxter entered vocational ministry at the age of 23 without any formal education. He pastored in a small English town of 2,000 people. He took these "ignorant, rude and reveling people" and turned them into a worshipping church of 1000 people. He viewed

teaching as his primary task and focused on the basics of the Christian faith. Each year he would personally visit the homes of each member of his congregation and did a great amount of counseling. He held a weekly pastor's forum for discussion and prayer in which he encouraged and trained numerous pastors. His gifted training of other pastors culminated in his classic book, *The Reformed Pastor*, which is one of his 200 writings.

Do you have this gift?

- Do you diligently study God's Word?
- Do you desire to shepherd God's people?
- Can you teach?
- Do you enjoy developing other leaders?
- Is your family a good model for the church?
- Do you enjoy mentoring others?

Dangers to be aware of - Remember to train others to do the work of serving, rather than doing it all yourself.

TEACHING

Place in Scripture - Romans 12:7; 1 Corinthians 12:28

Shown in Jesus' Ministry - John 3:2; 13:14

Defined - The gift of teaching is the God-given ability to understand and communicate Biblical truth in a clear and relevant manner so that there is understanding and practical application.

General Makeup - Learning, researching, communicating, and illustrating truth are qualities that an individual will manifest when exercising the gift of teaching. These people enjoy studying and learning new information, and find great joy in sharing it with others.

Illustrated Biblically - Paul (1 Timothy 1:6-7, 4:16; 2 Timothy 2:24-26; 3:15-17; 4:2-3), Aquila and Priscilla (Acts 18:26), Apollos (Acts 18:24-28)

Illustrated Historically - John Calvin (1509-1564)

- Calvin was one of the greatest and most significant teachers in all of history. Converted around age 23, he published his now famous Institutes for the Christian Religion at the age of 26. At age 28, Calvin settled in Geneva and soon established schools with intense academic teaching throughout the city. He later founded a university for more academic instruction. Calvin's passion for teaching has made him the father of modern education in numerous countries, including America. Calvin promoted education for everyone, which was a revolutionary concept that has now become a pattern throughout the world. In pagan nations, such as China and India (with little exposure to the Word of God) the literacy rate ranged from 0-20%. Roman Catholic countries ranged from 40-60%. In Protestant influenced countries, the literacy rate ranged from 94-99.9%. In America, the first 123 colleges and universities had Christian origins that were directly influenced by the teachings of John Calvin.

Do you have this gift?

- Do you enjoy intense studying and researching?
- Do you enjoy imparting Biblical truth to others?
- Do others come to you for insight into Scripture?
- Do you love to answer questions about the Bible?
- When you see someone confused in their understanding of the Bible do you feel a responsibility to speak to them about it?

- Do you enjoy speaking to various sizes of groups about Biblical issues you have strong convictions about?

Dangers to be aware of - Remember always to be a student who is learning from others. Remember to teach only what the Bible says without reading your own thoughts into it. Remember not to be thrust into other areas of leadership (leading/apostle) simply because you have a broad understanding of issues and principles underlying a ministry.

ENCOURAGEMENT

Place in Scripture - Romans 12:8

Shown in Jesus' Ministry - 2 Corinthians 2:16-17

General makeup - Christians with this gift have unusual sensitivity for and are attracted to those who are discouraged or struggling. People tend to pursue them for counsel, and they tend to have a high degree of patience and optimism. They may prefer working with an individual or small group.

Illustrated Biblically - Barnabas, whose name means "Son of Encouragement"

- He encourages Paul (Acts 9:27) and John Mark (Acts 15:39)

Illustrated Historically - Katharina von Bora Luther (1499-1552)

- The Great Reformer, Martin Luther, sought to purify the church and in doing so split the church into Catholicism and Protestantism. Involved in continual opposition and controversies, his life was in constant danger, his friends and church rejected and opposed him. As a result Luther struggled mightily with a deep depression. The ill health of his final ten years further contributed to his depression. His wife, Katherine, was a gifted encourager who strengthened, supported, and counseled her husband as he spearheaded the Reformation. Without her gift of encouragement it is doubtful whether Luther would have had the strength and will to continue pressing forward with his calling from God.

Do you have this gift?

- Do people seek you out for advice and encouragement?
- Do you enjoy walking with someone through difficulties?
- Are you attracted to those who are hurting and needy?
- Do you enjoy working closely with people who have personal and emotional problems?
- Would you rather speak personally with someone about their problems than send them to someone else for help?
- Do you find it easy to express joy in the presence of those who are suffering?

Dangers to be aware of – Remember to give Biblical answers and solutions. Remember not to take on more needy people than you can handle.

WORD OF WISDOM

Place in Scripture - 1 Corinthians 12:8

Shown in Jesus' Ministry - Luke 2:40-52; 1 Corinthians 1:24, 30; Colossians 2:2-3

Defined - The gift of wisdom is the ability to have very practical insight into people and situations that is not obvious to the average person, combined with an understanding of what to do and how to do it. It is the ability not only to see, but also apply the deep mysteries of God.

General makeup - When they speak people recognize their insight as being from God, and specifically needed in that moment.

Illustrated Biblically - Joshua (Deuteronomy 34:9), Solomon (1 Kings 3:5-28)

Illustrated Historically - A.W. Tozer (1897-1963)

- Tozer was born into a poor home in the hills of western Pennsylvania. Forced by his home situation to forfeit education, Tozer entered the ministry without either high school or college training. He came to Christ at age fifteen, after hearing a lay preacher speaking at a street meeting in Akron, Ohio. He went on to a lifetime of faithful pastoral ministry. Thousands regularly listened to his preaching on the Moody Bible Institute radio station. He became a very gifted writer and spent a number of years editing the Alliance Witness Magazine. Tozer's only education was years of diligent study with a constant prayerful pursuit of the mind of God. For example, when he desired to understand the works of Shakespeare, he read them through on his knees, asking God to help him understand their meaning. He wrote dozens of books, including *The Pursuit of God* while on his knees. With no teacher but the Holy Spirit and good books, Tozer became a theologian, a scholar, and a master craftsman in the use of the English language. His teaching was intensely practical as he taught how to integrate deep theological truths into practical daily living.

Do you have this gift?

- When studying God's Word with others, do you find that you discover the meaning and its implications before others do?
- Do you seem to understand things about God's Word that other believers with the same background and experience do not seem to know?
- Are you able to apply deep Biblical truth to practical daily living?
- Does God give you profound insights into people and circumstances?

Dangers to be aware of - Remember to maintain a broad exposure to people and ideas. Remember to study Scripture and maintain a Biblical worldview. Remember to remain humble. Remember to remain in continual prayer and walk in holiness so that God can speak to you clearly.

WORD OF KNOWLEDGE

Place in Scripture - 1 Corinthians 12:8

Shown in Jesus' Ministry - John 4:17-18

Defined - Knowledge received from the Holy Spirit to enable us to more effectively minister to the needs of people. To know and understand situations, circumstances, strategies of the enemy, kingdoms of darkness, etc.

General makeup - Those who operate in this gift are sensitive to the Holy Spirit. It is often combined with the gift of Prophecy.

Illustrated Biblically - Ananias (Acts 9:10-18), Peter (Acts 5:1-11), Paul (Acts 16:9-10)

Illustrated Historically - Charles Spurgeon (1834-1892)

- In his autobiography, Spurgeon tells the following story: "While preaching in a hall, on one occasion, I deliberately pointed to a man in the midst of the crowd, and said, 'There is a man sitting there, who is a shoemaker; he keeps his shop open on Sundays, it was open last Sabbath morning, he took in ninepence, and there was fourpence profit out of it; his soul is sold to Satan for fourpence!'" The shoemaker, convicted by the Holy Spirit, repented of his sin and trusted in

Christ for his salvation. He said that Spurgeon had been the one speaking, but it was God's voice speaking to his soul through Spurgeon's words. Spurgeon said of this event: "I could tell as many as a dozen similar cases in which I pointed at somebody in the hall without having the slightest knowledge of the person, or any idea that what I said was right, except that I believed I was moved by the Spirit to say it; and so striking has been my description, that the persons have gone away, and said to their friends, 'Come, see a man that told me all things that ever I did; beyond a doubt, he must have been sent of God to my soul, or else he could not have described me so exactly.'"

Do you have this gift?

- Do people often come to you with difficult problems and questions, seeking your insights?
- Do you seem to know the right time to share information?
- Do you find yourself having strong convictions or impressions that are often accompanied by a mental picture or a Scripture that is quickened to you?
- Do you often have insight into situations that you feel does not originate with you?

Dangers to be aware of - Remember not to become proud because you know what others do not. Remember it is God who is the Giver of gifts, not because of our own wisdom.

TONGUES / INTERPRETATION

Place in Scripture - 1 Corinthians 14:1-25

Defined - The gifts of Tongues and Interpretation of Tongues are separate gifts. The gift of Tongues is the supernatural utterance of praise to God in a language that is totally unknown to the speaker. The gift of Interpretation is the supernatural revelation of the meaning of what has been declared in the public exercise of the gift of Tongues.

General makeup - People with this gift will generally have a vibrant prayer life. Often they desire to spend extended times in meditation, prayer, and worship.

Illustrated Biblically - Early believers on the Day of Pentecost (Acts 2:4), Cornelius and his household (Acts 10:44-46, 11:15-18), Paul (1 Corinthians 14:18)

Illustrated Historically - Irenaeus (120-200)

- This is not a gift that lends itself to the recounting of particular historical episodes, but early Church Father Irenaeus confirms for us that this gift was in operation in the post-New Testament Christian Church. He writes: "We hear of many members of the church who have prophetic gifts, and, by the Spirit speak with all kinds of tongues, and bring men's secret thoughts to light for their own good, and expound the mysteries of God" (*Against Heresies*, 5:6,1).

Do you have this gift?

- Do you have an overwhelming desire to glorify God in prayer and worship?
- Have you ever felt, while you were praying, that the Holy Spirit was actually stepping in and praying on your behalf?
- When others pray in tongues, have you ever sensed that you knew what God was saying?
- Do you find that you have a desire for this gift?

Dangers to be aware of - Remember that 1 Corinthians tells us that the public exercise of the gift of Tongues must be accompanied by the gift of Interpretation. Remember that the private use of a prayer language (1 Corinthians 14:14) is for your edification, and is not to be used as a public display of your own spirituality. The gift of Tongues is not "ecstatic speech" that is beyond the control of the one speaking,

and is to be used with a sensitivity to those around you. Further, the Apostle Paul reminds us that “the one who speaks in a tongue speaks not to men but to God” (1 Corinthians 14:2). So, the legitimate use of the gifts of Tongues and Interpretation will be Godward in its orientation rather than directed at people. Remember the purpose of all gifts – the glory of Jesus, and the building of His church.

HEALING

Place in Scripture - 1 Corinthians 12:9

Shown in Jesus’ Ministry - Matthew 4:23-24 and 9:35

Defined - The gift of healing is the ability to call on God to heal the sick through supernatural means for the purpose of revealing God

General makeup - Those with the gift of healing trust that God can heal the sick and pray in faith for the physical restoration of those in need. These people see healing as a sign that God uses to reveal His power to people so that many will come to believe in Jesus. People with this gift do not see someone healed every time they ask God, since healing is something that God alone decides to do (Galatians 4:13-14; Philippians 2:27; 1 Timothy 5:23; 2 Timothy 4:20).

Illustrated Biblically - The Twelve (Matthew 10:1), the Seventy (Luke 10:8-9), Peter (Acts 5:14-16), Paul (Acts 3:1-8). Additionally, church elders are supposed to pray for the sick so that God might heal them (James 5:13-16).

Illustrated Historically - Augustine (354-430)

- Early in his ministry, the great Church father Augustine taught that the miraculous gifts of the Holy Spirit had ceased to be in operation after the time of the Apostles and the writing of the New Testament. However, in his later writings he retracted his denial of the ongoing reality of the miraculous and carefully documented no fewer than 70 instances of divine healing in his own church during a two-year span (see his *City of God*, Book XXII, chapters 8-10).

Do you have this gift?

- Do you have a deep compassion for people who are sick?
- Do you have a deep conviction that God can heal anyone He chooses?
- Do you enjoy praying for people who are sick?
- Have you seen God heal someone?
- When God heals someone, are you excited because it helps to reveal His power to others?
- Do you long for the coming of God’s Kingdom when there will be an end to all sickness since sin and its effects will be no more?

Dangers to be aware of - Remember that God heals whom HE chooses. Some extreme groups teach that Christians should not use a doctor, but the Bible does not teach this, and some doctors like Luke used their medical ability as part of their pastoral ministry to help people (Colossians 4:14; 2 Timothy 4:11; Philemon 1:24). Remember that even faithful Christians may become sick and not be healed. Examples of this include: Epaphroditus (Philippians 2:25-27), Timothy (1 Timothy 5:23), Tophimus (2 Timothy 4:20), and Paul (1 Corinthians 2:3; 2 Corinthians 11:30, 12:5-10; Galatians 4:13).

MIRACLES

Place in Scripture - 1 Corinthians 12:10

Shown in Jesus’ Ministry - John 20:20-31

- Jesus commanded nature (Mark 4:35-41), cast out demons (Mark 5:1-13; Matthew 12:22), walked on water (Mark 6:45-51), turned water into wine (John 2:1-11), and fed over 5,000 people with one boy's lunch (John 6:1-14).

Defined - The gift of miracles is the ability to call on God to do supernatural acts that reveal His power.

General makeup - People with the gift of miracles see God show up in extraordinary ways from daily little events to major public displays. People with this gift do not chase signs and wonders, but they do expect signs and wonders to follow God's people who follow Jesus.

