

Wayne Rickerson



GREAT DOCTRINES OF THE BIBLE

THE DISCIPLE'S JOURNEY

STAGE 2: THE CALLING *"Come follow me..." Mark 1:17*

7 GREAT DOCTRINES OF THE BIBLE



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What is mine is yours. Pass it on to others as though it was theirs. All is for the glory of God.

Acts 4:32, 34

All the believers were one in heart and mind. No one claimed that any of his possessions was his own, but they shared everything they had. There were no needy persons among them...

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INTRODUCTION

THE DISCIPLE'S JOURNEY

The study you are about to begin is the second in a series that will guide you in “The Disciple’s Journey.” This journey is based on the process that Jesus used to train His disciples. The journey consisted of five observable stages, each of which required a higher level of commitment. There are four manuals in this series that follow that progression. There are a total of fifty-one weekly group sessions. These sessions are designed for Bible study, discussion, accountability, training and prayer. Each session requires approximately 40 to 45 minutes five days a week to prepare for group sessions.

If you started this journey at the beginning you will have already completed *Spiritual Boot Camp* which is the resource for the “The Invitation Stage.” You are now entering the second leg of the journey, “The Calling Stage.” During this stage you will study the *7 Great Doctrines of the Bible*. This is a study designed to give you a sound foundation in Bible doctrine. You will learn how to discern false doctrines and how to be well grounded in the following doctrines: the doctrine of God, the doctrine of Christ, the doctrine of the Holy Spirit, the doctrine of the Bible, the doctrine of salvation, the doctrine of the Church and the doctrine of last times.

This is also the stage where Jesus taught His disciples to be “fishers of men.” You will also learn how to effectively share the gospel through “The Bridge” illustration and telling your “Life Story.” Training to become a disciple always includes study and outreach.

Our passion

Our passion is to develop fully devoted followers of Jesus who will develop other fully devoted followers of Jesus. Jesus set this pattern when He trained twelve disciples who reproduced themselves in others. He commissioned them to “Go make disciples of all the nations” (*Matthew 28:18-20*). We are commissioned to continue the process by passing the baton to others.

Our mission statement

Our mission is to help disciple the nations by developing training resources that will bring people into the presence of God so they can experience the heavenly Father in intimate fellowship and be transformed through the Word by the power of the Holy Spirit and become reproducing disciples, glorifying God in all they say and do. What I have to say in this series is relatively unimportant. What God has to say in His Word is everything. I have done my best to make God’s Word the focal point of every study.

The challenge

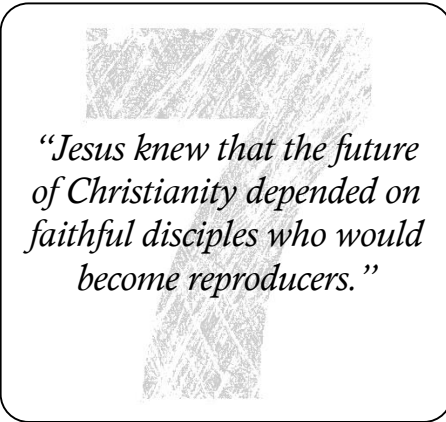
I challenge you to put your very best effort into this study. You will get out of it what you put into it. It is really God who challenges you, not me. In His Word He asks us to give Him our best. Paul said to his disciple Timothy,

2 Timothy 2:15

¹⁵ Do your best to present yourself to God as one approved, a workman who does not need to be ashamed and who correctly handles the word of truth.

WEEK 1

THE DISCIPLE'S JOURNEY



A foundation of sound doctrine is essential for anyone who wants to disciple others. During this stage of “The Disciple’s Journey” you will not only gain knowledge of 7 great doctrines, but will learn to apply them to your lives. During this second stage Jesus not only taught His disciples sound doctrine but also how to become, “...fishers of men” (Mark 1:17-18). Discipleship without an emphasis on evangelism is not truly discipleship. Therefore, during this stage you will master “The Bridge” illustration and plan and implement ways to reach out to non-believers.

ASSIGNMENTS:

Memorize and meditate on *Mark 1:17-18*

Mark 1:17-18 (NIV)

¹⁷ “Come, follow me,” Jesus said, “and I will make you fishers of men.” ¹⁸ At once they left their nets and followed him.

- Memorize the Five Stages of The Disciple’s Journey
- Study and practice “The Bridge” illustration. Write the illustration on your memory/review index card if you have not already done so.
- Complete all study and review assignments
- Prepare your memory/review index card. Write your memory verse for the week on one side. On the opposite side write the five stages of The Disciple’s Journey.

THE DISCIPLE'S JOURNEY

Welcome to Stage 2 of “The Disciple’s Journey.” Some of you have already begun the journey by participating in *Spiritual Boot Camp*, the first step in this exciting journey with Jesus. Others may be new to the journey and joining us at this stage. To you we say welcome to the journey. The Disciple’s Journey is an experience in spiritual growth that involves the five stages through which Jesus led his disciples. Stage one was “The Invitation” which was designed to teach you the basic fundamentals of living the Christian faith. If you faithfully completed the first stage of the journey then you were invited to begin Stage 2.

The goal of discipleship

The goal of discipleship is to develop fully devoted followers of Jesus who will walk in His footprints, producing fruit and reproducing themselves in others. Shortly before leaving earth Jesus said to His twelve disciples:

Matthew 28:18-20

¹⁸ "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. ¹⁹ 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, ²⁰ and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age."

This commission to make disciples was not only for the original disciples but for us as well. When we have been discipled we are to disciple others. That is God's strategy for reconciling a lost world to Himself. For this to happen we must be fully taught. Our character must be transformed through the Word by the power of the Holy Spirit into the character of Christ. A Christlike character is our standard, our goal. We will never be perfect like Jesus, but we are to make every effort to become like Him in our thoughts and actions. The Disciple's Journey is designed to equip you to develop the character of Christ.

THE FIVE STAGES OF DISCIPLESHIP

When Jesus invited the first disciples to follow Him they were not mature believers. In fact they were not believers at all. They were first brought to faith, taught the basic fundamentals of the faith and after three years of being with Jesus were commissioned to disciple others. In the Gospels there are five stages through which Jesus took His disciples. We will look briefly at these stages.

STAGE 1: THE INVITATION *"The Starting Five"* (John 1:35-51)

Jesus developed His disciples in stages. He did not immediately call these men to become fully devoted followers. He brought them along, step by step, until they were ready to fully commit to following Him. The Apostle John gives us the earliest account of Jesus' interaction with His future disciples some time in A.D. 26. Four of "The Starting Five", as we will call them, were first introduced to Jesus by John the Baptist. When they met Jesus they had not yet come to faith in Him. In the following "Search the Word" study you will discover what happened at that first meeting. Matthew was added a short time later.



SEARCH THE WORD

Look up *John 1:35-51* and answer the following questions:

- What in this passage indicates that Jesus made a priority of teaching new believers the basic fundamentals of the faith?

- What in this passage gives us a clue as to why Jesus would choose these men to be His first disciples?

- Verses 41-46 record Andrew's and Philip's first response after they had met with Jesus. What does this indicate about our responsibility as disciples?

In this story we find the first example of new believer follow-up. Jesus immediately met with these men, and brought them to faith in Him. He then began the process of giving them a firm foundation in the fundamentals of the faith. Jesus spent the day with these men. These were men who demonstrated a great motivation for becoming true disciples. They were already John's disciples, but knew there was more to learn. They immediately followed Jesus.

After Andrew met Jesus he could not wait to tell his brother Simon the good news. He immediately brought him to Jesus. Philip likewise found Nathanael and took him to see Jesus. In these men's actions we immediately see the heart of a disciple-- a passion to know and follow Jesus. The journey, however, would be done in stages and take time. The next thing Jesus did was to invite the "starting five" to accompany Him on some trips. He brought them along, stage by stage.

A.B. Bruce in his classic, *The Training of the Twelve*, referring to this stage says,

"The twelve arrived at their final, intimate relation to Jesus only by degrees...In the first stage they were simply believers in Him as the Christ, and His occasional companions at convenient, particularly festive, seasons."

Spiritual Boot Camp is the resource that is used for this first stage of "The Disciple's Journey." Believers and non-believers alike are invited to participate in this first nine week course which is designed to bring people to faith and teach them the basic fundamentals of the Christian life.

STAGE 2: THE CALLING *"The Fab Five"* (Matthew 4:19-20; 9:9; Mark 1:17)

You are now entering the second stage of discipleship. In this stage Jesus called some of the disciples who were His occasional followers, to be His permanent companions. Jesus had been able to observe their level of commitment for about a year. This is Mark's account of "The Calling":

Mark 1:17-18 (NIV)

¹⁷ "Come, follow me," Jesus said, "and I will make you fishers of men." ¹⁸ At once they left their nets and followed him.

Jesus called those who demonstrated by their faithfulness that they were ready for the challenge of the next stage. Jesus was not ready to "choose" the final twelve. He would spend another year with them before "The Choosing" stage. Jesus called His disciples at this time so they would be with Him on a more regular basis and train them to become fishers of men. This training began immediately as they followed Him on His first Galilean tour starting in the summer A.D. 27.

Because of your faithfulness in the first stage of “The Disciple’s Journey” you will now continue the journey through the second stage. It was at this stage that Jesus began spending an increasing amount of time with a select group of His disciples. The challenges became greater as He began to call them to a higher commitment and give them increasing responsibility.

7 *Great Doctrines of the Bible* is the resource you will go through in this stage of “The Disciple’s Journey.” The focus is on becoming firmly grounded in sound doctrine and to become “fishers of men”.

STAGE 3: THE CHOOSING “*The Dirty Dozen*” (Luke 6:12-13; Mark 3:14-15)

A larger group of disciples followed Jesus from the summer of A.D. 27 until the winter of A.D. 28. While being with Jesus for over a year on His second Galilean tour they had learned much. They had proven faithful and were now ready for more intensive training to prepare them to be sent out on their own.

During this stage Jesus makes the final cut and chooses from among His followers twelve men whom He also designated Apostles. From this point on His main focus would be training the twelve. He did this while still including other disciples and teaching the crowds. The following were the twelve disciples who made the cut. We will call them “The Dirty Dozen.” Those first disciples were just ordinary, largely unschooled men that God choose to lead in extraordinary ways (*Acts 4:13*).

Luke 6:12-16 (NIV)

¹² One of those days Jesus went out to a mountainside to pray, and spent the night praying to God. ¹³ When morning came, he called his disciples to him and chose twelve of them, whom he also designated apostles: ¹⁴ Simon (whom he named Peter), his brother Andrew, James, John, Philip, Bartholomew, ¹⁵ Matthew, Thomas, James son of Alphaeus, Simon who was called the Zealot, ¹⁶ Judas son of James, and Judas Iscariot, who became a traitor.

The first thing we see is that Jesus spent the night in prayer before He chose twelve disciples from the many who followed Him. Jesus knew that the future of Christianity depended on faithful disciples who would become reproducers. From this point on He would concentrate on “The Dirty Dozen.” This select group of disciples would be his close associates, being with Him most of the time. It was during this time that the hardcore training would occur. They would soon be ready for the “The Sending Stage” and then “Commissioned” to go and make disciples.

Jesus’ plan from the beginning was that He would invest His life in a few. Robert E. Coleman in his excellent book, *The Master Plan of Evangelism*, says,

“Hence, as the company of followers around Jesus increased, it became necessary by the middle of his second year of ministry to narrow the select company to a more manageable number. Accordingly, Jesus “Called his disciples, and he chose from them twelve, whom also he named apostles”.(p. 2)



SEARCH THE WORD

In *Mark 3:13-14* we find Mark's account of "The Choosing." Read this passage and answer the following:

- In this passage, what indicates the responsibility that those who want to follow Jesus have in responding to His call?
- Jesus chose and appointed twelve of the many men who followed Him to be Apostles so that "...*that they might be with Him and he might send them out...*" What does this indicate about Jesus' priority in making disciples?

We know from later accounts in the Gospels that Jesus' decision to focus on twelve men did not mean he excluded others from following Him. There were also the seventy-two who were appointed by Jesus and sent out (*Luke 10:1*). There were many would-be disciples who followed Jesus. He did not include them all in the select circle of twelve. Jesus' principle of disciple making was very clear: *The smaller the group, the more concentrated the training and the greater the potential for effective reproduction*. The small group was the primary method Jesus used for training disciples.

The people who proved to be faithful during the previous stages of "The Disciple's Journey" and who show a high level of commitment will be selected to participate in the "Choosing" and "Sending" stages. These stages are for those who are willing to pay the price of further intentional and intense discipleship training. It is for those who are willing to reproduce themselves in others. *Anchoring* is the resource for this stage of the journey.

STAGE 4: THE SENDING "*The Dirty Dozen*" and "*Band of Brothers*", (*Luke 9:1-4; Luke 10:1,17; Mark 6:6-7,30; Matthew 10:1,5*)

"The Choosing Stage" had prepared the disciples for the "The Sending Stage". These two stages seem to merge together. Jesus now sent His disciples out to practice what He had taught them. The disciples were sent out on their mission in the fall of A.D. 29. This stage lasted approximately one year until they were commissioned. (*Matt. 28: 18-20*)

During "The Sending Stage" Jesus sent out two groups of disciples to practice what they had learned. The first group was the "The Dirty Dozen."

Luke 9:1-4

¹ When Jesus had called the Twelve together, he gave them power and authority to drive out all demons and to cure diseases, ² and he sent them out to preach the kingdom of God and to heal the sick. ³ He told them: "Take nothing for the journey—no staff, no bag, no bread, no money, no extra tunic. ⁴ Whatever house you enter, stay there until you leave that town.

The second group we have referred to as the "The Band of Brothers." There were 72 of them that were sent out two by two ahead of Jesus.

Luke 10:1

¹ After this the Lord appointed seventy-two others and sent them two by two ahead of him to every town and place where he was about to go.

Anchoring is the course in "The Disciple's Journey" that facilitates both of these stages. This is an intense twenty-four week course that combines group study time with group ministry and outreach time. The focus is not just on knowing more, but using what you know in hands on ministry. You will regularly participate in some kind of outreach together. You will dig deeper into the Scriptures and walk further in the footsteps of Jesus. The goal of these stages is for you to develop into a fully devoted follower of Jesus who will be "Commissioned" to intentionally develop a few other fully devoted followers who will also become reproducers.

STAGE 5: THE COMMISSIONING "All the Others" (Matthew 28: 18-20)

Matthew 28:18-20

¹⁸ Then Jesus came to them and said, "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. ¹⁹ 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, ²⁰ and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age."

The disciples were commissioned to go make other disciples. They were to reproduce what Jesus had produced in them. It was a mandate, not an option. Jesus had spent over three years with them for this very moment. They were to pass on the baton to others. That was Jesus' only plan for producing mature Christians and developing leaders for the church. The last resource, *Footprints: Following Jesus, Leading Others* is an overview of the five stages and a guide for reproducing new groups. As you complete this final course you will begin finding people for your own *Spiritual Boot Camp Group*. You will be commissioned to reproduce others by leading them stage by stage through "The Disciple's Journey" you have just completed.

LAUNCHING 7 GREAT DOCTRINES OF THE BIBLE

You are about to start your study of the *7 Great Doctrines of the Bible*. To help you prepare for the study of these doctrines we will review your weekly assignments.

Basic Bible doctrine

This is a course about basic Bible doctrine. It is not a comprehensive study. In the brief amount of time you will spend studying these doctrines you will receive a solid foundation upon which to build. You will have

a basic understanding of these doctrines and how to apply them to your life. I encourage you to make it a goal to do further study on these great doctrines of the Bible.

WEEKLY ASSIGNMENTS

Following are the weekly assignments. It is important to complete these assignments before each weekly group session. You will find the assignments for the week in the introduction page of each doctrine.

- **Memorize and meditate on key scriptures**

Each week you will be given key Scriptures to memorize and meditate on. On the first day of the week there will always be some study questions to help you gain a thorough understanding of what you are memorizing.

- **Memorize the doctrinal covenant**

Each week there will be a doctrinal covenant to memorize. This covenant is in the form of a prayer and is a personal commitment to not only know a doctrine, but to live by it. Paul told Timothy:

1 Timothy 4:16

¹⁶ Watch your life and doctrine closely. Persevere in them, because if you do, you will save both yourself and your hearers.

The doctrinal covenant will include the basic points of the doctrine that you will learn each week. Memorizing this doctrinal covenant along with the key Scripture will help you make the doctrine a vital and permanent part of your life.

- **Review “The Bridge” illustration**

Since at this stage of the journey Jesus called His disciples to become “fishers of men” one of the main goals is to become proficient in sharing your faith. Once each week review “The Bridge” illustration. You will have opportunities in group session to practice this skill.

You will find my expanded version of “The Bridge” illustration at the end of this week’s session. You will only be expected to learn the shorter version using the five steps included in that illustration.

- **Prepare a 4X6 Disciple’s Journey index file**

For people on this journey preparing a 4x6 index file for review is essential. Each week write your key Scripture on one side of the card and your doctrinal covenant on the other side. Because the cards are large you will be able to add other important notes you want to remember. There are spiral bound index card holders that contain 50 cards. I have found something I like even better at Wal-Mart. Now they are selling 4X6 cards in a 2 ring binder that can be opened. There are also dividers. This allows you to put in over a hundred cards. This method is handy because you will be able to put all your memory work for the four courses on these cards. First put the *Spiritual Book Camp* memory projects on your index binder. Then start entering the memory work from this course.

Look at this as a tool chest. It will be very helpful for review as it is portable and you can take it with you wherever you go. Keep it close to where you roost in the evening. Keep it in sight and remember the old adage, “Out of sight, out of mind”. This tool will contain much of the essential information you have memorized in The Disciple’s Journey. You can use this tool for teaching as well as review. If you

are a tech type person and have a hand held device which you would prefer over the index cards feel free to use that instead.

- **Reflect and respond**

“Reflect and respond” assignments give you the opportunity to stop for a moment, reflect on what you have been reading and write down your response to what you have just read.

- **Search the Word**

An important part of all The Disciple’s Journey courses is learning to study the Word on your own. To help equip you in this area there will be “Search the Word” studies throughout the course. These studies will give you the opportunity to use the Bible study tools of observation, interpretation and application that you learned in *Spiritual Boot Camp*. If you did not participate in that course you can get help by going to my website at www.anchorsofgod.com and downloading that course.

- **DO! “Watch your life and doctrine closely. Persevere in them...” (1 Timothy 4:16)**

The first two letters of doctrine spell “do”. It is essential to remember that doctrine is not just something we study but is something we do. Every doctrine combines truth with action. There is something to know and something to do. Doctrine is meant to become an essential part of the fabric of our soul. It is to affect our mind, will and emotions. At the end of each day’s study you will find a “do” section. This is to help you apply that day’s study in a practical way.

- **Weekly review**

There is a weekly review section at the conclusion of each day’s study. In this section you will write out your memory projects for the week and review previous weeks’ memory projects that you will have written on your index cards. In addition, you are to review your *Spiritual Boot Camp* memory projects at least once a week and preferably several times a week.

Most people find this a tedious process. People in my groups usually complain. Some even ask why this is necessary. I have found that by the end of a course they see how valuable this discipline has been. They have thoroughly learned the material and have a great feeling of accomplishment. You will be richly rewarded for your hard work.

- **Prayer**

One of the primary purposes of five days of review each week is to help you establish a lifelong discipline of daily appointments with God. There is nothing more important than setting aside a regular time each week to meet with the Lord for time in His Word and prayer. At the conclusion of each day’s review there is a section which will suggest that you pray using the five components of the Lord’s Prayer as a guide. Again, those who have completed *Spiritual Boot Camp* will already know how to do this, but first time participants may catch up by reading that section in the *Spiritual Boot Camp* manual.

- **Weekly accountability**

Accountability turns good intentions into Godly disciplines. We all do better with accountability. Accountability is the willingness to be held responsible by others for commitments we have made. This means that if you commit to completing all the assignments each week and are willing to be held accountable, you will be asked by the group leader if you have fully complied. Accountability should not be viewed as negative. It is a way to be encouraged by those who care deeply about your spiritual growth. We all do better with accountability!

Bill Bright, founder of Campus Crusade for Christ, made the following statement to new recruits each year at their annual conference. This summed up his philosophy of ministry and criteria for success:

“All you have to do from the time you get up in the morning until the time you go to bed at night is love the Lord with all your heart; trust His promises; obey His commands. Everything else flows from that.”

In this statement of faith Bill Bright encouraged new Campus Crusade staff to live by these three commitments. These commitments will form the basis for accountability during this stage of discipleship. At the end of week you will find questions to ask yourself. Be ready to share the following with your group:

Love the Lord with all your heart

- In what ways did I or didn't I demonstrate my love of God by seeking Him with all my heart?
- In what ways did I or didn't I allow God's love to flow through me to others including my spouse, family and others?

Trust God's promises

- To what degree did I or didn't I demonstrate complete trust in God's promises this week?
- What was my greatest test of faith?

Obey God's commands

- Are there weaknesses or sins I need to confess?
- Did I faithfully complete all assignments this week?
- In what ways did I witness to the lost this week? (Pray, share, serve, encourage)

ACCOUNTABILITY COVENANT

Following is the accountability covenant for the “Calling Stage” of The Disciple's Journey.

I covenant to set aside 30-40 minutes a day five days a week to complete all the assignments each week. I will attend all group sessions except in the case of emergencies or sickness. I agree to be held accountable to the group to love, trust and obey God. I am willing to be open and honest in what I share. I understand that anything said during the accountability time is completely confidential.

Signed _____

Inside out

It is important to remember that while these courses focus on transformation through disciplines that equip us to think and act biblically they are not “self-help” programs. Every Disciple's Journey course is designed to be a “God-help” resource. Each course is meant to bring you into the presence of God through His Word so that He can renew your mind and transform your character. The Bible makes it clear that “... it is God who works in you to will and to act according to his good purpose” (Philippians 2:13). It is through God's Spirit

that we are transformed into the likeness of His Son. The process is inside out, not outside in. When God works in us and we respond by “working out” (obeying His Word) the result is spiritual growth. Jesus made this clear when he said:

John 15:5

⁵ “I am the vine; you are the branches. If a man remains in me and I in him, he will bear much fruit; apart from me you can do nothing.

Priority

It will take between 30 and 40 minutes a day, five days a week to complete the assignments for this course. I suggest a specific time that you put on your calendar. It may mean getting up an hour earlier or not watching a TV program or sacrificing something else you do that is important but not essential.

Being “too busy” is not a viable excuse. We all have twenty-four hours a day. We all appropriate those hours to various things we have to do. Within that twenty-four hours there are things that we must do and things we choose to do. How we spend our time, especially our optional hours, is largely dependent on what we value. I’m asking you to place a high value on spending time with God. Look at your time to prepare for group as an appointment with God.

We will never “find” time to do the work required in this stage of The Disciple’s Journey. It is only when we “make” time that we follow through with our good intentions. Decide ahead of time when this time will be and commit fully to keeping your appointment with God at least five days a week and completing all assignments.

“THE BRIDGE” ILLUSTRATION: HOW TO HAVE A PERSONAL RELATIONSHIP WITH GOD

Following is an excerpt from my book *America’s Vanishing Anchors*. I concluded this book by sharing my life story (My life before I made a decision to follow Jesus, how I received Jesus, and how my life has changed since I made that decision). I am including this as an example of how to share the gospel with people using “The Bridge” illustration. You will not be expected to memorize or know all of this information. What you will be expected to do is learn to share the gospel using the five steps of “The Bridge”.

You will have nine weeks to learn this evangelism tool and become skilled “fishers of men.” At least once each week take out a blank sheet of paper and sketch out the five steps. Memorize at least one verse to go along with each step. You can personalize this presentation to make it your own. Often it is best to share your own story first. During this next nine weeks pray and look for opportunities to share “The Bridge” illustration with at least one non-believing person. Make a list of people you will pray for regularly during this time.

How to have a personal relationship with God

There are three questions I like to ask people to help them determine where they stand with God.

1. Would you say you have a personal relationship with Jesus or are you still in the process?
2. If you were to die today are you absolutely sure that you would go to heaven or do you have doubts?
3. If you were to die today and stand before God in heaven and He was to ask you “Why should I let you into my heaven?” what would you say?

If you answered question #1, “I have a personal relationship with Jesus” then I would assume that you have placed your trust in Jesus and are a follower of Him. If you said that you were “still in the process” it would seem to me that you have not made a total commitment to receive Jesus and follow Him. There is no process to having a personal relationship with Jesus. At the very moment we put our trust in Jesus and invite Him into our lives we have a personal relationship with Him forever. There is a final step that you need to take that I will explain in “The Bridge” illustration that follows.

If you answered question #2, “I am absolutely sure I would go to heaven” then again I would assume you have placed your trust in Jesus and are a follower of Him. If you said “I have doubts” there could be two reasons. The first could be that you do not yet have a personal relationship with Jesus that comes from total trust in Him for your salvation. You may be religious. You may know about Jesus and “believe” that He is the Son of God but have never taken the step of inviting Him into your life and trusting Him to forgive your sins and guarantee that you will go to heaven when you die. A second reason might be that even though you have received Jesus you lack assurance because you have not been taught about God’s grace or fail to grasp it for some other reason. When you receive Jesus, at that very moment you are assured of eternal life. It is a done deal. “The Bridge” illustration that follows should help you clarify this issue.

If your answer to question #3 is anything other than something that indicates you trust in God alone for your salvation because you have received Jesus and been forgiven of all of your sins, past, present and future, you still have a decision to make. You have another step to take. If your answer included such things as: “I have tried to live a good life”; “I have followed the Ten Commandments”; “I go to church”; “I read the Bible”; it is clear that you have not trusted in Jesus alone for eternal life. Some people look at what they have done on a scale. If the good deeds outweigh the bad deeds, then they think that they have a chance of getting into heaven. But the Bible clearly says that we cannot save ourselves by our good works and God does not grade on the curve.

Ephesians 2:8-9

⁸ For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith—and this **not from yourselves**, it is the gift of God—⁹ **not by works**, so that no one can boast. (Bold added)

We are saved through faith or trusting in God alone. There is nothing we can do to earn our salvation and yet that is what many people, perhaps even you, are depending on to get them into heaven. What seems to confuse people the most is the difference between religion and Christianity. The difference can be clarified with two words: Religion is “do” and Christianity is “done”. In all other major religions you must do enough to earn your salvation and gain eternal life. In Christianity Jesus has done for you what you can never do yourself—be good enough for eternal life. How do you know when you are good enough or have done enough? What happens when you fall just a little short? What is the standard for entering heaven? Imagine this scene. You die and arrive at the pearly gates. There you stand behind Mother Teresa in a line of people who are being interviewed by God to see if they qualify to enter heaven. Imagine how you would feel if you heard God say to her, “You should have done more.” I’m sure you get the point. If someone who is regarded as one of the most caring people the world has ever seen, someone who did more for the poor people than anyone else in the history, hasn’t done enough good works to earn heaven, where would that leave you and me?

God’s standard for getting into heaven is perfection. This is because according to the Bible, God is holy and cannot tolerate sin. Nothing impure is to enter heaven. That seems to leave us in an impossible situation.

But God has made what is humanly impossible, possible through grace. Grace is God's gift to us of eternal life. It is God's gift at Christ's expense. It is neither something we work for nor deserve. To explain how to receive God's grace I will share with you an adaption of the "The Bridge" illustration, first developed by The Navigators, a Christian discipleship and publishing organization.

The bridge

(When you practice this illustration or share it with someone you only need to sketch out what is inside the box in each of the five steps. The simpler the better when sharing the gospel with someone).

1. **God's love and plan:** He loves us and wants a relationship with us.



First we need to understand that God loves us and created us to have a relationship with Him. The first book of the Bible says:

Genesis 1:27

²⁷ So God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them.

2. **Our problem:** Because of our sin we are separated from God.



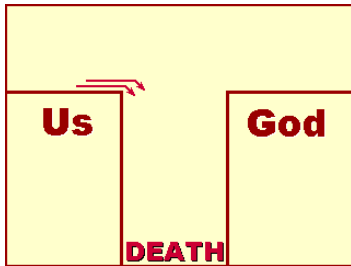
Adam and Eve were given free will but used that freedom to disobey God's clear instructions and do their own thing. Through them sin entered the world and since then everyone has sinned. The Bible says,

Romans 5:12; 3:23a

*¹² Therefore, just as sin entered the world through one man, and death through sin, and in this way death came to all men, because all sinned...²³ for **all have sinned**... (Bold added)*

Sin means missing the mark and choosing to be the boss of our own lives. Every sin is a sin not to trust God and to live independently from Him, trusting in ourselves and our own resources. I'm sure you will agree that we all often miss the mark of even our own standards. We want to control our own lives.

3. **Our solutions:** We attempt to get back to God through our own efforts.



Most of us feel that separation from God in some way and attempt to reconnect with Him by doing good deeds such as helping others, giving to charities, reading the Bible and going to church. The Bible tells us that all of these things fall short

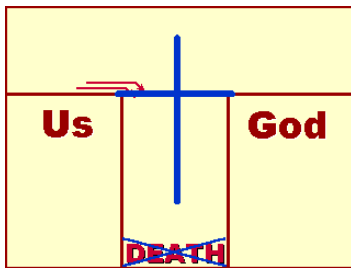
Romans 3:23

²³ for all have sinned and **fall short** of the glory of God, (Bold added)

Ephesians 2:8-9

⁸ For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith-and this not from yourselves, it is the gift of God- ⁹ **not by works**, so that no one can boast. (Bold added)

4. **God's Solution:** He provides a bridge to Himself though Jesus.



The good news is that God loves us so much that He has done something we could never do for ourselves. Through His death on the cross Jesus has provided a bridge back to Himself.

1 Peter 3:18

²¹ For **Christ died for sins** once for all, the righteous for the unrighteous, **to bring you to God**. He was put to death in the body but made alive by the Spirit, (Bold added)

When Jesus was crucified on the cross He “bore” or paid the price for our sins so that we can be reconciled to God and stand perfect before Him on the day we die. The Bible explains it this way:

1 Peter 2:24

²⁴ He himself bore our sins in his body on the tree, so that we might die to sins and live for righteousness; by his wounds you have been healed. 1 Peter 2:24

When we cross the bridge by putting our trust In Jesus, we become righteous or “perfect” before God. God sees our sins no more because He looks at us through the cross. Look at the illustration above and imagine

God looking back at you through the cross. What does He see? He sees the cross, not your sins. He sees His Son, not you. Your sins are nailed to that cross. They no longer exist in God's sight. The Bible says,

2 Corinthians 5:21

²¹ God made him who had no sin to be sin for us, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God.

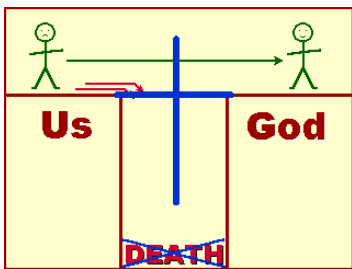
We know we have been made right with God. Our sins have been forgiven. Jesus has become sin for us. Our sins are blotted out forever. God remembers them no more. The Bible says

Ephesians 1:7

⁷ In him we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, in accordance with the riches of God's grace

The "redemption" we have in Jesus means that through Jesus' sacrificial death on the cross, our freedom has been purchased and our sins forgiven because of God's free gift of grace. Is this not an offer too good to refuse?

5. **Our Response:** We need to cross the bridge



God is inviting you to cross over the bridge and be reconnected with Him. Where on the line would you say you are right now? If you locate yourself on the left side and believe you have not yet crossed over the bridge you can do that right now. You can cross over the bridge by praying to receive Jesus. The Bible says:

John 1:12

¹² Yet to all who received him, to those who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God

The question is, are you ready to put your trust in Jesus and cross the bridge? This means trusting in Him alone for your salvation. This involves asking God to come into your life. It involves asking forgiveness for your sins and repenting (a commitment to turn around in your thoughts and actions and go in a new direction). If you do this it means that you are willing to turn control of your life over to God. Is this your commitment?

Prayer of commitment

If you are ready to make this commitment you can do it right now. You can pray the following prayer to receive Jesus:

*“Lord Jesus, I invite you into my life right now.
I repent and ask forgiveness for my sins.
I accept you as my own personal Savior.
I believe you died for me to pay the penalty for my sins.
Help me turn from my sins and obediently follow you.
Thank you for giving me eternal life. Amen.”*

What’s next?

It is important to connect to a church where you can receive teaching, support and fellowship. It is also important to be baptized. Baptism is a picture of what happens to you when you die to your old self and are raised to live a new life. Now I have an offer that you can’t refuse. I have written a book on spiritual growth that I would like to send to you. This book titled *Spiritual Boot Camp* will help you understand more fully the commitment you have just made and give you valuable tools for growing in your new faith. You can email me at wayne@anchorsofgod.com. I would love to hear from you.

Leadership guide

There is a leadership guide for this course that you will find in Appendix B and in *Footprints—Following Jesus, Leading Others*, the final resource in The Disciple’s Journey series. You may download this book free by going to our website at www.anchorsofgod.com.

DO! “Watch your life and doctrine closely. Persevere in them...”

➤ What did today’s study say to you about following Jesus on “The Disciple’s Journey”?



MEMORY ASSIGNMENTS AND REVIEW

Following is the key Scripture to learn this week. Memorize and meditate on this Scripture and write it in the space that follows:

- Memorize *Mark 1: 17-18*

- Memorize the Five Stages of The Disciple’s Journey

Stage 1: _____

Stage 2: _____

Stage 3: _____

Stage 4: _____

Stage 5: _____

- Review “The Bridge” illustration

PRAYER

Spend time in prayer using the five components of the Lord’s Prayer.



WEEK 1

WEEKLY ACCOUNTABILITY

“All you have to do from the time you get up in the morning until the time you go to bed at night is love the Lord with all your heart; trust His promises; obey His commands. Everything else flows from that.”(Bill Bright)

Be ready to share the following with your group:

- **Love the Lord with all your heart**

In what ways did I or didn’t I demonstrate my love of God by seeking Him with all my heart?

In what ways did I or didn’t I allow God’s love to flow to through me to others including my spouse, family and others?

- **Trust God’s promises**

To what degree did I or didn’t I demonstrate complete trust in God’s promises this week?

What was my greatest test of faith?

- **Obey God’s commands**

Are there weaknesses or sins I need to confess?

Did I faithfully complete all assignments this week?

In what ways did I witness to the lost this week? (pray, share, serve, encourage)

WEEK 2

SOUND DOCTRINE

“There is a great blurring between good and evil. If the Bible is not the inspired, authoritative Word of God, then one man’s view of morality is as good as another.”

The seven great doctrines of the Bible you will study in this course will give you a firm foundation upon which to live your life and to help others. This week you will learn some basic principles of sound doctrine. One of the main things we will focus on is how to discern false teaching, false doctrine, heresy and cults. You will learn four essentials of discerning false doctrine. Your memory project for this week is to memorize a key Scripture and these four essentials. In future weeks it will be very important to memorize and meditate on the key Scriptures and doctrinal covenant each week and complete all other assignments.

WEEK 2 STUDY

DAY 1: INTRODUCTION TO SOUND DOCTRINE

DAY 2: HOW TO DISCERN FALSE DOCTRINE

DAY 3: HERESY AND CULT ALERT

DAY 4: FOUR ESSENTIAL WAYS TO DISCERN FALSE DOCTRINE

DAY 5: HOW TO HOLD TO SOUND DOCTRINE

ASSIGNMENTS:

- **Memorize and meditate on Colossians 2:8 and 1Timothy 4:16**

Colossians 2:8

⁸ See to it that no one takes you captive through hollow and deceptive philosophy, which depends on human tradition and the basic principles of this world rather than on Christ.

1 Timothy 4:16

¹⁶ Watch your life and doctrine closely. Persevere in them, because if you do, you will save both yourself and your hearers.

- **Memorize the four essential basics of discerning false doctrine.**
 1. False teaching occurs when the inspiration, inerrancy and authority of the Bible is denied or altered in any way.
 2. False teaching occurs when salvation through faith by grace alone is added to or altered in any way.
 3. False teaching occurs when the Trinity or an attribute of God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit is denied or altered in any way.
 4. False teaching occurs when behavior condemned in Scripture is tolerated or excused in any way.

- **Complete all study and review assignments**

Prepare your memory/review index card. Write your memory verse for the week on one side and the four essential basics of discerning false doctrine on the other side. Review all previous memory assignments from this course each day.

DAY 1: INTRODUCTION TO SOUND DOCTRINE

WHAT IS DOCTRINE?

The word doctrine as it is used in the Bible simply means “teaching.” In the New Testament there are two words used for doctrine. The Greek words, didaskalia and didachē are similar in meaning. Both refer to the act and content of teaching. These words were often used to refer to a specific body of teaching used as a standard of correct teaching or sound doctrine. Paul told Titus:

Titus 2:1 (NIV)

¹You must teach what is in accord with sound doctrine.

Everything that was taught was to conform to the teachings of the Old Testament, the writings and teachings of the disciples. Today the most common use of the term doctrine is to refer to the great themes or subjects of the Bible. In this study we will study seven of the ten doctrines that are often referred to as “The great doctrines of the Bible.” In *Spiritual Boot Camp* you learned much about two of the other great doctrines of man and Satan. I have not included the doctrine of Angels. The seven sound doctrines you will study in this course are:

- The Doctrine of God
- The Doctrine of Christ
- The Doctrine of the Holy Spirit
- The Doctrine of Salvation
- The Doctrine of the Bible
- The Doctrine of the Church
- The Doctrine of Future Things

Doctrine is practical

The doctrines we will cover in this course are ones that have greatly impacted my life on a daily basis. It is my hope that they will impact your lives as well. You need not be intimidated by the word, “doctrine.” It is not about complicated ideas that only theologians can understand. It is not “heady”, impractical studies that only apply to people in monasteries and seminaries. Not at all! God would not make something as important as doctrine out of reach for the common man. In fact, that is exactly who doctrine is for. It is not impractical at all but an essential teaching from which a godly Christian life is to be lived.

I want to introduce you to these basic Bible doctrines so they can impact how you live each day of your life. The first two letters of the word doctrine spell “do.” This is a good way to remember we are to live doctrine, not simply study or understand it. Doctrine is practical. It is life changing. For every doctrine there is a response we must make. The Apostle Paul made this clear in his instructions to Titus in regard to the selection of elders in the church at Crete.

Titus 1:9 (NIV)

⁹ *He must hold firmly to the trustworthy message as it has been taught, so that he can encourage others by sound doctrine and refute those who oppose it.*

Sound doctrine had to be in complete agreement with the teachings of Jesus, the Apostles and Old Testament Scriptures. Paul warned Timothy:

1 Timothy 6:3 (NIV)

³ *If anyone teaches false doctrines and does not agree to the sound instruction of our Lord Jesus Christ and to godly teaching,*

The sound doctrines that are found in the great themes throughout the Bible can be easily understood and yet still have great depth. You can understand the simple message but spend years studying all the things God has said about that doctrine and applying it to your life. We will not go into great depth with any of the doctrines. This will be a concise study of some of the basic tenets of each doctrine. We will only scratch the surface. You can build on the foundation of these great doctrines of the Bible for the rest of your life.