Illustrated Biblically - The Apostles (Acts 2:43), Stephen (Acts 6:8), Paul (Acts 13:6-12, 16:16-18, 19:11)

Illustrated Historically - John Wimber (1934-1997)

- "I'm just a fat man trying to get to heaven." That is how John Wimber most often spoke of himself. Convinced by Scripture that he was commanded to regularly pray for healing in his church, Wimber began to pray for those in need of healing each service. For 9 months, no one was healed, but John persisted in prayer. His life and ministry were not governed by results but by what he believed he was commanded to do in the Bible. He said, "Obedience to God's Word is the fundamental reason that I pray for the sick." Rather than attempting to measure his success by the miraculous signs he asked himself "Was I faithful to teach the whole counsel of God and to train the Church?" Though thousands of miracles occurred throughout his ministry, Wimber noted the danger of lives centered on "ecstatic, spiritual experience." He taught that believers should not to seek formulas to see the miraculous but rather "to seek the Lord and Lifegiver himself, Jesus Christ." Because the complete ability and responsibility for miracles rests in God's hands alone, Wimber would often declare: "We obey and leave the results to God."

(NOTE: the historical illustrations provided are not meant to be an endorsement of the totality of the person's life or teaching. Rather, they simply serve as an example of someone who appeared to operate in a particular gift – which Romans 11:29 says is not dependent on our own faithfulness.)

Do you have this gift?

- Do you truly believe that God can do the impossible?
- When you read of the many miracles in the Bible are you encouraged because you love to see God made known in ways that cannot be ignored?
- Have you seen someone freed from demonic oppression?
- Have you seen God perform miracles?
- When you hear of or see miracles is your faith in God greatly increased?
- Do you use stories of God's miracles to help prove to others that Jesus is God?

Dangers to be aware of - Remember that this gift exists to exalt God, not the person using the gift.

Remember not to chase signs and wonders, Jesus said this was a wicked and evil thing to do (Luke 11:29). Don't get discouraged if God performs signs and wonders and non-Christians don't believe. Jesus said that some people would never believe in Him, even if they saw a miracle (John 4:48).

HELPS

Place in Scripture - 1 Corinthians 12:28

Shown in Jesus' Ministry - Luke 7:16

Defined - The gift of helps is the remarkable ability to work alongside another and help that person complete the task that God has given them.

General makeup - These people tend to demonstrate a servant attitude, loyalty, attention to detail, and responsiveness to the initiatives of others. They function well in positions of detail and assistant

leadership, and often prefer to work behind the scenes and are encouraged to see other people succeed because of their help.

Illustrated Biblically - Ephroditus (Philippians 2:19, 2:25, 4:18)

Illustrated Historically - Billy Graham's staff

- Billy Graham preached the Gospel to more people in live audiences than anyone else in history – over 210 million people in more than 185 countries and territories – through various meetings, including Mission World and Global Mission. Hundreds of millions more have been reached through television, video, film, and webcasts. Since the early days of his ministry a faithful team of helpers with gifts varying from music to administration have tirelessly labored behind the scenes to help Billy Graham in his very fruitful evangelistic ministry. Without their help, he could have not had the impact that God has given him.

Do you have this gift?

- Do you enjoy helping others become more effective in their work?
- Do you prefer to labor behind the scenes?
- When someone is doing a job poorly, is your first instinct to help them or criticize them?
- Do you prefer to work in a supportive rather than leadership capacity?
- When you hear of someone with needs do you offer your services if possible?
- Do you feel a burden to relieve others of their tasks so they are free to do their most important work?
- When someone asks for your help, do you have difficulty saying no?
- Do you look for opportunities to serve others?
- Are you humble?

Dangers to be aware of - Remember not to be afraid of criticism from others. Remember not to take on more work than you are able to accomplish. Remember to serve God first and not unquestionably comply with another person's wishes.

SERVING

Place in Scripture - Romans 12:7

Shown in Jesus' Ministry - Matthew 20:28

Defined - The gift involves the capacity to recognize and joyfully provide assistance in meeting practical needs, thus making life a little easier for others, particularly those who cannot help themselves.

General makeup - These people generally like to work behind the scenes. They also tend to find joy in helping alleviate the burdens and responsibilities of others. This gift is usually accompanied with an attitude of humility and sacrifice, as well as an ability to perceive the needs of others.

Illustrated Biblically - Exodus 18:22; Numbers 11:17; Romans 16:1–2; Acts 20:35; 1 Timothy 6:2

Illustrated Historically - Amy Carmichael (1867-1951)

- Amy Carmichael was a missionary to India for 55 years. In India she witnessed many “child widows:” young girls who grew up to be temple prostitutes. Moved with compassion for these children, Carmichael started the Dohnavur Fellowship, as a sanctuary for these disposable children who faced such a bleak future. Though her ministry at Dohnavur, Amy gave these children shelter and protection, and brought them into Christian community. She elevated the status of women, showing them that Jesus loved and had compassion for them. Her work was so influential that India outlawed temple prostitution in 1948. Amy once received a letter from a

young lady who was considering life as a missionary. She asked Amy, “What is missionary life like?” Amy wrote back saying, “Missionary life is simply a chance to die.”

Do you have this gift?

- Are you drawn to those in need?
- Do you prefer to labor behind the scenes?
- Are you burdened to relieve the needs of others?
- When someone asks for your help, do you have difficulty saying no?
- Do you look for opportunities to serve others?

Dangers to be aware of - Remember to learn to say no when you need to. Remember to learn to receive the service of others.

LEADERSHIP

Place in Scripture - Romans 12:8

Shown in Jesus’ Ministry - Matthew 4:19; 2 Corinthians 2:14

Defined - The spiritual gift of leadership is found in people who have a clear, significant vision from God and are able to communicate it publicly or privately in such a way that they influence others to pursue that vision.

General makeup - These people tend to gravitate toward the “point position” in a ministry. Others tend to recognize and have trust and confidence in their abilities. They best serve others by leading them, and they tend to operate with a strong sense of destiny or vision.

Illustrated Biblically - Abraham, Moses, Joshua, David, Daniel, Josiah, Paul, Peter, James, etc.

Illustrated Historically - Dawson Trotman (1906-1956)

- The ministry of The Navigators began in the 1930’s through the call of God to a young Californian, Dawson Trotman. He began to teach high school students and local Sunday school classes. Then in 1933, he and his friends began to extend their work among sailors in the U.S. Navy. Many hours were spent with individual sailors in Bible study, Scripture memorization and prayer with an emphasis on each teaching another what he had learned. By the end of World War II, thousands of men on ships and bases around the world were learning the principles of spiritual multiplication. At the same time, the high school students whose lives Dawson had touched went on to reach out to others around them in Southern California. Today, nearly seventy years later, they minister not only in the military and with students on college campuses, but in the marketplace with businessmen and women, among homemakers, ethnic groups, and international students in countries around the world—wherever there are people who need Christ.

Do you have this gift?

- Do others have confidence in your ability to lead?
- Do you enjoy being the “final voice” or the one with the overall responsibility for the direction and success of a group or organization?
- When a difficult situation arises, do others look to you for input and leadership?
- Do you usually take leadership in a group where none exists?
- Do you find leadership enjoyable rather than frustrating and difficult?
- Do others look at you to make the major decisions for a group or organization?

Dangers to be aware of - Remember to learn to train other leaders and delegate responsibility and ownership to them. Remember to avoid being placed in a position that requires devotion to details and the implementation of particulars. Remember that leadership is service and requires humility.

ADMINISTRATION

Place in Scripture - 1 Corinthians 12:28

Shown in Jesus' Ministry - Colossians 1:17

Defined - The gift of administration is the God-given ability to give direction and to make decisions on behalf of others that result in efficient operation and accomplishment of goals. Often the mark of an administrator is the ability to accomplish things in a "fitting and orderly way" (1 Corinthians 14:40).

General makeup - Administrators often have a keen eye for detail. They may also possess the natural talents of organization, observing and using details, problem solving, and reasoning.

Illustrated Biblically - Joseph, Jethro, Titus (Titus 1:5)

Illustrated Historically - William Carey (1761-1834)

- William Carey was born in England in 1761 and served as a pastor before going to the mission field where he served the Lord for 41 years preaching the gospel and translating the Scriptures. Carey served at a time when there was some indifference and even hostility to missionary effort. But, his strategic plan for missions titled Enquiry clearly laid out a means by which the world could be evangelized. In this masterpiece on missions, Carey answered arguments, surveyed the history of missions from apostolic times, surveyed the entire known world as to countries, size, population and religions, and dealt with the practical application of how to reach the world for Christ!

Do you have this gift?

- Do you find it easy to make decisions?
- When you give advice to someone, do you seem to emphasize more in the area of "how" it should be done rather than "why"?
- Do you find yourself frequently thinking of decisions that need to be made in giving overall direction to a group or organization?
- Do you like to oversee the distribution of resources?
- Are you organized and efficient?

Dangers to be aware of - Remember that you have to make decisions quickly and decisively. Remember to seek wise counsel before making major decisions.

GIVING

Place in Scripture - Romans 12:8

Shown in Jesus' Ministry - Matthew 7:7-12, 20:28

Defined - The gift of giving is the ability to give eagerly, wisely, generously, and sacrificially to meet the needs of others.

General makeup - Regardless of the amount, people with this gift genuinely view their treasures, talents, and time as on loan from God, and not their own. They are often moved to meet the needs of others. They enjoy giving of themselves and what they have, and even if they do not have resources to help, they earnestly pray for those needs to be met.

Illustrated Biblically - Tabitha (Acts 9:36)

Illustrated Historically - Throughout the history of the church, people with this gift are rarely seen. They tend to operate with great humility and prefer to do their work in quiet and secret by funding and supporting God's works with their money and other resources.

Do you have this gift?

- Do you tend to see the needs of others more than other people you know?
- Do you enjoy giving your time, talent, and treasure to others?
- Do you see giving to a worthwhile project as an exciting honor and privilege?
- When you give some money to someone, do you find that you do not expect any appreciation in return?
- Do you sense a great deal of joy in giving?
- Do you find yourself looking for opportunities to give your money in response to needs?

Dangers to be aware of - Remember to give out of pure motives with joy.

SHOWING MERCY

Place in Scripture - Romans 12:8

Shown in Jesus' Ministry - Mark 5:19

Defined - The gift of mercy is the capacity to feel and express unusual compassion and sympathy for those in difficult or crisis situations and to provide them with the necessary help and support to see them through these times.

General makeup - They have the ability to "walk in another's shoes" and to feel the pain and burdens they carry. They desire to make a difference in the lives of hurting people for Christ without being judgmental. They run the risk of being hurt and used, and may have a difficult time evaluating the intentions of others.

Illustrated Biblically - Tabitha (Acts 9:36), the Good Samaritan (Luke 10:30-37)

Illustrated Historically - Elisabeth Elliot (1926-2015) and Rachel Saint (1914-1994)

- The Huaorani tribe, located near the Andes Mountains in Ecuador, were a violent and murderous tribe that had virtually no contact with the outside world. Five young missionaries - Jim Elliot, Nate Saint, Roger Youderian, Peter Fleming, and Ed McCully - set out to bring the Gospel to this hostile people. On January 3, 1956, the missionaries landed their plane and established a camp on a beach about 4 miles from the Huaorani settlements. Five days later, on January 8, 1956, the five missionaries were attacked and speared by a group of Huaorani warriors. The news of their deaths was broadcast around the world. In 1958, Rachel Saint (sister of Nate Saint) and Elisabeth Elliot (wife of Jim Elliot), traveled to Ecuador to attempt to carry on the missionary work started by their husband and brother. These two unarmed women (as well as Elliot's little daughter) were not perceived as a threat by the tribe, and by February of 1959, were invited to live with the the Huaorani. This eventually led to the conversion of almost everyone in the tribe, including some of those involved in the killing, and largely put an end to the tribe's violence.

Do you have this gift?

- Do you enjoy visiting people who are sick or disabled?
- Do you often think of ways to minister to those who are suffering physically?
- Do you sense a great deal of compassion for people having personal and emotional problems?
- Would you enjoy a regular ministry to those who are suffering physically?

- Do you find that when visiting those who are suffering physically that it brings you joy rather than depressing you?

Dangers to be aware of - Remember to be honest with people in confronting sin. Remember to balance God's mercy with His justice.

DISCERNING OF SPIRITS

Place in Scripture - 1 Corinthians 12:10

Shown in Jesus' Ministry - Mark 2:8

Defined - The spiritual gift of discernment is the ability to give an immediate evaluation of what was spoken and the person who said it, as to whether it is of God or Satan.

General makeup - This person will have a solid understanding of God's Word and a sensitivity to the Holy Spirit. They easily detect insincerity and wrong motives in others. They also tend to be perceptive, sensitive to moral issues, and personally steadfast.

Illustrated Biblically - John (1 John 4:1), Paul (1 Corinthians 14:29)

Illustrated Historically - Jonathan Edwards (1703-1758)

- During the Great Awakening in the 1740's, many critics of the revival pointed to the unusual manifestations that were taking place. Jonathan Edwards, the greatest theologian and philosopher of the day, offered a balanced defense, evaluation, and critique of the revival that he played such an instrumental role in. In his book "*The Distinguishing Marks of a Work of the Spirit of God*", Edwards offered wise counsel for what he called "the discernment of spirits." His zeal for revival, spiritual renewal, and the proper place of emotion in response to God's working was balanced by a desire to see the believer's passion expressed in the context of Biblical authority, self-control, and the fruit of the Spirit. Edwards' gift for discerning Spirit from counterfeit produced a wealth of written material that remains instructive of the church in our day.

Do you have this gift?

- Have you felt a special responsibility to protect the truth of God's Word by exposing that which is wrong?
- Have you often made an evaluation of someone or something that was said that others did not see, but yet proved to be correct?
- Do you sense often that what is being said is produced by the devil rather than God, and has your judgment been correct?

Dangers to be aware of - Base your feelings on God's Word. Remember to have the courage to speak up when you know something is wrong. Remember to judge to correct and not to condemn.

FAITH

Place in Scripture - 1 Corinthians 12:9

Shown in Jesus' Ministry - Matthew 21:21

Defined - The gift of faith is the ability to envision what needs to be done and to trust God to accomplish it even though it seems impossible to most people.

General makeup - Those with the gift of faith have a strong sense that God is going to accomplish something important through them or their ministry whether others see it as significant or not. They trust

God in difficult, even impossible situations, when others are ready to give up. These people are often visionaries who dream big dreams, pray big prayers, and attempt big things for their Savior.

Illustrated Biblically - Caleb and Joshua, who led Israel in conquering and possessing the Promised Land; Nehemiah, who got permission from a pagan king to rebuild Jerusalem; The poor widow who gave practically all she had to God (Luke 21:2-4). Stephen was a “man full of faith” (Acts 6:5). See especially Hebrews 11.

Illustrated Historically - George Mueller (1805-1895)

- George Mueller said, “God delights to increase the faith of his children.” Mueller was a man who lived by faith and prayer alone. Charles Dickens’ Oliver Twist motivated Mueller to open the United Kingdom’s first orphanage for orphaned boys and girls. He began without finances and throughout his life never asked anyone for financial support, because he wanted people to glorify God when they saw the way He provided. His first orphanage began with 30 children. He would often pray with the children before meals, trusting God to somehow bring the meal they were to eat within a few minutes. Over his lifetime he cared for over 10,000 orphans and printed Bibles and books, supported over 130 missionaries, and opened a Bible college. He taught in over 30 countries on faith and prayer and died in poverty having never kept anything for himself over the course of his life.

Do you have this gift?

- Do you view obstacles as opportunities?
- Do you trust God for the impossible?
- Do you have the ability to believe God for things other believers do not?
- Do you find yourself feeling opposed to anyone who expresses that something cannot be done or accomplished?
- Do you find other believers coming to you when they face a seemingly overwhelming trial or task?
- Have you seen God accomplish things in your life that others said could not be done but which you believed He could do?
- Do you have an effective prayer ministry with many wonderful answers to prayers that were impossible from the human point of view?

Dangers to be aware of - Remember not to merely look at the problems and trials in life. Remember not to worry. Remember to pray with others who have the gift of faith.

HOSPITALITY

Place in Scripture - Romans 12:13

Shown in Jesus’ Ministry - Mark 6:30-44

Defined - The spiritual gift of hospitality is the ability to entertain guests in your home with great joy and effectiveness.

General makeup - These people tend to have an “open home” where others are welcome to visit. This gift is often combined with the natural talent of cooking and provides a natural ministry in a loving home environment.

Illustrated Biblically - It is a qualification of an overseer (1 Timothy 3:2; Titus 1:8)

Illustrated Historically - Edith Schaeffer (1914-2013)

- In the turbulent social chaos of the 1960's and 70's, God raised up a loving couple to address a lost and rebellious generation with the truth of Jesus Christ. Francis Schaeffer was a widely known apologist, theologian and evangelist. What is not as widely known, though, is the impact his wife had on his ministry. As their renowned pupil Os Guinness said, "Mrs. Schaeffer is the secret of Schaeffer." Together, they built an international ministry in the Swiss Alps called L'Abri, which means shelter. With modest beginnings, their ministry grew quickly as lost university students, eastern mystics, rebellious church kids, hippies and adherents to other faiths from around the world came to visit L'Abri. Francis would teach, debate, and give answers for the faith. Edith illustrated it with a life of hospitable service. Over a hundred students would live with them at a time. Edith provided clean bedding, home cooked meals, fresh flowers, neat decor, paintings, sculptures, sketches, music, endless hot cookies and artful table settings. She even published a book titled *The Hidden Art of Homemaking* to teach others in hospitality.

Do you have this gift?

- Do you enjoy having people in your home?
- Do you enjoy serving behind the scenes?
- Is your home the kind that most people feel comfortable in and drop by to visit unannounced?
- Do you feel that something is really missing in your life when you cannot have guests into your home?
- When you think of your home, do you view it from the perspective of guests who will visit?
- Do you consider your home as a place of ministry?
- Do you like to connect people together for friendships?

Dangers to be aware of - Remember to maintain some closed time for your immediate family's needs. Remember to always check your motives and maintain a good attitude.

HOW CAN I DISCOVER MY SPIRITUAL GIFTS?

1. Seek _____ from church leaders and mature Christians who have wisdom (Acts 13:1-4; 1 Timothy 4:14; 2 Timothy 1:6).
2. Begin _____ in various areas to discover what a good fit is for you (Romans 12:1; Isaiah 6:8).
3. Think through your areas of _____ and _____ because those may be areas that God is leading you for a ministry opportunity.
4. Seek to discover in what ways God is _____ to bear fruit since that may be an indication of your gift(s).
5. Though serving the Lord can always be tiring; you should expect to have a sense of _____, _____, and _____ if you are serving in your area of gifting.

Lesson Seven - Stewardship

Psalms 24:1 - *“The earth is the Lord’s, and the fullness thereof, the world and those who dwell therein.”*

Murray Harris - *“Christian stewardship is the management of life and all its resources for the glory of God.”*

FINANCIAL STEWARDSHIP

Many people are suspicious that churches and ministries are just after people’s money. Even teaching on the subject can result in misunderstandings and accusations of greediness. So, why even teach on the subject of money? Couldn’t we just avoid the topic so that no one accuses us of being on the same team as those ridiculous televangelists? If a church has any interest in being faithful to teach the whole counsel of Scripture, financial stewardship must be regularly taught.

_____ % of Jesus’ words in the Gospels are related to our resources and stewardship of them (28 passages in the four Gospels). In the Old Testament and New Testament combined there are over 800 verses on the subject – dealing with a wide variety of financial topics including, planning and budgeting, saving and investing, debt and tithing.

Money has always been one of the greatest idols in the world, but never more so than in contemporary American culture. Money is also a critical component to the growth and health of the church. Church ministry takes money. Supporting missionaries, caring for those in need, having electricity in a building, paying staff, purchasing cleaning supplies, having a phone, and purchasing Sunday School resources all require money.

“A feast is made for laughter, and wine makes life merry, but money is the answer for everything” (Ecclesiastes 10:19). While this verse is true for almost everything in the world, there still are some things money can’t buy, mainly our _____. Some people may try, but they will fail. God is not moved by our possessions, He is not bribed by what we can offer Him. God Himself is the giver of all of our possessions and cares, not about them, but about the condition of our hearts: Do we worship Him above and beyond everything else in our lives? Do we worship Him as the giver of everything? Does our “stuff” hinder our walk with God, or cause us to grow closer by rightfully acknowledging His grace?

God blesses us for the purpose of giving _____ glory and not _____. Yet it is very easy to fall prey to the love of money (the love of the next new car, the love of spending more than you make, the love of trying to impress others); greed falls close to the flesh of every human. In large part it could be said that American culture is currently built upon the premise of greed. As Dave Ramsey put it, “We all buy things we don’t need, with money we don’t have, to impress people we don’t even like.”

The Bible has much to say about our money and possessions. God knows the state of the human heart and how we are so easily swayed by things of this world. Like any other area of our Christian life, it is imperative that we have good theology and that our doctrine penetrates how we actually live. *“Be diligent in these matters; give yourself wholly to them, so that everyone may see your progress. Watch your life and doctrine closely. Persevere in them, because if you do, you will save both yourself and your hearers”* (1 Timothy 4:15-16).

WHAT IS THE FUNCTION OF MONEY?

Money is simply a _____ that the Bible gives us the framework for using correctly. Other tools outlined in Scripture are prayer, friendships, teaching of the Word, fellowship, etc.; all of which are to be used to aid us in our lives as Christians. Money can be used in this manner for:

- Loving and Glorifying God - Honoring the Lord with your wealth (Proverbs 3:9)
- Advancement of the Gospel - Giving your first fruits to the work of the Gospel through the church
- Providing for the needs of your family (1 Timothy 5:8)
- Loving People - Through generosity, hospitality, and blessing others
- Enjoying God - Enjoying his blessings, and not taking money so seriously

Until we properly understand the function of money from a Biblical perspective we can't begin to leverage it for its true purposes. In other words, our money is most effective when it is in line with how God calls us to use it.

WHO OWNS EVERYTHING?

Where does our stuff come from? _____. He owns everything we have, He makes everything we make, He is in control of everything and nothing is out of His hands. It is a great deception to believe that we own anything, that we deserve anything, that we can do anything good apart from God, and that we are sovereign over our own lives. Nothing good that we have or do originates with us, it all comes from the hand of God.

“Don't be deceived, my dear brothers. Every good and perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of the heavenly lights, who does not change like shifting shadows. He chose to give us birth through the Word of Truth, that we might be a kind of firstfruits of all He created” (James 1:16-18).

Scripture speaks often about the origin of our stuff. Just as God created the Heavens and the Earth in Genesis; we see in the whole of Scripture that He is intimately involved with the creation of everything contained within those Heavens and Earth – including the hairs on your head and the pennies in your pocket!

John 1:1-5 - *“In the beginning was the Word and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was with God in the beginning. Through Him all things were made; without Him nothing was made that has been made. In Him was life, and that life was the light of men. The light shines in the darkness, but the darkness has not understood it.”*

Haggai 2:8 - *“The silver is mine and the gold is mine,” declares the LORD Almighty”*

Psalms 50:10 - *“For every animal of the forest is mine, and the cattle on a thousand hills.”*

Psalms 139:13 - *“For you created my inmost being; You knit me together in my mother's womb.”*

Luke 12:6-8 - *“Are not five sparrows sold for two pennies? Yet not one of them is forgotten by God. Indeed, the very hairs of your head are all numbered. Don't be afraid; you are worth more than many sparrows. I tell you, whoever acknowledges me before men, the Son of Man will also acknowledge him before the angels of God.”*

Acts 17:24-25 - *“The God who made the world and everything in it is the Lord of heaven and earth and does not live in temples built by hands. And He is not served by human hands, as if He needed anything, because He Himself gives all men life and breath and everything else.”*

Deuteronomy 8:17-18 - *“You may say to yourself, “My power and the strength of my hands have produced this wealth for me.” But remember the LORD your God, for it is He who gives you the ability to produce wealth, and so confirms His covenant, which He swore to your forefathers, as it is today.”*

WEALTH (BIBLICALLY DEFINED)

Wealth is everything we have, given to us by God, including our finances, jobs, houses, products of our land, businesses, automobiles and personal items. Our wealth is not limited to our cash but includes the vast array of stuff that we have been given by the hand of God.

WHAT IS STEWARDSHIP?

STEWARDS DEFINED:

A steward is a person, who by God's grace, belongs to God. And, because they belong to God they recognize that ultimately everything they are and have belongs to God and has been given to them as a gift. Therefore, they then seek to both enjoy the gifts God has given them as well as invest those gifts in others and the future by distributing them wisely. We have three categories that we must steward: our time, our talents and our wealth.

Romans 1:6 - *"And you also are among those who are called to belong to Jesus Christ"*

1 Corinthians 4:7 - *"For who sees anything different in you? What do you have that you did not receive? If then, you received it, why do you boast as though you did not receive it?"*

FOUR TYPES OF STEWARDS IN PROVERBS

RIGHTEOUS RICH

- Marked by Hard Work, Faithfulness and Financial Blessing from God
 - **Proverbs 18:18-20** - *"With Me are riches and honor, enduring wealth and prosperity. My fruit is better than fine gold; what I yield surpasses choice silver. I walk in the way of righteousness, along the paths of justice, bestowing wealth on those who love Me and making their treasuries full."*
 - **Proverbs 15:6** - *"The house of the righteous contains great treasure, but the income of the wicked brings them trouble."*

RIGHTEOUS POOR

- Marked by Hard Work, Honesty and Contentment
 - **Proverbs 28:6** - *"Better a poor man whose walk is blameless than a rich man whose ways are perverse"*
 - **Luke 21:1-4** - *"As he looked up, Jesus saw the rich putting their gifts into the temple treasury. He also saw a poor widow put in two very small copper coins. "I tell you the truth," he said, "this poor widow has put in more than all the others. All these people gave their gifts out of their wealth; but she out of her poverty put in all she had to live on."*

UNRIGHTEOUS RICH

- Marked by Deception, Lying, and Stealing
 - **Proverbs 11:16-18** - *"A kindhearted woman gains respect, but ruthless men gain only wealth. A kind man benefits himself, but a cruel man brings trouble on himself. The wicked man earns deceptive wages, but he who sows righteousness reaps a sure reward."*
 - **Proverbs 11:7** - *"When a wicked man dies, his hope perishes; all he expected from his power comes to nothing."*

UNRIGHTEOUS POOR

- Marked by Laziness and Complacency
 - **Proverbs 6:10** - *"A little sleep, a little slumber, a little folding of the hands to rest – and poverty will come on you like a bandit and scarcity like an armed man."*
 - **Proverbs 20:4** - *"A sluggard does not plow in season; so at harvest time he looks but finds nothing."*

The goal for a Christian is to live a life marked by: Faithfulness, righteousness, hard work, honesty, obedience, wisdom, generosity, and contentment. As we exhibit these characteristics in our life, God is faithful to bless us in return. Many make the mistake of thinking that God's blessing will always be manifested in _____ ways. God's grace and blessings come in many different ways, some of which are: Contentment and the ability to enjoy what you have, financial wealth that in turn can be shared with others, reconciliation with a friend (or business partner or family member), and healthy friendships and relationships.