Doctrine is an authoritative standard of truth

Doctrine is important because it teaches us about the essentials of God's Word and trains us to live godly lives that are in line with key principles. Doctrine gives us an authoritative standard by which to measure our lives (*Ephesians 4:11-16*). Paul stressed the importance of sound doctrine impacting the way we live. To Timothy he urged:

1 Timothy 4:16 (NIV)

¹⁶ *Watch your life and doctrine closely. Persevere in them, because if you do, you will save both yourself and your hearers.*

Doctrine renews our minds with the truth about God, His love for us, and His standards for us. With a renewed mind we become transformed into His image (*Romans 12:1-2*). God's Word consistently reminds us to be diligent in obeying God's Word. We are exhorted to persevere in our faith. Sound doctrine gives us a sure foundation from which to make the critical decisions of life.

Doctrine protects us from false teaching

You can convince children to believe just about anything. The younger they are the more vulnerable they are to deception. Young children do not have the mental capacity yet to discern fact from fiction, truth from falsehood. Tell a child of four or five that there is a bear under their bed and make a loud growl and they will be terrified. You probably won't get them back into that room for a while no matter what you say.

All new believers are like children in regard to their new faith. Because they have recently been born anew by the Holy Spirit, they do not have the spiritual discernment to recognize false teachers and false doctrine. Spiritual growth takes time. You may be a relatively new believer taking this course. You will have gone through *Spiritual Boot Camp*, but are still new in the faith. Others may have been Christians for years. Whatever your level of maturity, this course will be another important milestone in your maturity process. By learning some of the basic doctrines you will begin to discern doctrinal error when you hear it. The Apostle Paul explained how this is to happen.



SEARCH THE WORD

Look up *Ephesians 4:11-16* and answer the questions that follow.

- What were the leaders to do? What was their goal?

- How could this affect new believers?

- What would be the result of attaining that goal?

- What would be avoided in the lives of believers?

Paul makes it clear that the best way to avoid being negatively influenced by the doctrinal winds of false teaching is to grow in unity and knowledge of God until we reach maturity in Christ. This is a process that is to be intentional. Church leaders have a responsibility in this process. They are to teach believers so that by having a strong foundation in doctrine they will not be led astray by false doctrine and false teachers. Individuals have a responsibility of their own to take advantage of this teaching and to eventually “feed” themselves.

This course will help you learn to discern false doctrine. This will primarily happen as you learn sound doctrine. During the course you will find three false teaching alerts to give you additional skills in determining false doctrine. There will be “the false teaching alert”, “the heresy alert”, and “the cult alert”. There will also be an occasional “controversy alert”. This will not be about false doctrine but about major differences people have when interpreting certain doctrines.

DO! “Watch your life and doctrine closely. Persevere in them...”

- What did today’s study say to you about watching your life and doctrine closely?



WEEK 2 MEMORY ASSIGNMENTS AND REVIEW

- Memorize and meditate on *Colossians 2:8* and write it in the following space.

- Memorize and meditate on *1 Timothy 4:16* and write it in the following space

- Memorize the four essentials of discerning false doctrine.
 1. False teaching occurs when the i_____ i_____ and a_____ of the Bible is d_____ or a_____ in any way.
 2. False teaching occurs when salvation through f_____ by grace a_____ is added to or a_____ in any way.
 3. False teaching occurs when the T_____ or an a_____ of God the F_____, God the S_____, and God the H_____ S_____ is d_____ or altered in any way.
 4. False teaching occurs when b_____ c_____ in Scripture is t_____ or e_____ in any way.

- Review all previous memory work assignments

PRAYER

Spend time in prayer using the five components of the Lord's Prayer.

DAY 2: HOW TO DISCERN FALSE DOCTRINE



FALSE DOCTRINE ALERT!

When you see this heading you will know that we are going to discuss what I and many other evangelical Christians believe is a false teaching or doctrine. First we will look at ten general principles on how to discern false teachings, false religions, heresies and cults under the general of False Doctrine.

TEN WAYS TO DISCERN FALSE TEACHING

There are ten principles that can help you discern false teaching, false religions, heresies, and cults.

1. **False teaching often overemphasizes a principle that is partially true.**

All false teaching and doctrine is a distortion of a biblical truth. One way false teachers have of doing this is to make a principle more than it is in Scripture. False teachers will isolate a Scripture or perhaps a few Scriptures and turn them into a major doctrine with a particular slant, while ignoring everything else the Bible has to say about it. A prime example of this is what is referred to as the “health and wealth” or “prosperity gospel”. It is true that there are Scriptures that talk about the law of the harvest and God meeting our needs. But beware if this is a main theme of someone’s teaching.

Nowhere in Scripture is there a major theme of sowing so you will receive, or giving to get wealth in return. What the Bible does repeatedly emphasize is that we should trust God to meet our basic needs and to be content with what we have. What is stressed consistently is sacrificial giving. Paul tells Timothy to stress being content with the basics:

1 Timothy 6:6-8 (NIV)

⁶ But godliness with contentment is great gain. ⁷ For we brought nothing into the world, and we can take nothing out of it. ⁸ But if we have food and clothing, we will be content with that.

People who teach “prosperity” leave this out. They promise things that God does not promise. They make up stories of getting wealth to promote their agenda. Peter warns against this. He says:

2 Peter 2:2-3 (NIV)

² Many will follow their shameful ways and will bring the way of truth into disrepute. ³ In their greed these teachers will exploit you with stories they have made up. Their condemnation has long been hanging over them, and their destruction has not been sleeping.

See also *1 Timothy 6:6-10; Matthew 6:19-33; Philippians 4:11-13*. We are never promised that we will have an abundance of wealth and perfect health as the “prosperity gospel” promises (*2 Corinthians 12:7-10; 2 Corinthians 11:23-29*).

- Think of an example when you have observed overemphasis of a principle that is partially true.

2. False teaching will often deemphasize, ignore, or deny a principle that is clear in Scripture.

A sound doctrine will be ignored or minimized in order to rationalize sinful behavior or support a belief system that a person or group wants to promote. This is especially true of cults where sexual immorality is accepted, especially among the leaders. They are often deceitful leaders that the Bible calls false prophets who claim some kind of special status or powers from God.

This is not only true of cults but also includes the teaching of some mainline denominations that do not believe in the Bible as the inerrant, authoritative Word of God. This opens the door for all kinds of sinful behavior.

2 Corinthians 11:13-15 (NIV)

¹³ For such men are false apostles, deceitful workmen, masquerading as apostles of Christ. ¹⁴ And no wonder, for Satan himself masquerades as an angel of light. ¹⁵ It is not surprising, then, if his servants masquerade as servants of righteousness. Their end will be what their actions deserve.

People are often sucked into cults and false religions by people who seem to be angels of enlightenment and totally righteous. They can easily deceive new or immature believers. Paul warned against being deceived by these people:

2 Corinthians 11:3-4 (NIV)

³ But I am afraid that just as Eve was deceived by the serpent's cunning, your minds may somehow be led astray from your sincere and pure devotion to Christ. ⁴ For if someone comes to you and preaches a Jesus other than the Jesus we preached, or if you receive a different spirit from the one you received, or a different gospel from the one you accepted, you put up with it easily enough.

- What example can you cite where a person or group has deemphasized, denied or ignored a clear Biblical principle? Why do you believe this was done?

3. False teaching promises freedom but will eventually enslave its adherents.

You have probably heard the saying, "If it sounds too good to be true it probably is." This is certainly true of false teaching. Every false teaching and false religion and cult preys on the needs of people and promises some kind of advantages and freedoms. What people get in return is enslavement. Peter makes this clear:

2 Peter 2:17-19 (NIV)

¹⁷ These men are springs without water and mists driven by a storm. Blackest darkness is reserved for them. ¹⁸ For they mouth empty, boastful words and, by appealing to the lustful desires of sinful human nature, they entice people who are just escaping from those who live in error. ¹⁹ They promise them freedom, while they themselves are slaves of depravity—for a man is a slave to whatever has mastered him.

In return for that "freedom" you are asked by false teachers and false religions to give them your souls. You are then mastered by those false ideas and become a slave to that religion. Jim Jones promised

freedom to the people who went to live with him in Guyana. Instead they became enslaved to his godless philosophy and eventually were convinced to commit suicide because of his paranoia.

4. **False teaching occurs when a basic principle of the world is elevated to the level of authority of Scripture.** Very subtle but extremely dangerous are the principles such as humanism that overemphasize the importance and self sufficiency of man. The Bible warns against such false teaching.



SEARCH THE WORD

Read *Jude 17-19* and answer the questions that follow:

- What will be the characteristics of these false teachers?

- What do they do that elevates principles of the world to the level of Scripture?

This Scripture talks about scoffers who follow after their own ungodly desires. What they desire for themselves is more important than the authority of Scripture. They follow after “*mere natural instincts*” rather than the clear, pure doctrine of the Bible.

Robert Schuler and his positive thinking gospel is an example of raising principles of humanism to the level of Scripture. While it is true that God wants to renew our minds with Scripture it is not true that by simply believing in ourselves and practicing positive thinking we can achieve anything we want. The saying, “What you believe you can achieve,” is not from the Bible and is only partially true. The Bible does not promote success by positive thinking but by a godly life that is transformed by the renewing of the mind (*Romans 12:1-2*). Paul warns believers to watch out for these principles of the world.

Colossians 2:8 (NIV)

⁸ See to it that no one takes you captive through hollow and deceptive philosophy, which depends on human tradition and the basic principles of this world rather than on Christ.

Blending humanistic, basic principles of the world with Scripture is a dangerous trend that I see in our churches. Humanism is a system that rejects religious beliefs and the Bible and centers on human potential and worth apart from God.

5. **False teaching occurs when tradition is elevated to the level and authority of Scripture.**

I believe this is true of some of the teaching of the Catholic Church. Now I want to be clear that I am not calling the Catholic Church a false religion, but I am pointing out doctrinal error when I see it. The Catholic Church elevates tradition to the level of Scripture so they have the same authority. This simply cannot be supported by the Bible. Nowhere in Scripture is a tradition given anywhere close to this status. By definition, tradition is an inherited, established, or customary pattern of thought, action, or

behavior. Traditions are not wrong in themselves, but when they are considered to have the authority of Scripture they become false teachings. Jesus warned the Jews about their traditions:

Mark 7:9 (NIV)

⁹ And he said to them: "You have a fine way of setting aside the commands of God in order to observe your own traditions!"

➤ Can you think of other examples of traditions being elevated to the level and authority of Scripture?

6. False teaching occurs when experience is elevated to the level and authority of Scripture.

There are two major examples that come to mind. The Mormon religion is based on the experience of Joseph Smith. He reports having an experience where an angel visited him and gave him some golden tablets. He translated these tablets into what is called the Book of Mormon. The Book of Mormon is the Mormon religion's Bible. While Mormons still say they believe in our Bible, Joseph Smith's "translation" is their final authority.

The Muslim religion is based on the experience of Mohammad. Very similar to Joseph Smith, Mohammad reports an experience where he was visited by an angel named Gabriel. He says Gabriel gave him the Koran, which is the Muslim Bible. In both the case of Joseph Smith and Mohammad, a major religion was started on the testimony of one man claiming a supernatural experience. In both cases the tablets from which their "Bibles" were translated have never been seen. Would you want to risk your eternal destiny on either of these experiences?



SEARCH THE WORD

Here is what the Apostle Peter has to say about false teachings; Read *2 Peter 1:16-21* and answer the following questions:

- What evidence does Peter give that he and the other Apostles were teaching true doctrine?
- What can we learn from the passage about how to discern false doctrine?

Observe how the sound doctrine given by Peter in this passage refutes private revelations based on experience such as those claimed by Joseph Smith and Mohammad. Rather than one person's claim of a divine encounter the Bible backs up its claim of being the Word of God in several measurable ways. First there were multiple eyewitnesses to the divinity of Jesus. Not just one person but several heard the voice of God. Then there was the evidence of the prophets foretelling in detail about the coming of Jesus thousands of years before He appeared. There is the verification of the Bible. The Scripture we have did not come from man but was given to men who wrote down what God said. The Bible has great validity because it was written over a period of fifteen hundred years by forty different authors on three

continents with no contradictions. In addition there is significant manuscript, historical and archeological evidence.

7. False teaching occurs when the authority and inerrancy of Scripture is denied.

All false teaching, false religions, heresy and cults have at their core some departure from the authority and inerrancy of God's Word. This is warned against as we just witnessed in *2 Peter 1:16-21*. Peter concludes his letter by focusing on false teaching and then mentions the Apostle Paul's teaching. It is obvious he regards this teaching as inspired Scripture. Peter says:

2 Peter 3:16 (NIV)

¹⁶ He writes the same way in all his letters, speaking in them of these matters. His letters contain some things that are hard to understand, which ignorant and unstable people distort, as they do the other Scriptures, to their own destruction.

There is always some level of denial and distortion of Scripture in false teaching. And once you undermine the authority and inerrancy of the Bible you open the door to the false doctrines of men. That is why throughout the Bible the doctrine of God is so closely guarded. Once the leaven of distortion is tolerated in any way, false teaching spreads like gangrene. Jesus warned against the leaven of the Pharisees and Sadducees which denied the truth of God's Word (*Matthew 16:6*). Paul also warned against the leaven of false teaching that would spread and corrupt the whole batch of dough.

Galatians 5:7-10 (NIV)

⁷ You were running a good race. Who cut in on you and kept you from obeying the truth? ⁸ That kind of persuasion does not come from the one who calls you. ⁹ "A little yeast works through the whole batch of dough." ¹⁰ I am confident in the Lord that you will take no other view. The one who is throwing you into confusion will pay the penalty, whoever he may be.

8. False teaching occurs when some aspect of God's nature is denied or altered.

Any teaching that questions or attempts to "change" the nature of God as plainly recorded in Scripture is a false teaching.

- An attribute of God is altered or denied.

Peter gives an example of this when He warns against false prophets who deny the sovereign Lord. This would include all of His attributes but especially His absolute all knowing, all powerful rule over all of His creation.

2 Peter 2:1-2 (NIV)

¹ But there were also false prophets among the people, just as there will be false teachers among you. They will secretly introduce destructive heresies, even denying the sovereign Lord who bought them — bringing swift destruction on themselves. ² Many will follow their shameful ways and will bring the way of truth into disrepute.

- The Godhead is altered or denied in any way.

Some question, deny, or attempt to alter the divinity of Christ. The false teachings of some mainline churches and liberal theologians deny the virgin birth and the divinity of Christ. Mormons claim that God was once a man like us and Jesus was not preexistent with the Father. Jehovah's Witnesses do not believe in the Trinity. They believe that Jehovah is the only Supreme Being and that Jesus is

the Son of God as a created being. He is believed to have originally existed in a pre-human state as the Archangel Michael. The view of Islam is that Allah is the only Supreme Being and that Jesus while a great prophet was not divine. The Bible is crystal clear that anyone who denies Christ is a false teacher, in fact an antichrist.



SEARCH THE WORD

Read *1 John 2:20-24* and answer the questions that follow:

- Who is the liar and what is he called?
- What does this Scripture say about altering or denying the Godhead in any way?
- What is John's main point?

Anyone or any religious body that denies any aspect of the Godhead is a false teacher or false religion. Some attempt to alter the sound doctrine of the Trinity which is one God yet three distinct personalities. Anything less than that must be considered a false teaching. The Bible clearly identifies one God yet three distinct personalities.

2 Corinthians 13:14 (NIV)

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.

9. False teaching occurs when grace is altered.

Grace can be altered in two ways. Either way is false.

- Behavior is excluded from God's grace.

The first way grace is altered is that God's unmerited favor can be distorted in a way that excludes obedience to God's Word. People believe that God's grace gives them a license to sin without restraint. They say, "God forgives all so why worry about it?" Paul refutes this in *Romans 6:1-14*. Jude warns believers to be on the alert to this false teaching:

Jude 3-4 (NIV)

³ Dear friends, although I was very eager to write to you about the salvation we share, I felt I had to write and urge you to contend for the faith that was once for all entrusted to the saints. ⁴ For certain

men whose condemnation was written about long ago have secretly slipped in among you. They are godless men, who change the grace of our God into a license for immorality...

- Behavior is included with God's grace.

This second way is grace plus behavior saves you. Grace is altered by adding any requirement to salvation other than faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. A characteristic of many false teachings, false religions and cults is that some kinds of works are necessary to be saved. However, Scripture consistently says that we are saved through faith by the grace of God alone, apart from any works of our own.

Ephesians 2:8-9 (NIV)

⁸ For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith—and this not from yourselves, it is the gift of God—⁹ not by works, so that no one can boast.

The believers in Galatia to whom Paul addresses his letter were being influenced by the false teaching that they also needed to observe the Law and be circumcised to have God's full acceptance. Paul tells them plainly that nothing could be further from the truth.

Galatians 5:2-6 (NIV)

² Mark my words! I, Paul, tell you that if you let yourselves be circumcised, Christ will be of no value to you at all. ³ Again I declare to every man who lets himself be circumcised that he is obligated to obey the whole law. ⁴ You who are trying to be justified by law have been alienated from Christ; you have fallen away from grace. ⁵ But by faith we eagerly await through the Spirit the righteousness for which we hope. ⁶ For in Christ Jesus neither circumcision nor uncircumcision has any value. The only thing that counts is faith expressing itself through love.

Beware of any one person or group that tries to convince you that there is something you have to do other than put your faith in Jesus and accept God's grace to receive salvation. Paul sums this up in the Galatian letter:

Galatians 5:1

¹ It is for freedom that Christ has set us free. Stand firm, then, and do not let yourselves be burdened again by a yoke of slavery.

10. False teaching occurs when behavior condemned in Scripture is tolerated or excused in any way.

An alarming trend among some churches and Christians today is the acceptance of behavior that is explicitly condemned in the Bible. For example I have seen believers being increasingly accepting of sexually immoral behavior. The number of couples claiming to be born again Christians living together or regularly having pre-marital sex seems commonplace with hardly an eyebrow raised. The Scripture is clear on this topic. Following is one of the many places Paul condemns all kinds of sexual immorality:

Ephesians 5:3

³ But among you there must not be even a hint of sexual immorality, or of any kind of impurity, or of greed, because these are improper for God's holy people.

While there may be very few evangelical churches that would teach that behavior condemned in Scripture is acceptable, by ignoring this behavior they give approval. By not confronting obvious sexual immorality they are guilty of false teaching by default.

DO! “Watch your life and doctrine closely. Persevere in them...”

➤ How can the ten ways to discern false doctrine help you stay true to the Bible and help others avoid being led astray?



WEEK 2 MEMORY ASSIGNMENTS AND REVIEW

- Memorize and meditate on *Colossians 2:8* and write it in the following space.

- Memorize and meditate on *1 Timothy 4:16* and write it in the following space.

- Memorize the four essentials of discerning false doctrine. (See page 38)
 1. False teaching occurs when the i_____, i_____ and a_____ of the Bible is d_____ or a_____ in any way.
 2. False teaching occurs when salvation through f_____ by grace a_____ is added to or a_____ in any way.
 3. False teaching occurs when the T_____ or an a_____ of God the F_____, God the S_____, and God the H_____ S_____ is d_____ or altered in any way.
 4. False teaching occurs when b_____ c_____ in Scripture is t_____ or e_____ in any way.

- Review all previous memory work assignments.

PRAYER

Spend time in prayer using the five components of the Lord's Prayer.



CULT ALERT!

Now and then I will throw in a “cult alert.” A cult is defined as *“A group of people, which claiming to be Christian, embraces a particular doctrinal system taught by an individual leader, group of leaders, or organization, which denies either explicitly or implicitly one or more of the central doctrines of the Christian Faith as taught in the sixty-six books of the Bible.”* (Alan Gomes, *Unmasking The Cults*, Zondervan, 1995)

Cults isolate certain Scriptures to the exclusion of the major themes of the Bible. With cults there is also a social/psychological dimension. There is a misuse of power, authority, and control exercised by the group. This includes manipulation, mind control, and isolation from those outside the group including family.

Cults are extremely dangerous. Often they draw in needy, naïve people who become captive to the system. We might call cults “heresy plus.” They are blatantly false and psychologically damaging. People need to be warned of their dangers.

- What cult are you aware of that matches the above definition? What characteristics stand out?



CONTROVERSY ALERT!

The occasional “controversy alert” that you will occasionally encounter in this study is to call your attention to major controversies that have been debated for hundreds of years. There are good reasons for these controversies. There is usually strong Biblical evidence on both sides of the issue. These controversies do not involve false teaching, only differences in interpretation. In cases of controversial doctrine it is important to not become rigid or judgmental but to extend grace. However there are always some people and churches who will label controversies as false teaching or heresy.

Beware of yeast

Anything that departs from the sound doctrine of Jesus and the Apostles is troublesome. False doctrines often evolve over a period of time becoming increasingly further from the truth. Like spreading yeast, what might seem like minor differences in the beginning can grow into fully blown false teaching or even heresies. That is why leaders in the early church were constantly reminded to “hold to sound doctrine” or “guard” what had been entrusted to them. Even the slightest departure from sound doctrine is dangerous.



SEARCH THE WORD

Read what Paul has to say about the inherent dangers of controversies in 1Timothy 6 and answer the questions that follow.

- What dangers of false doctrines does Paul refer to in this chapter?

- What was entrusted to Timothy's care?
- How is Timothy to guard what which has been entrusted to him?

We should all take seriously our responsibility to guard the precious doctrines of Jesus and the Apostles. These teachings have been entrusted to all of us. In Paul's second letter to Timothy he again stressed the importance of guarding the sound teaching that Timothy had learned from him:

2 Timothy 1:13-14 (NIV)

¹³ *What you heard from me, keep as the pattern of sound teaching, with faith and love in Christ Jesus.*

¹⁴ *Guard the good deposit that was entrusted to you—guard it with the help of the Holy Spirit who lives in us.*

DO! "Watch your life and doctrine closely. Persevere in them..."

- What in today's study do you believe will be most helpful in helping you discern heresies and cults?



WEEK 2 MEMORY ASSIGNMENTS AND REVIEW

- Memorize and meditate on *Colossians 2:8* and write it in the following space.
- Memorize and meditate on *1 Timothy 4:16* and write it in the following space.
- Memorize the four essentials of discerning false doctrine.
 1. False teaching occurs when the i_____, i_____ and a_____ of the Bible is d_____ or a_____ in any way.
 2. False teaching occurs when salvation through f_____ by grace a_____ is added to or a_____ in any way.

3. False teaching occurs when the T_____ or an a_____ of God the F_____, God the S_____, and God the H_____ S_____ is d_____ or altered in any way.

4. False teaching occurs when b_____ c_____ in Scripture is t_____ or e_____ in any way.

- Review all previous memory work assignments

PRAYER

Spend time in prayer using the five components of the Lord's Prayer.

DAY 4: FOUR ESSENTIAL WAYS TO DISCERN FALSE DOCTRINE

Today we will reduce the ten principles of discerning false teaching, false religions, heresies, and cults to four basic essentials so that they are easier to remember and use. These basic essentials will always indicate false teaching in some form. These include fundamentals of sound doctrine that cannot be changed in any form. It is critical that you remember these four essential ways to discern false doctrine. That is why they are a major memory project for this course.

As we study these basic essentials we will also look at how our culture has contributed to the erosion of these essentials. Increasing numbers of Christians who are not grounded in the basic doctrines of the Bible are adopting a non-Biblical worldview. The religious oriented Barna Research Group and the strictly secular Pew Forum prove this beyond a doubt. The first way to discern false doctrine is by understanding the following four essentials of the discerning false doctrine.

BASIC ESSENTIALS OF DISCERNING FALSE DOCTRINE

- 1. False teaching occurs when the inspiration, inerrancy and authority of the Bible is denied or altered in any way.** The Bible is “God breathed.” It is no less than God speaking to His people. It is the only real truth. It carries with it the authority of God. Therefore the authority and inerrancy of the Bible are essentials of sound doctrine. Any departure from these constitutes false teaching.

The effects of “cultural drift”

Probably the greatest threat to believers in our culture today is belief in relativism. Relativism is the view that there is no one standard for truth. Truth and morality are as an individual sees them. Consider these statistics from the 2010 research of the Barna Group:

“Half of all adults firmly believe that the Bible is accurate in all the principles it teaches. That proportion includes the four-fifths of born again adults (79%) who concur.”

“Most self-identified Christians are comfortable with the idea that the Bible and the sacred books from non-Christian religions all teach the same truths and principles.”

- 2. False teaching occurs when salvation through faith by grace alone is added to or altered in any way.** Salvation is through faith by grace alone. The only way to be saved is through the blood of Jesus. He is the way, the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through Him. (*John 14:6*) Nothing is to be added as a requirement for salvation. Anything that departs from these essentials of salvation is false teaching.

The effects of “cultural drift”

While the Bible is clear about the essentials of salvation, culture continues to embrace the view that many paths lead to God and eternal life. Our culture says to think otherwise is to be arrogant and bigoted and biased. Great pressure is put on people to endorse this belief. Christians, it is clear from research, are falling in line in increasing numbers. The Pew Forum on Religion & Public Life / U.S. Religious Landscape Survey discovered the following:

“Seven-in-ten Americans with a religious affiliation say that many religions can lead to eternal life. In fact, majorities of nearly every religious tradition take the view that many religions can lead to eternal life.”

- 3. False teaching occurs when an attribute of God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit is denied or altered in any way.** God is the heavenly Father, the first person of the Trinity. He is the all holy, all powerful, all knowing sovereign creator and ruler of the universe. Nothing happens in heaven and earth without His initiative or approval. Any departure from the nature of God constitutes false teaching.

Jesus is the divine Son of God, the second person of the Trinity. He was born of a virgin, lived a perfect life, died on the cross for our sins and rose on the third day. He ascended to heaven and will return for His people. Any departure from these facts constitutes false teaching.

The Holy Spirit is the third person of the Trinity. The Holy Spirit is fully God, a personal being that indwells all believers as Christ’s representative, possessing all the divine attributes. Any departure from the nature of the Holy Spirit and the Trinity is false teaching.

The effects of “Cultural drift”

Again we will look at Barna Group’s 2010 summary of its findings. They found that:

“A minority of American adults (40%) are persuaded that Jesus Christ lived a sinless life while He was on earth. Slightly less than two-thirds of the born again segment (62%) strongly believes that He was sinless.”

What we see here is a cultural drift away from the truth of Scripture. Sound doctrine is slowly vanishing in our culture.

- 4. False teaching occurs when behavior condemned in Scripture is tolerated or excused in any way.** Everything that falls short of the righteousness of God is sin. The Bible never condones sin, but always forgives it. However that grace is not a license to sin. God requires obedience, not to be saved, but because we are saved. Any sin that is condoned or accepted in any way is false teaching.

The effects of “cultural drift”

It will be no surprise to most of you that our culture is increasingly permissive when it comes to any standards for right and wrong. There is a great blurring between good and evil. If the Bible is not the inspired, authoritative Word of God, then one man’s view of morality is as good as another.

The Barna Group discovered this in their research into what percentage of the U. S. population held to a biblical world view.

“They found that (9 %) of non-believers, (19 %) of Christians hold to a Biblical World View: One-third of all adults (34%) believe that moral truth is absolute and unaffected by the circumstances. “

Because of the cultural drift of political correctness people are increasingly pressured to accept and endorse many behaviors and lifestyles that the Bible says are sin.

DO! "Watch your life and doctrine closely. Persevere in them..."

- To what degree, if any, have you been influenced by our culture's view of relativism? To what degree, if any, have you been influenced by our culture's view of Scripture and morality?



WEEK 2 MEMORY ASSIGNMENTS AND REVIEW

- Memorize and meditate on *Colossians 2:8* and write it in the following space.

- Memorize and meditate on *1 Timothy 4:16* and write it in the following space.

- Memorize the four essentials of discerning false doctrine.
 1. False teaching occurs when the i_____, i_____ and a_____ of the Bible is d_____ or a_____ in any way.
 2. False teaching occurs when salvation through f_____ by grace a_____ is added to or a_____ in any way.
 3. False teaching occurs when the T_____ or an a_____ of God the F_____, God the S_____, and God the H_____ S_____ is d_____ or altered in any way.
 4. False teaching occurs when b_____ c_____ in Scripture is t_____ or e_____ in any way.
- Review all previous memory work assignments

PRAYER

Spend time in prayer using the five components of the Lord's Prayer.

DAY 5: HOW TO HOLD TO SOUND DOCTRINE

Be prepared

The best way to hold to sound doctrine and not be deceived by false teaching is to be prepared. That is the central theme of the warnings we have been studying. Prepare by knowing sound doctrine and by recognizing false doctrine.



SEARCH THE WORD

Paul gave Timothy some sound advice regarding being prepared. Look up *2 Timothy 4:2-4* and answer the following questions:

- What do you think Paul means when he says to *“be prepared in season and out of season?”*
- What is Timothy to be prepared to do? How could this apply to you today?
- How can preparation help resolve the issue of false teachers and people who do not put up with sound doctrine?
- Are you prepared? Be ready to share with the group what specific plans you have made in your schedule to complete your assignments.

Memorize and review

By completing the assignments in this course you will take a significant step toward being prepared to hold to sound doctrine and discern false doctrine. As you know, following each day’s study you will memorize new key verses and doctrinal covenants. You will also review all previous memory assignments. I know that this will become tedious and you will probably wonder if this is really necessary but you will find that by the end of the course the repetition has helped you master the material. You will be able to use what you have learned for the rest of your life.

Consider the whole counsel of God

As we have seen, false teachers “cherry pick” what Scriptures they will use to support their agendas. One of the best ways of discerning false doctrine is to know all that the Bible has to say about a topic.



SEARCH THE WORD

Read what Paul had to say to the elders at Ephesus in his farewell speech. Look up *Acts 20:25-31* and answer the questions that follow.

- What is it that Paul says he has not been hesitant to do in verse 27? What do you think this means?
- Why is it essential to teach the whole will or counsel of God? What happens when a church fails to do this?
- What does Paul warn about in this passage?

Use sound hermeneutics

False teachers do not use sound hermeneutics (rules for studying Scripture). If you took the *Spiritual Boot Camp* course you would have learned the basics of sound hermeneutics. Continue to use these principles as you study the Scripture. Paul urged Timothy to,

2 Timothy 2:15 (NIV)

¹⁵ Do your best to present yourself to God as one approved, a workman who does not need to be ashamed and who correctly handles the word of truth.

Study orthodox, historic Christian doctrine - search it out for yourself

The New Testament gives us the only sound pattern for orthodox, historic Christianity. Study the New Testament to know what has been said from the beginning. The Apostle John said:

1 John 2:24 (NIV)

²⁴ See that what you have heard from the beginning remains in you. If it does, you also will remain in the Son and in the Father.

Follow the example of the Bereans

Acts 17:11 (NIV)

¹¹ Now the Bereans were of more noble character than the Thessalonians, for they received the message with great eagerness and examined the Scriptures every day to see if what Paul said was true.

There are three books I recommend that you add to your library and study when you have the opportunity: *Concise Theology* by J.I. Packer, *All the Doctrines of the Bible* by Herbert Lockyer, and *Great Doctrines of the Bible* by William Evans. There are many other good books on doctrine but these will help you dig deeper into

these great truths. The goal of this course is to help you learn some of the basics of doctrine that you will be able to build on for the rest of your life. This should be looked at as just the beginning of your study.

Become part of a doctrinally sound Bible teaching church

It is important to be part of a church that teaches the whole counsel of God and equips believers to study the Scriptures on their own. The Apostle Paul contends that the primary function of church leaders is to equip members of the body so they will become mature. This maturity then will prevent them from being tossed about by the “wind” of false teachings and the deceitfulness of false teachers.

Ephesians 4:11-14

¹¹ It was he who gave some to be apostles, some to be prophets, some to be evangelists, and some to be pastors and teachers, ¹² to prepare God’s people for works of service, so that the body of Christ may be built up ¹³ 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. ¹⁴ 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.

Renew your mind with sound doctrine

The best way to discern false doctrine is to know the truth. This happens when we recall the truth that we have been taught. Peter says:

2 Peter 3:2 (NIV)

² I want you to recall the words spoken in the past by the holy prophets and the command given by our Lord and Savior through your apostles.

We must not only remember these words and commands but constantly use them. It is with the practical application of these truths that we will become mature and be able to distinguish good from evil. The writer of Hebrews says:

Hebrews 5:14 (NIV)

¹⁴ But solid food is for the mature, who by constant use have trained themselves to distinguish good from evil.

Stay on the disciple’s journey

It is very important that you keep growing. This is the second of four courses of The Disciple’s Journey. It is my prayer that you continue through each stage of The Disciple’s Journey. This will help you keep setting spiritual goals and stay in an environment to receive encouragement and be accountable to others.



SEARCH THE WORD

The Apostle Peter ends his letter warning believers about false teaching with an admonition. Look up 2 Peter 3:17-18 and answer the questions that follow:

- What does it mean to grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ?

- Write a short statement about what you will do to grow in this way.

DO! "Watch your life and doctrine closely. Persevere in them..."

- What are the two most important points you have learned this week? How will knowing and doing these help you stay grounded in sound doctrine and help others?



WEEK 2 MEMORY ASSIGNMENTS AND REVIEW

- Memorize and meditate on *Colossians 2:8* and write it in the following space.

- Memorize and meditate on *1 Timothy 4:16* and write it in the following space.

- Memorize the four essentials of discerning false doctrine.
 1. False teaching occurs when the i_____, i_____ and a_____ of the Bible is d_____ or a_____ in any way.
 2. False teaching occurs when salvation through f_____ by grace a_____ is added to or a_____ in any way.
 3. False teaching occurs when the T_____ or an a_____ of God the F_____, God the S_____, and God the H_____ S_____ is d_____ or altered in any way.
 4. False teaching occurs when b_____ c_____ in Scripture is t_____ or e_____ in any way.

- Review all previous memory work assignments

PRAYER

Spend time in prayer using the five components of the Lord's Prayer.



WEEK 2

WEEKLY ACCOUNTABILITY

“All you have to do from the time you get up in the morning until the time you go to bed at night is love the Lord with all your heart; trust His promises; obey His commands. Everything else flows from that.” (Bill Bright)

Be ready to share the following with your group:

- **Love the Lord with all your heart**

In what ways did I or did I not demonstrate my love of God by seeking Him with all my heart?

In what ways did I or did I not allow God’s love flow through me to others including my spouse, family and others?

- **Trust God’s promises**

To what degree did I or didn’t I demonstrate complete trust in God’s promises this week?

What was my greatest test of faith?

- **Obey God’s commands**

Are there weaknesses or sins I need to confess?

Did I faithfully complete all assignments this week?

In what ways did I witness to the lost this week: (prayer, share, serve, encourage)

WEEK 3

THE DOCTRINE OF GOD

“Our purpose on earth is to glorify God because He is holy. We were created to bring glory to God with our lips and with our lives. Every attribute of God should remind us of God’s glory and cause us to praise Him.”

This week begins the exciting study of 7 Great Doctrines of the Bible. The study and applications of these doctrines will give you a firm foundation and enable you to help others build firm foundations. While there is much more that could be said about each of these doctrines, you will learn certain basic essentials upon which you can build.

The brief study of the doctrine of God this week will focus on just four of His many attributes. The doctrine of God is vastly greater than this but I have chosen four basic attributes to serve as a solid foundation. The first three are referred to as relative attributes because they reveal

his personal relationship with His children. These attributes give us faith in His character and demonstrate how He relates to us. Holiness, the fourth attribute we will study, is a moral attribute. Moral attributes demonstrate moral action on the part of God. In *Anchoring*, the third study in this series, you will study other moral attributes such as the love and faithfulness of God.

WEEK 3 STUDY

DAY 1: INTRODUCTION TO THE DOCTRINE OF GOD

DAY 2: GOD IS OMNIPOTENT

DAY 3: GOD IS OMNISCIENT

DAY 4: GOD IS OMNIPRESENT

DAY 5: GOD IS HOLY

ASSIGNMENTS:

- **Memorize and meditate on *Isaiah 40:25-26***

Isaiah 40:25-26

²⁵“To whom will you compare me? Or who is my equal?” says the Holy One. ²⁶Lift your eyes and look to the heavens: Who created all these? He who brings out the starry host one by one, and calls them each by name. Because of his great power and mighty strength, not one of them is missing.

- **Memorize the personal doctrinal covenant**

Lord, I acknowledge that You are the sovereign, omnipotent, omniscient, omnipresent and holy creator and sustainer of the universe. Therefore I will praise, trust, and obey You in all things.

- Complete all study and review assignments. Review memory work from past courses at least once a week.

- Prepare your memory/review index card. Write your memory verse for the week on one side and the Personal Doctrinal Covenant on the other. Review all previous memory assignments each day.

DAY 1: INTRODUCTION TO THE DOCTRINE OF GOD

The study of the doctrine of God is an essential component in helping us become spiritually mature. It is our concept or image of God that renews our minds with the truth, shapes our behavior, and gives us a purpose in life. What we believe about God forms the foundation of our relationship with Him. Our image of God determines how we relate to Him. In praying for His disciples before departing earth Jesus said plainly,

John 17:3

³ Now this is eternal life: that they may know you, the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom you have sent.

Jesus' mission was to make God known to His disciples so they could make Him known to the whole world (*Matthew 28:18-20*). God the Son came to earth in bodily form to reveal to everyone the complete nature of God the Father. Through the Old Covenant (Old Testament) God began to reveal His nature but only in the New Covenant (New Testament) did God reveal the full nature of the Son, the Father and the Holy Spirit. When Jesus died on the cross and ascended to heaven He completed His mission of revealing the full nature of God to His disciples. He did this so that through His disciples "...all the world..." would have the opportunity to experience the love of God (*Matt. 28:18-20*). Jesus prayed,

John 17:26

²⁶ I have made you known to them, and will continue to make you known in order that the love you have for me may be in them and that I myself may be in them."

The doctrine of God

We study the doctrine of God first because God as Father is the primary focus of the Old Testament. Jesus is revealed primarily in the Gospels. The Holy Spirit is also introduced in the Gospels but revealed fully to the Church. Of course the doctrine of God in a general sense includes the Trinity--God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit. For the purpose of the study of God we will study each person of the Trinity separately.

All doctrines of the bible are interpreted by us through our understanding of who God is and how He relates to us. Our concept of God determines our world view. It shapes how we view truth, sin, obedience and our purpose in life. Our image of God determines whether we will assess our value and significance based on the opinion of others or on how God sees us. The Bible plainly says that knowing God is a top priority. Through the prophets Jeremiah and Hosea, God announced:

Jeremiah 9:23-24

²³ This is what the LORD says: “Let not the wise man boast of his wisdom or the strong man boast of his strength or the rich man boast of his riches, ²⁴but let him who boasts boast about this: that he understands and knows me, that I am the LORD, who exercises kindness, justice and righteousness on earth, for in these I delight,” declares the LORD.

Hosea 6:6

⁶ For I desire mercy, not sacrifice, and acknowledgment of God rather than burnt offerings.

Head knowledge must become heart knowledge

A person can know all about God but not truly know Him in a true and intimate way. Facts about God do not always lead to faith in God. The religious leaders in Jesus’ time knew many facts about God but they were far from Him. They possessed head knowledge but lacked heart knowledge. Heart knowledge comes from experiencing God through a relationship with Him. Job was a very devout man but after suffering great personal losses he came to realize that his knowledge of God was lacking. He knew all about God but lacked heart knowledge.



SEARCH THE WORD

Turn to *Job 42:1-6* and answer the following questions:

- What head knowledge did Job have about God?
- What did God ask Job? Why do you think He asked that question?
- What does verse 5 say that Job learned about heart knowledge? What was his response to heart knowledge about God?

Job came to a completely new understanding of God through a severe time of testing by Satan. God used this experience to shape Job’s heart. Job was transformed because he came to know God in his heart as well as his head. He repented and even prayed for his friends who had criticized him when he suffered (*Job 42:10*).

God reveals Himself to us through His mighty acts

God reveals to us who He is not only in Scripture but also in mighty acts that He does for us and around us. God wanted the Israelites to open up their eyes and see His mighty acts so that they would believe that “...I am the Lord your God...”

Exodus 6:6-7

⁶ “Therefore, say to the Israelites: ‘I am the LORD, and I will bring you out from under the yoke of the Egyptians. I will free you from being slaves to them, and I will redeem you with an outstretched arm and with mighty acts of judgment.’ ⁷ I will take you as my own people, and I will be your God. Then you will know that I am the LORD your God, who brought you out from under the yoke of the Egyptians.

God is continually at work around us, in us and through us. To know God is to be aware of His mighty acts that He does every day.

FROM CREATION TO NEW CREATION

The doctrine of God starts with creation

The doctrine of God began when He created the heavens and the earth by the word of His mouth. In the first verse of the Bible the Lord began to reveal Himself. He began by revealing His sovereign power in creation.

Genesis 1:1

¹ *In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth.*

Through creation God gives indisputable evidence of who He is. Creation levels the playing field for everyone. It is plain for everyone to see the basic nature of God through what He has created. Paul says because of creation man is “...without excuse.”

Romans 1:19-20

¹⁹ *since what may be known about God is plain to them, because God has made it plain to them.* ²⁰ *For since the creation of the world God’s invisible qualities—his eternal power and divine nature—have been clearly seen, being understood from what has been made, so that men are without excuse.*

The doctrine of God ends with a new creation

The doctrine of God is the story of life, death, and new life. God created man and woman in His image. They rebelled and experienced spiritual and physical death. They became separated from God because of their sin but God provided a way back through the sacrificial death of His Son. People could be reconciled to God and given a new life by grace through faith in Jesus. At that point they became new creations with a new life.



SEARCH THE WORD

Read 2 Corinthians 5:17-18 and answer the questions that follow:

- What does it mean to be a “new creation”? What old things are gone and what is new?

- How has all this been made possible through Christ?

God’s character transforms our character

Because we are a new creation in Christ, God transforms our character. There is an instant transformation as we are born again and receive the righteousness of Christ (2 Cor. 5:21). There is also a progressive transformation as God transforms our character through the renewing of our minds. This happens as we grow to know God more intimately (Romans 12:1-2). We begin to see God with “...unveiled faces...” Paul explains,

2 Corinthians 3:18

¹⁸ And we, who with unveiled faces all reflect the Lord’s glory, are being transformed into his likeness with ever-increasing glory, which comes from the Lord, who is the Spirit.

Paul refers to Moses who put a veil over his face so the people could not see the fading glory that was still on His face after being with God. The people were not yet ready to see the full nature of God. They could only see Him as through a veil because Jesus had not yet come to earth to reveal the full nature of the godhead. In the Old Covenant (old agreement) people could not see the fullness of God. It was only when the veil was removed by Christ that the full glory of God was revealed.

When the veil was removed through Christ’s death and resurrection it made it possible for us to have “...unveiled faces...” and see the full glory of God. We are now able to see all of His attributes. By seeing and experiencing God’s character, the likeness of His character is reflected on us. We begin the process of being transformed into His likeness. As you begin this week’s study of the Doctrine of God remember that you are not just learning head knowledge about God. You are learning heart knowledge that will transform your life.

DO! “Watch your life and doctrine closely. Persevere in them...”

- What is the most important point that you learned about the doctrine of God of today? How will this point shape your thoughts and actions?



WEEK 3 MEMORY ASSIGNMENTS AND REVIEW

Key Scripture

Following is the key Scripture to learn during this week's study. Memorize and meditate on this Scripture and answer the questions that follow. Memorize the Doctrinal Covenant.

- Memorize and meditate on *Isaiah 40:25-26* and write it in the following space:

- Memorize the Doctrinal Covenant.

Lord, I acknowledge that you are the s _____, o _____,
o _____ o _____ holy, creator and s _____ of the
universe. Therefore I will praise, trust, and obey you in all things. Review previous memory projects
from your index file.

PRAYER

Spend time in prayer using the five components of the Lord's Prayer.

DAY 2: GOD IS OMNIPOTENT

God is all-powerful over His creation

Jeremiah 32:17 (NIV)

¹⁷ “Ah, Sovereign LORD, you have made the heavens and the earth by your great power and outstretched arm. Nothing is too hard for you.

Isaiah 40:10 (NIV)

¹⁰ See, the Sovereign LORD comes with power, and his arm rules for him. See, his reward is with him, and his recompense accompanies him.

The Bible begins by introducing God as the all-powerful sovereign creator and sustainer of the universe. A sovereign God who created the universe with His “...great power and outstretched arm...” will certainly rule what He has created. Any study of God must start with His Omnipotence. *Omni* means “all” and *potence* means “power”. Therefore we have an all-powerful God who has the power and authority to effect whatever He wills.

To say that God is sovereign is to say that He has supreme power, rank, and authority over all else. This has huge implications for mankind. If a person is not anchored in the belief of a sovereign, all-powerful creator and sustainer of the universe, life becomes random and out of control. Therefore man believes that he must control people, events and even his own destiny. For those of us who have “been there and done that” we say “good luck.” We all need to be firmly anchored in the sovereignty of God.



SEARCH THE WORD

Read *Psalms 33:6-9* and answer the following questions:

- What does this passage say about God’s omnipotence in creation?
- What is the people’s response to be to God’s omnipotence in creation?
- How does this passage say God created the universe?

God is omnipotent even over “global warming”!

Evidence that most people do not clearly understand the sovereign omnipotence of God is the current obsession with global warming. This is a belief that the earth is warming and if we do not do something drastic to stop the phenomenon we will face catastrophic consequences. Billions of dollars must be spent before it is too late. In all the discussions I have heard or read about global warming I have never heard the sovereign power of God over His creation even alluded to. It would seem that only man is in control of what happens to the earth. Let’s look at what God has to say about His power over creation:

- ❖ The heavens and the earth are winding down according to the sovereign will of God.

Romans 8:20-22

²⁰ For the creation was subjected to frustration, not by its own choice, but by the will of the one who subjected it, in hope ²¹ that the creation itself will be liberated from its bondage to decay and brought into the glorious freedom of the children of God. ²² We know that the whole creation has been groaning as in the pains of childbirth right up to the present time.

The earth is wearing out in keeping with God’s sovereign plan. It is subject to God’s will and will last until He gives us a new heaven and a new earth. Every sign of decay, including any global warming, is a sign that the end is drawing near. God will liberate the earth and its people from decay at exactly the right moment, no sooner, no later.

It is God’s plan that creation is wearing down so we have no need to panic. It is God’s choice to let the earth decay and therefore He has a better long term plan. A common sense approach to any global warming that might be taking place is to take reasonable measures to correct man made contributions to any possible decay and then trust God for the ultimate fate of His earth.

God is all-powerful over all nations

Because God is the creator of all and owner of all He is also the ruler of all. There is nothing that is outside of the “*Lord Almighty’s*” rule. When we acknowledge that God is sovereign we acknowledge that nothing happens in heaven or on earth without His initiative or approval (*Psalms 33:10-11*). There is no ruler in power who is there except by God’s permission (*Daniel 2:20-21*)



SEARCH THE WORD

You have already studied *Psalms 33:6-9*. Now I want you to continue by studying *Psalms 33:10-11*.

- How does God foil the plans of the nations? Can you think of any examples?

- What evidence can you think of that “...the plans of the Lord stand firm forever, the purposes of his heart through all generations?”

- How can this Scripture shape how we look at world events?

Governments only think they are in control. Then a disaster comes along that shakes the foundations of that nation. People begin to realize that there are many things that they cannot control. God controls everything by His great power and outstretched hand. He has purposes and plans for the nations that cannot be thwarted. When Daniel was held captive in Babylon he was able to experience God's sovereign power over that nation many times. Listen to how he is in awe of God's omnipotence:

Daniel 2:20-22

²⁰ "Praise be to the name of God for ever and ever; wisdom and power are his. ²¹He changes times and seasons; he sets up kings and deposes them. He gives wisdom to the wise and knowledge to the discerning.

Because of the sovereignty of God we can trust that God is doing His will on earth and no ruler, war, natural disaster or any other event will ever thwart His perfect will.

God is all-powerful over all people

No nation or person can challenge the sovereign power of God and get away with it for long. Nebuchadnezzar, king of Babylon, found that out the hard way when He challenged the sovereignty of God. Even though He was not a true believer in the God of Israel he paid dearly for denying the sovereignty of God. Listen to how he exalts himself:

Daniel 4:30

³⁰ he said, "Is not this the great Babylon I have built as the royal residence, by my mighty power and for the glory of my majesty?"

Because he challenged the sovereignty of God, God caused Nebuchadnezzar to become insane and lose his throne and live like a wild animal until he repented. His sanity was not restored until he acknowledged that God was sovereign. Listen to how he changed his tune after being humbled by God.

Daniel 4:34-35 (NIV)

³⁴ At the end of that time, I, Nebuchadnezzar, raised my eyes toward heaven, and my sanity was restored. Then I praised the Most High; I honored and glorified him who lives forever. His dominion is an eternal dominion; his kingdom endures from generation to generation. ³⁵ All the peoples of the earth are regarded as nothing. He does as he pleases with the powers of heaven and the peoples of the earth. No one can hold back his hand or say to him: "What have you done?"

Our all-powerful God shapes our lives for His purposes and plans

The sovereignty of God is not limited to the world. His great power and rule extends to us. He has a specific purpose and plan for our lives. What God purposes for us He accomplishes by His great power. Search the Word and discover what Paul has to say about this subject.



SEARCH THE WORD

Read 2 *Thessalonians* 1:11-12 and answer the following questions:

- What is it that Paul prays the people will be worthy of? What does this mean?
- What does this passage say about the power to accomplish God's purposes?
- What is the primary purpose of this prayer?

The Apostle Paul constantly prayed that believers would fulfill God's purposes for their lives by His great power. The ultimate goal was that God would be glorified. God's power in our lives is never for our glory but always for His glory. He is glorified when His power is released in concert with our faith and His purposes are accomplished.

We are God's masterpiece

God shapes us in His image and designs ministry assignments that fit our shape perfectly. These are the works that He planned from the beginning of time for us to accomplish for Him.

Ephesians 2:10

¹⁰ For we are God's workmanship, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do.

Think of the wonder of God's all-powerful work in our lives. He personally designs us to accomplish His purposes and plans. We are God's "workmanship". We are His masterpiece. From the beginning of time God has shaped and reshaped His people to accomplish His purposes.

God is the Potter and we are the pots

The analogy of God as the potter shaping His people can be found in the books of Isaiah and Jeremiah. The prophet Isaiah warned,

Isaiah 29:15-16

¹⁵ Woe to those who go to great depths to hide their plans from the LORD, who do their work in darkness and think, "Who sees us? Who will know?" ¹⁵ You turn things upside down, as if the potter were thought to be like the clay! Shall what is formed say to him who formed it, "He did not make me"? Can the pot say of the potter, "He knows nothing"?

It is our responsibility as the pot to acknowledge the sovereign work of the all-powerful Lord of our lives. We hide our plans from the Lord when we do not acknowledge or we minimize His sovereign rule in our lives. We hide our plans from the Lord when we take credit for our own accomplishments. We will never be able to accomplish God's purpose and plans for our lives unless we allow the Potter's hand to shape us as He sees best (*Jeremiah 18:4*). God has great plans when we seek Him with all of our hearts. God's says,

Jeremiah 29:11-13

¹¹ For I know the plans I have for you," declares the LORD, "plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future. ¹² Then you will call upon me and come and pray to me, and I will listen to you. ¹³ You will seek me and find me when you seek me with all your heart.

Other related Scriptures: (*Psalms 102:25-27; Psalm 103:19; Isaiah 40; Daniel 2:20-21; Ezek. 1:26; Rev. 3:21, 4:2; Psalm 93:1-5; 1 Kings 22:19; Isaiah 6:1; Heb. 12:2; Psalm 47; Exod. 15:18; Matt 10:29-31; Job 40:42*)

DO! "Watch your life and doctrine closely. Persevere in them..."

- What is the most important point that you learned about the omnipotence of God today? How will this point shape how you think and act?



WEEK 3 MEMORY ASSIGNMENTS AND REVIEW

Key Scripture

Following is the key Scripture to learn during this week's study. Memorize and meditate on this Scripture. Memorize the Doctrinal Covenant.

- Memorize and meditate on *Isaiah 40:25-26* and write it in the following space:

Lord, I acknowledge that You are the s _____, o _____,
o _____ o _____ holy, creator and s _____ of the
universe. Therefore I will praise, trust, and obey You in all things.

- Review previous memory projects from your index file.

PRAYER

Spend time in prayer using the five components of the Lord's Prayer.

DAY 3: GOD IS OMNISCIENT

God's omnipotence and omniscience are inseparable

The omnipotence of God and the omniscience of God are inseparable because God's omnipotence assumes that He has the knowledge to do all things. The Psalmist says,

Psalm 147:5

⁵ Great is our Lord and mighty in power; his understanding has no limit.

It is God's unlimited understanding that enables Him to use His unlimited power to create and sustain the universe perfectly. God has infinite wisdom that needs no outside counsel of any kind. It stands alone. Because God is the sovereign creator of the universe He knows everything about all He has created. There is no true wisdom or knowledge that does not have its source in Him. God knows everything that has happened in the past, everything that is happening in the present and everything that will happen in the future. In the book *All the Doctrines of the Bible*, the omniscience of God is described as follows:

This glorious attribute implies infinity in knowledge. Omni, 'all': science, knowledge. God has intuitive, simultaneous, infallible perceptions of Himself, and all other beings and events. Past present and future are as an open scroll to Him, and His all-knowledge is not the result of reasoning, as with man, but is intuitive, perfect and eternal. He sees and knows everything. (All the Doctrines of the Bible, Herbert Lockyer, pp. 29)

Because God is all-powerful and is all-knowing He controls all. Since God has foreknowledge of every moment and every event He is in ultimate control. Nothing happens in heaven and earth without His initiative or approval.

God is the source of all wisdom

From the beginning to the end the Bible describes God as omniscient. He is the essence of all wisdom and knowledge. Wisdom begins with the "fear" of the Lord.

Psalm 111:10 (NIV)

¹⁰ The fear of the LORD is the beginning of wisdom; all who follow his precepts have good understanding. To him belongs eternal praise.



SEARCH THE WORD

Read *Psalm 111:10* and answer the following questions:

- What is "The fear of the LORD" that is the beginning of all wisdom?

- Why is this kind of "fear" essential for following the precepts of God and gaining wisdom?

The “*fear of God*”, as it is used here and other places in the Bible, is a conventional phrase denoting a reverential trust in God and a commitment to His commands. Wisdom starts with the reverential trust and assumes that a person who is in awe of God and His Word will want to know and live by it.

The omniscience of God is unfathomable

Because God is omniscient His wisdom is unfathomable. Our finite minds cannot understand God’s infinite eternal wisdom. Paul makes this clear in his letter to the Christians in Rome:

Romans 11:33-36 (NIV)

³³ *Oh, the depth of the riches of the wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable his judgments, and his paths beyond tracing out!* ³⁴ *“Who has known the mind of the Lord? Or who has been his counselor?”* ³⁵ *“Who has ever given to God, that God should repay him?”* ³⁶ *For from him and through him and to him are all things. To him be the glory forever! Amen.*

Scripture clearly informs us that God’s wisdom is beyond our comprehension. It is “*unsearchable*” because it is infinite and eternal. Our minds simply cannot go there. “*Who has known the mind of the Lord?*” The answer is “no one.”

Isaiah 40:28

²⁸ *Do you not know? Have you not heard? The LORD is the everlasting God, the Creator of the ends of the earth. He will not grow tired or weary, and his understanding no one can fathom.*

Man is tempted to rely on his own wisdom

God expects us to accept that His understanding is unfathomable. Man’s tendency to be proud and self-centered tempts him to want to be as wise as God. In the Garden of Eden Satan first tempted Adam and Eve to eat fruit from the forbidden tree of good and evil so they could have knowledge which belonged only to God. When Eve told the serpent that God had commanded not to eat the fruit from the tree Satan answered,

Genesis 3:4-5

⁴ *“You will not surely die,” the serpent said to the woman.* ⁵ *“For God knows that when you eat of it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil.”*

Adam and Eve ate of the fruit of that tree and as a result sin and death entered God’s perfect environment. From that point the sin of man’s pride to rely on his own wisdom rather than God’s omniscience has caused all kinds of trouble.

Throughout the Bible we are warned not to rely on our own wisdom. God warned Israel,

Isaiah 29:14

¹⁴ *Therefore once more I will astound these people with wonder upon wonder; the wisdom of the wise will perish, the intelligence of the intelligent will vanish.”*

God’s wisdom always prevails. In the end man’s wisdom and intelligence become impotent and useless.

In the great chapter on the sovereignty and omniscience of God the prophet Isaiah questions,

Isaiah 40:13-14

¹³ Who has understood the mind of the LORD, or instructed him as his counselor? ¹⁴ Whom did the LORD consult to enlighten him, and who taught him the right way? Who was it that taught him knowledge or showed him the path of understanding?

True wisdom requires trust and humility on our part. Just as we are to trust in the omnipotence of God we are to trust in the omniscience of God. It is not necessary for us to completely understand the mind of God to trust that He knows all and controls all. In humility we are simply to acknowledge that God is all-knowing, trust in His infinite wisdom and power and do what He asks us to do.

GOD'S KNOWS EVERYTHING ABOUT US: PAST, PRESENT AND FUTURE

God's omniscience includes knowing everything about us. In His infinite wisdom nothing about our past, present or future is unknown to God.

God knows our past

God has known everything about us even before we were conceived. God said to the prophet Jeremiah,

Jeremiah 1:4-5

⁴ The word of the LORD came to me, saying, ⁵ "Before I formed you in the womb I knew you, before you were born I set you apart; I appointed you as a prophet to the nations."

How can God know everything about us before we are even conceived? He has always known us intimately. How can He know our past, present and future before we are born? I have no idea other than God is God. He is omniscient.

God knows our present

God not only knows our past--everything about us before we were conceived and everything since we were born--He also knows our present. What we will do in the moment.



SEARCH THE WORD

Read *Psalms 139:1-6* in your bible and answer the questions that follow:

- Underline the words or phrases in your Bible that indicate how God knows everything about your "present."
- What specific things does this passage say God knows about our "present"? What words show that He is actively involved in knowing us?

- What does the Psalmist say about the omniscience of God in verse 6? How does this help us accept the mystery of the omniscience of God?
- What does this passage say to you about God's intimate knowledge of your life?

God knows what we are going to do the moment we sit, rise, go out and lay down. That pretty well includes everything we do. God is not passively aware of our present but actively involved in "searching" and "knowing" us. He "perceives" our thoughts and is "familiar with all of my ways". The Psalmist accepts the omniscience of God by faith. He admits that such great knowledge is beyond his ability to comprehend and certainly impossibly for him to "attain."

God knows our future

How can God know what I am going to do years before I do it? Again it is impossible for our finite minds to understand the infinite mind of an eternal, sovereign God who has always been and will always be. Still the Psalmist accepts by faith that God not only knows everything about his past and present but also the exact details of His future. He says,

Psalm 139:16 (NIV)

¹⁶ your eyes saw my unformed body. All the days ordained for me were written in your book before one of them came to be.

God knew everything about us before we were conceived including the day we would pass on from this world into eternity. Nothing about us catches God by surprise. God was intimately involved in our conception and birth. (*Psalm 139:13-14*). He knows every thought and word before we think and speak it (*Psalm 139:3*). God even knows the day hour and minute we will die (*Psalm 139:16*). We can be confident that God will use this knowledge to always do what is best for us.

Because God is omnipotent and omniscient

As we have seen, God's knowledge is linked to His sovereignty. God knows all because He created all, sustains all, and at this moment everything functions according to His eternal plan. In the following passage God gives a powerful example of how His omnipotence and omniscience work perfectly together.

Isaiah 46:9-11 (NIV)

⁹ Remember the former things, those of long ago; I am God, and there is no other; I am God, and there is none like me. ¹⁰ I make known the end from the beginning, from ancient times, what is still to come. I say: My purpose will stand, and I will do all that I please. ¹¹ From the east I summon a bird of prey; from a far-off land, a man to fulfill my purpose. What I have said, that will I bring about; what I have planned, that will I do.

God is speaking to His people Israel. The omniscient God is reminding His people that He is the source of all knowledge, past, present, and future: He says, "I make known the end from the beginning, from ancient times,

what is still to come..." (Isaiah 46:10). He then connects His omniscience to His sovereignty when He says, "...my purpose will stand and I will do all that I please" (Isaiah 46:10).

God then gives an example of His omniscience and omnipotence through a prophecy. There will come a day when Israel will be taken captive in Babylon. After living in slavery for seventy years God will use a heathen king to do His will. God promises, "From the east I summon a bird of prey; from a far-off land, a man to fulfill my purpose. What I have said, that will I bring about; what I have planned, that will I do" (Isaiah 46:11). The "...bird of prey..." from a far off land refers to Cyrus, king of Persia. God will use this king to defeat the Babylonians. King Cyrus will do God's will by freeing the Israelites and returning them to their homeland. He even authorizes them to rebuild the temple in Jerusalem.

FALSE TEACHING ALERT!

There is a trend in some Christian circles today of teaching a false teaching referred to as "Open Theology." This false doctrine denies the omniscience and omnipotence of God. It believes that God cannot know in advance the future choices we will make. And if God cannot know in advance everything that will happen, there are certain things that are out of His control. This teaching is clearly unbiblical and undermines the nature of God. As you can see the Scriptures we have looked at already clearly refute this view.

The Psalmist says,

Psalm 147:5 (NIV)

⁵ Great is our Lord and mighty in power; his understanding has no limit.

It is dangerous to alter any belief about God's nature because we do not understand it fully. But that is exactly what Open Theism does. Because it is difficult to comprehend how God could know future events and decisions that have not happened, they devise a humanistic way of understanding it.

Even though God acknowledges that we can never fully fathom His infinite knowledge He expects us to accept it based on what He has revealed about His nature. He explains,

Isaiah 40:23-28

²⁵ "To whom will you compare me? Or who is my equal?" says the Holy One. ²⁶ Lift your eyes and look to the heavens: Who created all these? He who brings out the starry host one by one, and calls them each by name. Because of his great power and mighty strength, not one of them is missing. ²⁷ Why do you say, O Jacob, and complain, O Israel, "My way is hidden from the LORD; my cause is disregarded by my God"? ²⁸ Do you not know? Have you not heard? The LORD is the everlasting God, the Creator of the ends of the earth. He will not grow tired or weary, and his understanding no one can fathom.

God has revealed His omniscience in countless ways. We simply need to trust that the God who created the universe is who He says He is.

DO! "Watch your life and doctrine closely. Persevere in them..."

- What is the most important point that you learned about the omniscience of God today? How will this point shape your thoughts and actions?

Other related Scriptures: *Job 11:7, 8; 37:16; Psalm 147:5; John 3:20; Proverbs 5:21; Matt. 10:21; Exodus 3:19; Daniel 2, 8; Acts 15:18; 1 Corinthians 1:18-21*



WEEK 3 MEMORY ASSIGNMENTS AND REVIEW

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Following is the key Scripture to learn during this week's study. Memorize and meditate on this Scripture. Memorize the Doctrinal Covenant.

- Memorize and meditate on *Isaiah 40:25-26* and write it in the following space:

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universe. Therefore I will praise, trust, and obey You in all things.

- Review previous memory projects from your index file.

PRAYER

Spend time in prayer using the five components of the Lord's Prayer.

DAY 4: GOD IS OMNIPRESENT

God is present at all places at all times

Omnipresent means that God is present universally and simultaneously in every part of His creation. He is able to assert His power everywhere, simultaneously every moment. God said of Himself,

Jeremiah 23:23-24 (NIV)

²³ "Am I only a God nearby," declares the LORD, "and not a God far away?" ²⁴ "Can anyone hide in secret places so that I cannot see him?" declares the LORD. "Do not I fill heaven and earth?" declares the LORD.

God is present at all times in all places for He has no physical limitations. Since God is pure Spirit He is not bound by time and space as we are. He is transcendent above all of our earthly limitations. God is active everywhere and has full knowledge of everything that is happening. God not only fills heaven and earth but at the same time is not far away from us. He is a God that is "nearby" or present at every moment (*Jeremiah 23:23-24*).



SEARCH THE WORD

You now will have the opportunity to study one of the great passages on the nature of God. Read *Psalms 139:1-18* and answer the following questions:

- What different attributes of God do you find in this passage? (List the attributes and the verse in which they are found)
- In what ways do these attributes perfectly complement one another? How can one not exist without the other?
- What does this passage say about the omnipresence of God?

The attributes of God work together in perfect unity

I am sure you noticed how perfectly the first three attributes of God are grouped together in Psalm 139. In *verses 1-6* David focuses on the omniscience of God. God knows Him intimately, perceiving his thoughts from afar, being familiar with all his ways, and even knowing what he is going to say before he says it. In *verses 7-12* the omnipresence of God is introduced. David understands that God's Spirit is with Him at all times and in all places. There is no where he can escape. He says, "Where can I go from you Spirit? Where can I

flee from your presence?" (v. 7). Notice that God is omnipresent In order to "guide" and "hold" him fast (v. 10). God uses His omniscience and His omnipresence for the Psalmist's good.

The omnipotence of God is revealed in verses in *verses 13-19*. It is this attribute that overwhelms David. He acknowledges that an all-powerful, sovereign God put him together in his mother's womb. It was God who knew him before his mother gave birth. He was the masterpiece of the creator God's creation.

God is present with us at all times

God the Father, God the Son and God the Holy Spirit are omnipresent together. There is nowhere that the Spirit of God is not with us (*Psalm 139:7-8*). This is the mystery of the Trinity. God the Father is revealed in Scripture as specially manifested in heaven (*1 Kings 8:30; Rev. 21:2*). God the Son has been specially manifested on earth and is at the right hand of God in heaven (*Eph. 1:20*). God the Holy Spirit is present with us always and is manifested everywhere. To put it simply God has it all covered. God is present at all times to give us His undivided attention. He is not a distracted parent or too busy to be there for us at all times. Here are a few of the ways He is always with us:

Present with us to comfort us

There is great comfort in knowing that our heavenly Father is present with us always. I remember as a child my greatest fear was that something would happen to my parents and I would be left alone. I well remember the panic I would sometimes experience when I would come home and find no one there. The fact that our heavenly Father promises to never leave us or forsake us and has the power to be always with us gives us peace. Everything is under His supervision and control.

When the Israelites were preparing to wage war so that they could occupy the Promised Land, Moses said to Joshua,

Deuteronomy 31:8

⁸ The LORD himself goes before you and will be with you; he will never leave you nor forsake you. Do not be afraid; do not be discouraged."

God uses His omnipresence in our lives so that we will feel secure. Throughout the Bible God is pictured as always being present with His people to comfort and guide them. Joshua and the Israelites faced a daunting and fearsome task in their conquest of the Promised Land. They were able to proceed with confidence because God promised He would be omnipresent with them. He would go "*before*" them and be "*with*" them. He would never "*leave*" or "*forsake*" them. The following Scripture was quoted by the writer of the book of Hebrews to give comfort to believers who faced great persecution.

Hebrews 13:5b-6

^{5b} "God has said, "Never will I leave you; never will I forsake you." ⁶ So we say with confidence, "The Lord is my helper; I will not be afraid. What can man do to me?"

When Jesus left earth He left us without His physical presence and instead gave the Spirit of His presence to be with us always. Jesus told His disciples that the presence of the Holy Spirit would be their "*Comforter*."

John 14:15-17

¹⁵ "If you love me, you will obey what I command. ¹⁶ And I will ask the Father, and he will give you another Counselor to be with you forever — ¹⁷ the Spirit of truth. The world cannot accept him, because it neither sees him nor knows him. But you know him, for he lives with you and will be in you.

What a tremendous promise. God promises His presence through the "Comforter" to be "in" us and be "with" us "forever." That pretty well sums up the comfort of His presence. What more could we want?

Present with us to guide us

God is present to guide us. This is an important part of security and protection. David knew that God was always present with Him to hold him fast and guide Him. He said,

Psalms 139:9-10 (NIV)

⁹ If I rise on the wings of the dawn, if I settle on the far side of the sea, ¹⁰ even there your hand will guide me, your right hand will hold me fast.

In the Bible God is often pictured as our Shepherd. This had a deep and powerful meaning to the people in ancient Israel. They would have understood how this analogy pointed to the omnipresence of God. Sheep were a main source of income for the people. Their lives depended on the safety and health of the sheep. It was a shepherd's task to always be present with the sheep, watching, protecting and guiding them into safe and green pastures. The shepherds even slept on the ground close to the sheep so they could keep an eye on them, protecting them from predators during the night. I want you to spend some time pondering one of the most well-known and quoted chapters of the Bible.



SEARCH THE WORD

The 23rd Psalm has been a source of assurance of God's omnipresence throughout the generations. Read this Psalm and answer the questions that follow:

- What specific verses in the 23rd Psalm indicates the omnipresence of God? What different things do they say about His presence?
- What one thing impresses you most about this Psalm?
- What does Scripture mean when it says that the Shepherd "...guides me in paths of righteousness for his name's sake"?

I'm sure you were impressed about how much this Psalm has to say about the omnipresence of God as our Shepherd. He meets all of our needs so that we are never in want. He is there to continually restore our soul, renewing our minds, will and emotions. He leads us and guides us in "paths of righteousness." This

denoted prosperity but also could have had a double meaning. It could also refer to the moral path on which God guides His people so that they will bring glory to His name.

Present with us to protect us

The 23rd Psalm closes with the promise that the Lord as our Shepherd is always present to protect us. Even when we face “...the valley of the shadow of death” we do not have to fear evil for God is with us. *Psalms 121* says,

Psalm 121:1-4 (NIV)

¹ I lift up my eyes to the hills— where does my help come from? ² My help comes from the LORD, the Maker of heaven and earth. ³ He will not let your foot slip— he who watches over you will not slumber; ⁴ indeed, he who watches over Israel will neither slumber nor sleep.

The Lord watches us because He is a loving Father who wants to protect His children. The Maker of heaven and earth “...watches over you and will not slumber; (*Psalm 121:3*) He is there to protect you. He is also there to guide you so you will always be where He wants you to be. This does not mean that nothing will ever happen to us. This would be inconsistent with other Scriptures that show God’s people suffering. What it does mean is that our sovereign God is ever present and nothing will ever happen to us that is out of God’s control. Remember that nothing happens in heaven or on earth without God’s initiative or permission. Therefore if He permits harm to come to us He has something better than our safety in mind. What God allows to happen will always work out for our good and His glory (*Romans 8:15-17, 28; James 1:2-4*).

Nothing escapes God’s vision in heaven and on earth

Omnipresence means that God sees everything at all times. Nothing escapes His vision. Proverbs says,

Proverbs 15:3 (NIV)

³ The eyes of the LORD are everywhere, keeping watch on the wicked and the good.

God keeps an eye on His universe and us 24/7. If this was about the government there would be great suspicion and an outcry about “big brother” spying on us to use the information against us. Not so with God. God is not a “spy in the sky” just waiting to catch us in a sin. God is not “big brother” spying on us but a loving Father keeping His watchful eye on His children. He is always there for our good to accomplish His purposes for our lives. His watchful eye should cause us to feel secure and at the same time accountable to do His will. God’s omnipresence should give us great peace knowing that He is there, watching over us in all circumstances. The Psalmists says,

Psalm 33:13-15, 18

¹³ From heaven the LORD looks down and sees all mankind; ¹⁴ from his dwelling place he watches all who live on earth — ¹⁵he who forms the hearts of all, who considers everything they do...¹⁸But the eyes of the LORD are on those who fear him, on those whose hope is in his unfailing love,

Joy in his presence

We end today’s study of the omnipresence of God with this encouragement from the Psalms:

Psalm 16:8-11

⁸ I have set the LORD always before me. Because he is at my right hand, I will not be shaken. ⁹ Therefore my heart is glad and my tongue rejoices; my body also will rest secure, ¹⁰ because you will

not abandon me to the grave, nor will you let your Holy One see decay. ¹¹You have made known to me the path of life; you will fill me with joy in your presence, with eternal pleasures at your right hand.

There are two important things to notice here. While we are assured that God is always with us, we must “set” Him before us. This means that we have a responsibility to be constantly aware of and acknowledge His presence in our lives. When we do this there is “joy” in His presence and “eternal pleasures” at His right hand. The Lord’s presence in our life should bring us immeasurable joy. We are to praise Him for His presence and enjoy His presence.

- ❖ Take time to praise God right now for His presence in your life. Experience the joy of His presence as you reflect on His promises.

DO! “Watch your life and doctrine closely. Persevere in them...”

- What is the most important point that you learned about the omnipresence of God today? How will this point shape your thinking and actions?

Related Scriptures: *Acts 17:24-28; Ephesians 4:8; Psalm 18:1,2; 46:1; Matt. 10:29-30; Hebrews 3:5-6; Matt. 28:18-20; Job 26:2,12-14; Jonah 2:2*



WEEK 3 MEMORY ASSIGNMENTS AND REVIEW

Key scripture

Following is the key Scripture to learn during this week’s study. Memorize and meditate on this Scripture. Memorize the doctrinal covenant.

- Memorize and meditate on *Isaiah 40:25-26* and write it in the following space:
- Memorize the Doctrinal Covenant.

Lord, I acknowledge that You are the s _____, o _____,
o _____ o _____ holy, creator and s _____ of the
universe. Therefore I will praise, trust, and obey You in all things.

- Review previous memory projects from your index file.

PRAYER

Spend time in prayer using the five components of the Lord’s Prayer.

DAY 5: GOD IS HOLY

HOLINESS: THE ATTRIBUTE OF ALL ATTRIBUTES

The holiness of God occupies first place in the Bible. It is the attribute of attribute of attributes. Every other attribute is part of God's holiness. It is the preeminent message of the Old Testament and dominates the New Testament. It was the major theme when Moses led Israel to the Promised Land. Moses and the people sang:

Exodus 15:11

¹¹“Who among the gods is like you, O LORD? Who is like you—majestic in holiness, awesome in glory, working wonders?”

It was His holiness that God wanted His people to remember about Him most. He knew that if they truly believed that He was holy, all else would follow. Worshiping His holiness would lead to obedience. It would prevent them from being led astray and worshiping the idols of other nations. Over thirty times the prophet Isaiah spoke of the holiness of Jehovah. Isaiah never would forget the dramatic way He was called to be a prophet. Imagine this scene:

Isaiah 6:1-4

¹ In the year that King Uzziah died, I saw the Lord seated on a throne, high and exalted, and the train of his robe filled the temple. ² Above him were seraphs, each with six wings: With two wings they covered their faces, with two they covered their feet, and with two they were flying. ³ And they were calling to one another: “Holy, holy, holy is the LORD Almighty; the whole earth is full of his glory.” ⁴ At the sound of their voices the doorposts and thresholds shook and the temple was filled with smoke.

God puts His holiness on display for Isaiah to see. We were not there in person but we can share in this experience because God has left this story for us to read. I include one of the greatest verses in the Bible describing the holiness of God:

Isaiah 6:3

³ “...Holy, holy, holy is the LORD Almighty; the whole earth is full of his glory.”

Throughout the Psalms the holiness of God is featured. His holiness is continually praised. The following Psalm is typical of the many Psalms that praise the holiness of God.

Psalms 96:7-9

⁷ Ascribe to the LORD, O families of nations, ascribe to the LORD glory and strength. ⁸ Ascribe to the LORD the glory due his name; bring an offering and come into his courts. ⁹ Worship the LORD in the splendor of his holiness; tremble before him, all the earth.

It is the attribute of holiness that best describes God and glorifies Him. If we understand the glory of God then we truly understand Him. We will have no problem living our life for a Holy God who is in complete control of the universe and loves us perfectly.

GOD IS HOLY - SET APART FROM ALL MANKIND

Holiness is the word that signifies everything about God that sets Him apart from us and everything else in His creation. The Lord makes it clear that He alone is holy, set apart and transcendent but at the same time present with us. God says of Himself,

Isaiah 57:15 (NIV)

¹⁵ For this is what the high and lofty One says— he who lives forever, whose name is holy: “I live in a high and holy place, but also with him who is contrite and lowly in spirit, to revive the spirit of the lowly and to revive the heart of the contrite.

God is set apart in the Trinity

- God the Father is referred to as “*the Holy One of Israel.*”

Isaiah 41:14

¹⁴ Do not be afraid, O worm Jacob, O little Israel, for I myself will help you,” declares the LORD, your Redeemer, the Holy One of Israel.

- God the Son is referred to as the “*Holy and Righteous One*”.

Acts 3:14

¹⁴ You disowned the Holy and Righteous One and asked that a murderer be released to you.

- God the Holy Spirit is referred to as the “*Holy Spirit of God*”.

Ephesians 4:30

³⁰ And do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, with whom you were sealed for the day of redemption.

GOD IS HOLY - PERFECT IN ALL HE SAYS AND DOES

God is free from all evil

Because God is Holy in His nature He is free from all evil. He cannot do wrong nor sin. He cannot act contrary to His nature. The book of Job says,

Job 34:10

¹⁰ “So listen to me, you men of understanding. Far be it from God to do evil, from the Almighty to do wrong.

Habakkuk 1:13a

¹³ Your eyes are too pure to look on evil you cannot tolerate wrong...

God cannot tolerate wrong nor can He do wrong. Because God is perfect He can do no wrong to us. He will always act in a way that is ultimately best for us. We can have complete trust in His purpose and plans for our lives. God will never act in a way that is harmful to us.

Manifestations of the holiness of God

God's holiness is manifested to us in four primary ways. He is wholly in His love, faithfulness, righteousness and justice. By this I mean that God is complete or perfect in each attribute. Notice how these attributes or manifestations are interrelated. There is perfect unity. Each one is connected to the other and forms the basis of relationship with God.

God is wholly loving



SEARCH THE WORD

Read *Psalm 33:5* and answer the questions that follow:

- In what way does this Scripture describe the characteristics of God's holy love?

- How are these characteristics interrelated?

We need to remember that the cross stands for God's holiness. Because He is holy He loves us perfectly. John says, "...*God is love...*" (*1 John 4:16*). This holy love of God was demonstrated when Jesus died on the cross for our sins (*1 John 4:9-10*). His love will always be "...*gracious and righteous...full of compassion*" (*Psalm 116:5*). God's essential nature is love and He always loves us perfectly. His love never fails. The book of Psalms often speaks of God's unending love.

God is wholly faithful



SEARCH THE WORD

Read *Lamentations 3: 21-23*

- What did Jeremiah recall that restored his hope?

- In what ways are God's love and faithfulness related?

When the Prophet Jeremiah was greatly distressed and ready to give up on life, he remembered God's faithfulness. His mind was renewed, his damaged emotions were healed and he had hope because of God's love and faithfulness. God's love and faithfulness are inseparable. Because He is holy and loving He will

always do what is most merciful and compassionate for us. Because He is holy and faithful He will always do what He has promised. If God were not faithful He would not be holy. The Psalmist says,

Psalm 117:2

² *For great is his love toward us, and the faithfulness of the LORD endures forever. Praise the LORD.*

Our hope comes from knowing that God is wholly faithful. There will never be a time that His love will fail us.