WHAT ARE SOME COMMON FINANCIAL SINS?

IDOLATRY (worshipping anything other than Jesus)

- **Matthew 6:19-24** - *“Do not store up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust destroy, and where thieves break in and steal. But store up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where moth and rust do not destroy, and where thieves do not break in and steal. For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also. The eye is the lamp of the body. If your eyes are good, your whole body will be full of light. But if your eyes are bad, your whole body will be full of darkness. If then the light within you is darkness, how great is that darkness! No one can serve two masters. Either he will hate the one and love the other, or he will be devoted to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve both God and Money.”*
- **Luke 18:18-30** - *“A certain ruler asked him, “Good teacher, what must I do to inherit eternal life?” Why do you call me good?” Jesus answered. “No one is good—except God alone. You know the commandments: ‘Do not commit adultery, do not murder, do not steal, do not give false testimony, honor your father and mother’. All these I have kept since I was a boy,” he said. When Jesus heard this, He said to him, “You still lack one thing. Sell everything you have and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven. Then come, follow me.” When he heard this, he became very sad, because he was a man of great wealth. Jesus looked at him and said, “How hard it is for the rich to enter the kingdom of God! Indeed, it is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich man to enter the kingdom of God.” Those who heard this asked, “Who then can be saved?” Jesus replied, “What is impossible with men is possible with God.” Peter said to him, “We have left all we had to follow you!” I tell you the truth,” Jesus said to them, “no one who has left home or wife or brothers or parents or children for the sake of the kingdom of God will fail to receive many times as much in this age and, in the age to come, eternal life.”*

_____ (giving in order to be recognized)

- **Matthew 6:1-4** - *“Be careful not to do your ‘acts of righteousness’ before men, to be seen by them. If you do, you will have no reward from your Father in heaven. “So when you give to the needy, do not announce it with trumpets, as the hypocrites do in the synagogues and on the streets, to be honored by men. I tell you the truth, they have received their reward in full. But when you give to the needy, do not let your left hand know what your right hand is doing, so that your giving may be in secret. Then your Father, who sees what is done in secret, will reward you.”*

DEBT

- **Proverbs 22:7** - *“The rich rule over the poor, and the borrower is servant to the lender”*

ENVY AND COVETOUSNESS

- **Ecclesiastes 4:4** - *“And I saw that all labor and all achievement spring from man's envy of his neighbor. This too is meaningless, a chasing after the wind.”*

NO FEAR OF THE LORD

- **Proverbs 15:16** - *“Better a little with the fear of the LORD than great wealth with turmoil.”*

LAZINESS

- **Proverbs 13:4** - *“The sluggard craves and gets nothing, but the desires of the diligent are fully satisfied.”*
- **1 Timothy 5:8** - *“If anyone does not provide for his relatives, and especially for his immediate family, he has denied the faith and is worse than an unbeliever.”*

LACK OF PLANNING

- **Proverbs 21:5** - *“The plans of the diligent lead to profit as surely as haste leads to poverty.”*
- **Proverbs 15:21-22** - *“Folly delights a man who lacks judgment, but a man of understanding keeps a straight course. Plans fail for lack of counsel, but with many advisers they succeed.”*
- **Proverbs 13:22** - *“A good man leaves an inheritance for his children’s children, but a sinner’s wealth is stored up for the righteous.”*
- **Proverbs 19:14** - *“Houses and wealth are inherited from parents, but a prudent wife is from the LORD.”*

GREED AND FALSE DOCTRINE

- **1 Timothy 6:3-10** - *“If anyone teaches false doctrines and does not agree to the sound instruction of our Lord Jesus Christ and to Godly teaching, he is conceited and understands nothing. He has an unhealthy interest in controversies and quarrels about words that result in envy, strife, malicious talk, evil suspicions and constant friction between men of corrupt mind, who have been robbed of the truth and who think that godliness is a means to financial gain. But godliness with contentment is great gain. For we brought nothing into the world, and we can take nothing out of it. But if we have food and clothing, we will be content with that. People who want to get rich fall into temptation and a trap and into many foolish and harmful desires that plunge men into ruin and destruction. For the love of money is a root of all kinds of evil. Some people, eager for money, have wandered from the faith and pierced themselves with many griefs.”*

NOT GIVING OR TITHING

- **Malachi 3:8-10** - *“Will a man rob God? Yet you rob me. But you ask, ‘How do we rob you?’ In tithes and offerings. You are under a curse – the whole nation of you – because you are robbing me. Bring the whole tithe into the storehouse, that there may be food in my house. Test me in this,” says the LORD Almighty, “and see if I will not throw open the floodgates of heaven and pour out so much blessing that you will not have room enough for it.”*

SELFISHNESS

- **James 4:1-4** - *“What causes fights and quarrels among you? Don’t they come from your desires that battle within you? You want something but don’t get it. You kill and covet, but you cannot have what you want. You quarrel and fight. You do not have, because you do not ask God. When you ask, you do not receive, because you ask with wrong motives, that you may spend what you get on your pleasures. You adulterous people, don’t you know that friendship with the world is hatred toward God? Anyone who chooses to be a friend of the world becomes an enemy of God.”*

IS MONEY RELATED TO WORSHIP?

Our money is inextricably linked to our worship both corporately and individually. As a body of believers, we worship corporately by contributing financially to our local church. We respond to God’s gifts and kindness by giving in return, so that the Gospel can continue to reach others through the work of the church. As scattered individuals, we worship by loving our family and loving others with our money. This may take the form of sharing your home and a meal with friends, loaning your truck to a neighbor, or buying a Bible for your unbelieving co-worker. Our whole lives are to be marked by worship – and how you use your money plays a role in this every day. Worship does happen on Sundays, but does not end there.

- **Deuteronomy 16:16** - *“Three times a year all your men must appear before the LORD your God at the place He will choose: at the Feast of Unleavened Bread, the Feast of Weeks, and the Feast of Tabernacles. No man should appear before the LORD empty-handed.”*
- **Philippians 4:18** - *“I have received full payment and even more; I am amply supplied, now that I have received from Epaphroditus the gifts you sent. They are a fragrant offering, an acceptable sacrifice, pleasing to God.”*

TITHING IN THE BIBLE

Tithe literally means “_____” (a numerical measurement).

TITHING IN THE OLD TESTAMENT

In the Old Testament, tithing was basically (but not technically) a law. There is no punishment found in OT for not tithing in the church. 10% of money given to the church funded the Levite priest’s ministry (Deuteronomy 18:21-29, 27:30), 10% paid for festivals to build community and for celebration (Deuteronomy 12:10-11, 17-18, 14:22-27), and 3.3% of the church tithe was given to help the poor (Deuteronomy 14:28-29). Additionally, crop gleanings were collected for poor and alien (Leviticus 19:9-10), and occasional additional offerings above and beyond regular giving were taken (Nehemiah 10:32-33). The total “mandatory” OT tithe resulted in over 25% of a family’s gross income.

TITHING IN THE NEW TESTAMENT

In the New Testament, giving is grace centered not law centered, as the OT is fulfilled in Jesus (Matthew 5:17). The grace centered life taught by Jesus, and the rest of the NT, increased (not decreased) what was expected of believers (Matthew 5:17-48). The word “tithe” is rarely used in the NT; the few times it is used was either to rebuke the Pharisees or relating OT stories.

THE GRACE OF GIVING – 2 CORINTHIANS 8 AND 9

- Giving is a joy and an honor
- Giving is a heart issue
- Giving should come from your first fruits
- Giving should be done regularly, cheerfully, and sacrificially
- Giving is tied to your proportion of faith
- The amount is between you and God
- Giving is a spiritual gift that should be coupled with faith (Romans 12)

COMMON QUESTIONS ABOUT TITHING

Proverbs 3:9-10 - *“Honor the LORD with your wealth, with the first fruits of all your crops; then your barns will be filled to overflowing, and your vats will brim over with new wine.”*

SHOULD GIVING VARY BY INCOME?

1 Corinthians 16:1-2 - *“Now about the collection for God’s people: Do what I told the Galatian churches to do. On the first day of every week, each one of you should set aside a sum of money in keeping with his income, saving it up, so that when I come no collections will have to be made.”*

WHAT IF I CANNOT AFFORD TO TITHE?

2 Corinthians 8:1-4 - *“And now, brothers, we want you to know about the grace that God has given the Macedonian churches. Out of the most severe trial, their overflowing joy and their extreme poverty welled up in rich generosity. For I testify that they gave as much as they were able, and even beyond their ability. Entirely on their own, they urgently pleaded with us for the privilege of sharing in this service to the saints.”*

- o You may need to begin by reorganizing your spending habits with a wise budget.

SHOULD NON-CHRISTIANS TITHE?

Non-Christians are welcome guests in the church and are not expected to give financially.

SHOULD I TITHE FROM MY GROSS OR NET INCOME? (Should I tithe from all my income or only my salary?)

Proverbs 3:9 - *“Honor the LORD with your wealth, with the firstfruits of all your crops...”*

- o In our society the government takes a piece of our income before we even see it (in most cases). The Bible teaches the concept of _____, meaning that of all we are given or earn, we should give the first portion back to God.

CAN I GET A TAX-DEDUCTION FOR TITHING?

Yes. If you give in a way that we can record (i.e. check, online or cash in a marked envelope) then our church bookkeeper will keep accurate totals of your giving and give you a receipt at the beginning of the year, certifying the amount of your total contributions that are tax deductible for the previous calendar year.

HOW MUCH SHOULD I TITHE?

2 Corinthians 9:6-8 - *“Remember this: Whoever sows sparingly will also reap sparingly, and whoever sows generously will also reap generously. Each man should give what he has decided in his heart to give, not reluctantly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver. And God is able to make all grace abound to you, so that in all things at all times, having all that you need, you will abound in every good work.”*

STEWARDED OUR GIFTS

Galatians 6:10 - *“Therefore, as we have opportunity, let us do good to all people, especially to those who belong to the family of believers”*

Matthew 12:48-50 - *“Pointing to His disciples, Jesus said, ‘Here are my mother and my brothers. For whoever does the will of My Father in heaven is My brother and sisters and mother.’”*

WHAT DOES IT MEAN TO BE PART OF THE FAMILY OF GOD?

As Christians, we have a bond of family stronger than blood. We are united in Christ and, through our salvation, made co-heirs with Christ, adopted by God our Father. While this term is often used and given lip service, it rarely receives the meditation and depth that Scripture teaches us. Our understanding is made even more difficult by the fact that many of us may have had parents and relatives who have modeled family poorly and so the concept leaves a bad taste in our mouth. We must redeem our understanding of family if we are to understand our place in God’s kingdom and relationship with our brothers and sisters in Christ.

HOW SHOULD WE INTERACT WITH OUR FAMILY?

1 Peter 4:8-11 - *“Above all, keep loving one another earnestly, since love covers a multitude of sins. Show hospitality to one another without grumbling. As each has received a gift, use it to serve one another, as good stewards of God’s varied grace: whoever speaks, as one who speaks oracles of God; whoever serves, as one who serves by the strength that God supplies—in order that in everything God may be glorified through Jesus Christ. To him belong glory and dominion forever and ever. Amen.”*

WHAT IS THE FUNCTION OF THIS FAMILY?

Romans 12:1-5 - *“Therefore, I urge you, brothers, in view of God’s mercy, to offer your bodies as living sacrifices, holy and pleasing to God – this is your spiritual act of worship. Just as each of us has one body with many members, and these members do not all have the same function, so in Christ we who are many form one body, and each member belongs to all the others. Do not conform any longer to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God’s will is – His good, pleasing and perfect will. For by the grace given me I say to every one of you: Do not think of yourself more highly than you ought, but rather think of yourself with sober judgment, in accordance with the measure of faith God has given you.”*

HOW SHOULD THIS FAMILY FUNCTION RELATIONALLY FOR THE WORK OF THE GOSPEL?

Romans 12:6 - *“We have different gifts, according to the grace given us. If a man’s gift is prophesying, let him use encourage; if it is contributing to the needs of others, let him give generously; if it is leadership, let him govern diligently; if it is showing mercy, let him do it cheerfully.”*

1 Corinthians 12:4-26 (excerpts) - *“There are different kinds of gifts, but the same Spirit. There are different kinds of service, but the same Lord. There are different kinds of working, but the same God works all of them in all men. The body is a unit, though it is made up of many parts; and though all its parts are many, they form one body. So it is with Christ. For we were all baptized by one Spirit into one body – whether Jews or Greeks, slave or free – and we were all given the one Spirit to drink. But in fact God has arranged the parts in the body, every one of them, just as He wanted them to be. If they were all one part, where would the body be? As it is, there are many parts, but one body. The eye cannot say to the hand, “I don’t need you!” And the head cannot say to the feet, “I don’t need you!” On the contrary, those parts of the body that seem to be weaker are indispensable, If one part suffers, every part suffers with it; if one part is honored, every part rejoices with it.”*

In a culture that values autonomy and independence, Christians are called upon by Scripture to be countercultural and not only have authentic, deep relationships but work hand-in-hand in _____ for the cause of the Gospel. This goes against our sinful natures and will sadly not be involuntary, like many of our bodily functions. To develop relational interaction on this level takes continual prayer, meditation, fellowship, and maturation in community with each other.

WHAT IS THE PRIESTHOOD OF BELIEVERS?