God is wholly righteous

The holy character of God manifests itself in His dealings with man. In His righteousness and justice in dealing with His children He demonstrates His holy character. God is righteous—always perfectly right—and therefore always does what is right. Notice that God’s righteousness is founded in His graciousness and compassion.

Psalm 116:5 (NIV)

⁵ *The LORD is gracious and righteous; our God is full of compassion.*

There is positional righteousness where God has imputed His righteousness onto us. We have been given the righteousness of Christ so that we are righteous in God’s sight. This never changes. It is our permanent position in Christ. Scripture says,

2 Corinthians 5:21

²¹ *God made him who had no sin to be sin for us, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God.*

There is practical righteousness. God asks us to be right with Him and others in our attitude and actions. We are not to take our position of righteousness for granted. We are to practice righteousness. John says,

1 John 3:7

⁷ *Dear children, do not let anyone lead you astray. He who does what is right is righteous, just as he is righteous.*

In the book of Jeremiah God declares:

Jeremiah 9:24

²⁴ *but let him who boasts boast about this: that he understands and knows me, that I am the LORD, who exercises kindness, justice and righteousness on earth, for in these I delight,” declares the LORD.*



REFLECT AND RESPOND

Reflect for a few moments on the righteousness of God. Think about how positional and practical righteousness fit together. Summarize these characteristics of righteousness and how they apply to you.

God is wholly just

Because He is holy loving and faithful He will always do what He has promised. Because God is holy, loving and faithful he will always do what is right. Because God is holy, loving, faithful and righteous, He is just. This is a judicial term which means that God judges us with Divine Justice. It is holy justice based on grace. In the Old Testament God said that He delighted in justice.

Jeremiah 9:24

24 but let him who boasts boast about this: that he understands and knows me, that I am the LORD, who exercises kindness, justice and righteousness on earth, for in these I delight," declares the LORD.

In the New Testament God's justice came to include grace. Under grace we are finally able to understand the justice of God. When Jesus died on the cross, through God's grace we received forgiveness of our sins and were pronounced "not guilty." We were justified by a just God and given a crown of righteousness. Paul says,

2 Timothy 4:8

8 Now there is in store for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, will award to me on that day—and not only to me, but also to all who have longed for his appearing.



REFLECT AND RESPOND

Write a few thoughts about your understanding of the holy justice of God.

We are to be holy as God is holy

We end today's study on the holiness of God on this note; we are to be holy as God is holy. Peter says,

1 Peter 1:13-16

13 Therefore, prepare your minds for action; be self-controlled; set your hope fully on the grace to be given you when Jesus Christ is revealed. 14 As obedient children, do not conform to the evil desires you had when you lived in ignorance. 15 But just as he who called you is holy, so be holy in all you do; 16 for it is written: "Be holy, because I am holy."

We are made holy by God. We have the position of holiness so we are "...holy and blameless in His sight." (Eph. 1:4) But there is also practical holiness. We are told to be holy in our actions as God is holy. We cannot be holy on our own strength. God gives us the power to grow in holiness but we are told to prepare our minds and actions. We are to grow in holiness as we mature in Christ.

We are to praise God for his holiness

We are to praise God for His holiness. We were created for God's glory. God says,

Isaiah 43:7

7 everyone who is called by my name, whom I created for my glory, whom I formed and made.

Our purpose on earth is to glorify God because He is holy. We were created to bring glory to God with our lips and with our lives. Every attribute of God should remind us of God's glory and cause us to praise Him. When the Psalmist saw the power and glory of God, his response was to glorify Him:

Psalm 63:2-4

² I have seen you in the sanctuary and beheld your power and your glory. ³ Because your love is better than life, my lips will glorify you. ⁴ I will praise you as long as I live, and in your name I will lift up my hands.

While we are to glorify God with our lips, we are also to glorify Him with our character. Our entire lives are to be an acceptable sacrifice to God.

DO! "Watch your life and doctrine closely. Persevere in them..."

- What is the most important point that you learned about the holiness of God in this passage? How will this point shape your thinking and actions?

Related Scriptures: *Isaiah 6:1-8; Leviticus 11:44, 45; Josh. 24:19; Isa. 2:2; Ps. 99:9; 2 Cor. 6:14-7:1; Heb. 12:10-17; Deut. 30:1-10; Eph. 4:17-5:14; 1 Pet. 1:13-22; Isaiah 57:15; Hab. 1:13; Job. 34:10; 1 Ch. 16:28, 29; Ps. 96*



WEEK 3 MEMORY ASSIGNMENTS AND REVIEW

Key scripture

Following is the key Scripture to learn during this week's study. Memorize and meditate on this Scripture. Memorize the Doctrinal Covenant.

- Memorize and meditate on *Isaiah 40:25-26* and write it in the following space:
- Memorize the Doctrinal Covenant.

Lord, I acknowledge that You are the s _____, o _____,
o _____ o _____ holy, creator and s _____ of the
universe. Therefore I will praise, trust, and obey You in all things.

- Review previous memory projects from your index file.

PRAYER

Spend time in prayer using the five components of the Lord's Prayer.



WEEK 3

WEEKLY ACCOUNTABILITY

"All you have to do from the time you get up in the morning until the time you go to bed at night is love the Lord with all your heart; trust His promises; obey His commands. Everything else flows from that." (Bill Bright)

Be ready to share the following with your group:

- **Love the Lord with all your heart**

In what ways did I or did I not demonstrate my love of God by seeking Him with all my heart?

In what ways did or did not God's love flow through me to others including spouse, family and others?

- **Trust God's promises**

To what degree did I or didn't I demonstrate complete trust in God's promises this week?

What was my greatest test of faith?

- **Obey God's commands**

Are there weaknesses or sins I need to confess?

Did I faithfully complete all assignments this week?

In what ways did I witness to the lost this week? (prayer, share, serve, encourage)

WEEK 4

THE DOCTRINE OF JESUS CHRIST

“The Bible from beginning to end proclaims that Jesus is the divine Son of God, co-equal with the Father and Holy Spirit in every way.”

This week we study the central doctrine of the Bible. God the Son—Jesus Christ—the second person of the trinity came to earth to reconcile us to the heavenly Father. The story of the Bible is how God created man in His own image, how man became separated from God through his rebellion and how God provided a way to be reconciled through Jesus Christ. Without the doctrine of Christ and the resurrection, Christianity would fall apart. But we have the divine record of how God our Savior came to earth, died for our sins and through His blood redeemed us. Enjoy the week!

WEEK 4 STUDY

DAY 1: INTRODUCTION TO THE DOCTRINE OF JESUS CHRIST

DAY 2: JESUS CHRIST WAS FULLY HUMAN

DAY 3: JESUS CHRIST WAS FULLY DIVINE

DAY 4: JESUS CHRIST CAME TO EARTH AS A SERVANT

DAY 5: THE WORK OF JESUS CHRIST

ASSIGNMENTS:

- **Memorize and meditate on 1 Cor. 15: 3-4**

1 Corinthians 15:3-4 (NIV)

³ For what I received I passed on to you as of first importance: that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, ⁴ that he was buried, that he was raised on the third day according to the Scriptures,

- **Memorize the Doctrinal Covenant**

I believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God, fully human, fully divine, died for my sins, that he was buried and raised on the third day according to Scriptures, ascended into heaven and is now at the right hand of God advocating for me.

- Complete all study and review assignments. Review memory work from past courses at least once a week.
- Prepare your memory/review index card. Write your memory verse for the week on one side and the Doctrinal Covenant on the other. Review all previous memory assignments each day.

DAY 1: INTRODUCTION TO THE DOCTRINE OF JESUS CHRIST

The distinctiveness of Christianity is Jesus Christ. If you take away Jesus Christ from the Christian religion it is stripped of that which makes it different from all other religions. Christianity is based on a triune God consisting of God the Father, God the Son and God the Holy Spirit. In God there is one perfect being consisting of three distinct persons each with different roles. The role of Jesus Christ as the Son of God was to come to earth in the form of a man and die on the cross for the sins of man.

By faith in the sacrificial death and resurrection of Jesus, man could be saved from spiritual and physical death. Through the blood of Jesus as the sacrificial lamb, man could be redeemed and reconciled to God. Through God's grace, man could receive total forgiveness and be assured of spending eternity with God in heaven. The New Testament teaching of Jesus focuses on His incarnation, sacrificial death, resurrection from the dead and the redemption of man from sin and death.

JESUS CHRIST THE CREATOR GOD

The story of Jesus Christ begins at creation when the Father, Son and Holy Spirit speak the world into existence out of nothing. The divine office of Creator God is ascribed to Jesus.

Jesus Christ created the universe

John 1:1-3

¹ In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. ² He was with God in the beginning. ³ Through him all things were made; without him nothing was made that has been made.

Jesus is referred to as "The Word". The Greek word used here is "Logos." The Jewish meaning behind the term is "that which comes from God to fulfill His purposes". Jesus was designated to be both creator and redeemer of the world. The Apostle Paul wrote:

Colossians 1:15-17

¹⁵ He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn over all creation. ¹⁶ For by him all things were created: things in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or powers or rulers or authorities; all things were created by him and for him. ¹⁷ He is before all things, and in him all things hold together.

Jesus Christ sustains the universe

God did not create the world and then abandon it. Jesus Christ's power sustains that which He created. It is controlled by Him and functions according to His sovereign plan. He holds everything together.



SEARCH THE WORD

Read *Hebrews 1:1-3* and answer the following questions:

- How did God communicate with man in the “*last days*”?
- According to this passage what role does Jesus Christ have in sustaining the universe?
- What does Scripture say about God being three persons, yet one?

JESUS CHRIST THE PROMISED MESSIAH

The Bible is the story of man’s sin and separation from God in the Garden of Eden and Gods’ offer of reconciliation through Jesus Christ. The promise of reconciliation was made by God in Genesis.

Genesis 3:15

¹⁵ And I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your offspring and hers; he will crush your head, and you will strike his heel.”

The alienation between man and God is symbolized by Satan in the form of a serpent who tempted Adam and Eve. God told the serpent that while He would strike the heel of man, it would not be a fatal blow. The promise is that the serpent’s head would be crushed and evil defeated when Jesus Christ bore the sins of the world on the cross. At the moment of His crucifixion the sinless, sacrificial lamb atoned for our sins. Whoever believes in Jesus Christ is reconciled to God and given eternal life. John summed up the promise in a single sentence:

John 3:16

¹⁶ “For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life.

The promise of Jesus Christ the Messiah was kept alive throughout the time of the Old Testament by hundreds of prophecies. God’s people looked forward to the coming Messiah but most did not recognize Him when He arrived. *Isaiah 53* is one of the clearest of all these prophecies.



SEARCH THE WORD

Look up *Isaiah 53: 1-7* and answer the following questions:

- What specific prophecies in this passage did Jesus fulfill?

- What New Testament Scriptures contain the fulfillment of these prophecies?

We can see Jesus clearly in this wonderful prophecy. It is foretold by Isaiah that Jesus would be pierced for our transgressions (*John 19:34*). By His wounds we would be healed (*1 Peter 2:24*). All of our sins would be laid on Him. The Bible records in great detail the prophecies of Jesus Christ and how they were fulfilled. Paul writes about these promises.

Romans 1:1-4

¹ Paul, a servant of Christ Jesus, called to be an apostle and set apart for the gospel of God — ² the gospel he promised beforehand through his prophets in the Holy Scriptures ³ regarding his Son, who as to his human nature was a descendant of David, ⁴ and who through the Spirit of holiness was declared with power to be the Son of God by his resurrection from the dead: Jesus Christ our Lord.

THE RESURRECTION OF JESUS

The proof of the claims that Jesus was the Messiah--the Son of God-- depended on His resurrection from the dead. If Jesus was not raised from the dead then the entire Christian faith falls apart and we are to be pitied for our naivety. Paul emphasized this when he wrote to the Christians in Corinth about resurrection from the dead.

1 Corinthians 15:12-15

¹² But if it is preached that Christ has been raised from the dead, how can some of you say that there is no resurrection of the dead? ¹³ If there is no resurrection of the dead, then not even Christ has been raised. ¹⁴ And if Christ has not been raised, our preaching is useless and so is your faith. ¹⁵ More than that, we are then found to be false witnesses about God, for we have testified about God that he raised Christ from the dead. But he did not raise him if in fact the dead are not raised.

The good news is our faith is not useless. We are not victims of false witnesses. There is a preponderance of evidence not only that the Bible is the inspired Word of God, but that the record of the resurrection of Jesus Christ is true. However, since the time of Jesus' death, there have been theories about the resurrection.

Theories about the resurrection

Following are four possible theories about the resurrection of Jesus Christ and a very brief summary of evidence or lack thereof for each theory.

1. The Christianity theory

Jesus rose from the dead. The eyewitness accounts are true.

Evidence for: There are multiple eyewitness accounts recorded in Scripture (*1 Cor. 15:3-6; John 20*). How can over 500 eyewitness accounts to a supposedly dead man walking be discounted?

Acts 2:32

³² God has raised this Jesus to life, and we are all witnesses of the fact.

2. The hallucination theory

Jesus didn't rise from the dead but His followers hallucinated because they wanted to believe that He had risen.

Evidence against: Hallucinations are brief. They usually last only a few seconds or minutes. This hallucination would have lasted for forty days (*Acts 1:3*). A crowd of five hundred people saw Christ at the same time in the same place. That is a whole lot of hallucinations! Does that make sense?

1 Corinthians 15:3-6

³ For what I received I passed on to you as of first importance: that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, ⁴ that he was buried, that he was raised on the third day according to the Scriptures, ⁵ and that he appeared to Peter, and then to the Twelve. ⁶ After that, he appeared to more than five hundred of the brothers at the same time, most of whom are still living, though some have fallen asleep.

3. The conspiracy or myth theory

Jesus didn't rise from the dead. The apostles created a conspiracy to deceive people. The body was stolen from the tomb and disposed of.

Evidence against: It is hard to imagine a group of fearful disciples and other close followers of Jesus banding together to create a conspiracy such as the resurrection. Remember fearful Peter denying Christ three times. If Jesus did not rise from the grave how could Peter's heroic faith be explained? Why would followers of Jesus rather die than deny Him? Why would they live and die for a deception? It is difficult if not impossible to explain how people involved in deception of epic proportions could live exemplary lives and die for the sake of their conspiracy. Would you?

Acts 4:13

¹³ When they saw the courage of Peter and John and realized that they were unschooled, ordinary men, they were astonished and they took note that these men had been with Jesus.

4. The swoon theory

Jesus did not really die but only swooned. The soldiers thought He was dead but later He was resuscitated by the disciples.

Evidence against: It is almost impossible to conceive that Jesus could have survived the crucifixion. Roman executions were precise. They eliminated any possibility that someone would survive. To let a prisoner escape was a crime punishable by death. It just never happened!

John 19:32-34

³² The soldiers therefore came and broke the legs of the first man who had been crucified with Jesus, and then those of the other. ³³ But when they came to Jesus and found that he was already dead, they did not break his legs. ³⁴ Instead, one of the soldiers pierced Jesus' side with a spear, bringing a sudden flow of blood and water.

JESUS CHRIST OUR ANCHOR OF HOPE

Jesus Christ anchors our soul. Jesus Christ is our hope. The writer of Hebrews assures us,

Hebrews 6:19-20

¹⁹ We have this hope as an anchor for the soul, firm and secure. It enters the inner sanctuary behind the curtain, ²⁰ where Jesus, who went before us, has entered on our behalf. He has become a high priest forever, in the order of Melchizedek.

Through the death, burial and resurrection of Jesus Christ we have the hope of eternal life. Jesus entered heaven on our behalf and assures our salvation. This is our promise—our anchor:

Colossians 3:1-4

¹ Since, then, you have been raised with Christ, set your hearts on things above, where Christ is seated at the right hand of God. ² Set your minds on things above, not on earthly things. ³ For you died, and your life is now hidden with Christ in God. ⁴ When Christ, who is your life, appears, then you also will appear with him in glory.

DO! "Watch your life and doctrine closely. Persevere in them..."

➤ What did today's study say to you about watching your life and doctrine closely?



WEEK 4 MEMORY ASSIGNMENTS AND REVIEW

Following are key Scriptures to learn this week. Memorize and meditate on these key Scriptures and write them in the space that follows. Memorize the doctrinal covenant.

- Memorize - 1 Corinthians 15:3-4

- Memorize the Doctrinal Covenant.

I believe that J_____C_____ is the S_____ of G_____, fully human, fully d_____; died for my s_____, that he was buried and r_____ on the third day according to Scriptures, a_____ into heaven and is now at the right hand of God a_____ for me.

- Review previous memory projects from your card index file.

PRAYER

Spend time in prayer using the five components of the Lord's Prayer.

DAY 2: JESUS CHRIST WAS FULLY HUMAN

One of the great mysteries of the Bible is the two natures of Jesus Christ. He who created and sustains the universe became man. He came to earth as a man for one reason—to reveal Himself fully to mankind and to offer salvation to everyone. Jesus voluntarily chose the path of a humble servant so that we could understand how much He loves us. By being able to observe the nature of Jesus on earth through the Scriptures we are able to understand and experience His grace. Through His life--ministry, death, burial and resurrection-- we have a completed picture of the hope that anchors our souls.

Jesus had human parents and family

Jesus was born in the flesh, had human parents and brothers and sisters. He was born of a woman, the virgin Mary. When Mary was told she was going to give birth to a child she was naturally troubled:

Luke 1:34-35

³⁴ "How will this be," Mary asked the angel, "since I am a virgin?" ³⁵ The angel answered, "The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you. So the holy one to be born will be called the Son of God.

The virgin birth of Jesus is clearly documented in Scripture and is an essential doctrine of Jesus Christ. To deny the virgin birth of Christ is heresy. If you believe the Scripture is the inspired, inerrant Word of God it is impossible to doubt the miraculous birth of Jesus. At just the right time in history God sent His Son in human flesh for one purpose—to redeem us so that we could be His children.

Galatians 4:4-5 (NIV)

⁴ But when the time had fully come, God sent his Son, born of a woman, born under law, ⁵ to redeem those under law, that we might receive the full rights of sons.

Jesus chose to be born into an ordinary family and experience the ordinary conditions of family life. But it is also clear that He was divine, born of a virgin. He was *Immanuel*, God with us (*Matt. 1:23*). Jesus chose the ordinary life so He could identify with ordinary men and women.

Jesus had human names



SEARCH THE WORD

Look up the following Scripture and record the human names given to Jesus.

- *Luke 19:10; Matt. 1:21; Acts 2:22; 1 Tim. 2:5; John 1: 49-51*

As you can see Jesus went by human and divine names reflecting His two natures. Eighty times in the Gospels Jesus referred to Himself as "*The Son of Man.*" In this title we can see both natures. Jesus identifies Himself with the sons of man yet He is still **THE** Son of Man because of His divine, sinless nature.

Jesus had a body, soul and spirit

When Jesus Christ chose to empty Himself and take on a human nature He subjected Himself to the same human development that we experience.

Luke 2:39-40

³⁹ When Joseph and Mary had done everything required by the Law of the Lord, they returned to Galilee to their own town of Nazareth. ⁴⁰ And the child grew and became strong; he was filled with wisdom, and the grace of God was upon him.



SEARCH THE WORD

We will now fast forward to Jesus' adolescence. Luke records a very interesting story about the human development of Jesus. Read *Luke 2: 41-52* and answer the questions that follow:

- In this story what demonstrates the human development of Jesus as an adolescent?

- In this story what demonstrates the divine development of Jesus as an adolescent?

Being a vigilant parent of three children and six grandchildren it is hard for me to imagine it taking a day for parents to realize that their child was missing but this happened in another time and in another culture. The point of the story is to demonstrate that Jesus had a soul just like us. He had a human mind with which He was able to think like we think. He showed human development as well as divine attributes as He asked questions of the teachers. Jesus had a human will and made choices and decisions as we do. He showed human adolescent development by His independent actions. His divine nature showed itself when He asked His parents if they didn't realize He had to be in His, "Fathers house" (v. 4).

Jesus experience human temptations

Because of His human nature Jesus was tempted just as we are (*Matt. 4:1-11*). As incredible as it may sound, there is no temptation that we have faced that Jesus did not face. He did this for us. He subjected Himself to human pressures such as hunger, weaknesses, and pain.



SEARCH THE WORD

Read *Hebrews 4: 14-16* and discover how Jesus was tempted just like us.

- Why was Jesus tempted just like us? What was the difference?

- What kind of temptations do you think Jesus faced? Are there some temptations that you think would be excluded? If so why?
- In what ways does the human nature of Jesus give you confidence?
- How will this Scripture help you when you face trials or temptations?

One of the reasons that Jesus came to earth in the flesh was so that we could be confident that in everything we face we have a God that understands and helps us in our weaknesses. The writer of Hebrews assures us that Jesus understands exactly what we are going through. He is able to “...sympathize with our weaknesses...” because He has been “tempted in every way just, as we are...” (Hebrews 4:15). Notice that Jesus was tempted in **every way** just as we are. That was His human side. Because of this we can approach God with confidence and experience God’s grace when we need it (Hebrews 4:16). We also see Jesus’s divine side because He was sinless. He did not give in to His temptations.

Jesus experienced human emotions

He was able to experience the full range of human emotions. Jesus suffered human limitations, pain and sorrow. He did this so He could demonstrate God’s love and identify with us. We see the human side of His emotions on several occasions. When his friend Lazarus died he demonstrated compassion and grief even though He knew that He would raise Lazarus from the dead.

John 11:33-35

³³ When Jesus saw her weeping, and the Jews who had come along with her also weeping, he was deeply moved in spirit and troubled. ³⁴ “Where have you laid him?” he asked. “Come and see, Lord,” they replied. ³⁵ Jesus wept.

When Jesus saw people in the temple selling livestock and exchanging money He drove them out with a whip demonstrating righteous anger (John 2: 12-16). As Jesus faced His final days on earth and His death on the cross He showed sorrowful and trouble emotions. He showed His human side by wanting His disciples to stay with Him.

Matthew 26:37-38

³⁷ He took Peter and the two sons of Zebedee along with him, and he began to be sorrowful and troubled. ³⁸ Then he said to them, “My soul is overwhelmed with sorrow to the point of death. Stay here and keep watch with me.”

Jesus' humanity and our salvation

God's eternal plan was for His Son to come in the form of a man, experience all we experience and demonstrate the Heavenly Fathers' everlasting love by dying on the cross for our sins. In the following scripture we see how the humanity and divinity of Jesus merged to bring us salvation.

Hebrews 5:7-9

⁷ During the days of Jesus' life on earth, he offered up prayers and petitions with loud cries and tears to the one who could save him from death, and he was heard because of his reverent submission. ⁸ Although he was a son, he learned obedience from what he suffered ⁹ and, once made perfect, he became the source of eternal salvation for all who obey him

The prayer and petitions are a reference to Jesus Christ's suffering at Golgotha. Even though He was God's Son, Jesus submitted to His Father and was obedient in all things. God's plan of salvation culminated on Golgotha where Jesus suffered and died in the flesh to save us from our sins.

DO! "Watch your life and doctrine closely. Persevere in them..."

➤ What did today's study say to you about watching your life and doctrine closely?



WEEK 4 MEMORY ASSIGNMENTS AND REVIEW

Following are key Scriptures to learn this week. Memorize and meditate on these key Scriptures and write them in the space that follows. Memorize the doctrinal covenant.

- Memorize - *1 Corinthians 15:3-4*

- Memorize the Doctrinal Covenant

I believe that J_____ C_____ is the S_____ of G_____, fully human, fully d_____; died for my s_____, that he was buried and r_____ on the third day according to Scriptures, a_____ into heaven and is now at the right hand of God a_____ for me.

- Review previous memory projects from your card index file.

PRAYER

Spend time in prayer using the five components of the Lord's Prayer.

DAY 3: CHRIST WAS FULLY DIVINE

Throughout the Bible we clearly see Jesus' human and divine natures. Jesus did not enter a human body but was born as a human. In His incarnation He became the God man. Jesus' divine nature did not change when He became a man. In addition to being divine Jesus also became human. He possessed the fullness of Deity and humanity. Paul said,

Colossians 2:9 (NIV)

⁹For in Christ all the fullness of the Deity lives in bodily form,

JESUS ALWAYS EXISTED AND WAS CO-EQUAL WITH THE FATHER AND THE HOLY SPIRIT

The second part of the miracle of the incarnation is that Jesus was also fully divine. He was fully God and drew on divine resources to transcend all human limitations. Jesus was with the Father and the Holy Spirit from the beginning because He always existed. He was with God and was God. John said,

John 1:1-3

¹In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. ²He was with God in the beginning. ³Through him all things were made; without him nothing was made that has been made.

If Jesus was only human we would not have a complete picture of many dimensions of the Godhead: the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. We do have a complete picture of God because all attributes were revealed in Jesus. When we see Jesus we see God the Father and God the Holy Spirit as well. We see God's fullness.

Colossians 1:19

¹⁹For God was pleased to have all his fullness dwell in him,

In the New Testament God the Father spoke to us through God the Son

The writer of Hebrews says,

Hebrews 1:1-3

¹In the past God spoke to our forefathers through the prophets at many times and in various ways, ²but in these last days he has spoken to us by his Son, whom he appointed heir of all things, and through whom he made the universe. ³The Son is the radiance of God's glory and the exact representation of his being, sustaining all things by his powerful word. After he had provided purification for sins, he sat down at the right hand of the Majesty in heaven.

In Jesus we see all the radiance of God. Jesus is not just a reflection of God, He is God. He is "...the exact representation of His being..." (v.3). One of the clearest statements that Jesus Christ is divine and co-equal with the heavenly Father is found in Paul's letter to the church in Rome. Speaking of the Children of Israel he says,

Romans 9:5

⁵ *Theirs are the patriarchs, and from them is traced the human ancestry of Christ, who is God over all, forever praised! Amen.*

JESUS WAS REVEALED AS THE SON OF GOD AND ALWAYS REFERED TO AS GOD

Jesus was referred to as the Son of God

The divinity of Jesus is documented throughout the New Testament. There can be no doubt that the followers of Jesus believed He was divine. When Jesus asked Simon Peter who he thought He was, Peter answered,

Matthew 16:16 (NIV)

¹⁶ *"You are the Christ, the Son of the living God."*

There are many references to Jesus as the Son of God in the Bible. The book of Mark begins by saying,

Mark 1:1

¹ *The beginning of the gospel about Jesus Christ, the Son of God.*

Luke made it clear He believed Jesus is divine in recording Jesus' birth.

Luke 1:35

³⁵ *The angel answered, "The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you. So the holy one to be born will be called the Son of God.*



SEARCH THE WORD

While Jesus did not refer to Himself as the Son of God in the synoptic Gospels, He accepted the title when others referred to Him in this way. Following is a passage of Scripture that illustrates this. Read *Luke 22: 66-71* and answer the following questions.

- Why did the religious leaders ask Jesus if He was the Christ? (Read what comes before and after)
- In Jesus' answer what shows that He believed He was the Son of God?
- What indicates that the religious leaders believed Jesus was claiming to be the Son of God?

Jesus was referred to as God

Jesus is consistently referred to as God in the Bible. He called Himself God. The Disciples referred to Him as the Son of God. The Jews obviously believed He was claiming to be God when they tried to stone Him for saying, *“before Abraham was born, I am.”* The Greek word for the *“I am”* statements that Jesus made is *emi*. A claim to deity is implicit in this word (*John 8:28, 58*).

John 8:58

⁵⁸ *“I tell you the truth,” Jesus answered, “before Abraham was born, I am!”*

When Jesus appeared to Thomas after the resurrection Thomas was amazed and confessed,

John 20:28

²⁸ *Thomas said to him, “My Lord and my God!”*

Other references: (*John 1:1, 18, 20:28; Acts 20:28; Rom 9:5; Titus 2:13; Heb 1:8; 2 Pet 1:1; 1 John 5:20*)

All of the New Testament writers clearly believed in Christ’s divinity

That all the New Testament writers believed that Jesus was God, the agent of creation and the source of all life is indisputable. The writer of Hebrews refers to Jesus as the *“...Son, whom He appointed heir of all things and through whom He made the universe (Hebrews 1:1-3).”* Paul refers to Jesus as *“...the image of the invisible God...all things were created by Him and for Him” (Colossians 1:16)*. The Apostle John says that it is the liar that denies that Jesus is the Christ

1 John 2:22

²² *Who is the liar? It is the man who denies that Jesus is the Christ. Such a man is the antichrist—he denies the Father and the Son.*

There is no doubt about what the writers of the New Testament thought about Jesus. He was the eternal Son of God who became man to reveal the Father to the world and die on the cross so that everyone could have eternal life. It was after the resurrection that those close to Jesus finally realized that He was indeed God. John says,

1 John 2:22

²² *After he was raised from the dead, his disciples recalled what he had said. Then they believed the Scripture and the words that Jesus had spoken.*

Other related Scriptures: (*Mark 1:1; 14:61; Luke 1:35; 4:41; John 1:1-18; 1 Peter 3:14-15; Matt. 16:16; 17; Mark 1:1; Matt. 27:40,43; John 5:25; 10:36; 11:4; 20:28; Tit. 2:13; Rev. 22:8,9; John 5:23,24; 2 Cor. 12:8-10; Heb. 7:16; 13:8; John 5:22; 2 Tim. 4:1; Rev. 1:8; Eph. 1:20-22*)



HERESY AND FALSE RELIGION ALERT!

2 John 7 (NIV)

⁷ *Many deceivers, who do not acknowledge Jesus Christ as coming in the flesh, have gone out into the world. Any such person is the deceiver and the antichrist.*

Some question, deny, or attempt to alter the divinity of Christ. The false teachings of some mainline churches and liberal theologians deny the virgin birth and the divinity of Christ. Mormons claim that God was once a man like us and Jesus was not preexistent with the Father. Muslims believe “Christ, the Son of Mary, was no more than an apostle.” (Koran Sura, 5:78). Chapter 5:75 says, “*They do blaspheme who say God is the Christ, the Son of Mary.* How do we answer the false teachings?” See *John 3:18* and *14:6* above.

Jesus possessed divine attributes

The final evidence that Jesus was divine is the biblical record that He possessed divine attributes.



SEARCH THE WORD

Following are five divine attributes ascribed to Jesus and corresponding Scriptures. Look up these Scriptures and record how each is described.

- His eternal existence (*John 1:1-3; 8:58; Colossians 1:16, 17; Hebrews 1:8-12; Revelation 1:1-18*)

- His immutability (*Hebrews 1:10-12; 13:8*)

- His omnipresence (*Matthew 28:20; John 1:48; 3:13*)

- His omniscience (*Matthew 9:4; 12:25; Luke 6:8; 9:47; 11:17; Colossians 2:3*)

- His omnipotence (*Mark 1:27; John 5:19-21; 1 Peter 3:21,22*)

CONCLUSION

The Bible from beginning to end proclaims that Jesus is the divine Son of God, co-equal with the Father and Holy Spirit in every way. As you have just seen He has all the divine attributes of God. Nothing is lacking. To deny the divinity of Jesus is pure heresy.

DO! "Watch your life and doctrine closely. Persevere in them..."

➤ What did today's study say to you about watching your life and doctrine closely?



WEEK 4 MEMORY ASSIGNMENTS AND REVIEW

Following are key Scriptures to learn this week. Memorize and meditate on these key Scriptures and write them in the space that follows. Memorize the doctrinal covenant.

- Memorize - *1 Corinthians 15:3-4*

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- Review previous memory projects from your card index file.

PRAYER

Spend time in prayer using the five components of the Lord's Prayer.

Mark 1:14

¹⁴ ... Jesus went into Galilee, proclaiming the good news of God.

Almost everything Jesus did from that point on was for the specific purpose of giving people the opportunity to receive Him and become Children of God. John says,

John 1:12

¹² Yet to all who received him, to those who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God.

Much later in His ministry we see Jesus still walking in the footprint, proclaiming the good news. When Jesus went to Zacchaeus the tax collector's house, He announced that His primary purpose for coming to earth was to tell people the good news. He said,

Luke 19:10

¹⁰ "For the Son of Man came to seek and to save what was lost."

Jesus showed His disciples how to proclaim the good news. They watched him as He articulated the good news. They saw how He loved the lost and would do everything possible to reach them. They saw His heart of compassion for those who were far from God. Matthew reports:

Matthew 9:35-38

³⁵ Jesus went through all the towns and villages, teaching in their synagogues, preaching the good news of the kingdom and healing every disease and sickness. ³⁶ When he saw the crowds, he had compassion on them, because they were harassed and helpless, like sheep without a shepherd. ³⁷ Then he said to his disciples, "The harvest is plentiful but the workers are few. ³⁸ Ask the Lord of the harvest, therefore, to send out workers into his harvest field."



REFLECT AND RESPOND

At this time in the disciple's journey how well do you follow in the footprint of proclaiming the Kingdom of God? What is your compassion quotient?

FOOTPRINT #2: TRAINING THE DISCIPLES (Mark 1:17; 38-39)

Next we see Jesus training the disciples. After proclaiming the good news of God, Jesus immediately began calling His disciples and launched the process of training them to become fishers of men. From the very onset of His ministry Jesus started training a few good men to be His disciples (*John 1*). Jesus called people who had the potential to be reproducers. He said to Peter and Andrew:

Mark 1:17

¹⁷ "Come, follow me," Jesus said, "and I will make you fishers of men."

That the training of the disciples was an essential part of God's plan cannot be missed. In His classic work, *The Training of the Twelve*, A.B. Bruce says,

That these calls were given with a conscious reference to an ulterior end, even the apostleship, appears from the remarkable terms in which the earliest of them was expressed. "Follow Me," said Jesus to the fishermen of Bethsaida, "and I will make you fishers of men." These words (whose originality stamps them as genuine saying of Jesus) show that the great Founder of the Faith desired not only to have disciples, but to have about Him men whom He might train to make disciples of others: to cast the net of divine truth into the sea of the world, and to land on the shores of the divine kingdom a great multitude of believing souls. Both from His words and His actions we can see that He attached supreme importance to that part of His work which consisted in training the twelve. (p. 12-13)

The first two footprints were inseparably linked by Jesus. He would proclaim the good news of God, telling people how they could be saved and train the disciples to do the same. These remained two of the top ministry priorities of Jesus throughout His time on earth and must always be among our top priorities as we train others. The next three footprints completed the direction for the disciples training. It is clear through the remainder of the Gospels that Jesus would continue to concentrate on these five key areas.



REFLECT AND RESPOND

At this time in the disciple's journey how well do you follow in the footprint of training—becoming a reproducing disciple?

FOOTPRINT #3: TEACHING THE WORD (*Mark 1:21*)

The third footprint of Jesus we see is teaching the Word. The difference between proclaiming the good news and teaching the Word is that one tells a person how to become a child of God and the other teaches them how to live as a child of God. At times teaching and proclaiming the good news were linked together in a single theme. Jesus began His teaching ministry in Capernaum soon after calling His first disciples beside the Sea of Galilee. Mark says;

Mark 1:21

²¹ They went to Capernaum, and when the Sabbath came, Jesus went into the synagogue and began to teach

Jesus was constantly teaching the crowds and His disciples. He often took time to impart specific information to His disciples as part of their training. On one occasion Jesus took His disciples on a mountain retreat to teach them some important truths. This intensive time of teaching the disciples is found in the book of *Matthew* chapters 5-7 and is often referred to as "The Sermon on the Mount". It has some of the most profound teaching on righteous behavior and godly relationships in the entire Bible.

Jesus' disciples learned to teach by watching Him teach. When it came time for them to start their own teaching ministries they were well prepared. They taught as their "Master Teacher" had taught them to teach. In much the same way you will probably model your teaching much like the person who guides you through *The Disciple's Journey*. Like the disciples you will also be well prepared because you have observed the teaching of your group leader.

Teaching the Word is absolutely essential if we are to develop fully devoted followers of Jesus. We know Jesus' disciples were taught well because of how they were committed to teaching the Word and how they were able to pass on a love of the Word to those they taught. Early in the book of Acts Luke says,

Acts 2:42

⁴² They devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and to the fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer.

What did the apostles teach? They taught all that Jesus taught them. (*Matthew 28:18-20*) That curriculum included teaching about knowing and loving God, loving others, obeying God's Word and completing His mission. That responsibility for teaching all has been passed on to us. As disciples we are to have a lifelong commitment to teaching all that we have been taught.



REFLECT AND RESPOND

At this time in the disciple's journey how well do you follow in the footprint of teaching the Word?

FOOTPRINT #4: TIME WITH THE FATHER (*Mark 1:35; 11:1*)

As we read through the first chapter of Mark, the fourth footprint of Jesus we find is time with the Father. Mark notes this priority

Mark 1:35

³⁵ Very early in the morning, while it was still dark, Jesus got up, left the house and went off to a solitary place, where he prayed.

It is obvious from the very beginning that the time that Jesus spent with His heavenly Father in intimate communication was essential to the success of all other things that He did. It was during these solitary times away from His disciples that Jesus fellowshiped with His Father, renewing His purpose on earth and receiving wisdom and strength to accomplish His mission.

While proclaiming the good news was Jesus' highest ministry priority, time with His Father was his highest personal priority. Jesus' ministry flowed out of His relationship with His Father. This footprint must have been very clear to His disciples for it is mentioned several times throughout the gospels. The disciples were well aware that the time Jesus spent with His Father in prayer was the key to Jesus' success. Luke recorded,

Luke 11:1

¹ One day Jesus was praying in a certain place. When he finished, one of his disciples said to him, "Lord, teach us to pray, just as John taught his disciples."

We know that this time with the Heavenly Father was a regular and consistent part of the busy schedule of Jesus. No matter what the demands of daily life, Jesus made it a priority to spend time with His Father. Luke says,

Luke 22:39

³⁹ Jesus went out as usual to the Mount of Olives, and his disciples followed him.

Notice that Jesus went out **as usual** to the Mount of Olives to pray. We know that He had certain places and was committed to usual times for intimate time with His Father. This sacred time was the key to His success and He wanted His disciples to know it would be the key to their success. Likewise, as those who would follow in the footprints of Jesus, we must follow closely in this footprint of consistent, intimate time with God in prayer and the Word. It is our greatest personal priority! This time is where character is formed, wisdom is developed and power is received. It will also be the key to our success and the success of those whom we lead. Those whom we disciple will learn the importance of time in the Word and prayer from us. Above all we must be dedicated and disciplined in our regular appointments with our Heavenly Father. This will enable us to “Abide” in God and produce much fruit (*John 15:1-5*).



REFLECT AND RESPOND

At this time in the disciple’s journey how well do you follow in the footprint of time with the Father?

FOOTPRINT #5: SERVING THE NEEDS OF OTHERS (*Mark 1:40-41*)

The fifth footprint of Jesus is serving the needs of others. We might call this the compassion ministry of Jesus. Although all of His footsteps showed compassion, it was never felt more by people than when He touched them at the source of their greatest need. Jesus came to earth as a servant and taught His disciples that if they wanted to be great they should be the servant of all.

Matthew 20:25-28

²⁵ Jesus called them together and said, “You know that the rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them, and their high officials exercise authority over them. ²⁶ Not so with you. Instead, whoever wants to become great among you must be your servant, ²⁷ and whoever wants to be first must be your slave — ²⁸ just as the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many.”