1 Peter 2:4 - *“As you come to Him, the Living Stone – rejected by men but chosen by God and precious to Him – you also, like living stones, are being built into a spiritual house to be a holy priesthood, offering spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ.”*

1 Peter 2:9 - *“But you are a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people belonging to God, that you may declare the praises of Him who called you out of darkness into his wonderful light.”*

Revelation 1:6 - *“To Him who loves us and has freed us from our sins by his blood, and has made us to be a kingdom and priests to serve his God and Father – to Him be glory and power for ever and ever! Amen.”*

The priesthood of believers is the Scriptural teaching that every Christian is in full-time ministry serving the Lord in all they do. This means that vocations other than paid ministry are still ministry and that God has scattered His people throughout varying times and places so that they could honor Him in all of life.

Lesson Eight - The Mission of the Church

Ephesians 5:25 - *“Christ loved the church and gave Himself up for her”*

WHAT IS THE CHURCH?

The _____ Church is the community of Christians for all time who have been loved and saved by Jesus Christ (Ephesians 5:25). The Church also includes the people of the Old Testament (Deuteronomy 4:10; Acts 7:38; Hebrews 2:12 cf. Psalms 22:22). In every _____ church, there are people who are not Christians (Matthew 13:24–30), including wolves sent by Satan to lead people astray (Acts 20:29–30). While it is possible for Christians to know who else is a Christian (i.e. the frequent references to Christian brothers and sisters), ultimately only the Lord knows exactly every person who is and is not a Christian (2 Timothy 2:19).

SHOULD ALL CHRISTIANS BE VITALLY INVOLVED IN A LOCAL CHURCH?

Hebrews 10:24–25 - *“And let us consider how to stir up one another to love and good works, not neglecting to meet together, as is the habit of some, but encouraging one another, and all the more as you see the Day drawing near.”*

The Old and New Testaments were written to communities of God’s people who regularly gathered together for such things as teaching, fellowship, worship, etc. The Bible is clear that every Christian is a part of the Universal Church body and is expected to participate in the life of a local church with the gifts God has given him or her (1 Corinthians 12:1–31). It is therefore a sin for someone who claims to be a Christian not to be actively loving his or her Christian brothers and sisters (1 John 1:7, 3:17–18, 4:21), and seeking to build up the church (1 Corinthians 12:7, 14:6, 14:12, 14:26b).

WHO IS THE ULTIMATE HEAD OF THE CHURCH?

The Scriptures are clear that Jesus Christ is the head of the church (Ephesians 1:9, 1:22–23, 4:15, 5:23). Jesus is the Apostle who plants a church (Hebrews 3:1), and the Senior Pastor who builds (Matthew 16:18) and rules the church (1 Peter 5:4). And, it is ultimately Jesus who closes churches down when they have become faithless and/or fruitless (Revelation 2:5). Therefore, it is absolutely vital that a church loves Jesus, obeys Jesus, imitates Jesus, and follows Jesus at all times and in all ways according to the teaching of His Word (Colossians 3:16).

WHAT ARE ELDERS, DEACONS, AND MEMBERS?

Philippians 1:1 - *“Paul and Timothy, servants of Christ Jesus, to all the saints in Christ Jesus who are at Philippi, with the overseers and deacons...”*

_____ are the leaders of the church who are also called pastors, bishops, and overseers (Acts 20:28; Ephesians 4:11; 1 Peter 5:2). The elders are men chosen for their ministry according to clear Biblical requirements (1 Timothy 2:11–3:1–7; Titus 1:5–9). They are always spoken of in plurality because God intends for more than one man to lead and rule over the church as a safeguard for both the church and the man. The elders’ duties include ruling (1 Timothy 5:17), managing (1 Timothy 3:4–5), tending (1 Peter 5:2–5), giving account (Hebrews 13:17), living exemplary lives (Hebrews 13:7), using authority (Acts 20:28), teaching (Ephesians 4:11; 1 Timothy 3:2), preaching (1 Timothy 5:17), doctrinal instruction (Titus 1:9), and discipline (Matthew 18:15–17).

_____ are the servants of the church who are also qualified for their ministry of overseeing and caring for God's people by qualifications that are nearly identical to the elders minus the teaching and preaching abilities (1 Timothy 3:8–13). Deacons can be either male or female (1 Timothy 3:8–13 especially 3:11), as with the example of the woman Phoebe (Romans 16:1–2). The deacon ministry may have officially begun in the early church in Acts 6:1–6. At EWC, the deacon ministry involves our trustees and those involved in the Social Committee.

_____ are the Christians who are actively participating in the life of the local church so that it is built up for God's purposes (1 Corinthians 12:1–31 especially 12:24). The early church had a notion of being a member that included numerical record (Acts 2:37–47), records of widows (1 Timothy 5:3–16); elections (Acts 6:1–6), discipline (Matthew 18:15–20; 1 Corinthians 5; Galatians 6:1), accountability (Hebrews 13:17), and an awareness of who was a church member (Romans 16:1–16).

WHAT ARE THE SACRAMENTS? (visible sign of an inward grace)

BAPTISM

Baptism occurred through the immersion of a person completely under water and then raising him up (Mark 1:5; 1:10; John 3:23); showing that the person was united with Christ in His death, burial, and resurrection (Romans 6:1–7; Colossians 2:11–12). Baptism is to be done in the name of the Trinity (Matthew 28:19), and is to be done for Christians who demonstrate saving faith (Acts 2:41; 8:12; 10:47–48; Galatians 3:27). Baptism does not save anyone, but instead shows that God has saved him or her solely by His free grace (Galatians 1:10; 5:4; Ephesians 2:8–9). Baptism is commanded for God's people (Matthew 28:19; Acts 2:38).

COMMUNION

Communion was instituted by Jesus at the Last Supper as a means by which God's people could continually remember and celebrate His body (shown in the bread) and His blood (shown in the wine) shed for the forgiveness of sins (Matthew 26:26–29). The final communion for God's people will be at the Wedding Supper of the Lamb, with Jesus, at the end of history in His Kingdom (Revelation 19:9). The church is to celebrate communion with a sober confession of sin and recognition of why Jesus died and rose (1 Corinthians 11:17–34). Christians are to partake of communion together to show that they are unified by Jesus (1 Corinthians 10:17). Therefore, communion is only intended for Christians (1 Corinthians 11:29–30).

WHAT IS MISSIOLOGY?

1 Corinthians 9:22b–23 - *"I [Paul] have become all things to all people, that by all means I might save some. I do it all for the sake of the gospel, that I may share with them in its blessings."*

Christianity is comprised of three basic groupings: First, there is the Gospel of Jesus Christ which is the heart of the Scriptures and the revelation of God, and which must be kept in the forefront of every Christian's life. Second, there are the cultures in which people live their lives. These lives both shape and are shaped by those cultures. Our presentation of the Gospel must be fitted (not altered) to particular people, times, and circumstances so that evangelism can effectively occur. And third, there is the church, or gathering of God's people – which does include people who are not Christians (Matthew 13:24–30). The purpose of the church is to be a place where people are built up in their faith, and knitted together in loving community, so that they can faithfully engage people in the culture with the Gospel. If this process fails to continually occur, the focus moves from the Gospel to either cultural agendas or church agendas that are often different than God's agenda, which is the Gospel. Missiology is simply an

unwavering commitment among God's people to the Gospel, and to their role as _____ of the church in (and to) their culture.

WHAT IS THE CULTURE?

Lesslie Newbigin - "When we speak of culture in its broadest sense, we are speaking about the sum total ways of living that shape (and also are shaped by) the continuing life of a group of human beings from generation to generation. We are speaking about the language that enables them to grasp, conceptualize, and communicate the reality of their world; about law, custom, and forms of social organization, including marriage, family, and agriculture. These things shape the life of each member of the society. They are also shaped, modified, and developed from generation to generation by the members of the society. From the point of view of the individual member they are given as part of the tradition into which he or she is born and socialized. But they are not changeless absolutes."

Culture is the enormous framework within which people live the entirety of their lives. We live in a multicultural and pluralistic society in which there are a seemingly endless number of cultures. Sociologically, there are three categories through which we can view culture:

- The _____ aspect of culture includes the broad and varied ways of thinking and beliefs that people hold. This includes such things as their view of truth, science, history, experience, etc.
- The _____ aspect of culture refers to the values that govern what people deem important as demonstrated by what they do and what they make sacrifices for. The clues to uncovering the values are discovered by assessing how they invest their time, energy, money, and passion. What do people talk about? What do they rally around? What shared values build their social network? When unearthing values it is important to note that values are not ideals. Ideals are things people wish they valued and care for in theory but not in practice (i.e. a "Christian" who doesn't pray, read the Bible, or attend church).
- The _____ aspect of culture is the range of experiences that have shaped people either because they have chosen them, or have had the experiences forced upon them. These experiences range from exhilarating and public to devastating and private. These experiences both shape and reflect a person and his or her culture, and are greatly varied. They include everything from sexual practices, entertainment pleasures, recreational activities, tragedies, etc.

All of these factors (cognitive, evaluative, affectual) combine to compose a local culture and each component can be weighted more heavily by people under varying circumstances for a myriad of reasons. This makes culture very fluid and unsettled, because people are different and are always changing.

SYNCRETISM AND SECTARIANISM

When it comes the the Church's response to our surrounding culture, there are two common errors we must be sure to avoid: Syncretism and Sectarianism.

_____ – **Romans 12:2** - "*Do not be conformed to this world...*"

Syncretism is the elevation of culture above the Gospel of Jesus Christ and the pollution of the clear teachings of the Scriptures with the muddled agendas and beliefs of the world. This sin is commonly known as "liberal Christianity" and includes everything from the golden calf the Hebrews worshipped in the Old Testament to the sexual immorality and drunkenness the

Corinthian church was supporting. A modern example would be the common “Christian” teaching in our own day that says that the Bible is a myth, Jesus was merely a good man, everyone will ultimately go to heaven, politics and social justice is the purpose of the church, homosexuality is acceptable, sin is an outdated idea, etc. etc. etc.

Syncretistic “Christianity” always elevates people, reduces God, and neglects the “offensive” parts of the Bible in an effort to be more culturally acceptable. The continual failure of syncretistic thinking is to believe that the Gospel cannot actually transform people and cultures so that they do not merely need to be affirmed, but instead can be redeemed. In Jesus’ day, this type of thinking among the Jews was championed by the Sadducees.

– **John 17:15** - *“My prayer is not that you take them out of the world...”*

Sectarianism is the elevation of the church above the Gospel of Jesus Christ and the pollution of the clear teachings of Scripture to love our neighbors and preach the gospel to every person (Mark 16:15). This is because it is wrongly believed that if a Christian befriends a non-Christian he or she will somehow catch their sins as if sin were the flu. Such a person prefers to spend all of his or her time hidden in the Christian subculture, naively believing that all the sin and wicked people in the world are exclusively outside of their church.

To justify their extreme sectarianism they will misquote 1 Thessalonians 5:22, as the KJV does, and command that we avoid every “*appearance*” of evil when, in actuality, it says that we should avoid every “*form*” of evil, which is a different matter altogether. This is one of the reasons why the Pharisees crucified Christ. Though Jesus never committed any evil (Hebrews 4:15), He did not avoid the appearance of evil and was condemned as a drunkard and glutton because that’s what some of the lost people He befriended for the sake of redemption were (Luke 7:34). The continual failure of sectarian thinking is the belief that the Gospel cannot keep a Christian from sin and bring a sinful person from death to life. In Jesus’ day, this type of thinking among the Jews was championed by the Pharisees.

WHAT IS CONTEXTUALIZATION?

Though the Gospel of Jesus Christ never changes (1 Corinthians 15:3–8), it must be contextualized (or fitted) to the culture it is brought to. This includes making sure the Gospel is spoken in a language people can _____, with concepts that were faithful to the Bible, and simultaneously understandable by the hearers. This kind of ministry takes great wisdom and careful scrutiny by God’s people to ensure neither syncretism nor sectarianism occurs.

Every church has a contextualized Gospel and therefore must continually undergo reform to continue the missiological work of the Gospel in their time and place. When churches fail to reform, they inevitably begin to die and become increasingly disconnected and irrelevant to the people and cultures around them. The problem is that God’s people often wrongly assume that everyone in the world is basically like them.

This is why every time the Gospel crosses from one culture into another there ensues a rigorous debate to sort out what is Gospel, what is sin, and what is simply baggage added to the Gospel as it was contextualized in a culture. In Paul’s day, this included such things as the eating of meat sacrificed to idols, day of worship, circumcision, dietary restrictions, sexual immorality etc. (Acts 10, 15; Romans 14–15; 1 Corinthians 10:14–33). In fact, much of the content of the New Testament epistles is the apostles sorting out the issues that arose as the Gospel reached new people and cultures.

In our own day this includes such things as day and time of worship, body modification (i.e. piercings, tattoos, plastic surgery), musical style in worship, styles of dress, sexual preference, authority, language etc. These things require apostles who can faithfully and wisely sort out the issues as they arise in each cultural context to determine what is sin and what is cultural freedom that God permits. Fortunately, the four Gospels in our Bible show us exactly how this kind of Gospel contextualization should occur. While each Gospel is absolutely unified in their central teachings, each Gospel also emphasizes some various truths to best speak to varying cultures of people.

GOSPEL	MATTHEW	MARK	LUKE	JOHN
Author	Jewish, Christian, former despised tax collector	Jewish, Christian, cousin of Barnabas	Gentile, Christian, doctor	Jewish, Christian, and Jesus' youngest disciple
Primary Audience	Jews	Romans	Gentiles	Greeks
Portrait of Jesus	Jewish Messiah and King	Faithful servant	Perfect man	God
Jesus' Genealogy	Traced to Abraham and David showing Jesus as the fulfillment of OT prophecy	No genealogy, as Jesus' accomplishments and not His family are important	Traced to Adam to show that Jesus is fully human	Jesus as the eternal Word of God
Notable Features	Roughly 60% of the book is Jesus' words teaching as a rabbi, about 50 OT quotes	Briefest Gospel, few OT quotes, explains Jewish words and customs for non-Jews, 150 present tense verbs emphasizing Jesus' actions, 35 miracles, 40% of the book is Jesus' words	Roughly 50% of the book is Jesus' words, 13 women mentioned that are omitted from other Gospels, Jewish customs explained, a focus on Jesus' early years and emotional life	Roughly 90% of John is unique to John, no parables or exorcisms, seven "I AM" statements of Jesus prove He is God

The mission of the Church is the contextualization of the Gospel. We are called to more than just bringing people in; we are called to send Christians out. Each one of us is a missionary who is sent out, and uniquely gifted, by God to reach those God has placed around us. When new people are reached, they begin their ministry as missionaries, bringing the Gospel to those they have relationships with as it was brought to them.

Lesson Nine - Who We Are and What We Do

Romans 12:5 - *"...So we, though many, are one body in Christ, and individually members one of another."*

THE HISTORY OF EWC

Eden Worship Center was founded on January 4, 1987, by Harold and Janice Gingerich. EWC was birthed out of a vision to see a new congregation in the Topeka area, that would be committed to the worship and glory of Jesus as well as the presence and power of the Holy Spirit. After sharing their vision for the church, and seek the blessing of the other churches in town, EWC was launched with the full support of every other church in Topeka. That first service had 11 people (both adults and children) in attendance.

WHO WE ARE

"Connection people to God and to each other"

WE ARE A GOSPEL-CENTERED CHURCH

What do we mean when we say that we are a Gospel-centered church? We mean that the message of the Gospel is not simply the entry point into the Christian life, but that it is also the foundation and power that shapes all we do as followers of Jesus Christ - both in our daily lives and in our experience as the corporate body of Christ. In other words, the Good News of Jesus Christ is not only the fire that ignites the Christian life, it's the fuel that keeps Christians going and growing each day.

The Gospel is the gloriously great news of what God has done through the incarnation, life, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ to satisfy His own wrath (His judgement against sin which His holy nature requires), and to secure forgiveness of sins, the gift of eternal life, a coming new creation free from decay, disasters, disease, evil, sin, and death and perfect righteousness for all who trust in Christ alone for salvation.

Therefore, the Gospel is not what God requires. The Gospel is what God provides! The Gospel is not an imperative, demanding things you must do. The Gospel is an indicative, declaring things that God has done. The Gospel is not about human action, it's about divine achievement. The Gospel is not a moralistic "Do!" The Gospel is a merciful "Done!" The Gospel is not good advice – it's good news! Our ministry values: impact, equip, and empower are all Gospel-driven. At EWC, we want the Gospel of Christ to inform and empower all that we do to the glory of God.

We believe that God has called us to:

- o **Impact** - We want to impact our community with the saving Gospel of Jesus Christ and to see Kingdom authority, power, and love manifested in the lives of people.
- o **Equip** - We want to disciple and equip people in God's Word to walk in Kingdom Principles and to train up spiritual leaders.
- o **Empower** - We want to see people empowered and mobilized in the Great Commission in such a way that they can impact their world starting with their community, then to the nations and every people group with the Gospel of the Kingdom.

ABOUT OUR WORSHIP

God is glorious, He is worthy of infinite worship. Jesus is a Treasure of infinite value, so we love to lift high His name through music and song. Although we recognize that music is only a part of all that worship is, we believe it is a significant one, and more importantly a Biblical one. Singing together has been a central activity for the Church since Jesus established it two thousand years ago (and for God's people thousands of years before that), and we at EWC are overjoyed to be a part of this God-ordained tradition.

Romans 12:1 says to: *"Present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, which is your spiritual worship."* So, ultimately, God wants us, not our songs. More than our music, more than our hands raised or clapping, He wants our hearts. God is not looking for people who can merely perform ritualistic ceremonies, utter mechanical prayers, or sing heartless songs. As Jesus says in Mark 7:6-7 (quoting the prophet Isaiah) *"This people honors me with their lips but their hearts are far from me; in vain do they worship me..."* Therefore, our greatest desire is to be a people who love God with our whole heart, soul, and mind (Matthew 22:37), and because of that love, obey His commands (John 14:21). Then from that place we sing songs of praise, lift up holy hands, and celebrate the glory of our great God and Savior Jesus!

Stylistically, our aim is to speak a language that the culture in which we exist understands. So, if you needed to, you could label our style as ranging from modern rock to folk or pop. We sing new songs as well as ancient hymns; all of them to, for, and about Jesus. The purpose of our musical worship is not our own entertainment; instead, we believe the most beautiful and powerful songs combine deep, rich, and accurate theology with artistic, creative and inspiring music. As we worship God in song, we experience His presence as well as prepare our hearts and minds to hear God's Word and to respond to it.

Since the focus of our worship is on Jesus, we expect, and welcome His presence among us by the Holy Spirit. For that reason you may hear, and see Gifts of the Holy Spirit (1 Corinthians 12:4-11) in operation during a service. The manifestation of these Spiritual Gifts is to be expected and welcomed, because they are God's gift to the Church.

WORLD MISSIONS

EWC is a church with a worldwide vision. We place a high priority on supporting missionaries, and missions work, around the world. From the beginning, EWC has been committed to giving 10% (or more) of our operating budget directly to missions. Our founding pastor, Harold Gingerich, also has a growing and highly respected international ministry. He ministers regularly in Asia (especially in the country of Indonesia) as well as other countries around the world.

OUR LEADERSHIP

Ephesians 4:11-13 - *"And he gave the apostles, the prophets, the evangelists, the shepherds and teachers, to equip the saints for the work of ministry, for building up the body of Christ, until we all attain to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to mature manhood, to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ,"*

Pastors and Elders

Pastors and Elders are to shepherd the flock of God, and oversee its growth by teaching the Word, and defending against false teachers and teaching. They seek and clarify God's vision for the congregation, as well as providing the general oversight and spiritual well

being of the Church. Pastors and Elders are discerned by leadership with the confirmation of the congregation. EWC's pastors and elders are: Matt Gingerich (Pastor), Jason Gingerich (Associate Pastor), Harold Gingerich (Founding Pastor), and Joe Drake (Elder).

Trustees

These individuals are responsible for the care and maintenance of the church building and property. They are chosen by the congregation and affirmed by the Pastor and Elders. EWC's Head Trustee is Jonas Miller.

Ministry Council

The Ministry Council meets monthly to oversee the financial affairs of the congregation. Ministry Council is comprised of: Pastor, Associate Pastor, Head Elder, Worship Leader, Head Trustee, Missions Commission Chair, Director of Christian Education, and Treasurer.

WHY DO WE HAVE CHURCH MEMBERSHIP?

When we transitioned to an official membership, we received a lot of questions: "Eden Worship Center was just fine for over 20 years without official church membership, so do we have it now?" "Are we becoming legalistic?" "Why all the hoops?" "Why box the Holy Spirit into member/non-member categories?" "Why should I bother joining a local church when I'm already a member of the universal Church?" "Isn't my relationship with Jesus all that really matters?" Such questions are common, and not altogether surprising given our individualistic culture and natural tendency toward independence. However, such questions also reveal a misunderstanding about the church and God's purposes in and through the church.

The very word "membership" sends chills up the spine of those who have endured an abusive, controlling, religious, and ultimately destructive version of it in a former church. For others, it conjures up images of stale, stiff, tradition-based church experiences completely devoid of any tangible evidence of life in the Holy Spirit. If you are in one of those two camps, rest assured, we are not interested in that kind of membership either.

So why does EWC have official membership?

IT IS BIBLICAL

The primary New Testament metaphors for the church – body (1 Corinthians 12:27), temple (Ephesians 2:21), household (1 Timothy 3:15), and flock (Acts 20:28) – have as a key characteristic the idea of separate individuals joined together into a single entity. Paul's whole argument, in 1 Corinthians 5, is based upon the idea that there is a defined church which includes membership. He writes, "*Is it not those inside the church whom you are to judge?*" (1 Corinthians 5:12). There is an inside and an outside. They are to "*purge the evil person from among you*" (1 Corinthians 5:13). He is to be cast outside the church. What is outside and what is inside if the membership itself is not defined? Paul does the same thing in 2 Corinthians 2:6, "*For such a one, this punishment by the majority is enough.*" How does one define a "majority" if there is no defined body?

We know from the list of widows mentioned in 1 Timothy 5:9, that lists of people were kept and tracked. If widows were listed, it is likely that a list of current members was kept and updated as well. And we see that the Lord Himself keeps a list of those within the Church in Philippians 4:3 and Revelation 21:27.

IT IS A VISIBLE COMMITMENT TO CHRIST AND HIS PEOPLE

Jesus said, in Mark 8:38, *“For whoever is ashamed of me and of my words in this adulterous and sinful generation, of him will the Son of Man also be ashamed when He comes in the glory of His Father with the holy angels.”*

Membership is one way to raise a flag of faith. You state, before God and others, that you are part of this local body of believers. It is easy to talk in glowing terms about commitment to Christ and membership in the invisible church (the body of all believers near and far, living and dead), but it is in the local church that God expects you to live out your faith. Sadly, this often has less appeal to us because real fellowship with a community of people is hard work, because most people are a lot like us – selfish, petty, and proud. But that is the kind of group God calls us to.

All but a small handful of Paul’s letters, in the New Testament, were written to a local body of believers (and the few letters addressed to individuals were mostly written to pastors). We see the same thing in Revelation – Jesus spoke to individual congregations in places like Ephesus, Smyrna, and Laodicea. There are more accounts of talking animals in the Bible than there are of Christians floating around claiming: “I don’t have to commit to a specific church, it’s just me and Jesus.” Believers belong to churches.

IT MAKES A POWERFUL STATEMENT IN A LOW-COMMITMENT CULTURE

There is a deeper level of commitment required for membership at Sam’s Club than there is at most churches. The church is often a sad reflection of its culture. And ours is a consumer culture, where everything is tailored to meet our needs and satisfy our preferences. When those needs aren’t met, we can always move on to the next product, store, job, or spouse.

In a culture like ours, joining a church makes a statement that is the polar opposite of that consumer mindset. It says: “I am committed to this group of people and they are committed to me. I am here to give, more than get.”

In every area of our lives, we are used to having more options than we know what to do with. The result (of our seemingly limitless choices) is that we have forgotten what it means to make a decision and stick with it. We prefer to keep our options open, just in case something better comes along. Unfortunately, we often approach the church with this same consumer mindset. We like “dating” the church (having her around for special events, taking her out when life feels lonely, and keeping her around for a rainy day), but we don’t want to be asked to take a leap of further commitment. Membership is one way to stop dating churches, and marry one.

IT KEEPS US ACCOUNTABLE TO EACH OTHER

Hebrews 3:13 - *“But exhort one another every day, as long as it is called ‘today,’ that none of you may be hardened by the deceitfulness of sin.”*

Some people make the claim: “I am accountable only to God.” True, only God has ultimate authority over you. But the doctrine of sin cautions us not to make ourselves sole judges over our own hearts. Jeremiah 17:9 says it clearly, *“The heart is deceitful above all things and beyond cure. Who can understand it?”*

When we join a church we are offering ourselves to one another to be encouraged, rebuked, corrected, and served. We are placing ourselves under leaders, and submitting to their authority. We are saying, “I am here to stay. I want to help you grow in Godliness, and I want you to help me do the same.”

Mark Dever - “Church membership is our opportunity to grasp hold of each other in responsibility and love. By identifying ourselves with a particular church, we let the pastors and other members of that local church know that we intend to be committed in attendance, giving, prayer, and service. We allow fellow believers to have great expectations of us in these areas, and we make it known that we are the responsibility of this local church. We assure the church of our commitment to Christ in serving with them, and we call for their commitment to serve and encourage as well.”

IT HELPS PASTORS AND ELDERS BE MORE FAITHFUL SHEPHERDS

Hebrews 13:7 - *“Obey your leaders and submit to them, for they are keeping watch over your souls, as those who will have to give an account. Let them do this with joy and not with groaning, for that would be of no advantage to you.”*

According to Hebrews 13, every believer must obey and submit to their leaders (but not treat them as infallible – 1 Timothy 5:19-20). This command assumes that you will have a covenant with specific spiritual leaders. The second part of this verse says that those spiritual leaders will have to answer to God for the way that they kept watch over your soul. This is a responsibility and a burden, before God, that the pastors and elders at EWC take very seriously. However, without clearly defined membership, it becomes difficult for pastors/elders to know who they will be responsible to give an account to God for.

The way Peter speaks to the pastors and elders, in 1 Peter 5, helps shed some light on this issue. He says, in 1 Peter 5:2-3, *“Shepherd the flock of God that is among you, exercising oversight, not under compulsion, but willingly, as God would have you; not for shameful gain, but eagerly; not domineering over those in your charge, but being examples to the flock.”* The phrases “that is among you” and “those in your charge” imply that the elders knew exactly who they were responsible for.

MEMBERSHIP MATTERS

Ultimately, we (the pastors and elders) believe that a formal membership process will be helpful in fostering true discipleship among our people. We do not believe that official membership is an explicit Biblical command required for salvation. We do, however, believe that it is wise for us to take this step as a church at this time. It is our hope that membership will call us all to a deeper level of commitment and mutual accountability.