It is obvious from the many ways Jesus touched people that He had great compassion for them. Jesus not only told people that God loved them, He modeled this love by having compassion on them. He knew that people would not care what He had to say until they knew how much He cared. Sometime Jesus touched people by healing their physical ailments like He did when He touched an untouchable of that day and healed the man of leprosy.

Mark 1:41

⁴¹ Filled with compassion, Jesus reached out his hand and touched the man. *Mark 1:41*

Sometimes His compassion showed when He touched people who were possessed by demons (*Mark 1:23-25*). Whatever their need, Jesus had compassion on people, reaching out His hand in practical love. Jesus realized that people needed to know that they mattered (*Luke 19:1-9*). Jesus knew that people needed to know someone cared about them. (*Mark 1:40-42*). And most of all, people needed to know that they had hope (*John 4:1-26; 8:1-11*). Jesus touched people with compassion at the deepest level of each of their needs.

To walk in the footprints of Jesus we must be filled with compassion and touch the needs of others around us. It is only when they feel our love that they will be open to our telling them the good news and teaching them how to live godly lives. They will not care about what we have to say until they know that we care about them. Discipleship includes time when we reach out with acts of kindness and touch others with the compassion of Jesus.

Jesus left us His footprint of meeting the needs of others as a servant so we would do the same. Toward the end of His life on earth Jesus made it abundantly clear why He had chosen to come to earth as a servant. It was to show them the "...full extent of his love..." (John 13:1). After He had showed the full extent of His love by washing His disciple's feet He told them to do the same for one another. In this single act of serving He set the standard for all disciples. We are first to become humble servants meeting the needs of others. That is how the love of God is truly demonstrated. John tells the story of how Jesus demonstrated to His disciples how to be a servant.

John 13:1, 14-15

¹ It was just before the Passover Feast. Jesus knew that the time had come for him to leave this world and go to the Father. Having loved his own who were in the world, he now showed them the full extent of his love... ¹⁴ Now that I, your Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, you also should wash one another's feet. ¹⁵ I have set you an example that you should do as I have done for you.



REFLECT AND RESPOND

At this time in the disciple's journey how well do you follow in the footprint of serving the needs of others?

DO! "Watch your life and doctrine closely. Persevere in them..."

➤ What did today's study say to you about watching your life and doctrine closely?



WEEK 4 MEMORY ASSIGNMENTS AND REVIEW

Following are key Scriptures to learn this week. Memorize and meditate on these key Scriptures and write them in the space that follows. Memorize the doctrinal covenant.

- Memorize - 1 Corinthians 15:3-4

- Memorize the Doctrinal Covenant

I believe that J_____C_____ is the S_____ of G_____, fully human, fully d_____; died for my s_____, that he was buried and r_____ on the third day

according to Scriptures, a_____ into heaven and is now at the right hand of God
a_____ for me.

- Review previous memory projects from your card index file.

PRAYER

Spend time in prayer using the five components of the Lord's Prayer.

DAY 5: THE WORK OF JESUS CHRIST

The footprints of Jesus led to the cross. All previous events recorded in the Bible were a prelude to the event that changed mans' relationship with God forever. The work of Christ on earth was culminated when the sins of the world were nailed to the cross allowing man to be reconciled to God. Grace was offered through the death, burial and resurrection of Jesus Christ.

Throughout the centuries since this great act of God's love, the cross has been a symbol of the incredible love of God. It was only at the cross that man was finally able to understand the depth of God's love. Many great hymns give testimony to the awe and reverence Christians have for the message of the cross. An example of this is the beloved hymn *When I Survey the Wondrous Cross* by renowned theologian and hymn writer Isaac Watts.

When I Survey the Wondrous Cross

*When I survey the wondrous cross
on which the Prince of Glory died;
my richest gain I count but loss,
and pour contempt on all my pride.*

*Forbid it, Lord, that I should boast,
save in the death of Christ, my God;
all the vain things that charm me most,
I sacrifice them to his blood.*

*See, from his head, his hands, his feet,
sorrow and love flow mingled down.
Did e'er such love and sorrow meet,
or thorns compose so rich a crown.*

*Were the whole realm of nature mine,
that were an offering far too small;
love so amazing, so divine,
demands my soul, my life, my all.*

THE DEATH OF JESUS CHRIST ON THE CROSS

The following Search the Word study will allow you to dig deeper into the significance of the cross in the work of Christ. You will gain insights into what Jesus and the early church taught about the significance of His sacrificial death on the cross for the sins of mankind.



SEARCH THE WORD

Read the following Scriptures and write a brief summary of what Jesus and the church taught about His death.

What Jesus taught:

- *John 3:13-18*

- *Matthew 16:21*

- *Matthew 17:22-23*

- *Matthew 20:17-19*

- *Matthew 26: 25-30*

Notice that Jesus progressively revealed the significance and details of His death on the cross. The details were clear. He was to suffer at the hands of religious leaders, be killed and on the third day be raised to life. The disciples would not comprehend the significance of the cross until after the resurrection. When Jesus was raised from the dead the fog began to lift and when the Spirit came on the day of Pentecost the world began to be turned upside down by the message of the cross.

What the early church taught

The central message of the early church was the message of the cross. Paul made it the focal point of his letters to the churches. To the church in Corinth He wrote:

1 Corinthians 2:2

²For I resolved to know nothing while I was with you except Jesus Christ and him crucified.



SEARCH THE WORD

Read the following Scriptures and write a brief summary of what the church taught about the significance of the sacrificial death of Jesus on the cross:

What the church taught:

- *Romans 3:23-25*

- *Galatians 2:20*
- *Philippians 3:10-11*
- *1 Thessalonians 4:14*

Paul makes it clear that the solution to mankind's sin and separation from God was resolved through the cross. God presented Jesus as a "...sacrifice of atonement, through faith in His blood..." (Romans 3:25) Anyone who put their faith in Christ would be "...justified freely by his grace through the redemption that came by Christ Jesus" (Romans 3: 24).

Paul takes the significance of the cross a step further. Not only are we redeemed by the blood of Jesus and justified (declared not guilty) but we are "...crucified with Christ..." and it is no longer we that live but Christ lives in us. We now have His life! (*Galatians 2:20*) To Paul the cross not only represented his new life but the "...power of his resurrection..." gave Paul the power to live that new life (*Philippians 3:10*). Because of their steadfast belief that Jesus died and rose again, believers had hope that Jesus would take them to be with Him forever.

Through the cross our ransom was paid. We were redeemed and bought back from the slavery of sin through "...the precious blood of Christ, a lamb without blemish or defect (*1 Cor. 5:17*). We were saved from the sentence of death by the substitutionary death of Jesus, the sacrificial lamb. He became sin for us so we could become the righteousness of God (*2 Cor. 5:21*).

THE RESURRECTION OF JESUS CHRIST

Needless to say, without the resurrection of Christ the death of Christ would mean little. Redemption requires that Jesus Christ was raised from the dead.

Grace depends on the resurrection

Grace depends on the resurrection. The miracle of Christ's resurrection is **the** object of the Christian faith. It is only if Jesus was raised from the dead and we believe in the resurrection that we can be saved. Paul said,

Romans 10:8-9

⁸ But what does it say? "The word is near you; it is in your mouth and in your heart," that is, the word of faith we are proclaiming: ⁹ That if you confess with your mouth, "Jesus is Lord," and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved.

If a person does not have faith in the resurrection his faith is useless and his sins have not been erased. Paul made this very clear to the believers in Corinth:

1 Corinthians 15:14, 17

¹⁴ And if Christ has not been raised, our preaching is useless and so is your faith...¹⁷ And if Christ has not been raised, your faith is futile; you are still in your sins.

❖ The doctrine of the death and resurrection is of “*first importance.*”

Christianity is the only religion that bases its claim to legitimacy on the resurrection of its founder. The resurrection of Jesus was so critical to Christianity that Paul said without it we are to be “...*pitied more than all men*” (1 Cor. 15:19). That is why the resurrection of Christ is such a prominent doctrine and so fiercely defended by Paul and the other writers of the New Testament. Paul said it was of “*first importance...*” (1 Cor. 15:3). The resurrection is a highly documented historical event which includes the testimony of many eye witnesses.”

1 Corinthians 15:3-7 (NIV)

³ For what I received I passed on to you as of first importance: that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, ⁴ that he was buried, that he was raised on the third day according to the Scriptures, ⁵ and that he appeared to Peter, and then to the Twelve. ⁶ After that, he appeared to more than five hundred of the brothers at the same time, most of whom are still living, though some have fallen asleep. ⁷ Then he appeared to James, then to all the apostles.

THE ACCESSION OF JESUS CHRIST

Any study of the work of Christ must include an understanding of His accession and present work in heaven. The ascension and exaltation were necessary to complete His redemptive work. His work was not finished when He died on the cross. It was not yet finished when He rose from the grave. It was finished when He took His rightful place at the right hand of the Father in heaven. It was at that point that a new work of Christ began. Christ’s accession occurred on the Mount of Olives.



SEARCH THE WORD

Read the account of the accession in *Acts 1: 1-11*.

- Summarize the importance of the accession. What makes this account an essential transition between the resurrection of Christ and the beginning of the church?

Christ’s work on earth was completed as He vanished into thin air in the presence of His disciples. Without this account a huge part of the story would be omitted. Because of this eyewitness account we are assured that Jesus is with the Father and will return to take us with Him to heaven. We know that Jesus sent His Holy Spirit to indwell all believers. We realize that the Holy Spirit empowers us to be witnesses of Jesus “around the block and around the world”.

Christ is exalted – He rules

When Jesus ascended to heaven the Heavenly Father exalted Him to “...*the highest place...*” Paul says,

Philippians 2:8-11

⁸ And being found in appearance as a man, he humbled himself and became obedient to death— even death on a cross! ⁹Therefore God exalted him to the highest place and gave him the name that is above every name, ¹⁰that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, ¹¹and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.

Jesus was humiliated as a man but exalted as God when He ascended to heaven. Jesus was given a place of power at the right hand of God. It was when Jesus was exalted and sat down at the right hand of God that the redemptive work was finished. The writer of Hebrews says,

Hebrews 1:3

³ The Son is the radiance of God's glory and the exact representation of his being, sustaining all things by his powerful word. After he had provided purification for sins, he sat down at the right hand of the Majesty in heaven.

Christ is at the right hand of His Father. It is there that He has all authority and that He rules. He rules as Priest and King. Christ rules over everything that exists. This includes everything on earth and in the heavenly realms, angelic and human. It is in this exalted position of authority that Jesus presents the blood of atonement for our sins to the Father. When the Father looks at us He sees His Son. Our life is hidden with Christ in God. Paul explains,

Colossians 3:1-3

¹ Since, then, you have been raised with Christ, set your hearts on things above, where Christ is seated at the right hand of God. ² Set your minds on things above, not on earthly things. ³ For you died, and your life is now hidden with Christ in God.

Christ is head of the church

When Jesus ascended to heaven He assumed His position as head of the church.

Ephesians 1:20-23

²⁰ which he exerted in Christ when he raised him from the dead and seated him at his right hand in the heavenly realms, ²¹ far above all rule and authority, power and dominion, and every title that can be given, not only in the present age but also in the one to come. ²² And God placed all things under his feet and appointed him to be head over everything for the church, ²³ which is his body, the fullness of him who fills everything in every way.

Christ is the head of the church and believers are His body. When we received Jesus we became part of His body. It is Christ as head of the church that gives direction and power to His body on earth and provides unity.



SEARCH THE WORD

Read *Ephesians 4: 9-16* and answer the following questions:

- According to verse 9 what was the purpose of the ascension of Christ?
- How is the body of Christ to be built up?
- What does Christ as head do for the church?

Jesus ascended to heaven to fill the whole universe with His presence and glory. His glory and presence is to be seen most clearly and powerfully through His body the church.

Ephesians 3:10

¹⁰ His intent was that now, through the church, the manifold wisdom of God should be made known to the rulers and authorities in the heavenly realms,

When the church truly functions as the loving, unified body of Christ, the world will see the wisdom and power of God. The body of Christ is built up when the members of the body are prepared for works of service and become mature "...attaining to the whole measure of the fullness of Christ" (*Eph. 4:13*). It is from Christ that the whole body is held together and builds itself up in love (*Eph. 4:15-16*).

Christ as our advocate

It is through the ascension that Jesus is at the right hand of the Father interceding for all of us.

Hebrews 9:24

²⁴ For Christ did not enter a man-made sanctuary that was only a copy of the true one; he entered heaven itself, now to appear for us in God's presence.

Jesus is in heaven at the right hand of the God to act as High Priest on our behalf. He stands as our advocate before the Heavenly Father. Christ's advocacy on our behalf does not stop with the forgiveness of our sins. Because Jesus Christ represents us before God we can approach the Father with confidence knowing that He understands our weaknesses. Hebrews says,

Hebrews 4:14-16

¹⁴ Therefore, since we have a great high priest who has gone through the heavens, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold firmly to the faith we profess. ¹⁵ For we do not have a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, but we have one who has been tempted in every way, just as we

are—yet was without sin. ¹⁶ Let us then approach the throne of grace with confidence, so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help us in our time of need.

As mediator of the new covenant Jesus has initiated a new relationship between us and God (1Tim 2:5). The Old Testament arrangement is gone and through Jesus we can have complete assurance that our guilt has been dealt with forever. As our advocate/mediator Jesus speaks on our behalf (1 John 2:1-2, Romans 8:33-34). Christ is preparing a place for us in heaven

As Jesus began to prepare His disciples for His death, resurrection and ascension He knew that they would be distraught because they did not fully understand His true mission. After telling them about His coming betrayal He said,

John 14:1-4

¹ “Do not let your hearts be troubled. Trust in God; trust also in me. ² In my Father’s house are many rooms; if it were not so, I would have told you. I am going there to prepare a place for you. ³ And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come back and take you to be with me that you also may be where I am. ⁴ You know the way to the place where I am going.”

Jesus knew full well that the disciples would not be able to comprehend what He was telling them but He also knew that they would remember what He said after the ascension. Jesus wanted all believers to be assured that He was in heaven preparing a place for them, and what a place it will be. In the book of Revelation we get a glimpse of the heavenly home Jesus is preparing for the church, His bride. We end this week’s study with this incredible picture of our future home.

Revelation 21:1-2

¹ Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth, for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away, and there was no longer any sea. ² I saw the Holy City, the new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride beautifully dressed for her husband.

DO! “Watch your life and doctrine closely. Persevere in them...”

➤ What did today’s study say to you about watching your life and doctrine closely?



WEEK 4 MEMORY ASSIGNMENTS AND REVIEW

Following are key Scriptures to learn this week. Memorize and meditate on these key Scriptures and write them in the space that follows. Memorize the doctrinal covenant.

- Memorize - 1 Corinthians 15:3-4

- Memorize the Doctrinal Covenant

I believe that J_____C_____ is the S_____ of G_____, fully human, fully d_____; died for my s_____, that he was buried and r_____ on the third day according to Scriptures, a_____ into heaven and is now at the right hand of God a_____ for me.

- Review previous memory projects from your card index file.

PRAYER

Spend time in prayer using the five components of the Lord's Prayer.



WEEK 4 WEEKLY ACCOUNTABILITY

"All you have to do from the time you get up in the morning until the time you go to bed at night is love the Lord with all your heart; trust His promises; obey His commands. Everything else flows from that." (Bill Bright)

Be ready to share the following with your group:

- **Love the Lord with all your heart**

In what ways did I or did I not demonstrate my love of God by seeking Him with all my heart?

In what ways did or I did I not allow God's love flow through me to others including spouse, family and others?

- **Trust God's promises**

To what degree did I or didn't I demonstrate complete trust in God's promises this week?

What was my greatest test of faith?

- **Obey God's commands**

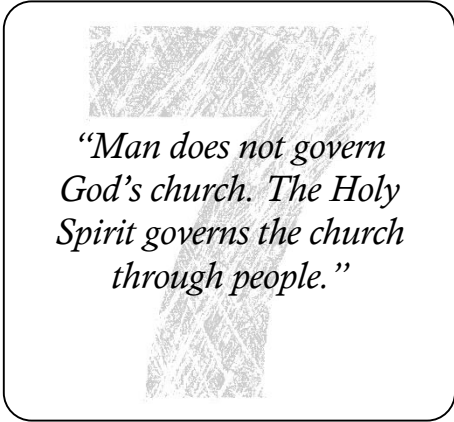
Are there weaknesses or sins I need to confess?

Did I faithfully complete all assignments this week?

In what ways did I witness to the lost this week: (prayer, share, serve, encourage)

WEEK 5

THE DOCTRINE OF THE HOLY SPIRIT



*“Man does not govern
God’s church. The Holy
Spirit governs the church
through people.”*

This week we add to our study of God the Father and God the Son by focusing on God the Holy Spirit. We will see how the Holy Spirit completes the trinity. The Trinity is one of the most difficult of all doctrines to fully understand. Our finite minds are not able to fully comprehend anything being one yet three. There are dimensions of thinking that are reserved only for God. He has, however, given us enough information and insight through His Spirit to grasp, by faith, the work of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit in our lives.

WEEK 3 STUDY

DAY 1: INTRODUCTION TO THE DOCTRINE OF THE HOLY SPIRIT

DAY 2: THE HOLY SPIRIT IS DIVINE

DAY 3: THE HOLY SPIRIT IS PERSONAL

DAY 4: THE HOLY SPIRIT IS TRINITY

DAY 5: THE WORK OF THE HOLY SPIRIT

ASSIGNMENTS:

- **Memorize and meditate on *John 14:16-17***

John 14:16-17 (NIV)

¹⁶ ...And I will ask the Father, and he will give you another Counselor to be with you forever — ¹⁷ the Spirit of truth.

- **Memorize the doctrinal covenant**

Holy Spirit of God, third person of the Trinity, paraclete, I covenant this day to be filled with your presence and power, obeying you in all things.

- Complete all study and review assignments. Review memory work from past courses at least once a week.
- Prepare your memory/review index card. Write your memory verse for the week on one side and the Doctrinal Covenant on the other. Review all previous memory assignments each day.

DAY 1: INTRODUCTION TO THE HOLY SPIRIT

From its beginning the Bible reveals God in three persons: God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit. While being one but three they are co-equal in every way. The three persons of God were revealed to man progressively through the centuries. God the Father dominates the pages of the Old Testament while at the same time beginning to reveal the nature and work of the Holy Spirit and prophesying of Jesus. The gospel era reveals the life, death and resurrection of God the Son and introduces the “Counselor” (Holy Spirit) that the Father will send in Jesus’ name. The 1st century church, as revealed in Acts and the letters of the Apostles, focuses on the power and indwelling presence of God the Holy Spirit in the believer’s life. The way the Spirit is revealed throughout the Bible helps us understand the doctrine of the Holy Spirit.

THE HOLY SPIRIT IN THE OLD TESTAMENT

The Holy Spirit co-created the world

The first mention of the Holy Spirit is in the opening verses of the Bible. Here we immediately see the Spirit’s work in creation:

Genesis 1:1-2

¹ *In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth. ² Now the earth was formless and empty, darkness was over the surface of the deep, and the **Spirit of God** was hovering over the waters. (Bold added)*

We see that the Spirit’s creative power is a dominant feature of His attributes and His creative power continues to this day. Job acknowledged that the Spirit of God gave Him life.

Job 33:4

⁴ *The Spirit of God has made me; the breath of the Almighty gives me life.*

The Psalmist recognized that God sent His Spirit to create and renew everything that exists.

Psalms 104:30

³⁰ *When you send your Spirit, they are created, and you renew the face of the earth.*

The Holy Spirit empowered man

In addition to creating, we witness the Holy Spirit empowering men and institutions in the Old Testament. The Holy Spirit does not “indwell” man as in the New Testament but comes upon man. This is more of an inworking and empowering rather than an indwelling. This happened often with many people to accomplish God’s sovereign will. When Samuel anointed Saul as king, the Holy Spirit came upon him enabling him to prophecy.

1 Samuel 10:9-10

⁹ *As Saul turned to leave Samuel, God changed Saul’s heart, and all these signs were fulfilled that day.*

¹⁰ *When they arrived at Gibeah, a procession of prophets met him; the Spirit of God came upon him in power, and he joined in their prophesying.*

We see the inworking of the Spirit in Joshua when Moses laid his hands on Joshua as his successor.

Numbers 27:18

¹⁸ So the LORD said to Moses, "Take Joshua son of Nun, a man in whom is the spirit, and lay your hand on him.

The work of the Holy Spirit was evident in Joshua's life. It is clear that he was appointed because of the presence and evidence of the Holy Spirit in his character.

The Spirit of the Lord came upon Gideon and empowered him to conquer Israel's foes against overwhelming odds.

Judges 6:34

³⁴ Then the Spirit of the LORD came upon Gideon, and he blew a trumpet, summoning the Abiezrites to follow him.

THE HOLY SPIRIT IN THE GOSPELS

The Holy Spirit is a prominent part of the Gospels. There are over fifty separate passages in the Gospels that mention or teach about the Holy Spirit.

Jesus' birth and the Holy Spirit

The Spirit was working in the hearts of people before Jesus entered the world. The activity of the Holy Spirit is an essential part of the birth of Jesus.



SEARCH THE WORD

The Holy Spirit was at work in the lives of people and through the events surrounding Jesus' birth and early years. Read the following Scriptures and record the role of the Holy Spirit:

Zacharias and Elizabeth

- *Luke 1: 11-15*

- *Luke 1:41*

- *Luke 1:67*

Joseph and Mary

- *Matthew 1:18*

- *Matthew 1:20*

Simeon

- *Luke 2:25-26*

As you have seen from these Scriptures, the Holy Spirit had a major role in the events surrounding the birth of Christ. An angel prophesied that Zacharias and Elizabeth would have a special son. This son was would be filled with the Holy Spirit and Zacharias was to name Him John (*Luke 1: 11-15*). Later we see Elizabeth being filled with the Holy Spirit (*Luke 1:41*). Zacharias was also filled with the Holy Spirit and prophesied (*Luke 1:67*). Joseph was informed by an angel that Mary would have a child conceived by the Holy Spirit (*Matt. 1:18-20*). Simeon received some great news revealed to Him by the Holy Spirit that he would see Christ before He died (*Luke 2:25-26*).

JESUS' TEACHINGS AND THE HOLY SPIRIT

- **Jesus asked the Father to send the Holy Spirit**

As Jesus began to prepare the disciples for His departure from earth He gave them this great promise:

John 14:15-17

¹⁵ *"If you love me, you will obey what I command. ¹⁶ And I will ask the Father, and he will give you another Counselor to be with you forever — ¹⁷ the Spirit of truth. The world cannot accept him, because it neither sees him nor knows him. But you know him, for he lives with you and will be in you.*

Jesus assured His disciples that He would not abandon them. He would ask His Father to send them the "Spirit of truth." The Counselor that Jesus promises is someone who is known to them and will be in them. The Holy Spirit will be Jesus' representative and will be with them forever. This promise was fulfilled on the day of Pentecost when the Holy Spirit was poured out on all believers (*Acts 1:8; 2:4*).

- **The Trinity is involved in the sending of the Holy Spirit**

John 15:26

²⁶ *"When the Counselor comes, whom I will send to you from the Father, the Spirit of truth who goes out from the Father, he will testify about me.*

The Trinity appears here in the teaching of Jesus. He asks the Father to send the Holy Spirit; He sends the Holy Spirit and the Holy Spirit comes on His own initiative.

John 16:13

¹³ *But when he, the Spirit of truth, comes, he will guide you into all truth. He will not speak on his own; he will speak only what he hears, and he will tell you what is yet to come.*

God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit are one and what one does the other does. While this is very difficult for us to comprehend it is nevertheless true.

- **The Holy Spirit will convict the world**

John 16:7-11

⁷ But I tell you the truth: It is for your good that I am going away. Unless I go away, the Counselor will not come to you; but if I go, I will send him to you. ⁸ When he comes, he will convict the world of guilt in regard to sin and righteousness and judgment: ⁹ in regard to sin, because men do not believe in me; ¹⁰ in regard to righteousness, because I am going to the Father, where you can see me no longer; ¹¹ and in regard to judgment, because the prince of this world now stands condemned.

One of the principal tasks of the Holy Spirit is to convict people of their need for God, the righteousness of Christ and His sacrificial death on the cross and the final judgment.

- **The Holy Spirit testifies of Christ**

In *John 15:26* the Holy Spirit *testifies* about Jesus. The Holy Spirit shares His nature. The Holy Spirit leads people to Jesus. He testifies of the love of Jesus. The Holy Spirit speaks to the hearts of people in a way that draws them to His love. The Holy Spirit speaks the truth so that people are given the opportunity to know God and receive Jesus. (*John 16:13*)

- **The Holy Spirit glorifies Christ**



SEARCH THE WORD

Read *John 16:12-15* and answer the questions that follow:

- How is the Holy Spirit referred to in this passage?
- How does this passage say that the Holy Spirit glorifies Christ?
- How do you see the Father, Son and Holy Spirit working together in the passage?

THE HOLY SPIRIT IN THE FIRST CENTURY CHURCH

The book of Acts is the history of the birth and growth of the church in the 1st Century after Jesus ascended into heaven. The work of the Holy Spirit is an essential part of the history of the church from beginning to the end of the book. It is sometimes referred to as “the Acts of the Holy Spirit”.

The Holy Spirit birthed the church

The church was not born until the promised Holy Spirit arrived on the Day of Pentecost (*Acts 1: 4*). The disciples were told to wait in Jerusalem until the Holy Spirit came. Acts records,

Acts 1:8

⁸ *But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth."*



SEARCH THE WORD

In *Acts 2: 1-13* we have the story of the promised Holy Spirit and the birth day of the church. Read this account and answer the following questions:

- Why do you believe the Day of Pentecost was chosen for the birth of the church? (For information on the Day of Pentecost check commentary notes in your study Bible or another resource.)
- Who were the people present on this day?
- What were the evidences that the promised Holy Spirit had come?
- What was the reaction of the people?

The Day of Pentecost was held on the 50th day after the Sabbath of Passover week (*Lev. 23:15, 16*). Pentecost is also referred to as the Feast of Weeks, The Feast of Harvest and the Day of First Fruits. The people present were the Apostles and likely those who were mentioned in *Acts 1:13-15*. The place was probably somewhere in the Temple courts where the Apostles often frequented. The Holy Spirit was poured out on those present in dramatic fashion. There was to be no doubt that this was what was promised. There was a violent wind which was a symbol of God (*Jn. 3:8*), and tongues of fire. All of them, that is the Apostles and perhaps the 120, were "filled" with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in tongues enabled by the Holy Spirit.

Many people witnessed this spectacular event. It was no accident that God chose the Day of Pentecost when people from many nations would be present to launch the church. Those who came to celebrate Pentecost in Jerusalem and residents of the community who heard the sound came to see what was happening. They were bewildered when each heard the apostles speaking in their own language. Now that the Holy Spirit had everyone's attention Peter stood up and preached the first sermon and offered the first invitation for people to receive Jesus. Three thousand responded (*Acts 2*).

The Holy Spirit unifies the church

The Holy Spirit is also the source of unity for the church. There is only one church. Christ is the head and all believers are part of the same family and are sons of God. We are all one! (*Gal. 3:27, 28*). It is the Spirit of Christ that unifies us. *Paul says,*

1 Corinthians 12:12-13

¹² *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.* ¹³ *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.*

Because the Holy Spirit unifies us, it is our responsibility to make every effort to keep or maintain this unity that makes us one in Christ.

Ephesians 4:3-6

³ *Make every effort to keep the unity of the Spirit through the bond of peace.* ⁴ *There is one body and one Spirit— just as you were called to one hope when you were called—* ⁵ *one Lord, one faith, one baptism;* ⁶ *one God and Father of all, who is over all and through all and in all.*

The Holy Spirit grows the church

The Holy Spirit that gave birth to the church also grows the church. It does not neglect its own body but supernaturally supplies all that is necessary for a healthy life and growth. The infant, growing church was “...strengthened and encouraged by the Holy Spirit...”

Acts 9:31

³¹ *Then the church throughout Judea, Galilee and Samaria enjoyed a time of peace. It was strengthened; and encouraged by the Holy Spirit, it grew in numbers, living in the fear of the Lord.*

The Holy Spirit governs the church

Man does not govern God’s church. The Holy Spirit governs the church through people. Christ appointed the Apostles to lead the early church. More leaders were needed for the expansion of the church so God appointed other leaders to grow the body (*Eph. 4:11-16*). God governs the church through elders whom the Holy Spirit makes overseers. The only authority any person has to govern the church is by the permission and power of the Holy Spirit. We may choose leaders but it is the Holy Spirit that “makes them overseers.” Paul appealed to the elders at Ephesus,

Acts 20:28

²⁸ *Keep watch over yourselves and all the flock of which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers. Be shepherds of the church of God, which he bought with his own blood.*

DO! “Watch your life and doctrine closely. Persevere in them...”

➤ What did today’s study say to you about watching your life and doctrine closely?



WEEK 5 MEMORY ASSIGNMENTS AND REVIEW

Following are key Scriptures to learn this week. Memorize and meditate on this key Scripture and write it in the space that follows. Memorize the doctrinal covenant.

- Memorize - *John 14:16-17*

- Memorize the Doctrinal Covenant

Holy Spirit of God; third person of the T_____ ; P_____ ; I
covenant this day to be f_____ with your p _____ and power,
o_____ you in all things.

- Review previous memory projects from your card index file.

PRAYER

Spend time in prayer using the five components of the Lord's Prayer.

DAY 2: THE HOLY SPIRIT IS DIVINE

The Bible does not attempt to prove that the Holy Spirit is divine any more than it attempts to prove that God the Father and God the Son are divine. The Holy Spirit is always referred to as divine and equal with the Father and Son. Jesus clearly stated this when He commissioned the disciples:

Matthew 28:19

¹⁹ 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,

THE HOLY SPIRIT POSSESSES ALL THE ATTRIBUTES OF GOD

The Bible gives ample evidence that the Spirit is divine in every way. The Bible attributes all divine attributes to the Holy Spirit. I will mention some of the attributes briefly because we studied many of them in a previous week's study of the Doctrine of God.

The Holy Spirit is eternal

The Bible reveals the Holy Spirit as eternal. Hebrews says,

Hebrews 9:14 (NIV)

¹⁴ How much more, then, will the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered himself unblemished to God, cleanse our consciences from acts that lead to death, so that we may serve the living God!

To be eternal means to always exist. There is no beginning or end. The "eternal Spirit" is co-eternal with the Father and Son. We know the Holy Spirit is divine because He always existed.

The Holy Spirit is omnipresent

The Bible reveals that the Holy Spirit is present in all places at all times. Few will argue that it is only the divine that can accomplish such a feat. Psalms says,

Psalms 139:7-10

⁷ Where can I go from your Spirit? Where can I flee from your presence? ⁸ If I go up to the heavens, you are there; if I make my bed in the depths, you are there. ⁹ If I rise on the wings of the dawn, if I settle on the far side of the sea, ¹⁰ even there your hand will guide me, your right hand will hold me fast.

The Holy Spirit is omnipotent

Only God is able to do what is humanly impossible: create the world from nothing, raise the dead, and control the elements of the universe. The Holy Spirit is always described as having equal powers to God the Father and God the Son. We can see the co-equal omnipotence of the Holy Spirit at work when God the Son was born:

Luke 1:35

³⁵ The angel answered, "The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you. So the holy one to be born will be called the Son of God.

The Holy Spirit is omniscient

The Bible describes the Holy Spirit as all-knowing. God the Father knows all; God the Son knows all; God the Holy Spirit knows all. Everything about God, Christ, man and the spiritual world is known by the Holy Spirit. Paul explains,

1 Corinthians 2:10-11 (NIV)

¹⁰ but God has revealed it to us by his Spirit. The Spirit searches all things, even the deep things of God. ¹¹ For who among men knows the thoughts of a man except the man's spirit within him? In the same way no one knows the thoughts of God except the Spirit of God.

The Holy Spirit is sovereign

To be sovereign is to have all power, rule and authority over everything that exists. It is to be the divine Lord of the universe. Scriptures reveals the Holy Spirit as the Lord who is able to transform hearts.

2 Corinthians 3:17-18

¹⁷ Now the Lord is the Spirit, and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is freedom. ¹⁸ And we, who with unveiled faces all reflect the Lord's glory, are being transformed into his likeness with ever-increasing glory, which comes from the Lord, who is the Spirit.

The Holy Spirit is holy

To say the Holy Spirit is holy may seem redundant but this is the attribute which encompasses all other attributes. To be holy is to be set apart and perfect in every attribute. This attribute is assigned to the Holy Spirit over one hundred times in the Bible. Paul says,

Ephesians 4:30

³⁰ And do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, with whom you were sealed for the day of redemption.

THE HOLY SPIRIT PERFORMS DIVINE WORKS

From *Genesis* through *Revelation* the Bible gives examples of the divine work of the Holy Spirit. The Father, Son and Holy Spirit are co-equal in their ability to perform divine works.



SEARCH THE WORD

Following is a Search the Word assignment. Look up the Scriptures and write in the spaces that follow what divine work is attributed to the Holy Spirit.

- *Genesis 1:2*

- *Romans 8:26-27*

- *Titus 3:5*
- *Romans 8:11*
- *2 Peter 1:20, 21*
- *Revelation 2:26-29*

As you can plainly see, the Holy Spirit's divine fingerprints are seen everywhere from the beginning of time. The Holy Spirit was at work creating the universe (*Genesis 1:2*). The Holy Spirit searches the heart, interceding for us when we can't find words to express our hurts (*Romans 8:26*). The Holy Spirit gives us new life. It is through the Holy Spirit that the new birth occurs (*Titus 3:5*). Scripture says that the Holy Spirit who raised Jesus from the dead will also give us new life (*Titus 3:5*). The Bible was written by the Holy Spirit as men were "carried along" by the Spirit to write down what was given to them as the infallible, authoritative Word of God (*2 Peter 1:20-21*). The Holy Spirit participates with the Father and Son in speaking to the seven churches in the book of Revelation (*Revelation 2:26-29*).

There are many more works of the Holy Spirit that prove that He is divine. I have listed only a few key verses that show that the Holy Spirit is fully God.

THE HOLY SPIRIT HAS DIVINE NAMES

The final evidence the Holy Spirit is divine and co-equal in every way with God the Father and God the Son is that the Spirit is given divine names.



SEARCH THE WORD

To discover some of the divine names attributed to the Holy Spirit look up the following Scriptures. Write the divine names for the Holy Spirit in the space that follows:

- *Exodus 31:3*
- *John 16:13*

- *Romans 8:9*
- *Romans 8:2*
- *2 Samuel 23:2*
- *Matthew 10:20*
- *John 14:26*

The “Spirit of God, the Spirit of truth, Spirit of Christ, The Spirit of life, The Spirit of the LORD, Spirit of your Father, and the Counselor” are just a few of the names of the Holy Spirit given in Scripture. Many of the names are associated with the Father and the Son. Some are distinct names that denote the Holy Spirit’s special role in the Godhead.

CONCLUSION

When we consider what the Bible has to say about the Holy Spirit there can be no doubt that the Holy Spirit is divine and co-equal with the Father and the Son. The overwhelming evidence of Scripture conclusively supports this.

DO! “Watch your life and doctrine closely. Persevere in them...”

- What did today’s study say to you about watching your life and doctrine closely?



WEEK 5 MEMORY ASSIGNMENTS AND REVIEW

Following are key Scriptures to learn this week. Memorize and meditate on these key Scriptures and write them in the space that follows. Memorize the doctrinal covenant.

- Memorize *John 14:16-17*

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Holy Spirit of God; third person of the T_____ ; P_____ ; I
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- Review previous memory projects from your card index file.

PRAYER

Spend time in prayer using the five components of the Lord's Prayer.

DAY 3: THE HOLY SPIRIT IS THE THIRD PERSON OF THE TRINITY

We will now venture into one of the most difficult of all doctrines, the doctrine of the trinity. Trinity is derived from the Latin word *trinitas*, which means “threeness.” (*tri* meaning three and *unity* meaning one) While the word is not found in the Bible it has been used for centuries to describe what is apparent about God in Scriptures—that God is one yet three distinct persons. The doctrine of the Trinity was formally developed in the early church as a reaction to the false teachings of monotheism (belief in one God), while denying the deity of Jesus. Irenaeus, one of the prominent early church fathers, in confronting heresy wrote the following:

“Complete faith in one God Almighty—of Whom are all things, and in the Son of God, Jesus Christ our Lord, by whom are all things and His dispensation by which the Son of God became Man, also a firm trust in the Spirit of God Who hath set forth the dispensations of the Father and the Son, dealing with each successive race of men as the Father willed.”

The doctrine of the trinity was formally stated in the *Nicene Creed* in 325 A.D. Any departure from this creed was considered heresy by the historic church. The *Athanasian Creed* which was written centuries later said,

“So the Father is God; the Son is God; and the Holy Christ is God. And yet there are not three Gods but one God...Neither confounding the Persons, nor dividing the substance.”

THERE IS ONLY ONE GOD

The Bible clearly and consistently states that there is only one God. He is revealed as the Creator and He alone is to be worshipped by all of mankind. Following is a Search the Word study in which you will discover some key verses in the Old and New Testaments that clearly reveal God as being one.



SEARCH THE WORD

Read the following Scriptures and write the key words or phrases that demonstrate that there is only one God:

In the Old Testament:

- *Isaiah 44:6*

- *Deuteronomy 6:4-5*

- *Isaiah 45:5-6*

In these verses God is speaking of Himself. He claims to be *the "Lord Almighty"* who is *"the first and the last"*. It is conclusive. Apart from Him there is no God (*Isaiah 44:6*). In the *Shema* which was Israel's confession of faith which is still quoted by orthodox Jews today, God is said to be one. It begins with *"Hear, O Israel: The Lord our God, the Lord is one."* (*Deut. 6:4-5*). In *Isaiah 45: 5-6*, the prophet makes it abundantly clear that Israel was to acknowledge the one Lord and that apart from the Lord there were no other Gods.

In the New Testament

- *Mark 12:29-30*

- *Corinthians 8:4*

When Jesus was asked which was the greatest commandment He answered by quoting from the *Shema* thereby claiming that there is only one God; *"Hear, O Israel, the Lord our God, the Lord is one"* (*Mark 12: 19-30*). When Paul was teaching the believers in Corinth some important lessons about food sacrificed to idol. He affirmed that there was only one God. He said, *"We know that an idol is nothing at all in the world and that there is no God but one"* (*1 Cor. 8:4*).

THE ONE GOD IS THREE DISTINCT PERSONS

Paul also taught that while there is only one God and that the one God is also three distinct persons with specific roles. Notice how clearly Paul refers to the three distinct persons of the one God:

2 Corinthians 13:14

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. (Bold added)*

This benediction of Paul paints one of the richest pictures of the Trinity. It has survived as part of the Christian tradition quoted in churches for centuries. The phrase or its counterpoint was to end most of Paul's letters. It is indicative of how important Paul thought it was to emphasize the three fold nature of the three persons of the one God.

Paul's emphasis on the Trinity does not stop with this benediction. He often reminded believers of the one God yet three distinct persons. When writing to his disciple Timothy Paul said,

1 Timothy 2:5 (NIV)

⁵ *For there is one God and one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus,*

Paul explained to Timothy that there is only one God and this God is Jesus who mediates between God the Father and men. This is another clear example of the Trinity.



SEARCH THE WORD

Study *Ephesians 4:4-6* and answer the following questions:

- What key words or phrases indicate that there is only one God?

- What key words or phrases indicate that there is one God but three distinct persons?

Paul also taught in his letter to the church in Ephesus that there is only one God but three persons. Even though Paul clearly states that there is only one God, at the same time He refers to one Lord, one Father who is through all and in all. If we look closely we can see one God who is three persons. There is the one *Lord* God; there is the one God who is *Father* of all; there is the one God who is *through all and in all*. God the Son, God the Father and God the Holy Spirit are consistently referred to as one God as the following Scriptures indicate:

- **God is Father**

Colossians 1:3

³ *We always thank God, the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, when we pray for you*

- **God is Son**

Colossians 2:9

⁹ *For in Christ all the fullness of the Deity lives in bodily form*

- **God is Holy Spirit**

1 Corinthians 3:16

¹⁶ *Don't you know that you yourselves are God's temple and that God's Spirit lives in you?*

When writing to the church in Rome Paul gave the historical setting for the Trinity through the prophets.

Romans 1:1-4

¹ *Paul, a servant of Christ Jesus, called to be an apostle and set apart for the gospel of God— ² the gospel he promised beforehand through his prophets in the Holy Scriptures ³ regarding his Son, who as to his human nature was a descendant of David, ⁴ and who through the Spirit of holiness was declared with power to be the Son of God by his resurrection from the dead: Jesus Christ our Lord.*

Paul starts this letter on salvation by grace through faith alone with a brief historical review of the gospel. First, Paul mentions he was set apart for the “*gospel of God* “. God the Father is the architect of salvation—the source of all things. Prophets foretold in the Holy Scriptures of the coming of the “*Son of God*” who was

the provider of salvation through His death and resurrection. The “*Spirit of Holiness*” was the declarer of salvation.

- ❖ The Holy Trinity works together in perfect unity as a team to bring about salvation. (*Rom. 8; Eph. 1:3-14; 2 Thess. 2:13-14; 1 Peter 1:2*)

THE SACRED MYSTERY

By now I am sure your head is spinning. You are probably wondering if you will ever fully understand what is sometimes referred to as “the sacred mystery of the Trinity”. The answer is no. You and I or any biblical scholar no matter how astute will never fully comprehend this doctrine. There is a limit to what the finite mind can understand about the infinite. It is God who sets these boundaries. He does, however, give us enough understanding. Professor J. Kenneth Grider in an article on “The Holy Trinity” in *Christianity Today* put it well:

“Off with our shoes, please, for the Holy Trinity is holy ground. Away with figured syllogisms and ordinary arithmetic: Here logic and mathematics do not suffice. The need is rather for a listening ear, an obedient heart (John 7:17) rapt adoration, a careful engagement with the Holy Scriptures. ”

It was the statesman Daniel Webster who once said, “*Do you expect to understand the arithmetic of heaven?*” The arithmetic of heaven in this case is that one is three and three is one. It is the Bible alone that is the authority for the doctrine of the Trinity. It is a doctrine clearly revealed by God in Scripture and is to be believed by us through faith. Faith never rejects nor abandons reason but we can never depend on reason alone to understand the mysteries of God. God reminds us in Scripture that some things will always be beyond our comprehension. After explaining how God brought His great plan of salvation to both the Jews and the Gentiles Paul concludes by praising the awesome omniscience of God in this doxology:

Romans 11:33-36

³³ *Oh, the depth of the riches of the wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable his judgments, and his paths beyond tracing out!* ³⁴ *“Who has known the mind of the Lord? Or who has been his counselor?”* ³⁵ *“Who has ever given to God, that God should repay him?”* ³⁶ *For from him and through him and to him are all things. To him be the glory forever! Amen.*



HERESY-FALSE RELIGION ALERT!

The Scripture clearly teaches there is one God. Perhaps the best way to clarify this is to see how false religions have perverted this teaching.

- Jehovah’s Witnesses contend that God is not one person. Rather there is the Father, with Jesus as a creation and the Holy Spirit as a force.
- Mormons believe that the Trinity is an office held by three separated Gods.
- Modalism is a philosophy that states that the Trinity involves three roles played by one person.
- Tritheism holds that the three Gods are in a cluster.

The doctrine of the Trinity is an essential foundation of the Christian faith. It must not be altered in any way. Any non-Trinitarian formulation of this doctrine must fall under the category of false teaching and, as we have seen, often heresy. This would include:

- Denial of the oneness, unity and uniqueness of God.
- Denial of the eternal deity of each person of the Trinity.
- Denial of the three distinct personalities or persons.
- Denial of the two, distinct natures of Christ.

CONCLUSION

Throughout the Bible we see the perfect unity of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit. They are always together, always cooperating with one another. The Father often is seen initiating, the Son complying with the Father's wishes and the Spirit carrying out the will of both. . They have separate roles and yet are one. They are co-eternal, co-equal and co-powerful. Jesus included the Trinity in "The Great Commission."

Matthew 28:18-20

¹⁸ Then Jesus came to them and said, "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. ¹⁹ 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, ²⁰ and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age."

Our task is not to get caught up in trying to totally understand something that is unfathomable to the finite mind, but to trust that the Trinity is true and respond in obedience to the ministry of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit in our lives.

DO! "Watch your life and doctrine closely. Persevere in them..."

➤ What did today's study say to you about watching your life and doctrine closely?



WEEK 5 MEMORY ASSIGNMENTS AND REVIEW

Following are key Scriptures to learn this week. Memorize and meditate on this key Scripture and write it in the space that follows. Memorize the doctrinal covenant.

- Memorize - *John 14:16-17*

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Holy Spirit of God; third person of the T_____ ; P_____ ; I
covenant this day to be f_____ with your p _____ and power,
o_____ you in all things.

- Review previous memory projects from your card index file.

PRAYER

Spend time in prayer using the five components of the Lord's Prayer.

DAY 4: THE HOLY SPIRIT IS A PERSONAL BEING

Because the Holy Spirit does not have a name and role with whom we can easily identify in human terms it is more difficult to view God the Spirit as a personal being. We know what a Father is. We know what a Son is. But what or who is a Holy Spirit? In Scripture the Holy Spirit is referred to in such terms as breath, wind, or power. Symbols that are used to describe the Holy Spirit are oil, fire, and water (*John 3:5-8; Acts 2:1-4; John 20:22; 1 John 2:20*). You can see why it is easier to think of the Holy Spirit as a divine agent, power or force rather than a personal being.

But the Bible depicts the Holy Spirit not as an impersonal entity but as a personal being. The Spirit is given personal attributes such as emotions, actions, intellect and relationships. The Holy Spirit is not merely a divine something but a divine someone! We will look at Scriptures that clearly demonstrate that the Holy Spirit is as personal as the Father and Son.

NAMES THAT IMPLY THAT THE HOLY SPIRIT IS PERSONAL

The seemingly impersonal terms given the Holy Spirit are used to describe certain works that the Spirit performs. They may seem impersonal but are part of the personality of a divine person. There are also names given the Holy Spirit that can only be personal. Following are a few:

- **“Comforter”**

John 14:16

¹⁶ And I will ask the Father, and he will give you another Counselor to be with you forever —

Counselor is a very personal term. It cannot be used to describe an impersonal being or force. In *1 John 1:21* the same word is used for Christ. That is because Jesus personally sent the Holy Spirit to take His place in our lives. He (the Spirit) takes the place of a person and therefore is a person not just an influence.

- **“Spirit of Christ”**

Romans 8:9

⁹ You, however, are controlled not by the sinful nature but by the Spirit, if the Spirit of God lives in you. And if anyone does not have the Spirit of Christ, he does not belong to Christ.

When Paul describes the third person of the Trinity he describes the personal Spirit of Christ not a Spirit or force like Christ. The Spirit is Christ—personal—living in us. If we do not have the personal Spirit of Christ we do not belong to Christ.

- **“He”**

John 16:13-15

¹³ But when he, the Spirit of truth, comes, he will guide you into all truth. He will not speak on his own; he will speak only what he hears, and he will tell you what is yet to come. ¹⁴ He will bring glory

to me by taking from what is mine and making it known to you. ¹⁵ All that belongs to the Father is mine. That is why I said the Spirit will take from what is mine and make it known to you.

The Greek masculine pronoun *ekeinos* (he, that one) is used of the Spirit. This is important to note because the Greek word generally used for spirit is *puenuma* and therefore would have a neuter pronoun. But when the Spirit is referred to in the following verses, it is the masculine pronoun that is used asserting a personality or a personal being. It is the same masculine pronoun that is used of Christ in *1 John 2:6; 3:3; 5, 7, 16*.

CHARACTERISTICS THAT PROVE THAT THE HOLY SPIRIT IS PERSONAL

We were created in the image of God with a soul consisting of the mind, the will and the emotions. No one would argue that these are not personal characteristics. These form the basis of our personality. Jesus exhibited these personal characteristics as does the Holy Spirit.



SEARCH THE WORD

The following Scriptures speak of the mind, the will, and the emotions of the Holy Spirit. Look up the Scriptures and write what shows that these characteristics are personal.

- **Mind**
Romans 8:27

- **Will**
Acts 16:6-7

- **Emotions**
Romans 15:30

The Spirit has a mind that thinks, plans, purposes, and discerns--all attributes of a personality. The Holy Spirit has the perfect mind which is the mind of Christ. He is the Spirit of wisdom and knows the thoughts of God. (*1 Cor. 2:10, 11*).

With our will we act and make decisions based on what we think, want and feel. The Holy Spirit also acts in a way that indicates personality. It was the Holy Spirit that exercised His will when Paul and those who accompanied him tried to enter Bithynia. It was the person of the *Spirit of Jesus* that exercised His will and would not allow them to enter.

Our emotions are an integral part of our personality. With our emotions we experience such feelings as love, hate, anger, grief and joy. The Holy Spirit displays emotions. The Spirit experiences the emotions of love, comforts us out of compassion and can feel grief (*Eph. 4:30*).

ACTIONS THAT IMPLY THAT THE HOLY SPIRIT IS PERSONAL

There are over 150 passages in Scripture that mention the actions of the Holy Spirit. If the Holy Spirit is not personal these actions would be impersonal and not mean much to us. Here are just a few personal actions of the Holy Spirit:

The Holy Spirit prays for us

Prayer is possible only for a person, and Paul says that the Holy Spirit prays for us.

Romans 8:26 (NIV)

²⁶ In the same way, the Spirit helps us in our weakness. We do not know what we ought to pray for, but the Spirit himself intercedes for us with groans that words cannot express.

What can be more personal than someone praying for us? The Spirit knows us so well that even when we are so weak that we don't know to pray for ourselves, He intercedes on our behalf. He prays that the Father will meet our real needs.

The Holy Spirit communicates with us

Speech is also a personal attribute. Communication is a huge part of personal relationships. We relate to people largely through our communication with them. The Scripture says that the Holy Spirit has the personal attribute of communication. He speaks. The book of Revelation says,

Revelation 2:7

⁷ He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches. To him who overcomes, I will give the right to eat from the tree of life, which is in the paradise of God.

The Holy Spirit speaks to us about our salvation. The Holy is a personal being who places a seal on our hearts that assures our salvation (*Eph. 1:13*). The sealing satisfies both the sin and sonship issues. We can be confident that we are God's children and that we are eternally secure in His family. Our assurance happens because the Holy Spirit speaks into our hearts that assurance. Paul says,

Romans 8: 16

¹⁶ "The Spirit himself testifies with our spirit that we are God's children"

The Holy Spirit leads us

An impersonal influence or power is unable to give direct counsel or guidance. Those of us who are sons and daughters of God are personally led by the Holy Spirit. He guides our steps. Paul says,

Romans 8:13-14

¹³ 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, ¹⁴ because those who are led by the Spirit of God are sons of God.

The Holy Spirit teaches us

John 14:26

²⁶ But the Counselor, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, will teach you all things and will remind you of everything I have said to you.

One of the personal tasks of the Holy Spirit is that of teacher. The Holy Spirit is the Spirit of Truth and enables us to know the truth of God. The Holy Spirit illuminates Scripture and helps us apply it to our lives. (*Eph. 6:17; 1 Cor. 2:10-16*).

The Holy Spirit fellowships with us

You cannot have fellowship with a force or impersonal being. Fellowship requires a personal relationship between two or more people. In several of his Trinitarian benedictions Paul mentions the fellowship of the Holy Spirit.

2 Corinthians 13:14

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.

The fellowship of the Holy Spirit indwells all believers. The Spirit that lives in us and fellowships with us enables us to have true fellowship with others.



REFLECT AND RESPOND

Read *Philippians 2: 1-2*. What does this passage say about the fellowship of the Spirit? How have you seen the Holy Spirit producing fellowship between believers?

THE HOLY SPIRIT PERSONALLY INDWELLS US

On the day of Pentecost there was a pouring out of the Holy Spirit accompanied by miraculous signs and wonders. The outpouring of the Holy Spirit occurred on other special occasions that called for a demonstration of God's power. The outpouring that occurred on the Day of Pentecost was evidence that Christ's church had been established and that salvation was available to everyone. No one could miss that this outpouring of the Spirit was an act of God. This was followed shortly by Peter's message where three thousand people were saved.

The indwelling is a personal gift

The Holy Spirit is a personal gift from God that everyone receives at the moment of their conversion. When the people asked what they needed to do to be saved Peter replied,

Acts 2:38 (NIV)

³⁸“Repent and be baptized, every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins. And you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.

On the Day of Pentecost the three thousand people who were saved received the indwelling presence of the Holy Spirit. Obviously these people were not mature believers. They were new believers who knew little other than their need for Christ and how to receive Him. Every believer, no matter how imperfect he may be, has this indwelling of the Holy Spirit. Christ has taken up residence in his life. The Holy Spirit is for every believer. Paul says,

1 Corinthians 3:16 (NIV)

¹⁶Don't you know that you yourselves are God's temple and that God's Spirit lives in you?

The indwelling is permanent

The gift of the Holy Spirit is never withdrawn from the true believer. The Spirit is a permanent resident who also has ownership of our lives. Paul asks,

1 Corinthians 6:19

¹⁹Do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit, who is in you, whom you have received from God? You are not your own;

The indwelling is not the infilling

Ephesians 5:18

¹⁸Do not get drunk on wine, which leads to debauchery. Instead, be filled with the Spirit.

While everyone has the gift of the Holy Spirit or the indwelling, not everyone has the infilling of the Holy Spirit. While the indwelling of the Holy Spirit is a gift that requires no initial or continuing action of our own other than to receive Christ, the infilling of the Holy Spirit requires our participation. To be filled with the Spirit is to be under the complete control of the Spirit. On day five we will dig deeper into how the Holy Spirit fills the believer.

DO! “Watch your life and doctrine closely. Persevere in them...”

➤ What did today's study say to you about watching your life and doctrine closely?



WEEK 5 MEMORY ASSIGNMENTS AND REVIEW

Following are key Scriptures to learn this week. Memorize and meditate on this key Scripture and write it in the space that follows. Memorize the doctrinal covenant.

- Memorize - *John 14:16-17*

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Holy Spirit of God; third person of the T_____ ; P_____ ; I
covenant this day to be f_____ with your p _____and power,
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- Review previous memory projects from your card index file.

PRAYER

Spend time in prayer using the five components of the Lord's Prayer.

DAY 5: THE WORK OF THE HOLY SPIRIT

Much of what we have already discussed has involved the work of the Holy Spirit. In this last day of study we will look at five specific works of the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit works in a very personal way in our lives to demonstrate God's love for us and transform us into the likeness of Christ.

THE HOLY SPIRIT IS OUR PARACLETE

John 14:15-17 (NIV)

¹⁵ "If you love me, you will obey what I command. ¹⁶ And I will ask the Father, and he will give you another Counselor to be with you forever — ¹⁷ the Spirit of truth. The world cannot accept him, because it neither sees him nor knows him. But you know him, for he lives with you and will be in you.

The Paraclete supports us

The Holy Spirit is our *Paraclete*. *Paraclete*, translated "counselor", comes from the Greek word *parakletos*. The primary meaning is one who gives support. *Paraclete* includes the following: supporter, advisor, strengthener, ally, encourager, and advocate. In the previous passage Jesus promises His disciples to give them "...another Counselor..." that will be with them forever. This counselor or *Paraclete* will indwell them and never leave them. The Paraclete is Christ's "representative" when He ascended to the right hand of the Father. The Holy Spirit is our personal Paraclete.

Jesus tells His disciples that He is going away but He will not leave them alone. They depended on His support. He had been with them for three years. Jesus knew that His continued support, encouragement, strengthening and counsel would be essential for the tasks ahead. Because of this He assures them of His continuing support through the *Paraclete*. That same *Paraclete* is our personal ally and support. The Holy Spirit knows us intimately and gives us exactly the kind of support we need.



REFLECT AND RESPOND

Reflect for a few moments on the importance of the Holy Spirit (*Paraclete*) being your primary ally and supporter. Make a commitment to never forget His support is always there; strengthening, encouraging and caring about your burdens.

❖ Spend some time in prayer thanking the *Paraclete* for his support.

The Paraclete teaches us

John 14:25-26 (NIV)

²⁵ "All this I have spoken while still with you. ²⁶ But the Counselor, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, will teach you all things and will remind you of everything I have said to you.

A primary ministry of the *Paraclete* is to give us ongoing teaching and counsel. The Word is "God breathed" by the Holy Spirit (2 Peter 1:20-21). It is the Spirit's "sword" which He uses to judge our thoughts and actions (Heb. 4:12).



SEARCH THE WORD

Read 2 *Timothy* 3:16-17 and answer the following questions:

- How what ways does the *Paraclete* teach us?

- What is the goal of the *Paraclete* in teaching us?

The *Paraclete* illuminates our minds so we can understand Scripture. He reminds us of God's Word. How quickly we can forget the whole counsel of God. He is our guide (*Romans* 8:14; *Gal.* 5:16, 25). The goal of the *Paraclete* is to make us holy so we will be thoroughly equipped to do the will of God (every good work). The teaching includes showing us how to stay on the right path, rebuking us when we get off the path, showing us how to get back on the path (correcting) and training us to stay on the path.

THE HOLY SPIRIT FILLS US

Ephesians 5:18 (NIV)

¹⁸ Do not get drunk on wine, which leads to debauchery. Instead, be filled with the Spirit.

At the moment of our conversion we are given the gift of the Holy Spirit (*Acts* 2:38). At that very moment the Spirit indwells us with His personal presence as Christ's representative (*1 Cor.* 3:16). Whether we feel His presence or not He is always fully there. No matter how imperfect we may be the Spirit never leaves us (*Heb.* 13: 5).

God's responsibility – our responsibility

God also wants us to be "... filled with the Spirit..." (*Eph.* 5:18). This requires the continuous action of filling by the Holy Spirit and the continuous action of receiving by us. God's part is to supernaturally fill us up to full and overflowing with His Spirit. We can never fill ourselves. God does require us to open our lives up to Him so He can fill us. Our part is to always remain in a position to be filled. We cannot be filled if we separate ourselves from God's filling station. That would be like driving into a gas station and trying to fill up our gas tank when we are out of reach from the pump. It would be impossible. Neither is it possible to be filled with the Holy Spirit if we do not position ourselves to be filled.

Abiding/remaining

We are in position to be filled when we "abide" (NASB) or "remain" (NIV) attached to the Vine of Jesus. Jesus made this clear to His disciples:

John 15:1-5

¹ "I am the true vine, and my Father is the gardener. ² He cuts off every branch in me that bears no fruit, while every branch that does bear fruit he prunes so that it will be even more fruitful. ³ You are already clean because of the word I have spoken to you. ⁴ Remain in me, and I will remain in you. No

branch can bear fruit by itself; it must remain in the vine. Neither can you bear fruit unless you remain in me. ⁵ "I am the vine; you are the branches. If a man remains in me and I in him, he will bear much fruit; apart from me you can do nothing.

We stay connected to the vine when we stay in intimate fellowship with the Father, Son and Holy Spirit. We do this by making a priority of staying in the Word and praying. From these essential disciplines God's filling flows into us bearing much fruit in our lives. Spirit filled lives are fruit bearing lives.

Relinquishment

To be filled with the Holy Spirit means to be under the control of the Holy Spirit. It requires us to give over control to God. It means allowing God to do His work in and through us as we die to ourselves and trust Him for the results (*John 12:23-28*). Henerietta Mears, the founder of Gospel Light Publishing Company, learned this valuable lesson at a time when she doubted her own abilities.

*"I felt absolutely powerless from the thought that I could possibly live up to what my mother had been and had done, and I prayed that if God had anything for me to do that he would supply the power. I read my Bible for every reference to the Holy Spirit and his power. The greatest revelation came to me when I saw that there was nothing I had to do to receive his power but to submit to Christ, to allow him to control me. I had been trying to do everything myself; now I let Christ take me completely. I said to Christ that if he wanted anything from me that he would have to do it himself. My life was changed from that moment on. (Ethel May Baldwin and David Benson; *Henrietta Mears and how she did it; Gospel Light Publications 1966, p. 159*)*

What Henrietta Mears learned we all need to learn. To be filled with the Holy Spirit the only thing we have to do is to relinquish control of our lives and submit to Christ and allow Him to control us.

THE HOLY SPIRIT PRODUCES FRUIT IN US

The power to bear fruit

When we relinquish control and allow the Holy Spirit to fill us and control us we will bear much fruit (*John 15:5*). The desire and the power to bear fruit is a direct result of a life that is filled (possessed) by the Spirit.



SEARCH THE WORD

Read *Ephesians 3: 16-17* and answer the questions that follow:

- How does Paul say that we are strengthened? Where does this strength originate?

- What is the goal?

The power to bear the fruit of character in our lives comes from the Holy Spirit. We cannot change our character on our own. Bearing the fruit of the Spirit is a divine act of the Holy Spirit. Paul prayed that God would strengthen the believers in Ephesus "...with power thorough his Spirit in your inner being" (Eph. 3:16). This was so that Christ would "dwell" in their hearts through faith. The word "dwell" denotes Christ taking up permanent residency in a person's life so that He is in complete control.

The fruit of character

Galatians 5:16, 22-23(NIV)

¹⁶ So I say, live by the Spirit, and you will not gratify the desires of the sinful nature. ..²² But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, ²³ gentleness and self-control. Against such things there is no law.

Paul tells the believers in Galatia that if they will live by the Spirit, the Holy Spirit will produce the fruit of character in them. (Galatians 5:16, 22-23). And finally to the Romans Paul stresses that they are controlled by the Spirit if the Spirit of God lives in them.

Romans 8:9

⁹ You, however, are controlled not by the sinful nature but by the Spirit, if the Spirit of God lives in you. And if anyone does not have the Spirit of Christ, he does not belong to Christ.

The only path that leads to spiritual growth is through the power of the Holy Spirit.

THE HOLY SPIRIT IMPARTS GIFTS

One of the primary ways that the Holy Spirit empowers us for service is through giving us special abilities. The Bible calls these abilities spiritual gifts. They are given to all believers to enable each person to serve others in the name of Jesus. Paul went into great detail when he instructed the church in Corinth how to use these gifts of the Spirit. What Paul says about how these gifts are to be used is included in *Spiritual Boot Camp* so I will only mention them briefly here. Paul says:

1 Corinthians 12:4, 11 (NIV)

⁴ There are different kinds of gifts, but the same Spirit...¹¹ All these are the work of one and the same Spirit, and he gives them to each one, just as he determines.

All spiritual gifts come from the Holy Spirit. The Spirit knows the work that needs to be accomplished and He determines what gifts we need to accomplish God's purposes.

The Apostle Peter also emphasized that these gifts were to be used to serve others. He said:

1 Peter 4:10 (NIV)

¹⁰ Each one should use whatever gift he has received to serve others, faithfully administering God's grace in its various forms.

The gifts of the Spirit are given so the body of Christ can function properly. They are always to serve others so the grace of God can make the body of Christ effective.

THE HOLY SETS US APART FOR SERVICE

Acts 13:2-4 (NIV)

² While they were worshipping the Lord and fasting, the Holy Spirit said, "Set apart for me Barnabas and Saul for the work to which I have called them." ³ So after they had fasted and prayed, they placed their hands on them and sent them off. ⁴ The two of them, sent on their way by the Holy Spirit, went down to Seleucia and sailed from there to Cyprus.

The Holy Spirit sets us aside for special tasks of service. An example of this is when Paul and Barnabas were set aside by the Holy Spirit during a time of worship and fasting. The Holy Spirit said, "Set apart for me Barnabas and Saul for the work to which I have called them" (Acts 13:2). The Holy Spirit is not an exclusive sending agent only for Paul and Barnabas. The same Holy Spirit will set us apart for the work He has for us. We will hear the Spirit's voice most clearly in times of prayer and fasting.

When we have been set aside for service, the Holy Spirit also empowers us to do for God that which we could never do on our own. There are countless examples of this in the Bible. One example of how the Spirit guides and empowers His servants was when Philip was traveling from Jerusalem to Gaza on a desert road. An angel told Philip to meet the Ethiopian eunuch who would be traveling in a chariot reading the book of Isaiah. The Spirit guided and empowered Philip for the God's task. "The Spirit told Philip; 'Go to that chariot and stay near it' (Acts 8:29). What transpired next is one of the great stories of God's grace coming to people who earnestly seek Him. The eunuch understood the gospel and said, "...Look, here is water. Why shouldn't I be baptized" (Acts 8:36).

DO! "Watch your life and doctrine closely. Persevere in them..."

➤ What did today's study say to you about watching your life and doctrine closely?



WEEK 5 MEMORY ASSIGNMENTS AND REVIEW

Following is the key Scripture to learn this week. Memorize and meditate on this key Scripture and write it in the space that follows. Memorize the doctrinal covenant.

- Memorize - *John 14:16-17*

- Memorize the Doctrinal Covenant

Holy Spirit of God; third person of the T_____ ; P_____ ; I
covenant this day to be f_____ with your p _____ and power,
o_____ you in all things.

- Review previous memory projects from your card index file.

PRAYER

Spend time in prayer using the five components of the Lord's Prayer.



WEEK 5

WEEKLY ACCOUNTABILITY

"All you have to do from the time you get up in the morning until the time you go to bed at night is love the Lord with all your heart; trust His promises; obey His commands. Everything else flows from that." (Bill Bright)

Be ready to share the following with your group:

- **Love the Lord with all your heart**

In what ways did I or did I not demonstrate my love of God by seeking Him with all my heart?

In what ways did I or did I not allow God's love to flow through me to others including spouse, family and others?

- **Trust God's promises**

To what degree did I or didn't I demonstrate completely trust in God's promises this week?

What was my greatest test of faith?

- **Obey God's commands**

Are there weaknesses or sins I need to confess?

Did I faithfully complete all assignments this week?

In what ways did I witness to the lost this week: (prayer, share, serve, encourage)

WEEK 6

THE DOCTRINE OF SALVATION

“The consequences of sin are severe... He became an enemy of God in his mind and behavior. The result was a death sentence that could not be overturned by any human means”

This week we are privileged to study the great doctrine of salvation. This study is divided into two parts. First we will examine the amazing grace of God and how, in His mercy He reached out to us through His Son and reconciled us to Himself. The second part of the week we will look at five key words of salvation. When you complete this week's study you will have a firm grasp of the important doctrine of salvation. Memorizing the doctrinal covenant this week will be challenging but you will find it personally rewarding and a valuable tool in sharing the gospel clearly and succinctly with others.

WEEK 6 STUDY

PART 1: AMAZING GRACE

DAY 1: SEPERATED AND RECONCILED

DAY 2: ADOPTED AND SEALED

PART 2: FIVE KEY WORDS OF SALVATION

DAY 3: REDEMPTION, JUSTIFICATION,

DAY 4: RIGHTEOUSNESS, REBIRTH

DAY 5: SANTIFICIATON

ASSIGNMENTS:

- **Memorize and meditate on**

Romans 3:23-24

²³ for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, ²⁴ and are justified freely by his grace through the redemption that came by Christ Jesus.

- **Memorize the doctrinal covenant**

I have been saved by grace alone through faith alone. I am redeemed by the blood of the Lamb; justified by a verdict of not guilty; made righteous by the righteousness of Christ; born again by the Spirit; sanctified to be holy.

- Complete all study and review assignments. Review memory work from past courses at least once a week.
- Prepare your memory/review index card. Write your memory verse for the week on one side and the Doctrinal Covenant on the other.

PART 1: AMAZING GRACE

DAY 1: SEPARATED AND RECONCILED

❖ **GRACE:** *“The undeserved gift of God’s love and forgiveness at Christ’s expense”*

John Newton, a young Englishman in the 1700’s, was aboard a ship when it encountered a violent storm. Terrified and thinking he might die he cried out for God and God answered. It was this experience that compelled him to pen one of the most beloved hymns of all time. The words to Amazing Grace are a fitting way to begin this study of the Doctrine of Salvation.

AMAZING GRACE

*Amazing grace how sweet the sound
That saved a wretch like me
I once was lost, but now am found
Was blind but now I see*

*It was grace that taught my heart to fear
And grace my fears relieved
How precious did that grace appear
The hour I first believed*

*Through many dangers, toils and snares
I have already overcome
It was grace that led me safe thus far
And grace will bring me home*

*When we’ve been there ten thousand years
Bright shining as the sun
We’ve no less days to sing God’s praise
Than when we first begun*

SEPARATED FROM GOD

Like John Newton we all were lost at one time and in need of a Savior. The story of grace is how you were found and rescued from spiritual death. It is your own amazing story of amazing grace.

Sin entered the world through Adam and Even

Genesis 3:1-5 (NIV)

¹ Now the serpent was more crafty than any of the wild animals the LORD God had made. He said to the woman, “Did God really say, ‘You must not eat from any tree in the garden?’” ² The woman said to the serpent, “We may eat fruit from the trees in the garden, ³ but God did say, ‘You must not eat

fruit from the tree that is in the middle of the garden, and you must not touch it, or you will die.’ ”⁴ “You will not surely die,” the serpent said to the woman.⁵ “For God knows that when you eat of it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God,

Adam and Eve allowed the tempter to deceive them. The “father of lies” led them to question God’s sole and absolute authority in their lives. They were told they could have greater significance outside of God’s reign if they would live independent of Him. The great lie was based on the core belief that they could “...be like God” (Genesis 3:5). They were led to believe that they could not trust God to provide adequately for them.

Genesis 3:6-7

⁶ When the woman saw that the fruit of the tree was good for food and pleasing to the eye, and also desirable for gaining wisdom, she took some and ate it. She also gave some to her husband, who was with her, and he ate it. ⁷ Then the eyes of both of them were opened, and they realized they were naked; so they sewed fig leaves together and made coverings for themselves.

Satan’s message was enticingly deceptive; “You can do better by being your own authority and providing for yourself. You don’t really need God.” As a result of listening to this great lie they allowed their desire for independence to lead to sin. They rebelled by eating of the forbidden fruit. The result of sin was separation from God. Adam and Eve were expelled from the garden that God had created for them and they became alienated from God

Genesis 3:23

²³ So the LORD God banished him from the Garden of Eden to work the ground from which he had been taken.

Every sin is to some degree a result of believing the “great lie” that we can have greater significance apart from God. When we believe this lie we fail to trust God for His provisions, and we live independently from Him.

We all have sinned

Through Adam and Eve’s rebellion and act of disobedience sin entered into the world. Paul explains:

Romans 5:12

¹² Therefore, just as sin entered the world through one man, and death through sin, and in this way death came to all men, because all sinned.

We likewise have a rebellious sin nature. The self-centered, God minimizing mindset and immoral nature of Adam and Eve was passed on to all their decedents. Whether you believe that we were born sinners (original sin), or that we were predisposed to sin because of our sin nature, the results are the same. We all sin.

We all fall short and miss God’s mark of perfection

Sin is rebelling against God and missing the mark. Paul says,

Romans 3:23 (NIV)

²³ for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God,

Sin has caused all of us to go astray and follow our own desires. Sin has caused us to rebel and attempt to be our own gods. We are all separated from God and in need of His grace. The prophet Isaiah proclaims:

Isaiah 53:6 (NIV)

⁶ We all, like sheep, have gone astray, each of us has turned to his own way; and the LORD has laid on him the iniquity of us all.

God's standard is perfection

Because God is a holy God His standard is perfection and cannot tolerate sin. The prophet Habakkuk speaks of this perfection:

Habakkuk 1:13

¹³ Your eyes are too pure to look on evil; you cannot tolerate wrong. Why then do you tolerate the treacherous? Why are you silent while the wicked swallow up those more righteous than themselves?

We are all alienated from God and face a death sentence and are unable to save ourselves

Because God cannot tolerate sin no one can be reconciled to God on their own. Because we all have sinned and have no way of removing the stain of sin and because God cannot look on evil we need God's grace. The stain of sin must be completely removed from our lives so that we are perfect in His sight. Until that happens we remain alienated from God and face a death sentence. We are unable to save ourselves. No amount of good works or striving for moral perfection will close the gap. We will always come up short. Paul warns the believers in Rome about this death sentence:

Romans 6:23 (NIV)

²³ For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.

Romans 8:6-8 (NIV)

⁶ The mind of sinful man is death, but the mind controlled by the Spirit is life and peace; ⁷ the sinful mind is hostile to God. It does not submit to God's law, nor can it do so. ⁸ Those controlled by the sinful nature cannot please God.

The consequences of sin are severe. When man was separated from God by sin he lost his privileged relationship with God and his home in the Garden of Eden. He became an enemy of God in his mind and behavior. The result was a death sentence that could not be overturned by any human means (*Romans 6:23; 8:6*). The mind of the sinful man would only result in death because it was hostile to God. But wait! After the first act of rebellion God offered a solution. Even as Adam and Eve were being evicted from the Garden of Eden God promised a path to reconciliation. He said to the Serpent:

Genesis 3:15

¹⁵ And I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your offspring and hers; he will crush your head, and you will strike his heel.

This is a description of the war between Satan and God—good and evil. The offspring of the woman (Jesus) would eventually crush the serpent's head (Satan). God promised that man could be reconciled to Him

through the sacrificial death of Jesus on the cross. Man's sin was atoned for by the blood of the Lamb and Satan's destiny was predicted at that moment (See *Rom. 16:20*).



FALSE TEACHING ALERT

False teaching occurs when behavior condemned in Scripture is tolerated or excused in any way

I am concerned by the writings and teachings of Joel Osteen, best-selling author and pastor of the largest church in America. I am concerned about what he doesn't say about the serious nature of sin.

Although I do believe Osteen is sincere in wanting to help people I think he is misguided in how he is going about it. It is what he doesn't say about sin and repentance that causes me to classify his teaching as false. Not only does he not preach about the gravity of sin and the need for repentance he minimizes both. In an appearance on the Larry King show, he said the following

OSTEEN: I have thoughts. I just, you know, I don't think that a same-sex marriage is the way God intended it to be. I don't think abortion is the best. I think there are other, you know, a better way to live your life. But I'm not going to condemn those people. I tell them all the time our church is open for everybody.

KING: You don't call them sinners?

OSTEEN: I don't.

KING: Is that a word you don't use?

OSTEEN: I don't use it. I never thought about it. But I probably don't. But most people already know what they're doing wrong. When I get them to church I want to tell them that you can change. There can be a difference in your life. So I don't go down the road of condemning.

Those words are alarming. Although he later apologized for not taking a firmer stand on sin, it does seem to be his method of operation. He just does not want to offend anyone so he says only positive things and avoids all issues associated with sin. Add to this the subtle elements of humanism and you have what I regard as false teaching.

RECONCILED TO GOD

Grace and truth

The Bible never minimizes the seriousness of all sin and its consequences. It matters not what we think about sin. It does not matter what other people think about sin. It really should not matter to us what they think about our stand on sin. God sets the standard for right and wrong. The only truth is His truth. He is the sole and absolute authority for right and wrong. At the same time the Bible always emphasizes the grace of God. We should always show grace and respect for people. We are to be gentle and loving in the way we express our beliefs. Jesus was one hundred percent grace and one hundred percent truth. John said,

John 1:14

¹⁴ The Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us. We have seen his glory, the glory of the One and Only, who came from the Father, full of grace and truth.

Jesus came to earth full of grace and truth to offer reconciliation to all God's lost children no matter their condition. Jesus came with the answer to every type of lifestyle, sin and rebellion. Jesus said,

Luke 19:10

¹⁰ *For the Son of Man came to seek and to save what was lost."*

We are saved because of God's amazing grace

When the Bible speaks of truth and sin it always offers reconciliation through the gift of grace. Paul says,

Romans 6:23 (NIV)

²³ *For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.*

It is because of God's amazing grace that everyone is offered the gift of grace. Every person is deeply loved by the heavenly Father. He wants every person to experience His grace. It is God's grace--his offer of unconditional love of His Son for the forgiveness of our sins-- that reconciles us to God.

Ephesians 2:8-9 (NIV)

⁸ *For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith—and this not from yourselves, it is the gift of God—* ⁹ *not by works, so that no one can boast.*

Grace is the unmerited favor of God in our lives. It is given to us because of God's provision for our sins through the death of His Son. We are saved by grace because Christ has paid the penalty for our sins, period. We can add nothing to grace. The Bible makes it crystal clear that we are saved through grace alone. There is nothing we can do to earn eternal life. This makes the Christian faith different from all other religions. It is the difference between "Do" and "Done". In all other religions there is something you must "do" to earn eternal life. In the Christian life all has been "done" through the sacrifice of Jesus Christ on the cross. It is the gift of God.

We must put our faith in Jesus Christ

We must put our faith in Jesus Christ but even our faith comes from God. It is the work of the Holy Spirit, drawing us to Jesus. It comes through the Spirit empowered Word of God.

Romans 10:17 (NIV)

¹⁷ *Consequently, faith comes from hearing the message, and the message is heard through the word of Christ.*

While God puts faith in our hearts He requires us to respond to that faith. We respond by saying "yes" to God's invitation to receive Jesus. We must RSVP to His personal invitation.

John 1:12 (NIV)

¹² *Yet to all who received him, to those who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God—*

Romans 10:9 (NIV)

⁹ *That if you confess with your mouth, "Jesus is Lord," and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved.*

We must repent

Scripture tells us to repent. Repentance is our response to God convicting us of our sin and our lost condition. It requires our action but is also a divine gift. It is not something we do on our own. It is initiated by God. God puts it in our hearts to repent and then gives us the power to respond in obedience.

Acts 11:18 (NIV)

¹⁸ When they heard this, they had no further objections and praised God, saying, "So then, God has granted even the Gentiles repentance unto life."

2 Timothy 2:25 (NIV)

²⁵ Those who oppose him he must gently instruct, in the hope that God will grant them repentance leading them to a knowledge of the truth,

Repentance involves a U turn in our lives. It means a change in mind toward God. The Hebrew word for repent is to "turn." We make a U turn by turning our life over to God and then He turns us in the right direction. Repentance is submitting our will to God's will. Repentance is required by God. It is not an option. In the first sermon ever preached after Christ's death, Peter made this abundantly clear:

Acts 2:38 (NIV)

³⁸ Peter replied, "Repent and be baptized, every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins. And you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit."

We must be born again

John 3:3 (NIV)

³ In reply Jesus declared, "I tell you the truth, no one can see the kingdom of God unless he is born again."

Titus 3:5 (NIV)

⁵ he saved us, not because of righteous things we had done, but because of his mercy. He saved us through the washing of rebirth and renewal by the Holy Spirit,

When we are saved we experience a new birth. This involves the washing of regeneration which is the impartation of a new life. We become a new creation. The new birth is an act of God of which we have no part. We receive the righteousness and nature of God. While we were dead to sin we are now alive to the Spirit.