The sin of legalism (adding rules to the Gospel) is not something we take lightly. We are aware that many legalistic, and destructive, traditions began with good intentions. That being said, the sin of legalism doesn't just belong to churches who are organized, it is every bit as easy to fall into a legalism that proudly celebrates, “We are not like those legalistic churches...we do things THIS way.” Same legalism, different clothes. Equally dangerous, though, is the sin of license (doing whatever you want with no accountability). This sin causes us to reject the Biblical mandates to walk in mutual accountability and submit ourselves to spiritual authority. Entire denominations have walked away from the clear teachings of Scripture because of this sin, while individuals usually express this sin by getting offended and church-hopping any time they are confronted with the sin in their lives.

We believe that Gospel-Centered, Covenant Membership will help us to avoid these two common sins. We ask for your prayers, that we will shepherd the flock well and lead it in a direction that glorifies God and produces good fruit in all of our lives.

HOW TO BE A MEMBER

Membership is not just showing up to church meetings; it is not a status symbol or social club. Membership is entering into a covenant that calls for a higher degree of responsibility, service and sacrifice. By becoming a Member you are committing to be part of a spiritual family that will provide support and encouragement in your walk with Christ. Our elders and leadership pledge to assist our Members first and foremost, by providing care and counsel as well as pray, teach, and guide as necessary.

Mark Driscoll - "Christians are to work within their particular church for the cause of the gospel. Therefore, church members are, in a sense, leaders and servants of the church who serve according to their abilities in accordance with Jesus' command to love God and their neighbor. They must be trained and released to use their spiritual gifts in various ways so that they too are leading the church, behind the elders and deacons, as the priesthood of believers that Scripture speaks of throughout the New Testament."

If it is your desire to take part in our mission by becoming a member of Eden Worship Center, the process is a simple one with a few straightforward requirements:

1. A clear testimony of personal faith in Jesus Christ
2. Completion of the "Biblical Foundations" class
3. Full agreement with the "Statement of Core Beliefs"
4. Baptism as a believer
5. Meeting with pastor/elder
6. Signing the "Membership Covenant"

EWC MEMBERSHIP COVENANT (for informational purposes only)

PURPOSE

When anyone enters into relationship with God by grace from, and faith in, the person and work of Jesus Christ they are entering into two covenants. The first is to journey with God for the rest of their lives and love Him fully. The second is to journey with His other children in the community of the local church. Your membership in a church is an official recognition of this, and the purposes of the Eden Worship Center Membership Covenant are:

- To clarify the Biblical expectations and obligations for both the elders at EWC and the individual members of the EWC body.
- To encourage consistency, accountability and loving unity within the church family.
- To accomplish God's call for the EWC church family.

This covenant does not imply that you will perfectly keep your promises, but that the desire of your heart is to fulfill each of the responsibilities stated to the best of your ability. We trust that your commitment will be a blessing to your own journey in Christ, as well a blessing to those around you.

WHAT IS A COVENANT?

Within the Scriptures, we find a number of examples of covenants; some between God and man (*Genesis 6, 9, 15; Ezekiel 20; Hosea 2; Jeremiah 31; Matthew 26*), while others are solely between men (*1 Samuel 18, 2*

Samuel 5). Some covenants are unconditional, meaning that two or more parties obligate themselves in such a way that the obligation of each party is not dependent on the faithfulness of the other. In other words, there is a pledge to be faithful to the covenant regardless of the other person's faithfulness. Other covenants are conditional, meaning that the obligation of one party is at least in part dependent upon the faithfulness of the other. While God's gracious covenant with the Church is unconditional, the local church covenant itself is in part conditioned upon the faithfulness of each party. If at any time one of the parties, the individual member or corporate church body, fails in its obligations, the other party is freed from certain aspects of the covenant. The membership covenant of EWC consists mainly of general Christian obligations. For example, all Christians are required to submit to the Scriptures, pursue holiness, steward resources, etc., whether they are members of EWC or not. Such requirements are universal obligations for the Christ-follower regardless of any failure on the part of local church to live up to her covenant obligations.

Although the expectations of this membership covenant consist of general Christian obligations; all Christians are not required to carry out those obligations as a part of the EWC family. Therefore, if at any time an individual member feels as though the corporate church body is not remaining faithful to the requirements of the covenant, it is the responsibility of the individual member to lovingly and humbly express concerns to the leadership of the church. If the church elders are unwilling to change and pursue covenant faithfulness, then the member is freed from his or her membership obligations and is encouraged to seek membership elsewhere given the church's disobedience. In addition, certain circumstances may provide sufficient and righteous grounds to transfer membership elsewhere. While focusing primarily in language on the responsibilities between the individual parties, the corporate church body, her elders and her individual members, the covenant is first and foremost a promise made to God as a commitment to His glory and the good of the body and bride of His Son.

BIBLICAL OBLIGATIONS OF EWC ELDERS TO THE EWC CHURCH BODY

As shepherds and overseers of a local church, pastors and elders are entrusted with protecting, leading, equipping, and caring for the corporate church body and her individual members. The following is a rather comprehensive overview of the requirements for elders as spelled out within the Scriptures.

With the help of the Holy Spirit, the church leadership covenants the following:

- To meet the criteria assigned to pastors and elders in the Scriptures (*1 Timothy 3:1–13; 5:17–22; Titus 1:5–9; 1 Peter 5:1–4*)
- To appoint elders and deacons (including staff members who serve in these offices) according to the criteria assigned to them in Scriptures (*1 Timothy 3:1–13; Titus 1:5–9; 1 Peter 5:1–4*)
- To prayerfully seek God's will for our church community and steward her resources to the best of our ability based on our study of the Scriptures and the leading of the Holy Spirit (*Acts 20:28; 1 Peter 5:1–4*)
- To lovingly caring for you and seeking your growth in Christ (*Hebrews 13:17; 1 Thessalonians 5:12*)
- To provide teaching and counsel from the whole counsel of Scripture (*Acts 20:27–28; Galatians 6:6; 1 Timothy 5:17–18*)
- To helping you in times of need (*Acts 2:42–47, 4:32–35; James 2:14–17*)
- To pray for you regularly, particularly when you are sick (*James 5:14*)

- To be on guard against false teachers and teachings (*Matthew 7:15; Acts 20:28–31; 1 Timothy 1:3-7; 1 John 4:1*)
- To lovingly exercise church discipline when necessary - for the glory of God, the good of the one disciplined, and the health of the church as a whole (*Matthew 18:15–20; 1 Corinthians 5; Galatians 6:1*)
- To help you become equipped to serve Christ (*Ephesians 4:11–13*)
- To set an example and join you in fulfilling the obligations of church membership (*1 Corinthians 11:1; Philippians 3:17; 1 Timothy 4:12*)

BIBLICAL OBLIGATIONS OF EWC MEMBERS

As those who have experienced the grace of a life changed by the Gospel of Jesus Christ, we have the opportunity to reflect the character of Christ through the pursuit of certain attitudes and actions and the rejection of others. The Scriptures refer to this reality as "*living by the Spirit*" (*Galatians 5; Romans 8*). The requirements of this membership covenant are in no way intended as an addition to the Biblical obligations of a believer. Rather, this document functions primarily as an accessible, yet non-exhaustive, explanation of what the Scriptures teach about the obedience that faith produces.

With the help of the Holy Spirit, I, the undersigned, covenant the following:

- To submit to the Scriptures as the final authority on all issues (*Psalms 119; 2 Timothy 3:14-17; 2 Peter 1:19-21*)
 - I have read and understood the EWC Statement of Core Beliefs, and I am in full agreement with everything it says. I have also read and understood the EWC Statement of Faith and agree to promote unity, and fight against divisiveness, in any area where I may differ from the position of the church (*1 Timothy 4:13; Ephesians 4:1-3*).
- To pursue the Lord Jesus Christ through regular Bible reading, prayer, fellowship and practice of spiritual disciplines. My commitment to follow Jesus Christ will be evident through my regular participation in Sunday worship services, communion, my willingness to serve where needed, engaging in Biblical community, and a life that glorifies Jesus (*Psalms 105:1-2; 119:97; Acts 2:42-47; Hebrews 10:23-25; 2 Peter 1:3*).
- To steward the resources God has given me, including time, talents spiritual gifts and finances. This includes regular financial giving, service and participation in community that is sacrificial, cheerful, and voluntary (*Matthew 25:14-30; Romans 12:1-2; 2 Corinthians 8-9; 1 Peter 4:10-11*).
- To pursue reconciliation when offense occurs, and reject all opportunities to speak gossip or slander. If two or more of us cannot resolve a matter privately – whether it is personal or has church, business, or legal implications – we will obey God’s command to be “*eager to maintain the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace*” (*Ephesians 4:3*) by looking to our church for assistance, and cooperating with our leaders or wise people they recommend to resolve the matter through Biblical mediation or arbitration (*Matthew 18:15-16; Ephesians 4:29-32; 1 Corinthians 6:1-8*). Note: If a person coming to EWC has an unresolved conflict with someone from his former church, we will assist him in seeking to be reconciled to the other person before joining our church (*Matthew 5:23-24; Romans 12:18*).
- By God's grace through the power of the Holy Spirit, to walk in holiness in all areas of life as an act of worship to Jesus Christ (*1 Peter 1:13-16, 4:1-3*). Believers should strive to put certain attitudes and actions to death, while stirring and stimulating love and good deeds through the Spirit. Below are a few examples of actions addressed in the Scriptures:

- I will practice complete chastity unless married and, if married, complete fidelity within heterosexual and monogamous marriage. Complete chastity and fidelity means, among other things, that regardless of my marital status, I will pursue purity and abstain from sexually immoral practices such as adultery, premarital sex, homosexual practice and pornography (*Romans 13:11-14; 1 Corinthians 6:15-20, 10:8; Ephesians 5:3; 1 Thessalonians 4:1-8; Hebrews 13:4*).
- I will seek to preserve the gift of marriage and agree to work towards reconciliation, with the help of the pastors and elders at EWC before pursuing divorce from my spouse (*Matthew 19:1-12; Mark 10:1-12; Luke 16:18; 1 Corinthians 7:10-11*). Note: for the role of the church in the process of divorce, see Paul's concern for the resolution of legal matters within the assembly of the church in *1 Corinthians 6*.
- I will refrain from illegal drug use, drunkenness, gossip and other sinful behavior as the Bible dictates (*Romans 1:28-32, 13:13; Galatians 5:19-21; Ephesians 5:18; James 3:3-18*).
- To take seriously the responsibility of Christian freedom, especially actions or situations that could present a stumbling block to another (*1 Corinthians 8:1-13*).
- To submit to the discipline of God through His Holy Spirit by following the Biblical procedures for church discipline where sin is evident in another (the hope of such discipline being repentance and restoration), and receiving righteous and loving discipline when approached Biblically by fellow believers (*Psalms 141:5; Matthew 18:15-20; 1 Corinthians 5:9-13; Hebrews 12:5-11*).
- To do the following when I sin:
 - Confess my sin to God and to fellow believers
 - Repent and seek help to put my sin to death
 - Submit to the elders and other appointed leaders of the church, and be diligent to strive for unity and peace within the Church (*Romans 8:13; Ephesians 4:1-3; Colossians 3:5; Hebrews 13:17; James 5:16; 1 Peter 5:5; 1 John 1:6-10*).
- If I move from this place, I will unite with some other church where I can carry out the spirit of this agreement and the teaching of God's Word (*Hebrews 10:23-25*).

STATEMENT OF CORE BELIEFS

The following statements represent the central beliefs of Christianity. These are the things that all true Christians, throughout history, all around the world have held in common. Therefore, the explicit rejection of any one of these particular beliefs disqualifies one from Membership in Eden Worship Center.

We believe...

The Bible is the fully inspired Word of God. It is without error, and is the supreme and final authority for all matters of life and belief.

- *Matthew 5:18* – For truly, I say to you, until heaven and earth pass away, not an iota, not a dot, will pass from the Law until all is accomplished.
- *2 Timothy 3:16* – All Scripture is breathed out by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness
- *2 Peter 1:20-21* – No prophecy of Scripture comes from someone's own interpretation. For no prophecy was ever produced by the will of man, but men spoke from God as they were carried along by the Holy Spirit.

There is only one true and living God, the Creator of heaven and earth, who eternally exists in three persons – Father, Son, and Holy Spirit – who are equal in every divine perfection, executing distinct but harmonious offices in all the work of the Godhead.

- *Deuteronomy 6:4* – Hear, O Israel: The LORD our God, the LORD is one.

- *1 Corinthians 12:4-6* – Now there are varieties of gifts, but the same Spirit; and there are varieties of service, but the same Lord; and there are varieties of activities, but it is the same God who empowers them all in everyone.
- *2 Corinthians 13:14* – The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ and the love of God and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you all.

Man was created by God in His own image, but through his sin incurred physical and spiritual death. As a result, all humanity (Christ excluded) are born with a sinful nature, and are sinners by choice, and therefore under condemnation and without hope apart from salvation in Christ.

- *Genesis 1:26* – Then God said, “Let us make man in our image, after our likeness.”
- *Romans 3:22-23* – There is no distinction: for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God.
- *Romans 5:12-21* – Therefore, just as sin came into the world through one man, and death through sin, and so death spread to all men because all sinned...many died through one man's trespass...For the judgment following one trespass brought condemnation...because of one man's trespass, death reigned...one trespass led to condemnation for all men...by the one man's disobedience the many were made sinners
- *Ephesians 2:1-3* – And you were dead in the trespasses and sins in which you once walked, following the course of this world, following the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that is now at work in the sons of disobedience— among whom we all once lived in the passions of our flesh, carrying out the desires of the body and the mind, and were by nature children of wrath, like the rest of mankind.