Our new birth and baptism

Baptism is a very controversial topic. There is controversy over the mode of baptism—whether it is by immersion or sprinkling. There is a longstanding debate between those who believe baptism is an outward sign of an inner work of the Holy Spirit and those who believe that redemption and the new birth happens only when a person is immersed in water. Volumes have been written on this subject and I certainly don't claim to have all the answers. What I can say with certainty is that baptism is taught in Scripture as very important. In the book of Acts all who received Christ were immediately baptized. Faith and baptism were inseparably connected together. It was an act of obedience.

Following are some principles and related Scriptures I believe will help in understanding the topic. These principles summarize my conclusions. I suggest you look up the Scriptures and come to your own conclusions based on these and any other Scriptures you may find. Look in your concordance for additional Scriptures on salvation and baptism and related topics.



SEARCH THE WORD

This is a very extensive Search the Word project and will take a substantial amount of time to complete. You are not expected to complete it in a day. Work on it throughout the week. There are seven principles in this study. If you complete one or two principles each day you will finish it by the end of the week.

Principle #1

- The act of baptism alone is not what saves a person. We are saved by God's gift of grace alone through faith alone and we respond to what God has done by being baptized.
 - Read *Eph. 2: 8-9; Rom 5:1-2; 3:23-24; Titus 3:5-7; Rom. 5:9-11* and record the results of your search.

The doctrine of baptism can only be fully understood within the full context of the doctrine of salvation. We are saved by grace alone. We respond to God's offer of grace by believing, confessing our sins, repenting and being baptized.

Principle # 2

- Baptism is a symbol of how we are saved
 - Read *Acts 22:16; Titus 3:4-7; 1 Peter 3:21* and record the results of your search.

It is not the act that saves us but the act that symbolizes how we are saved. The invisible work of the Holy Spirit is visibly dramatized in cleansing water. Believers were immersed (completely submerged into water). The word "baptize" is a transliteration of the original Greek word (baptizo) which in the first century meant to submerge in water.

Principle #3

- Baptism is a picture of dying to the old life and being raised to a new life
 - Read *Romans 6:1-7; Col. 2:12* and record the results of your search.

In *Romans 6: 1-7* Paul paints a powerful picture of how the old nature has been defeated and how we have been reborn through the Spirit to live a new life in Christ.

Principle #4

- Baptism symbolizes a union with Jesus and His Church.
 - Read *Romans 6:5; 1 Corinthians 12:12-13; Galatians 3:26-27* and record the results of your search.

We are not baptized into a local church for membership. Baptism symbolizes becoming a member of the world-wide body of Christ.

Principle #5

- Baptism is a public commitment of faith and sacred vow to follow Jesus (*1 Peter 3:21*).
 - Read *1 Peter 3:21* and record the results of your search.

Baptism is a sacred vow and public commitment on the part of the believer in all good conscience to make sure that what baptism symbolizes will become a reality in his life.

Principle #6

- Baptism is an act of obedience and is not optional.
 - Read *Matthew 3:15; Matthew 28:18-20; Acts 8:26-39; 9:18; 10:47-48; 16:13-15, 16:16-34* and record the results of your search.

Jesus modeled it. Jesus commanded it. Peter preached it. Peter and Paul taught it. The early church practiced it. One thing is clear, the Bible always places believing in Christ for salvation and baptism together. They are not separate. People were baptized immediately after believing and repenting.

Principle #7

- Baptism is not about membership in a church but in the worldwide body of Christ.
 - Read *1 Cor. 12:12-13* and record the results of your search.

Scripture clearly says we were all baptized into one body by one Spirit and that is the Spirit of God. We are all members of the same body.

Principle #8

- Baptism does not require special preparation.
 - Read *Acts 2:38: 41; 8:36-40* and record the results of your search.

As you have seen from many of the previous Scriptures believers were immediately baptized after receiving Christ. They needed no special class or teaching only that they were to be obedient to Christ and be baptized.

Your conclusions

Summarize the conclusions to your study in one or two paragraphs. Try to do it in such a way that you could explain baptism to someone.

Baptism paints a beautiful picture of how we receive God's grace and how that grace affects our lives. When we are baptized it symbolizes dying to our old self, our sins being washed away by the blood of Jesus and being raised again into a new life. Our old self has been crucified and our old relationship with sin has been changed forever. Baptism shows how we have been set free from the bondage of sin and live an obedient life motivated by grace.



FALSE TEACHING ALERT!

There are churches and religions that seem to add to grace as a requirement for salvation. For example the Catholic Church in its Catholic Catechism, par. 2027 says, “No one can merit the initial grace which is at the origin of conversion. Moved by the Holy Spirit, we can merit for ourselves and for others all the graces needed to attain eternal life, as well as the necessary temporal goods”.

This certainly does not sound like what the Bible clearly says about grace. If we can merit for ourselves or others any graces that have to do with eternal life we are putting ourselves in the place of God. These are human works which the Bible clearly states cannot be part of grace (*Ephesians 2:8-9*).

DO! “Watch your life and doctrine closely. Persevere in them...”

➤ What did today’s study say to you about watching your life and doctrine closely?



WEEK 6 MEMORY ASSIGNMENTS AND REVIEW

Following are key Scriptures to learn this week. Memorize and meditate on this key Scripture and write it in the space that follows. Memorize the doctrinal covenant.

- Memorize *Romans 3:23-24*

- Memorize the Doctrinal Covenant

I have been saved by g_____ alone through f_____ alone. I am r_____ by the blood of the Lamb; j_____ by a verdict of not guilty; made r_____ by the righteousness of Christ; b_____ a_____ by the Spirit; s_____ to be holy.

- Review previous memory projects from your card index file.

PRAYER

Spend time in prayer using the five components of the Lord’s Prayer.

DAY 2: ADOPTED AND SEALED

The amazing grace continues with two events that happen at the moment we are saved. We are adopted into God's family and we are sealed by the Holy Spirit. The adoption is the Father's decision to save us. The Son redeems us by paying the penalty for our sins. The Holy Spirit puts His seal on our "birth certificate" forever documenting that we are legally part of God's family. Here are the details of how this transpires.

WE ARE ADOPTED BY THE FATHER

Adoption changes our position

Adoption was a word that was not well known at all by the Jews. It was a Roman word. It meant that one man would take another man's son to be his own. That son would have the same position as all other sons by birth. As difficult as it is for us to comprehend, we are God's own sons and daughters by adoption. When the Father looks at us He sees only His legitimate, deeply loved child. It is from this privileged position that we know that we are secure in His love. We can have complete intimacy with our Father. Paul gives us some of the details on how that adoption occurs:

Galatians 4:1-7 (NIV)

⁴ But when the time had fully come, God sent his Son, born of a woman, born under law, ⁵ to redeem those under law, that we might receive the full rights of sons. ⁶ Because you are sons, God sent the Spirit of his Son into our hearts, the Spirit who calls out, "Abba, Father." ⁷ So you are no longer a slave, but a son; and since you are a son, God has made you also an heir.

Paul gives us the background of our adoption. At just the right time in history Jesus came in human form, born of a woman to redeem us. He paid the price for our adoption by dying on the cross for our sins. He did this so we receive full rights as sons. At the time of our adoption God sent the Spirit of His Son into our hearts so we could call out "Abba, Father." Through our adoption we became legitimate sons, heirs of our Father with all the accompanying privileges.

Adoption gives us special blessings

Our adoption into God's family as His sons and daughters gives us some incredible blessings. You will discover some of these blessings in the following Search the Word study.



SEARCH THE WORD

Read *Ephesians 1:3-5* and answer the following questions:

- What specific blessing do you think are included in "every spiritual blessing in Christ"?
- How are we "holy and blameless in His sight"?

- In verse 3 what indicates God’s attitude toward our adoption?

The blessings we enjoy as adopted children of the Heavenly Father are countless. We have every spiritual blessing in Christ. Every blessing listed in the Bible is ours. Being holy and blameless in God’s sight are two of the greatest blessings. As the Father looks at us He sees the Son. The Son is holy and blameless so He sees us as holy and blameless.

We were not an accident! We were chosen by the Father to be His special children. It was with great joy that He took us into His family. It was His “...*pleasure and will*” (Eph. 1:5). There was a great celebration in heaven on the day that you were adopted by the Father. His lost child had been found. Imagine the applause breaking out in the heavens because the precious child who was lost was found. Observe the celebration:

Luke 15:22-24 (NIV)

²² “But the father said to his servants, ‘Quick! Bring the best robe and put it on him. Put a ring on his finger and sandals on his feet. ²³ Bring the fattened calf and kill it. Let’s have a feast and celebrate. ²⁴ For this son of mine was dead and is alive again; he was lost and is found.’ So they began to celebrate.

Our adoption removes all fear

Romans 8:15-17 (NIV)

¹⁵ 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.” ¹⁶ The Spirit himself testifies with our spirit that we are God’s children. ¹⁷ Now if we are children, then we are heirs—heirs of God and co-heirs with Christ, if indeed we share in his sufferings in order that we may also share in his glory.

When we were adopted by the Father, we were redeemed by the Son, and made new by the Holy Spirit (Rom 3:23-25; Titus 2: 3-7). We began a new life in a new family. When we truly understand our adoption and the unconditional love and acceptance our Heavenly Father has for us we will have no fear. His perfect love removes all fear (1 John 4:18). We only fear those who we do not trust to treat us with love and kindness. We fear those who will do us physical or emotional harm. Because the Holy Spirit assures us that we are God’s children we are able to approach our Heavenly Father with total confidence. He is our *Abba-Father* who will never harm His children.

WE ARE SEALED BY THE HOLY SPIRIT

The seal of the Holy Spirit is a permanent birthmark

Ephesians 1:13 (NIV)

¹³ And you also were included in Christ when you heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation. Having believed, you were marked in him with a seal, the promised Holy Spirit,

At the moment of our new birth we received the birthmark of the Holy Spirit. The seal of the Holy Spirit is the stamp of God's approval and can never be removed. It means that we have been included in Christ. His nature is a part of our nature (*Col. 3:1-4*).

The seal denotes ownership

2 Corinthians 1:22 (NIV)

²² set his seal of ownership on us, and put his Spirit in our hearts as a deposit, guaranteeing what is to come.

In the Roman legal system, the court of justice would transfer to the adopting family the *potestas*, or the legal power over the adopted child. When we were adopted into the family of God our adoption papers assured us that we were "legally" a child of the King. We are "signed, sealed and delivered" into the King's family. We are His for eternity. Our name has been entered into the Lamb's Book of Life, guaranteeing our entrance into heaven (*Rev. 21:7*).

The seal guarantees salvation

2 Corinthians 1:22 (NIV)

²² set his seal of ownership on us, and put his Spirit in our hearts as a deposit, guaranteeing what is to come.

The seal is a done deal! It means that we never have to wonder whether we are "good enough", or have "done enough" to earn our way into heaven. The seal means that the adoption cannot be reversed. We are His for eternity.

This is essential to understand. If we do not believe that we are secure we will be insecure in our relationship with God. God does not want us to doubt that we are a permanent part of His family, sealed for eternity with Him. If we understand grace we realize that we don't have to be good enough to receive our Heavenly Father's forgiveness and acceptance. We don't have to be perfect. Jesus Christ was perfect for us. We have His righteousness. When God looks at us He sees us through the filter of His Son. As flawed, imperfect people we are covered by the righteousness of Jesus.

How can we be assured of our salvation? How can all doubt be removed? There are two ways this will happen. Following is a Search the Word study which will explain two of the ways we can be assured of our salvation.



SEARCH THE WORD

Read the following Scriptures that reveal the assurance us of our salvation and answer the questions that follow:

1. There is the testimony of the Word of God.
 - Read *John 10: 27-30*.
 - What does Jesus say in this passage that assures of our salvation?

First we must believe what God's Word says about grace and adoption. We must take God at His word. Jesus promised that we were safe in His and the Fathers' hands. He knows us intimately. No one can take us out of the Fathers' hands. No one can take us out of the hands of the Son.

- Read *1 John 5:1, 11-13*
 - In verse 1 who does John say is born of God? What does this say about the assurance of our salvation?

 - According to verse 11& 12 what is the testimony God has given us about eternal life? Who has life?

 - Why were these things written? What should our response be to this passage?

It is clear. Belief that Jesus is the Christ is proof that we are born of God and therefore adopted into His family. The testimony that God has given us is that when we have His Son we have eternal life. Not that we may have eternal life, not that we will someday have eternal life. We have it now and it is irrevocable. These things were written for one purpose. To convince us once and for all that we are secure in the love of our Father. We are a permanent part of His family and will be with Him for all of eternity. Period!

2. There is the inner witness of the Holy Spirit.
 - Read *Romans 8:14-16*
 - According to this Scripture how is that we know we are God's children?

- How does this Scripture assure us of our salvation?

We could not conceive of being a true son of the Heavenly Father if was not for the Holy Spirit's inner witness in our hearts. It is the Spirit speaking to our souls that assures us that we are God's children. Because we are His children we are assured throughout the Bible that we will be with the Father, Son and Holy Spirit in heaven.



CONTROVERSY ALERT!

You will hear it sooner or later so it may as well be sooner. One of the most controversial and emotional issues is a doctrine called "eternal security". The controversy is as follows. There are basically two camps. One camp holds to a Calvinistic point of view that believes once you have been saved you cannot lose your salvation for any reason. This is sometimes referred to as "once saved, always saved." The other camp holds to an Arminian point of view that believes it is possible to lose your salvation if you abandon the faith.

- **Calvin on eternal security**

The French Theologian John Calvin was an influential pastor during the Protestant Reformation. In the middle 1500's he developed the system of christian theology that was eventually called "Calvinism". The Calvinist believes that a true believer will persevere in his faith (called "perseverance of the saints"). While he might backslide or sin, he is eternally secure if he has a genuine faith in Christ. People who are saved will never abandon the faith. It is impossible.

Scriptures that support Calvinism: (*John 10:27-29; Romans 8: 16, 29-20; Ephesians 1:3-14; 1 Cor. 1:23; 1 John 3:9, 24; Eph. 4:30; John 10: 27-30; Gal. 4:6; 1 Peter 1:5.*)

Key Scripture:

2 Corinthians 1:22 (NIV)

²² set his seal of ownership on us, and put his Spirit in our hearts as a deposit, guaranteeing what is to come.

- **Arminius on eternal security**

Jacobus Arminius was a Dutch Reformed theologian who was influential during the second half of the 1500's. His system of christian theology taught that Christians are not beyond the possibility of falling from grace through persistent, unrepentant sin. If they freely resist God and turn their back on Him, God turns His back on them. Unless they repent they could lose their salvation.

Scriptures that support Arminianism: (*1 Cor. 9:27; 10:12; 1 Timothy 1:19; Hebrews 4:1; 6:4-5:10: 23, 29; 1 Peter 5:8; 1 John.*)

Key Scripture:

Hebrews 10:26-27 (NIV)

²⁶ If we deliberately keep on sinning after we have received the knowledge of the truth, no sacrifice for sins is left, ²⁷ but only a fearful expectation of judgment and of raging fire that will consume the enemies of God.

I'm sure you can see why this is a controversy. One believes you can lose your salvation. The other believes you cannot. It is a controversy because there are Scriptures that seem to support both positions. While this tends to be a very emotional issue and people are passionate about their belief, it should not be a test of fellowship.

In my opinion the strength of the Calvinist point of view is that it elevates the sovereign work of God in salvation and gives the believer absolute security in his salvation. The weakness, it seems to me, is that it removes the element of human choice and Christians can use it as a license to sin and shirk their responsibility to grow in Christ-likeness.

In my opinion of the strength of the Arminian point of view is that while affirming that grace is the sovereign work of God and man cannot earn his own salvation, it retains human free will and man's responsibility to remain true to the faith. The weakness is that it opens the door for human works and can lead to eternal insecurity.

SOME-WHAT OF A CONCLUSION

We will know the absolute, whole truth when we get to heaven. It is there that we will have our questions about controversial doctrines answered by God Himself. Until then can't we all just get along? But here is my conclusion based on what I read in Scripture. I'm sure this will not satisfy those who hold closely to the Calvinist views or those who are strongly Arminian in their beliefs.

Eternally secure

I do believe that we can have total security in our salvation. We can know without a doubt that we are saved by grace. We can know because of the witness of the Word and the inner witness of the Holy Spirit. Grace is a sovereign act of God's will. He has imputed His righteousness on us and therefore we are in a right standing with God in spite of our sins and weaknesses. We never have to worry about being in and out of salvation. It is the completed work of Christ on the cross.

Always responsible

On the other hand we did not lose our free will at the time we believed. We still are responsible to choose how we live. We are responsible to persevere until the end. This means we stay faithful to God.

A vain faith

There is what Paul refers to in *1 Corinthians 15:2* and *2 Corinthians 6:1* as a "vain" faith.

1 Corinthians 15:2 (NIV)

² By this gospel you are saved, if you hold firmly to the word I preached to you. Otherwise, you have believed in vain.

2 Corinthians 6:1 (NIV)

¹ As God's fellow workers we urge you not to receive God's grace in vain.

The Greek word for "In vain" is (εἰς κενον [eis kenon]) meaning "into emptiness." Paul refers to the plan of God, the work of Christ on the cross. All this can be nullified with a vain or empty faith. What is referred to by Paul in 1 Corinthians 15:2 is a vain faith that denies the gospel. That is clear because he goes on to say:

1 Corinthians 15:3-4 (NIV)

³ For what I received I passed on to you as of first importance: that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, ⁴ that he was buried, that he was raised on the third day according to the Scriptures,

There is a passage in Hebrews that also refers to a vain faith although that word is not used:

Hebrews 3:12-14 (NIV)

¹² See to it, brothers, that none of you has a sinful, unbelieving heart that turns away from the living God. ¹³ But encourage one another daily, as long as it is called Today, so that none of you may be hardened by sin's deceitfulness. ¹⁴ We have come to share in Christ if we hold firmly till the end the confidence we had at first.

Was vain faith ever real faith?

Vain faith is more than mere unbelief. It is intentional disbelief. It is a turning from God with a refusal to believe. It describes a heart that has turned cold and hard toward God. This describes a heart that is not saved. Of course the question remains; does this mean that a person who has been saved can then backslide and have a vain faith that completely turns away from God? There are some Scriptures that would indicate that is true. The writer of Hebrews says:

Hebrews 6:4-6 (NIV)

⁴ It is impossible for those who have once been enlightened, who have tasted the heavenly gift, who have shared in the Holy Spirit, ⁵ who have tasted the goodness of the word of God and the powers of the coming age, ⁶ if they fall away, to be brought back to repentance, because to their loss they are crucifying the Son of God all over again and subjecting him to public disgrace.

There are three basic interpretations of this passage. One is that it is an hypothetical argument to warn immature Christians that they must continue to grow in their faith. If they do not they might experience divine discipline. A second interpretation is that it refers to professing Christians whose apostasy demonstrates that their faith was never real in the first place. A third interpretation is that a person who is saved can lose their salvation.

There is one truth on which we should all be able to agree. It is clear from many Scriptures that our heavenly Father wants us to be totally secure in our salvation. God knows those who are His own. Because He is all knowing he sees our faith from the beginning to the end. He knows which faith is real and which is in vain.

Romans 8:29-30 (NIV)

²⁹ 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. ³⁰ And those he predestined, he also called; those he called, he also justified; those he justified, he also glorified.

My conclusion is this: We can be one hundred percent sure that our faith is not in vain unless we intentionally reject God and turn away from Him. Was such a person ever really saved? Only God knows that. But you are secure!

DO! "Watch your life and doctrine closely. Persevere in them..."

➤ What did today's study say to you about watching your life and doctrine closely?



WEEK 6 MEMORY ASSIGNMENTS AND REVIEW

Following are key Scriptures to learn this week. Memorize and meditate on this key Scripture and write it in the space that follows. Memorize the doctrinal covenant.

- Memorize *Romans 3:23-24*

- Memorize the Doctrinal Covenant

I have been saved by g_____ alone through f_____ alone. I am r_____ by the blood of the Lamb; j_____ by a verdict of not guilty; made r_____ by the righteousness of Christ; b_____ a_____ by the Spirit; s_____ to be holy.

- Review previous memory projects from your card index file.

PRAYER

Spend time in prayer using the five components of the Lord's Prayer.

PART 2: FIVE KEY WORDS OF SALVATION

DAY 3: REDEMPTION AND JUSTIFICATION

INTRODUCTION TO THE FIVE KEY WORDS OF SALVATION

The five key words of salvation are closely connected. Each describes our salvation and new life. Understanding these key words and how they are connected will add a rich dimension to your understanding of salvation. **Redemption** by the blood of the lamb lays the foundation for the other key words. Everything starts when our ransom is paid by the blood of Jesus. **Justification** is a judicial act of God that resolves us of all guilt. We are credited with the **righteousness** of Christ. **Rebirth** by the Spirit gives us a new life and sanctified to be holy. **Sanctification** has a strong progressive element to it. Scripture emphasizes that we are made holy but we have a responsibility to grow in holiness. We are held accountable for the spiritual growth made possible through sanctification.

Redemption, justification and rebirth are all acts of God that are divinely given to us at the time we put our faith in Jesus. They require no effort from us. Righteousness and Sanctification are also divine gifts of God given at the moment of our salvation but also are progressive. We are given the righteousness of Christ but we are to grow in righteousness. We are sanctified and made holy but we are to grow in holiness. Both require our effort to cooperate with what God is doing in our life.

❖ **REDEMPTION:** *The ransom for our sins has been paid by the grace of Jesus who redeemed us by His blood.*

I believe a fitting way to introduce the study of redemption is to read the words of Fanny Crosby who in 1882 penned these words to this beloved hymn. Following is the first verse:

Redeemed, How I Love to Proclaim it

*Redeemed, how I love to proclaim it!
Redeemed by the blood of the Lamb;
Redeemed through His infinite mercy,
His child and forever I am.*

Refrain:

*Redeemed, redeemed,
Redeemed by the blood of the Lamb;
Redeemed, redeemed,
His child and forever I am.*

In many ways redemption sums up grace. Jesus Christ paid the debt for our sins and secured our position as a child of God by redeeming us through His blood. Indeed we have been “*redeemed by the blood of the lamb and His child forever I am.*”

Ephesians 1:7 (NIV)

⁷In him we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, in accordance with the riches of God's grace.

WE ALL INCCURED A DEBT THROUGH OUR SIN

We start with redemption because it is critical for a complete understanding of grace. It serves as a foundation of the other four key words of doctrine. Redemption is a comprehensive term that gives meaning to justification, righteousness, rebirth and sanctification. They are all together through the redemption that comes through the blood of the Lamb.

Redemption became necessary because of sin. Sin entered the world through Adam and Eve but each of us has chosen to sin as well. When we sinned we incurred a debt. With this debt came the penalty of death. In the book of Romans Paul states:

Romans 5:12 (NIV)

¹²Therefore, just as sin entered the world through one man, and death through sin, and in this way death came to all men, because all sinned—

Romans 3:23 (NIV)

²³for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God,

The debt is impossible for us to repay

Redemption graphically depicts the story of salvation from the beginning until the end. It starts with the debt of sin, continues with God's temporary solution and ends with the final solution. The temporary solution was part of the Old Covenant. The final solution was the New Covenant. Under the old covenant or agreement, sins were rolled ahead, one year at a time through the blood of an unblemished lamb. The law required cleansing with blood for forgiveness.

Hebrews 9:22 (NIV)

²²In fact, the law requires that nearly everything be cleansed with blood, and without the shedding of blood there is no forgiveness.

The High Priest would offer a blood sacrifice for the sins of the people. It would be good for only one year and then the sacrifice would have to be repeated. This was only a temporary agreement that was in effect until Jesus came with the New Covenant. Under the Old Covenant there was no permanent release from the debt of sin.

Hebrews 10:11 (NIV)

¹¹Day after day every priest stands and performs his religious duties; again and again he offers the same sacrifices, which can never take away sins.

It was only through a different kind of High Priest and sacrifice that the debt could be paid. God did not leave us victims of the old sacrificial system. He made it possible for our debt of sin to be fully paid by the sacrifice offered by Jesus as High Priest. He came as the mediator of the New Covenant.

Hebrews 9:15 (NIV)

¹⁵ For this reason Christ is the mediator of a new covenant, that those who are called may receive the promised eternal inheritance—now that he has died as a ransom to set them free from the sins committed under the first covenant.

Jesus offered a sacrifice that gave permanent redemption to all who would believe in Him. Jesus sat down at the right hand of God and represents us before His Father.

Hebrews 10:12 (NIV)

¹² But when this priest had offered for all time one sacrifice for sins, he sat down at the right hand of God.

OUR DEBT WAS PAID FOR BY THE BLOOD OF THE LAMB

“He paid a debt He did not owe. I owed a debt I could not pay.”

Only the blood of the Lamb was the perfect sacrifice that could satisfy the law

1 Peter 1:18-19 (NIV)

¹⁸ For you know that it was not with perishable things such as silver or gold that you were redeemed from the empty way of life handed down to you from your forefathers, ¹⁹ but with the precious blood of Christ, a lamb without blemish or defect.

God’s standard is perfection. No unclean or impure thing can enter heaven. Therefore, a holy God demands a holy sacrifice for our sins. Jesus became that perfect sacrifice for us. He was sinless so that in Him we would also be sinless before God.

2 Corinthians 5:21 (NIV)

²¹ God made him who had no sin to be sin for us, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God.

Jesus became our substitute and paid the ransom for our sins

Isaiah 53:6 (NIV)

⁶ We all, like sheep, have gone astray, each of us has turned to his own way; and the LORD has laid on him the iniquity of us all.

Those who lived under the Old Covenant would have understood the importance of substitution. It formed the basis for all of the Temple offerings and sacrifices (*Leviticus 1:4*). In the Old Covenant substitution referred to the transference of sins from a person to an animal (*Leviticus 1:10-13*). In the New Covenant the term refers to the transference of our sins to Christ. The Lord has laid on Him all of our sins (*Isaiah 53:6*). He becomes “sin for us” (*2 Cor. 5:21*). Peter explains how Jesus became a substitute for our sins:

1 Peter 2:24 (NIV)

²⁴ He himself bore our sins in his body on the tree, so that we might die to sins and live for righteousness; by his wounds you have been healed.

We are redeemed and set free by the blood of the Lamb



SEARCH THE WORD

The book of Revelation gives us a spine tingling glimpse of what redemption really means. The scene is in heaven as the Lamb of God is revealed and a heavenly host praises Him. Read this account in *Revelation 5* and answer the following questions

- How is Jesus described in this chapter?

- What is it that makes Jesus worthy?

- Who was involved in praising the Lamb? What does their worship say to us about how we should worship the Lamb for redeeming us by His blood?

- Take some time right now to give praise to the Lamb for your redemption. He is worthy! Use *Revelation 5:9-10* and *12-14* as your model of how to worship the lamb.

The Lord laid on Jesus all of our sins (*Isaiah 53:6*). We were under the sentence of death when He died for us. He bore our sins on the cross (*1 Peter 2:24*). By becoming our substitute he paid the ransom for our sins. All this was because of the precious blood of Christ the lamb.

1 Peter 1:18-19 (NIV)

¹⁸ For you know that it was not with perishable things such as silver or gold that you were redeemed from the empty way of life handed down to you from your forefathers, ¹⁹ but with the precious blood of Christ, a lamb without blemish or defect.

There are three Greek words for redeem that describe how we are set free from the bondage of our sins. Look up the following Scriptures in your own Bible:

- *Lutroo*: This word is used in *1 Peter 1:18*. This word means to be released from bondage, the ransom being paid by the blood of Jesus. It is a term used for the freeing of a captive.
- *Exagorazo*: This word refers to a price that is paid to satisfy the ransom required by the law (*Galatians 3:13; 4:4*). This means that Jesus not only pays the ransom, but set us free with no strings attached (*Romans 8:1*).
- *PAD-dah*: This word means “to set free, to let go.” It is translated *redeem* some 250 times in the Bible. God’s people in the Old Covenant were “set free” by the substitution of the spotless lamb.

These words give a rich background for the meaning of redemption. Redemption was purchased through Christ’s own blood. The ransom was paid and we were set free forever. Jesus became our substitute. Redemption changes our entire state and condition. We have been delivered from the state of slavery and have been granted our complete freedom in Christ.

THE BENEFITS OF OUR REDEMPTION

Redemption brings justification

Romans 3:23-24 (NIV)

²³ for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, ²⁴ and are justified freely by his grace through the redemption that came by Christ Jesus.

We have already seen many of the benefits of redemption but here are three more to consider. First redemption brings justification. Redemption can be looked at as meeting all of the requirements of our release. Justification happens when the judge put his signature on the release and pronounces us legally “not guilty”. We are justified through redemption.

Redemption prepares us for adoption

Galatians 4:4-5 (NIV)

⁴ But when the time had fully come, God sent his Son, born of a woman, born under law, ⁵ to redeem those under law, that we might receive the full rights of sons.

Through redemption we qualify to be adopted into God’s family. The ransom has been paid to release us into the freedom from sins that the Father requires for our adoption. Through redemption and justification we are freed from all condemnation and made righteous in His sight. The adoption makes us His children with all the rights and privileges that come with being a child of the King. Rebirth changes our nature. Justification changes our legal standing before God. Adoption gives us the privilege of being a legitimate child of God.

Redemption prepares us for holiness



SEARCH THE WORD

Redemption prepares us for holiness. Read *Titus 2:14* and answer the following questions:

- Explain the connection between redemption and holiness.
- In what way does redemption prepare us for holiness? What is our motivation to be holy?

Redemption prepares us for holiness because it changes our character. We are not only set free from sin and the penalty of death but we are set free to live holy lives for God. Because God has redeemed us from all wickedness we have the position and power to overcome sin. The Spirit now controls us, not the flesh because we are God's own possession. Because of what He has done for us through redemption we are eager to do good out of gratitude for His grace.

REDEMPTION IS PAST, PRESENT AND FUTURE

We were redeemed by the blood of the lamb

Galatians 3:13 (NIV)

¹³ Christ redeemed us from the curse of the law by becoming a curse for us, for it is written: "Cursed is everyone who is hung on a tree."

There is a past tense to our redemption. We were redeemed at the point in time that we put our faith in Christ alone for our salvation. At that very moment the ransom was paid and we were set free from our sin. Our response to the past tense of our redemption should be one of thanksgiving and praise for what He has done for us. It should also remind us of the assurance of our salvation.

We are redeemed by the blood of the lamb

Ephesians 1:7 (NIV)

⁷ In him we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, in accordance with the riches of God's grace.

There is also a present tense to our redemption. We presently "...have redemption through his blood..." Every day we have the present reality that we are set free from sin. Our present reality of redemption also reminds us that we have resources now to help us face life. We have the riches of His grace. We not only have the saving grace of God but also the empowering grace of God to give us victory over sin.

We will be redeemed by the blood of the lamb

Romans 8:22-23 (NIV)

²² We know that the whole creation has been groaning as in the pains of childbirth right up to the present time. ²³ Not only so, but we ourselves, who have the firstfruits of the Spirit, groan inwardly as we wait eagerly for our adoption as sons, the redemption of our bodies.

There is another sense in which there is a final redemption in heaven. We will have to wait for the redemption of our bodies until Jesus returns. We long for that final redemption when we will be transformed from this life to our life with God forever in the new heaven and the new earth.

❖ **JUSTIFICATION:** *“We are declared “not guilty” by grace through faith in Jesus.*

Romans 5:1 (NIV)

¹ Therefore, since we have been justified through faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ,

A second key word of salvation is justification. As with the other key words it helps us define grace. We will start our study of justification by reflecting on the words of the old hymn, *One Day When Heaven Was Filled With His Praises*. Following is the first verse:

ONE DAY WHEN HEAVEN WAS FILLED WITH HIS PRAISES

*One day when heaven was filled with His praises,
One day when sin was as black as could be,
Jesus came forth to be born of a virgin –
Dwelt among men, my example is He!*

Refrain:

*Living, He loved me; dying, He saved me;
Buried, He carried my sins far away;
Rising, He justified freely forever:
One day He's coming – O glorious day!*

The theme of justification is prominent throughout the Bible. Because of Gods' great love He sent His Son to earth to live and die for our sins. He redeemed us by His blood justifying us freely forever. We will explore how justification helps define grace.

WE ARE ALL GUILTY

All of us have fallen short of God's standard

Romans 3:23 (NIV)

²³ for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God,

The fact that we are guilty is not new information in this course on doctrine. It has been repeated several times because our guilt reminds us of our desperate need for the grace of God. We have seen that God's

standard for entrance into heaven is perfection. Since all have sinned there is no possible way to make it on our own.

We deserve death

Romans 6:23 (NIV)

²³ For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.

We all received the death sentence because of our sins. There was a time before our redemption and justification that we were on death row. Since we were already dead in our sins we could only look forward to eternal death, separated from God.

We are unable to save ourselves

Ephesians 2:8-9 (NIV)

⁸ For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith—and this not from yourselves, it is the gift of God—⁹ not by works, so that no one can boast.

Before we were saved there were no appeals we could make on our own. No further investigation into the facts of our case would help. It was an open and shut case. No amount of work we could do would help. No one else could help us. Our death sentence was final. But there was something God would do. The only thing we were required to do was put our faith in the Righteous Judge. The only appeal we could make was the one God was willing to make on our behalf.

WE ARE JUSTIFIED BY GRACE THROUGH REDEMPTION

Romans 3:23-25 (NIV)

²³ for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, ²⁴ and are justified freely by his grace through the redemption that came by Christ Jesus. ²⁵ God presented him as a sacrifice of atonement, through faith in his blood. He did this to demonstrate his justice, because in his forbearance he had left the sins committed beforehand unpunished

To justify means to make just or righteous. It is to be declared not guilty. It is solely an act of God's sovereign grace when He forgives sinners because of Christ's death. It is through the "...redemption that came by Christ Jesus" (Romans 5:25). You can see how these key words of Bible doctrine are connected. Redemption helps us understand justification. Justification is only possible because of the redemption—through the blood of the Lamb. We are justified "freely" which means that justification is granted to us with nothing done on our part to deserve it (Romans 3:24). Paul goes on to say:

Romans 5:9 (NIV)

⁹ Since we have now been justified by his blood, how much more shall we be saved from God's wrath through him!

Works do not work

Galatians 2:16 (NIV)

¹⁶ know that a man is not justified by observing the law, but by faith in Jesus Christ. So we, too, have put our faith in Christ Jesus that we may be justified by faith in Christ and not by observing the law, because by observing the law no one will be justified.

Paul persistently taught believers that they could never be saved by good works. This was important because in the Jewish system of religion everything depended on obeying the letter of the law. Jews really believed that to have eternal life they had to be good enough. Paul emphatically stated, “Works do not work! Never have, never will, so stop trying. If Abraham, as righteous as he was, could not make it on works, neither can you. When you work you only get what you deserve—wages.”

Romans 4:4 (NIV)

⁴ Now when a man works, his wages are not credited to him as a gift, but as an obligation.

Justification is getting something you don't deserve-- forgiveness. Paul says,

Romans 4:2-3 (NIV)

² If, in fact, Abraham was justified by works, he had something to boast about—but not before God. ³ What does the Scripture say? “Abraham believed God, and it was credited to him as righteousness.”

We are only asked to put our total faith in Jesus

Justification is an act of God; unearned, undeserved; a gift from God to those who trust Him. There is only one condition. A person must believe in Jesus Christ. A person must first see that works do not work and then place their faith in Jesus Christ who “...justifies the wicked...” (Romans 4:5).

Romans 4:5 (NIV)

⁵ However, to the man who does not work but trusts God who justifies the wicked, his faith is credited as righteousness.

Without faith it is impossible to please God

There is only one way to please God. It is through faith that we know God exists and acknowledge His rewards. God plants the seed of faith in our hearts. We are responsible to respond to His invitation and not resist the Spirit who creates faith in us.

Hebrews 11:6 (NIV)

⁶ And without faith it is impossible to please God, because anyone who comes to him must believe that he exists and that he rewards those who earnestly seek him.

Galatians 2:16 (NIV)

¹⁶ know that a man is not justified by observing the law, but by faith in Jesus Christ. So we, too, have put our faith in Christ Jesus that we may be justified by faith in Christ and not by observing the law, because by observing the law no one will be justified.

WE ARE PRONOUNCED “NOT GUILTY”

We have gone to trial and been found “not guilty” by the Judge

Romans 8:1 (NIV)

¹ Therefore, there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus,

To justify means to declare righteous in a legal sense. It denotes putting a person in right standing. Justification is a legal act. In a religious sense it implies that the person is really guilty but nevertheless has been tried in a court of law and declared innocent. The judge has pronounced the person, “not guilty.” The verdict is in. The blood of Christ has canceled our crime. There is nothing on our record. We have been given the righteousness of Christ.

Because we are justified all claims of the law are satisfied

The requirements of the law were that we must be fully righteous. Since we are all sinners it is impossible to be perfectly righteous. This means that justification and righteousness are inseparable. You can't have one without the other. When we are justified it means that the righteous requirements of the law were met. Christ met these requirements through His sinless life so that He could “...bring you to God...”

1 Peter 3:18 (NIV)

¹⁸ For Christ died for sins once for all, the righteous for the unrighteous, to bring you to God. He was put to death in the body but made alive by the Spirit,

When you were justified you were brought to God in a totally righteous state. Therefore, what the law was powerless to do because of our evil natures, Jesus did by being a sin offering for us. Paul says,

Romans 8:3-4 (NIV)

³ For what the law was powerless to do in that it was weakened by the sinful nature, God did by sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful man to be a sin offering. And so he condemned sin in sinful man, ⁴ in order that the righteous requirements of the law might be fully met in us, who do not live according to the sinful nature but according to the Spirit.

Because we are justified no one can bring any charge against us

Romans 8:33-34 (NIV)

³³ Who will bring any charge against those whom God has chosen? It is God who justifies. ³⁴ Who is he that condemns? Christ Jesus, who died—more than that, who was raised to life—is at the right hand of God and is also interceding for us.

Because we have been justified and have been given the righteousness of Christ we have been acquitted. But there is more. With our pardon we now have full rights of citizenship. No one at any time can bring any charge against us. We have been freed from all further charges of any kind by God. God's Word is the final verdict. It is God who justifies. That is all that counts. There is no higher authority. Jesus sits in the supreme court of heaven. To assure our forgiveness of sins and our new standing, Jesus, “...is at the right hand of God, interceding for us” (Rom. 8: 34).

THE BENEFITS OF JUSTIFICATION

The Scripture promises us some wonderful benefits of justification.



SEARCH THE WORD

Read the Scriptures that follow and list the benefits of justification

- *Romans 5:1*

- *Romans 5:9-10*

When we are justified through faith we have peace with God made possible by Jesus Christ (*Romans 5:1*). He was called “The Prince of Peace” (*Isaiah 9:6*). Jesus came into the world to bring peace (*Luke 2:14*). This peace was only possible through being reconciled to God (*Romans 5:1*). Reconciliation was made possible through justification. Once we were God’s enemies but now we are God’s friends. We have total peace with God.

The peace we experience with God through justification also brings us peace with people. Christ’s peace is like a river, flowing through us to others creating peace in our relationships (*Isaiah 48:18*). This peace is a fruit of the Spirit (*Galatians 5:22*). God’s peace within us results in God’s peace around us. We are to pursue peace with others (*Hebrews 12:14-15*).