Jesus Christ is the eternal Son of God. He was born of a virgin, and is both fully God and fully human.

- *Luke 1:35* – And the angel answered her, “The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you; therefore the child to be born will be called holy - the Son of God.”
- *John 1:1-2* – In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was in the beginning with God.
- *Colossians 1:15-20* – He is the image of the invisible God...For by him all things were created...all things were created through him and for him... and in him all things hold together...that in everything he might be preeminent. For in him all the fullness of God was pleased to dwell
- *Hebrews 1:1-3* – In these last days he has spoken to us by his Son, whom he appointed the heir of all things, through whom also he created the world. He is the radiance of the glory of God and the exact imprint of his nature, and he upholds the universe by the word of his power.

The Gospel – the good news of God’s saving actions towards sinners through Jesus Christ. Namely, that He took on human nature, lived a sinless life, died a substitutionary death for sinners, and physically rose from the dead.

- *Romans 5:8* – But God shows his love for us in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us.
- *2 Corinthians 5:21* – For our sake he made him to be sin who knew no sin, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God.
- *1 Peter 3:18* – For Christ also suffered once for sins, the righteous for the unrighteous, that he might bring us to God, being put to death in the flesh but made alive in the Spirit.

Salvation is a free gift that comes only by God’s grace, through faith in Jesus Christ. Those who repent, forsake sin, and trust in Jesus Christ and His death on their behalf, are regenerated by the Holy Spirit and become new creatures. They are delivered from condemnation, receiving forgiveness of sins and the gift of eternal life.

- *John 3:16* – For God so loved the world, that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life.
- *Romans 3:23-24* – For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, and are justified by his grace as a gift, through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus
- *2 Corinthians 5:17-19* – Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation. The old has passed away; behold, the new has come. All this is from God, who through Christ reconciled us to himself and gave us the ministry of reconciliation; that is, in Christ God was reconciling the world to himself, not counting their trespasses against them, and entrusting to us the message of reconciliation.
- *1 John 1:9* – If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.

Jesus Christ physically ascended into heaven, where He perpetually makes intercession for His people, and will one day physically and visibly return to earth to establish His kingdom.

- *Acts 1:9-11* – And when he had said these things, as they were looking on, he was lifted up, and a cloud took him out of their sight. And while they were gazing into heaven as he went, behold, two men stood by them in white robes, and said, “Men of Galilee, why do you stand looking into heaven? This Jesus, who was taken up from you into heaven, will come in the same way as you saw him go into heaven.”
- *Hebrews 7:25* – Consequently, he is able to save to the uttermost those who draw near to God through him, since he always lives to make intercession for them.
- *1 John 2:1-2* – My little children, I am writing these things to you so that you may not sin. But if anyone does sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous. He is the propitiation for our sins, and not for ours only but also for the sins of the whole world.
- *Revelation 1:7* – Behold, he is coming with the clouds, and every eye will see him, even those who pierced him, and all tribes of the earth will wail on account of him. Even so. Amen.

In the future bodily resurrection of both the saved and the lost: Those who trust in Jesus Christ alone will be raised to eternal joy, living and reigning with Christ. Those who have not trusted in Jesus Christ will be raised to endless punishment.

- *Matthew 25:31-46* – When the Son of Man comes in his glory...he will separate people one from another as a shepherd separates the sheep from the goats. And he will place the sheep on his right, but the goats on the left. Then the King will say to those on his right, ‘Come, you who are blessed by my Father; inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world...Then he will say to those on his left, ‘Depart from me, you cursed, into the eternal fire prepared for the devil and his angels...And these will go away into eternal punishment, but the righteous into eternal life.’”
- *John 5:28-29* – Do not marvel at this, for an hour is coming when all who are in the tombs will hear his voice and come out, those who have done good to the resurrection of life, and those who have done evil to the resurrection of judgment.
- *Acts 24:15* – Having a hope in God, which these men themselves accept, that there will be a resurrection of both the just and the unjust.

STATEMENT OF FAITH

The Scriptures

We accept the Bible, including the 39 books of the Old Testament and the 27 books of the New Testament, as the written Word of God. The Bible is the only essential and infallible record of God's self-disclosure to mankind. It leads us to salvation through faith in Jesus Christ. Being given by God the Scriptures are both fully and verbally inspired by God. Therefore, as originally given, the Bible is free of error in all it teaches. Each book is to be interpreted according to its context and purpose and in reverent obedience to the Lord who speaks through it in living power. All believers are exhorted to study the Scriptures and diligently apply them to their lives. The Scriptures are the authoritative and normative rule and guide of all Christian life, practice, and doctrine. They are totally sufficient and must not to be added to, superseded, or changed by later tradition, extra-biblical revelation, or worldly wisdom. Every doctrinal formulation, whether of creed, confession, or theology must be put to the test of the full counsel of God in Holy Scripture.

God is Triune

There is one God: infinite, eternal, almighty, and perfect in holiness, truth, and love. In the unity of the godhead there are three persons, Father, Son and Holy Spirit, co-existent, co-equal, co-eternal. The Father is not the Son and the Son is not the Holy Spirit, yet each is truly Deity. One God - Father, Son and Holy Spirit - is the foundation of Christian faith and life.

God the Father

God the Father is the Creator of heaven and earth. By His word and for His glory, He freely and supernaturally created the world of nothing. Through the same Word He daily sustains all His creatures. He rules over all and is the only Sovereign. His plans and purposes cannot be thwarted. He is faithful to every promise, works all things together for good to those who love Him, and in His unfathomable grace gave His Son Jesus Christ for mankind's redemption. He made man for fellowship with Himself, and intended that all creation should live to the praise of His glory.

Jesus Christ

Jesus Christ, the only begotten Son of God, was the eternal Word made flesh, supernaturally conceived by the Holy Spirit, born of the Virgin Mary. He was perfect in nature, teaching and obedience. He is fully God and fully man. He was always with God and is God. Through Him all things came into being and were created. He was before all things and in Him all things hold together by the word of His power. He is the image of the invisible God, the first-born of all creation and in Him dwells the fullness of the Godhead bodily. He is the only Savior for the sins of the world having shed His blood and died a vicarious death on Calvary's cross. By His death in our place, He revealed the divine love and upheld divine justice, removing our guilt and reconciling us to God. Having redeemed us from sin, the third day He rose bodily from the grave, victorious over death and the powers of darkness and for a period of forty days appeared to over five hundred witnesses performing many convincing proofs of His resurrection. He ascended into heaven where, at God's right hand, He intercedes for His people and rules as Lord over all. He is the Head of His body the Church and should be adored, loved, served, and obeyed by all.

The Holy Spirit

The Holy Spirit, the Lord and Giver of life, convicts the world of sin, righteousness and judgment. Through the proclamation of the Gospel He persuades men to repent of their sins and confess Jesus as Lord. By the same Spirit a person is led to trust in divine mercy. The Holy Spirit unites believers to Jesus Christ in faith, brings about the new birth, and dwells within the regenerate. The Holy Spirit has

come to glorify the Son who in turn came to glorify the Father. He will lead the Church into a right understanding and rich application of the truth of God's Word. He is to be respected, honored, and worshipped as God the Third Person of the Trinity.

Man

God made man - male and female - in His own image, as the crown of creation, that man might have fellowship with Him. Tempted by Satan, man rebelled against God. Being estranged from his Maker, yet responsible to Him, he became subject to divine wrath, inwardly depraved and apart from a special work of grace, utterly incapable of returning to God. This depravity is radical and pervasive. It extends to his mind, will and affections. Unregenerate man lives under the dominion of sin and Satan. He is at enmity with God, hostile toward God, and hateful of God. Fallen, sinful people, whatever their character or attainments, are lost and without hope apart from salvation in Christ.

The Gospel

Jesus Christ is the Gospel. The good news is revealed in His birth, life, death, resurrection and ascension. Christ's crucifixion is the heart of the Gospel, His resurrection is the power of the Gospel and His ascension is the glory of the Gospel. Christ's death is a substitutionary and propitiatory sacrifice to God for our sins. It satisfies the demands of God's holy justice and appeases His holy wrath. It also demonstrates His mysterious love and reveals His amazing grace. Jesus Christ is the only mediator between God and man. There is no other name by which men must be saved. At the heart of all sound doctrine is the Cross of Jesus Christ and the infinite privilege that redeemed sinners have of glorifying God because of what He has accomplished. Therefore, we want all that takes place in our hearts, ministries, and church to proceed from and be related to the Cross.

Man's Response to the Gospel

The proper response to the Gospel is faith in the person and work of Jesus Christ, a faith that is naturally accompanied by repentance from sin. Biblical repentance is characterized by a changed life, and saving faith is evidenced by kingdom service or works. While neither repentance nor works save, unless a person is willing to deny himself, pick up his cross and follow Christ, he cannot become His disciple. This response to the Gospel is rooted and grounded in the free and sovereign grace of God for His own pleasure and glory. This gospel of grace is to be sincerely preached to all men in all nations

Man's Inheritance Through the Gospel

Salvation, the free gift of God, is provided by grace alone, through faith alone, because of Christ alone, for the glory of God alone. Anyone turning from sin in repentance and looking to Christ and His substitutionary death receives the gift of eternal life and is declared righteous by God as a free gift. The righteousness of Christ is imputed to him. He is justified and fully accepted by God. Through Christ's atonement for sin an individual is reconciled to God as Father and becomes His child. The believer is forgiven the debt of his sin and, via the miracle of regeneration, liberated from the law of sin and death into the freedom of God's Spirit.

Sanctification

The Holy Spirit is the active agent in our sanctification and seeks to produce His fruit in us as our minds are renewed and we are conformed to the image of Christ. Though indwelling sin remains a reality, as we are led by the Spirit, we grow in the knowledge of the Lord, freely keeping His commandments and endeavoring to so live in the world that all people may see our good works and glorify our Father who is in heaven. All believers are exhorted to persevere in the faith knowing they will have to give an account to God for their every thought, word and deed. The spiritual disciplines, especially Bible study, prayer,

worship and confession, are a vital means of grace in this regard. Nevertheless, the believer's ultimate confidence to persevere is based in the sure promise of God to preserve His people until the end which is most certain.

Empowered by the Spirit

In addition to effecting regeneration and sanctification, the Holy Spirit also empowers believers for Christian witness and service. While all genuine believers are indwelt by the Holy Spirit at conversion, the New Testament indicates the importance of an ongoing, empowering work of the Spirit subsequent to conversion as well. Being indwelt by the Spirit and being filled with the Spirit are theologically distinct experiences. The Holy Spirit desires to fill each believer continually with increased power for Christian life and witness, and imparts his supernatural gifts for the edification of the Body and for various works of ministry in the world. All the gifts of the Holy Spirit at work in the church of the first-century are available today, are vital for the mission of the church, and are to be earnestly desired and practiced. The gifts are essential in the mission of the Church in the world today.

The Church

God by His Word and Spirit creates the Church, calling sinful men out of the whole human race into the fellowship of Christ's Body. By the same Word and Spirit, He guides and preserves that new redeemed humanity. The Church is not a religious institution or denomination. Rather, the Church universal is made up of those who have become genuine followers of Jesus Christ and have personally appropriated the Gospel. The Church exists to worship and glorify God as Father, Son and Holy Spirit. It also exists to serve Him by faithfully doing His will in the earth. This involves a commitment to see the Gospel preached and churches planted in all the world for a testimony. The ultimate mission of the Church is the making of disciples through the preaching of the Gospel. When God transforms human nature, this then becomes the chief means of society's transformation. Upon conversion, newly redeemed men and women are added to a local church in which they devote themselves to teaching, fellowship, the Lord's Supper and prayer.

All members of the Church universal are to be a vital and committed part of a local church. In this context they are called to walk out the New Covenant as the people of God and demonstrate the reality of the kingdom of God. The ascended Christ has given gift ministries to the church (including apostles, prophets, evangelists, pastors and teachers) for the equipping of Christ's body that it might mature and grow. Through the gift ministries all members of the Church are to be nurtured and equipped for the work of ministry. In the context of the local church, God's people receive pastoral care and leadership and the opportunity to employ their God-given gifts in His service in relation to one another and to the world.

Sacraments of the Church

Water baptism is only intended for the individual who has received the saving benefits of Christ's atoning work and become His disciple. Therefore, in obedience to Christ's command and as a testimony to God, the Church, oneself and the world; a believer should be immersed in water in the name of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit. Water baptism is a visual demonstration of a person's union with Christ in the likeness of His death and resurrection. It is an appeal to God for a good conscious, signifying that the former way of life has been put to death, vividly depicting a person's release from the mastery of sin.

As with water baptism, the Lord's Supper is to be observed only by those who have become genuine followers of Christ. This ordinance symbolizes the breaking of Christ's body and the shedding of his blood on our behalf, and is to be observed repeatedly throughout the Christian life as a sign of continued

participation in the atoning benefits of Christ's death. As we partake of the Lord's Supper with an attitude of faith and self-examination, we remember and proclaim the death of Christ, receive spiritual nourishment for our souls, and signify our unity with other members of Christ's body.

The Consummation

The Consummation of all things includes the visible, personal and glorious return of Jesus Christ, the resurrection of the dead and the translation of those alive in Christ, the judgment of the just and the unjust, and the fulfillment of Christ's kingdom in the new heavens and the new earth. In the Consummation, Satan with his hosts and all those outside Christ are finally separated from the benevolent presence of God, enduring eternal punishment, but the righteous, in glorious bodies, shall live and reign with Him forever. Married to Christ as His Bride, the Church will be in the presence of God forever, serving Him and giving Him unending praise and glory. Then shall the eager expectation of creation be fulfilled and the whole earth shall proclaim the glory of God who makes all things new.