- *Titus 3:7*

Because we have been redeemed by the blood of the Lamb and justified by faith in Christ, we have become heirs. This is a result of our adoption into the Family of God. Because we are heirs we have the benefit of all the spiritual blessing of the Father while we are here on earth (*Ephesians 1:3-5; Romans 8:15-17; Galatians 4: 4-7*).

- *Romans 8:29-30*

We are glorified because we have the righteousness of Christ. We no longer fall short of the glory of God (*Romans 3:23*). Our ultimate glorification will have to wait until God gives us our new, glorified bodies when we are with Him in heaven.

DO! "Watch your life and doctrine closely. Persevere in them..."

➤ What did today's study say to you about watching your life and doctrine closely?



WEEK 6 MEMORY ASSIGNMENTS AND REVIEW

Following are key Scriptures to learn this week. Memorize and meditate on this key Scripture and write it in the space that follows. Memorize the doctrinal covenant.

- Memorize *Romans 3:23-24*

- Memorize the Doctrinal Covenant.

I have been saved by g_____ alone through f_____ alone. I am r_____ by the blood of the Lamb; j_____ by a verdict of not guilty; made r_____ by the righteousness of Christ; b_____ a_____ by the Spirit; s_____ to be holy.

- Review previous memory projects from your card index file.

PRAYER

Spend time in prayer using the five components of the Lord's Prayer.

DAY 4: RIGHTEOUSNESS AND REBIRTH

RIGHTEOUSNESS: *I have become righteous in the sight of God because I have been given the righteousness of Christ.*

2 Corinthians 5:21 (NIV)

²¹ *God made him who had no sin to be sin for us, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God.*

To be acceptable to God we must be perfectly righteous. This means we must be perfect in all we say and do with no exceptions. As we have seen, this is impossible for us to do on our own. But because of the free gift of grace we have been redeemed by the blood of the Lamb and have been declared not guilty. Through justification we have **received the righteousness of Christ**. Here are the details:

ONLY GOD IS RIGHTEOUS

No one is perfectly righteous

To be righteous means to be free from guilt or sin. It requires us to be perfect in every thought and action. Therefore only God is totally righteous. This fact permeates the Bible from beginning to end. Paul states:

Romans 3:10 (NIV)

¹⁰ *As it is written: "There is no one righteous, not even one;*

While it should be abundantly clear that no one can achieve righteousness on their own, many still think they can meet God's requirements for righteousness. Before the coming of the Messiah people believed they could be righteous if they met all the requirements of the law. The Jews of Jesus' time were consumed by trying to meet those requirements. Religious leaders added additional requirements and went to ridiculous ends to try and obey the letter of the law. Because they did not understand that righteousness comes only from God they set standards of their own. This resulted in an endless list of rules and regulations. With the attempts to be righteous came religious arrogance which Jesus regularly confronted and denounced. Jesus pronounced "seven woes" on the teachers of the law, condemning their self righteousness. Here is what Jesus thought about their attempts to be righteous:

Matthew 23:27-28

²⁷ *"Woe to you, teachers of the law and Pharisees, you hypocrites! You are like whitewashed tombs, which look beautiful on the outside but on the inside are full of dead men's bones and everything unclean. ²⁸ In the same way, on the outside you appear to people as righteous but on the inside you are full of hypocrisy and wickedness.*

The Jewish Christians in the 1st Century church were influenced by the teaching of these religious leaders. Because many had been taught that they could become righteous by following the law, they struggled with a new definition of righteousness. The Apostle Paul went to great lengths to teach the believers in Rome that righteousness came only from God. Referring to the Jewish Christians ancestors Paul said,

Romans 10:3 (NIV)

³ *Since they did not know the righteousness that comes from God and sought to establish their own, they did not submit to God's righteousness.*

Paul taught that the law had a purpose but could never make them righteous. Under the Old Covenant God gave the law so that people would be conscious of sin and do what was right toward God and others. Following the law was never meant to make them totally righteous in God's eyes. Paul said,

Romans 3:20 (NIV)

²⁰ *Therefore no one will be declared righteous in his sight by observing the law; rather, through the law we become conscious of sin.*

God is by nature holy and righteous

Isaiah 5:16 (NIV)

¹⁶ *But the LORD Almighty will be exalted by his justice, and the holy God will show himself holy by his righteousness.*

Righteousness can come only from God because only He is righteous and holy. These attributes are part of His basic nature, constituting who He is and what He does. Righteousness can be defined as consistency of being perfectly right in every thought and action. It means being upright and free from all wrong. God always acts in complete unity with His nature. Therefore He is perfectly just, righteous and holy.

Our righteousness comes only from God

Jesus as the Righteous One introduced a new righteousness apart from the law. Everything God did in history was to lay the foundation for this righteousness. Isaiah prophesied,

Isaiah 53:11

¹¹ *After the suffering of his soul, he will see the light of life and be satisfied; by his knowledge my righteous servant will justify many, and he will bear their iniquities.*

Paul reminded the believers in Rome that the righteousness of which the prophets foretold had been made known through Jesus. It was from God and came only to those who had faith in Jesus Christ.

Romans 3:21-22

²¹ *But now a righteousness from God, apart from law, has been made known, to which the Law and the Prophets testify.* ²² *This righteousness from God comes through faith in Jesus Christ to all who believe...*

WE HAVE THE RIGHTEOUSNESS OF CHRIST

We have become the righteousness of Christ

The good news is that we have become the righteousness of Christ. This was only possible after Jesus died for our sins on the cross. Peter says,

1 Peter 2:24

24 He himself bore our sins in his body on the tree, so that we might die to sins and live for righteousness; by his wounds you have been healed.

On the cross Jesus the Righteous One was made sin for us so we could be made righteous. Paul says

2 Corinthians 5:21 (NIV)

21 God made him who had no sin to be sin for us, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God.

Now through Christ we have the righteousness of God. We are totally righteous in His eyes. Our sin has been removed and replaced by the righteous, sin free life of Christ. When God looks at us He sees His son. It is because of the one sacrifice of Jesus that we have been redeemed by the blood of the Lamb and justified by a verdict of not guilty. At that moment we were imputed with the righteousness of Christ and made perfect. The writer of Hebrews says,

Hebrews 10:14 (NIV)

14 because by one sacrifice he has made perfect forever those who are being made holy.



SEARCH THE WORD

For additional insights on how we have been made righteous through Christ read the following Scriptures and answer the questions that follow:

- Read *Galatians 2:20*. According to this Scripture what makes it possible for us to be the righteousness of God? What gives us the righteousness of Christ? What is our responsibility?

- Read *Colossians 3:1-4*. According to this Scripture what makes it possible for us to be the righteousness of God? What is our responsibility? What is promised us?

Our sins have been nailed to the cross enabling us to have the righteousness of Christ. Our responsibility is to live by faith the life of Christ.

Galatians 2:20

20 I have been crucified with Christ and I no longer live, but Christ lives in me. The life I live in the body, I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me.

Paul reminds the believers in Colossae that they have been raised with Christ and because of this they are to set their hearts and minds on Christ and things above. They have the righteousness of Christ because their “life are now hidden with Christ in God”. (v. 3) The promise is that they will appear with God in glory.

Our righteousness is positional

There is positional righteousness and there is practical righteousness. What we have just been studying is positional righteousness. In our position before God we are righteous. This comes only from God. We do nothing to earn this position.

God gives us this position because of His Son. Our position before God is that we are in Christ and Christ is in us. In the sight of God we are the righteousness of Jesus. When He sees us He sees His Son. Because of this union with Christ we are righteous. Righteousness is not something but someone. It is the righteous person of Christ. It is because of our relationship with a person that we are righteous.

The righteous from God is credited to us through faith

There is a condition that we must meet to receive the righteousness of Christ. It is the same condition that we must meet to receive God’s grace and be justified (*Romans 5: 1; Ephesians 2:8-9*). Divine righteousness can only be received through faith. Paul says.

Romans 3:22 (NIV)

²² This righteousness from God comes through faith in Jesus Christ to all who believe...

Philippians 3:9 (NIV)

⁹ and be found in him, not having a righteousness of my own that comes from the law, but that which is through faith in Christ—the righteousness that comes from God and is by faith.

Paul makes it clear that it is not the man who works, *but trusts God who justifies the wicked*. It is through faith in Christ that the divine gift of righteousness is imparted to a person. Paul says,

Romans 4:5 (NIV)

⁵ However, to the man who does not work but trusts God who justifies the wicked, his faith is credited as righteousness.

Righteousness only comes through faith in Jesus Christ (*Romans 3:22*). Righteousness is put into your account at the moment you respond to the Spirit’s call by believing in Jesus.

Our righteousness is relational – it brings us to God

1 Peter 3:18 (NIV)

¹⁸ For Christ died for sins once for all, the righteous for the unrighteous, to bring you to God. He was put to death in the body but made alive by the Spirit,

Righteousness puts us in a right relationship with God. It brings us to God so that we have peace with Him (*Romans 5: 5*). Everything else flows from this relationship. Because we have peace with God we now can have peace in our relationships with others. God’s love flows through us to others because of our relationship with Him. When we have the righteousness of God we can live in a right relationship with others (*1 John 4:7-23*).

BECAUSE WE HAVE BEEN MADE RIGHTEOUS WE ARE TO ACT RIGHTEOUS

We have been given the righteousness of Christ and therefore we are to practice the relationship of Christ. We are to be right before God. We are to do right before God. Our **position** of righteousness in Christ is to prepare us for our **practice** of righteousness for Christ. We were created to be like Christ in our righteousness. Paul says,

Ephesians 4:22-24

²² You were taught, with regard to your former way of life, to put off your old self, which is being corrupted by its deceitful desires; ²³ to be made new in the attitude of your minds; ²⁴ and to put on the new self, created to be like God in true righteousness and holiness.

Positional righteousness is to be followed by practical righteousness

Practical righteousness simply means that we are to obey God in all we do and say. There are parts of our old life that are to be put off. We are to put on our new self with new attitudes. This new self was created to be righteous and holy like God. It means doing what is right. John said,

1 John 3:7 (NIV)

⁷ Dear children, do not let anyone lead you astray. He who does what is right is righteous, just as he is righteous.

We may be righteous in our position but we do not practice our righteousness until we do what is right. While positional righteousness is only about God, practical righteousness is about God and us. We have a direct responsibility to live out the righteousness of God in our daily lives. We are, as Paul says, to “become slaves to righteousness”.

Romans 6:18 (NIV)

¹⁸ You have been set free from sin and have become slaves to righteousness.

Because we have been set free from the bondage of sin we can become slaves to righteousness instead. When we are right with God we are to be right in our conduct.

Practical righteousness is a fruit of God’s character flowing through us

We cannot separate practicing righteousness from the Holy Spirit’s work in our lives. When we are filled with the Spirit we will accomplish what the Spirit desires.

Romans 8:5

⁵ Those who live according to the sinful nature have their minds set on what that nature desires; but those who live in accordance with the Spirit have their minds set on what the Spirit desires.

The Spirit desires that we produce the righteous fruit of the Spirit. All of our righteous acts are a fruit of God’s Spirit in us.

Galatians 5:16. 22-23

¹⁶ So I say, live by the Spirit, and you will not gratify the desires of the sinful nature. ²² But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, ²³ gentleness and self-control. Against such things there is no law.

The Spirit produces the fruit but requires our response to His work in our life. It means we are responsible to remain attached to the Vine of Jesus (*John 15:1-5*).

John 15:5

⁵ "I am the vine; you are the branches. If a man remains in me and I in him, he will bear much fruit; apart from me you can do nothing.

The fruit of the Spirit is still an act of God but it requires us to respond to what He is initiating in our lives.

Galatians 5:24-25 (NIV)

²⁴ Those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the sinful nature with its passions and desires. ²⁵ Since we live by the Spirit, let us keep in step with the Spirit.

Practical righteousness shows itself in loving relationships

Philippians 1:9-11 (NIV)

⁹ And this is my prayer: that your love may abound more and more in knowledge and depth of insight, ¹⁰ so that you may be able to discern what is best and may be pure and blameless until the day of Christ, ¹¹ filled with the fruit of righteousness that comes through Jesus Christ—to the glory and praise of God.

Paul's prayer was that the believer's love would "abound" for one another. He reminded them that this would happen if they were "...filled with the fruit of righteousness that comes through Jesus Christ..." Notice that they were urged to practice righteousness in their love for one another. This happened only when they were "...filled with the fruit of righteousness..." Their character demonstrated by love was a fruit of Christ's righteousness.

THE BLESSING OF RIGHTEOUSNESS

There are many blessings of righteousness. They involve effort on our part but pay great dividends. Complete the following Search the Word project to discover two of the many blessings of righteousness.



SEARCH THE WORD

Read the following Scriptures and record the blessing of righteousness that is promised.

- *Isaiah 32:17*

- *Psalm 5:12*

There is the blessing of peace. It is a fruit of righteousness. The effect of righteousness, Isaiah says, will be "...quietness and confidence forever" (Isaiah 32:17). This peace is a blessing that comes from being in a right relationship with God and others. It does not mean that our lives will be free of conflict. It does mean that we can always expect an inner peace and confidence when we practice true righteousness. It will never fail us.

Another blessing of the fruit of righteousness is divine favor. Divine favor does not mean we are Divine favorites. This would not be in keeping with God's nature. The relationship of righteousness to divine favor is that when we "practice" righteousness we will reap what we sow. We will enjoy the fruit of our deeds. Jesus was speaking of this kind of divine favor when He said that those who "...hunger and thirst after righteousness...will be filled." (Matt. 5:6) Those who thirst for a right relationship with God and others will be filled with the kind of joy, peace and success that come only from God (*Psalm 1:1-3*).

❖ **REBIRTH:** *We are saved and given a new life by rebirth and renewal through the Holy Spirit.*

Titus 3:5 (NIV)

⁵ *he saved us, not because of righteous things we had done, but because of his mercy. He saved us through the washing of rebirth and renewal by the Holy Spirit,*

WE ALL MUST EXPERIENCE REBIRTH

The reason God requires a rebirth is that our first birth was contaminated by sin. We all inherited a sin nature. The Psalmist certainly was aware of his condition. He said,

Psalm 51:5 (NIV)

⁵ *Surely I was sinful at birth, sinful from the time my mother conceived me.*

Because we all inherited a sin nature we all have sinned. As a result of our sin we are spiritually dead. Paul tells the believers in Ephesus,

Ephesians 2:1

¹ *As for you, you were dead in your transgressions and sins,*

Born from above

The essential requirement for salvation is that we must be born again. Jesus explained this in detail to Nicodemus, a member of the Pharisees and a teacher of the law. Jesus got right to the point. No one can enter the kingdom of God unless they are born again.

John 3:3-6

³ *In reply Jesus declared, "I tell you the truth, no one can see the kingdom of God unless he is born again."* ⁴ *"How can a man be born when he is old?" Nicodemus asked. "Surely he cannot enter a second time into his mother's womb to be born!"* ⁵ *Jesus answered, "I tell you the truth, no one can*

enter the kingdom of God unless he is born of water and the Spirit. ⁶ Flesh gives birth to flesh, but the Spirit gives birth to spirit.

The Greek for “born again” can also be translated “born from above.” A person can be born again from above because of the redemption that comes through the blood of Jesus. The Spirit is the agent of rebirth. The Spirit performs our rebirth. Jesus said we must be born of the water and Spirit. While there are different ways this can be interpreted, it seems to me that water baptism is the most consistent with this passage. In the Bible water symbolizes purification. The Spirit performs the inward work of rebirth while baptism is the outward sign of what occurred through rebirth.

Romans 6:4 (NIV)

⁴ We were therefore buried with him through baptism into death in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, we too may live a new life.

New life with a new hope

Through rebirth we have been given a new life and a new hope. Because God loves us He has made us who were dead in sin to be alive in Christ. Paul explains,

Ephesians 2:1, 4-5 (NIV)

¹ As for you, you were dead in your transgressions and sins,... ⁴ But because of his great love for us, God, who is rich in mercy, ⁵ made us alive with Christ even when we were dead in transgressions—it is by grace you have been saved.

The sentence of death was removed the moment we were born again into this new life. We were made spiritually alive by the Spirit at the moment we were saved by grace. Not only did we receive a new life here on earth but also for the hereafter.

THE NEW BIRTH IS A DIVINE ACT

The new birth is a divine act of regeneration. It is God’s act of giving new life to our souls. It is an introduction to a radically different kind of life where all things become new. God the Father, God the Son and God the Holy Spirit work in perfect harmony in our new birth. They are the perfect pediatric team from above.

The Father commissions our rebirth

First we see that the Father commissions our rebirth.

John 1:12-13

¹² Yet to all who received him, to those who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God— ¹³ children born not of natural descent, nor of human decision or a husband’s will, but born of God.

John says that everyone who believed in the name of Jesus would be adopted into the family of God and become the Father’s children. This, John said, was a divine act. All who received Jesus were “...born not of natural descent, nor of human decision or a husband’s will, but born of God.” Peter said,

1 Peter 1:3

³ Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ! In his great mercy he has given us new birth into a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead,

The Son gives His life so we can have a new birth and life

While the Father commissions our rebirth it is the Son who comes to give us rebirth. Without His death on the cross this would be impossible. John shows us how the Father, Son and Holy Spirit work together to give us a new life through rebirth—a life where God resides in us and we in Him.

1 John 4:13-16 (NIV)

¹³ We know that we live in him and he in us, because **he has given us of his Spirit.** ¹⁴ And we have seen and testify that **the Father has sent his Son** to be the Savior of the world. ¹⁵ **If anyone acknowledges that Jesus is the Son of God, God lives in him and he in God.** ¹⁶ And so we know and rely on the love God has for us. God is love. Whoever lives in love lives in God, and God in him. (Bold added)

For us to experience rebirth someone had to die. This was necessary to fulfill God's requirements for redemption. This He did by offering His Son as a propitiation for our sins. Jesus died so that we might live. At the moment we acknowledge Jesus as the Son of God, and place our trust in Him the transaction is complete. We were born again. At that moment God began to live in us and us in Him. Paul said:

Galatians 2:20 (NIV)

²⁰ I have been crucified with Christ and I no longer live, but Christ lives in me. The life I live in the body, I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me.

The Holy Spirit is the agent for the new birth

The Holy Spirit is the primary agent for the new birth. Complete the following Search the Word study and discover new insights on how the Father, Son and Holy Spirit work together.



SEARCH THE WORD

Read Titus 3: 4-7

- What was God's motivation for saving us? What did this have to do with our righteousness?

- How were we saved?

- What does washing and renewal have to do with the rebirth? How does the Spirit do this?
- How are the Father, Son and Holy Spirit involved in our rebirth?
- What is the result of our rebirth?

The Holy Spirit is the Spirit of life and therefore those who are born of Him have spirit and life. The Spirit brings new life from the Father and through the Son. As the agent of the rebirth the Spirit washes and renews us (v. 5). He pours the washing of the rebirth from the Father through the Son. The Spirit then resides in us as Christ's representative enabling us to live Spirit filled lives. Through rebirth we see the Trinity working in perfect unity. The end result is that we are justified by His grace and as God's children we become heirs and have the hope of eternal life.

THROUGH THE REBIRTH WE BECOME A NEW CREATION

We receive a new nature

The word, "rebirth" or "regeneration" occurs only twice in the New Testament (*Matthew 19: 28* and *Titus 3:5*). In both cases this word refers to a new beginning, or a new birth. This new birth launches the process of a new beginning when a person receives Jesus. Through rebirth we have a new nature imparted to us through the Holy Spirit. The new nature is disposed to loving and following the commands of God. Ezekiel prophesied of this new nature;

Ezekiel 36:26-27 (NIV)

²⁶ I will give you a new heart and put a new spirit in you; I will remove from you your heart of stone and give you a heart of flesh. ²⁷ And I will put my Spirit in you and move you to follow my decrees and be careful to keep my laws.

We have been given a new nature but it does not automatically make us righteous or holy. We do have a responsibility to respond to the work that the Holy Spirit is doing in our life. For the imparted nature to be a new creation in practice, we must put off the old self and put on the new self (*Ephesians 4:22-24*).

We receive a new desire for God

The spirit renovates our heart and implants in us a new desire for God. Through rebirth we are given a new heart when the Spirit is put within us. Being born of the Spirit gives us a new desire to glorify God with in all we do and in all we say.

2 Corinthians 5:17, 14 (NIV)

¹⁷ Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; the old has gone, the new has come!...¹⁴ For Christ's love compels us, because we are convinced that one died for all, and therefore all died.

We receive a new motivation to love people

Through rebirth we are born again into an entirely new way of relating to others. We have God's nature which is a nature of love ("...God is love..." 1 John 4:16). We are clothed with Christ and are all one in Christ Jesus (Gal. 3:26-28). We no longer live for ourselves but for God who loved us and gave Himself up for us. Since we have been given the new clothes of the new life, it is our responsibility to wear these clothes, loving others as God loves us. Paul says,

Colossians 3:12-15

¹² Therefore, as God's chosen people, holy and dearly loved, clothe yourselves with compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience. ¹³ Bear with each other and forgive whatever grievances you may have against one another. Forgive as the Lord forgave you. ¹⁴ And over all these virtues put on love, which binds them all together in perfect unity.

DO! "Watch your life and doctrine closely. Persevere in them..."

➤ What did today's study say to you about watching your life and doctrine closely?



WEEK 6 MEMORY ASSIGNMENTS AND REVIEW

Following are key Scriptures to learn this week. Memorize and meditate on this key Scripture and write it in the space that follows. Memorize the doctrinal covenant.

- Memorize *Romans 3:23-24*

- Memorize the Doctrinal Covenant.

I have been saved by g_____ alone through f_____ alone. I am r_____ by the blood of the Lamb; j_____ by a verdict of not guilty; made r_____ by the righteousness of Christ; b_____ a_____ by the Spirit; s_____ to be holy.

- Review previous memory projects from your card index file.

PRAYER

Spend time in prayer using the five components of the Lord's Prayer.

DAY 5: SANTIFICATION

❖ **SANTIFICATION:** *By sanctification we are set apart and made holy to be holy as He is holy.*

1 Thessalonians 5:23-24 (NIV)

²³ *May God himself, the God of peace, sanctify you through and through. May your whole spirit, soul and body be kept blameless at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. ²⁴ The one who calls you is faithful and he will do it.*

WHAT IS SANTIFICATION

Redemption, justification and rebirth are divine acts of God given to us at the time we put our faith in Jesus. They require no effort from us. Righteousness and sanctification are also divine gifts of God given at the moment of our salvation but are progressive in nature. We are given the righteousness of Christ but we are to grow in righteousness. We are sanctified and made holy but we are to grow in holiness. Both require effort on our part to cooperate with what God is doing in our life.

Sanctification in the Old Testament

The primary meaning of sanctification is to be set apart from something that is unclean. The Old Testament used this term to speak primarily of **things** but also of **people**. An Old Testament word that denotes sanctification is *consecrate*. Items were set apart for God, cleansed and consecrated to Him. People were also consecrated and set apart for God's service. When Hezekiah became King of Israel at the age of twenty the Bible says "*He did what was right in the eyes of the Lord*". The first thing Hezekiah did was to repair the temple and restore worship.

2 Chronicles 29:4-5

⁴ *He brought in the priests and the Levites, assembled them in the square on the east side ⁵ and said: "Listen to me, Levites! Consecrate yourselves now and consecrate the temple of the LORD, the God of your fathers. Remove all defilement from the sanctuary.*

Sanctification in the New Testament

The New Testament uses the word to in regard to **people**. When God sanctifies us He sets us apart to be holy. We are also set apart to God for His service and set apart from sin to live holy lives. Sanctification is the action of the Holy Spirit making us holy. We are holy in God's sight but we are also to pursue holiness.

Ephesians 1:4 (NIV)

⁴ *For he chose us in him before the creation of the world to be holy and blameless in his sight...*

POSITIONAL SANTIFICATION

As you can see, sanctification is used in two different but complementary ways in the Bible. First there is positional sanctification. This is instantaneous and permanent sanctification at the moment we are saved. We were chosen before the creation of the world "*...to be holy and blameless in his sight...*" (Eph. 1:4). Because we are in Christ Jesus through His redemption, we also have His "*...righteousness and holiness...*" (1 Cor. 1:30). These are divine gifts of grace and have nothing to do with our effort. This is the finished work of Christ. **It is our position in Christ.** Paul made this clear to the believers in Corinth.

1 Corinthians 1:30 (NIV)

³⁰ *It is because of him that you are in Christ Jesus, who has become for us wisdom from God—that is, our righteousness, holiness and redemption.*

Once again we see the Trinity at work in our lives, sanctifying us.

1 Corinthians 6:11 (NIV)

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. (Bold added)*

The New Testament uses the word sanctification to denote being set apart and consecrated to God. Believers were sanctified by God.

1 Thessalonians 5:23-24 (NIV)

²³ *May God himself, the God of peace, sanctify you through and through. May your whole spirit, soul and body be kept blameless at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. ²⁴ The one who calls you is faithful and he will do it.*

PROGRESSIVE SANTIFICATION

Sanctification has a strong progressive element to it. Scripture emphasizes that we are made holy through sanctification but we have a responsibility to grow in holiness. We are held accountable for the spiritual growth made possible through sanctification. Believers were also sanctified so they would become holy. Paul taught that all believers were purified by the blood of the Lamb but were to purify themselves as well.

2 Corinthians 7:1 (NIV)

¹ *Since we have these promises, dear friends, let us purify ourselves from everything that contaminates body and spirit, perfecting holiness out of reverence for God.*

This is progressive sanctification. We become holy over a period of time as we progress towards maturity in Christ. This is generally referred to as spiritual growth. It involves a conscious effort on our part to respond to the Spirits' promptings. It involves the disciplines associated with prayer and the Word. It means that we are obedient to God. "...Perfecting holiness..." is a result of our obedience to God because of our desire to revere and honor Him.



SEARCH THE WORD

Paul gave the believers in Thessalonica some instructions on how to be sanctified. Read 1 Thessalonians 4:3-7 and answer the questions that follow.

- How is sanctification defined in this Scripture?

- In sanctification what is God's part and what is our part?
- According to this Scripture how is the believer sanctified?

Progressive sanctification involves practice. In the Bible it is often associated with being morally pure. It requires us to obey God's Word. In this passage of Scripture Paul defines sanctification as avoiding sexual immorality and controlling one's own body. We are sanctified by avoiding anything that God says is impure—anything that might contaminate our souls or body. As always what God calls us to do, He empowers us to do by His Spirit.

We are set apart for growth

We are set apart to grow in holiness. As we have seen, we are sanctified and made holy in our position. We are holy in God's sight. But we are to also grow in holiness. This is the practice of progressive sanctification. This is the "finishing" work of Christ where He puts the finishing touches on our life. It is the gradual moral transformation that occurs as we become mature and conform to the character of Christ (*Ephesians 4: 17*). Peter framed it this way:

1 Peter 1:13-16

¹³ Therefore, prepare your minds for action; be self-controlled; set your hope fully on the grace to be given you when Jesus Christ is revealed. ¹⁴ As obedient children, do not conform to the evil desires you had when you lived in ignorance. ¹⁵ But just as he who called you is holy, so be holy in all you do; ¹⁶ for it is written: "Be holy, because I am holy."

We can clearly see that Peter is talking about progressive sanctification. There is preparation if we are to lead holy lives. Holiness requires discipline. Holiness requires that we make choices not to conform to the evil desires that we had before we were saved. Our minds must be renewed and our actions transformed (*Romans 12: 1-2*).

According to the Westminster Shorter Catechism (1647), by sanctification "*we are renewed in the whole man after the image of God*" (Question 34; see *Col 3:10*). Nothing can be more crucial to our view of sanctification than this truth. The standard for holiness is complete conformity to Christ's image (*Rom 8:29*).

We are set aside for service

Sanctification sets us aside to be holy so we can serve God as an honorable vessel. Paul encourages Timothy to be a vessel of honor.

2 Timothy 2:20-22 NASB

²⁰ Now in a large house there are not only gold and silver vessels, but also vessels of wood and of earthenware, and some to honor and some to dishonor. ²¹ Therefore, if anyone cleanses himself from these things, he will be a vessel for honor, **sanctified**, useful to the Master, prepared for every good

work. ²² Now flee from youthful lusts and pursue righteousness, faith, love and peace, with those who call on the Lord from a pure heart.

The fact that God sets us aside for His service does not negate our responsibility to sanctify ourselves. Paul shows how these two elements are inseparable if a person wants to be "...a vessel for honor, sanctified, useful to the Master, prepared for every good work." For us to accomplish God's purposes for our lives we are called to sanctify ourselves. It is through holy vessels that God does His greatest work.

THE KEYS TO PROGRESSIVE SANCTIFICATION

We first must be filled by the Spirit

The first key to being sanctified is to be filled with the Spirit. Only the Spirit enables us to be sanctified. Paul says,

Ephesians 5:18 (ASV)

¹⁸ And be not drunken with wine, wherein is riot, but be filled with the Spirit;

The Greek present tense is used to indicate that the filling of the Holy Spirit is not a one-time experience but is a continuous filling. This requires that we participate by being in a position to be "filled". We do this when we learn to "live by the Spirit".

Galatians 5:16 (NIV)

¹⁶ So I say, live by the Spirit, and you will not gratify the desires of the sinful nature.

"Live" in the Greek is in the present tense. We are to go on living in the Spirit. By the prompting and power of the Holy Spirit we are able to overcome our evil desires and produce the fruit of the Spirit (*Gal. 5:15-26*). The way we remain in a position to be filled with the Spirit and live according to the Spirit is to remain attached to the vine of Jesus. We are attached primarily through prayer and the Word (*John 15:1-5, 7*)

We are to be sanctified by the Word

Progressive sanctification is moral transformation. As we respond to the Spirit-empowered Word, God cleanses us by His truth. Jesus prayed that His disciples would be sanctified by the truth of the Word.

John 17:17

¹⁷ Sanctify them by the truth; your word is truth.

We are purified not only by knowing the truth but by obeying the truth. Peter said,

1 Peter 1:22

²² Now that you have purified yourselves by obeying the truth so that you have sincere love for your brothers, love one another deeply, from the heart.

The Psalmist answers the question on how he is able to keep pure. He says it is by "...by living according to you word...I have hidden your word in my heart that I might not sin against you" (*Psalm 119:9-11*). An indispensable key to being sanctified is to know and do the Word of God. A commitment to reading, studying and memorizing the Word is essential.

We are to be sanctified by prayer

There is the power of the Word to sanctify us and there is the power of prayer. The two are linked together by Jesus. He releases the power of God by prayer so that His disciples will be sanctified by the truth He has taught them. Jesus prayed:

John 17:15-17

¹⁵ My prayer is not that you take them out of the world but that you protect them from the evil one. ¹⁶ They are not of the world, even as I am not of it. ¹⁷ Sanctify them by the truth; your word is truth.

King David, when repenting from the terrible sin of adultery and murder prayed, “Create in me a pure heart...” (Psalm 51:10). In another heartfelt prayer David prayed that God would search and test his heart.

Psalm 139:23-24 (NIV)

²³ Search me, O God, and know my heart; test me and know my anxious thoughts. ²⁴ See if there is any offensive way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting.

Since we cannot purify ourselves apart from the presence and power of God, we need to continually ask God to purify us. By confessing our own weaknesses and asking God to create pure hearts in us we release His sanctifying power.

THE SIGNS OF SANCTIFICATION

There will be the sign of separation from sin

Through sanctification we are separated to God and separated from sin. Our part is to intentionally separate ourselves from everything that contaminates us or makes us impure. The writer of Hebrews says,

Hebrews 12:14 (ASV)

¹⁴ Follow after peace with all men, and the sanctification without which no man shall see the Lord:

We are to follow after or pursue sanctification. When we pursue sanctification there will be visible signs in our life. One of these signs is that we will be morally pure because we dedicate our bodies to God as “...instruments of righteousness” (Romans 6: 11-14). The most significant sign of sanctification is when we present ourselves to God as “living sacrifices”. When we make this decision other decisions to be pure will follow. Paul said,

Romans 12:1-2

¹ 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. ² 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.

There will be the sign of conformity to the character of Christ

The true test of sanctification is a transformed life. Nothing less will be evidence that we have remained attached to the vine of Jesus and have been purified by the Word and prayer. Being “...conformed to the likeness of his Son...” is the true picture Paul gives us as to what it means to be transformed.

Romans 8:29 (NIV)

²⁹ 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. (Bold added)

Transformation is when our character is continually being changed into the image of Christ. It involves intentional and continual spiritual growth on our part. It results in being separated to God and from the world.

2 Corinthians 6:16-17 (NIV)

¹⁶ What agreement is there between the temple of God and idols? For we are the temple of the living God. As God has said: "I will live with them and walk among them, and I will be their God, and they will be my people." ¹⁷ "Therefore come out from them and be separate, says the Lord. Touch no unclean thing, and I will receive you."

Transformation will be demonstrated in part by a separation from all that is evil and defiles God's temple. We will be in the world but not part of the world (*John 17: 15-17; 1 John 2:15-17*). Because we are the "...temple of the living God...", we must separate ourselves from anything that would dishonor God (*2 Corinthians 6:16-17*; see also *1 Cor. 6:18-20*).

There will be the sign of faith

Every sin has its origin in a lack of faith in God. It is a sin not trust God for His provisions and live independent from Him. Sin demonstrates that we lack faith in God. When we sin we are trying to meet our own needs. Therefore without complete faith in God we will have difficulty being pure. It will always seem like we are swimming against the current because we are trying to be pure on our own strength. Paul reminds us that it is because we can trust in God's promises that we are able to purify ourselves.

2 Corinthians 7:1 (NIV)

¹ Since we have these promises, dear friends, let us purify ourselves from everything that contaminates body and spirit, perfecting holiness out of reverence for God.

Peter concurs:

2 Peter 1:3-4 (NIV)

³ His divine power has given us everything we need for life and godliness through our knowledge of him who called us by his own glory and goodness. ⁴ Through these he has given us his very great and precious promises, so that through them you may participate in the divine nature and escape the corruption in the world caused by evil desires.

Peter assures us that "His divine power has given us everything we need for life and godliness..." (*2 Peter 1:3*). That, my friends, is a real trust builder. We have absolutely everything we need for life and godliness! We have God's divine power. It is based on His precious promises. We are personally invited to participate in God's divine nature to "...escape the corruption caused by evil desires" (*2 Peter 1:3*). God has given us every assurance that He is one hundred percent committed to supplying the power for our progressive sanctification. Our responsibility is to trust and obey.

DO! "Watch your life and doctrine closely. Persevere in them..."

➤ What did today's study say to you about watching your life and doctrine closely?



WEEK 6 MEMORY ASSIGNMENTS AND REVIEW

Following are key Scriptures to learn this week. Memorize and meditate on this key Scripture and write it in the space that follows. Memorize the doctrinal covenant.

- Memorize *Romans 3:23-24*

- Memorize the Doctrinal Covenant

I have been saved by g_____ alone through f_____ alone. I am r_____ by the blood of the Lamb; j_____ by a verdict of not guilty; made r_____ by the righteousness of Christ; b_____ a_____ by the Spirit; s_____ to be holy.

- Review previous memory projects from your card index file.

PRAYER

Spend time in prayer using the five components of the Lord's Prayer.



Week 6

WEEKLY ACCOUNTABILITY

"All you have to do from the time you get up in the morning until the time you go to bed at night is love the Lord with all your heart, trust His promises, obey His commands. Everything else flows from that." (Bill Bright)

Be ready to share the following with your group:

- **Love the Lord with all your heart**

In what ways did I or didn't I demonstrate my love of God by seeking Him with all my heart?

In what ways did I or didn't I allow God's love to flow through me to others including spouse, family and others?

- **Trust God's promises**

To what degree did I or didn't I demonstrate complete trust in God's promises this week?

What was my greatest test of faith?

- **Obey God's commands**

Are there weaknesses or sins I need to confess?

Did I faithfully complete all assignments this week?

In what ways did I witness to the lost this week? (prayer, share, serve, encourage)

WEEK 7

THE DOCTRINE OF THE BIBLE

“What God has breathed into the Scriptures is our sole and absolute authority. It is what the all-powerful, all-knowing, sovereign God of the universe has revealed as truth...”

INTRODUCTION

The Bible claims to be the Word of God; not just contain the Word of God; not just reveal God or tell stories about God. The Bible says it **is** God’s Word. The Bible claims to be inspired by God—that *God breathed* His Word into existence. The question is can we be sure that this is true? Can we have complete confidence that the Bible is a record of exactly what God wants to communicate to His people? Do we know for sure that the sixty-six books contained in the Bible complete God’s revelation to man and that no more is to be added? We can be totally confident that the Bible is the perfect Word of God given to us by Him

for our good. Think about it. The sovereign God of the universe speaks to us through His Word, the Bible. When we recognize the magnitude of this gift we will learn to love and hunger for God’s word and accept it as an authoritative standard for all we say and do.

WEEK 7 STUDY

DAY 1: INTRODUCTION TO THE DOCTRINE OF THE BIBLE

DAY 2: INSPIRATION

DAY 3: ILLUMINATION

DAY 4: INTERPRETATION

DAY 5: AUTHORITY

ASSIGNMENTS:

- **Memorize and meditate on**

2 Timothy 3:16-17

¹⁶ All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness, ¹⁷ so that the man of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work.

- **Memorize the Doctrinal Covenant**

Lord, I believe the Bible is inspired and I covenant this day to make your Word my sole and absolute authority for all I think and do, obeying You in all things.

- Complete all study and review assignments. Review memory work from past courses at least once a week.
- Prepare your memory/review index card. Write your memory verse for the week on one side and the Doctrinal Covenant on the other.

DAY 1: INTRODUCTION TO THE DOCTRINE OF THE BIBLE

IS THE BIBLE THE INSPIRED, INERRANT WORD OF GOD?

In the study of the Doctrine of the Bible the first thing we will consider is the question of authorship. Who wrote the Bible? Was it written by man or is it written by God as the Bible claims? If God wrote the Bible how did He do it? How can we be sure that we have the exact Words of God?. Does the Bible contain mistakes or is it perfect in every detail? Does it reveal the only true picture of God and man?

The Bible claims to be the inspired Word of God—that He “*breathed*” the Scriptures into existence. Paul tells Timothy,

2 Timothy 3:16-17

¹⁶ All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness, ¹⁷ so that the man of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work.

But what does Paul mean when he says that all Scripture is *God-breathed*? There are several theories of inspiration.

Natural theory of inspiration

There are some who hold that the Bible is not divine. It was not written by God but about God. There is no supernatural element in the Bible. The Bible was written by men and therefore contains the thoughts of men and contains errors. This is held by liberal individuals and churches who often deny the divinity of Christ and other orthodox Christian beliefs.

Early in Billy Graham’s ministry he had a crisis of faith over the natural theory of inspiration. He recounts this time of spiritual doubts:

“Just weeks before the mission was to start, however, I experienced a major crisis of faith—the most intense of my life. Some months before, a fellow evangelist whom I respected greatly had begun to express doubts about the Bible, urging me to “face facts” and change my belief that the Bible was the inspired Word of God. “Billy,” he said, “you’re fifty years out-of-date. People no longer accept the Bible as being inspired the way you do. Your faith is too simple.” I knew from my own reading that some modern theologians shared his views.” (The Journey by Billy Graham)

The friend Billy Graham referred to was Charles Templeton. Templeton was regarded as a more dynamic preacher than Graham and a rising star. They even held evangelical crusades together. Templeton, however, started doubting God and the reliability of the Bible. After seeing a mother with a dead child in her arms Templeton stated that he could no longer believe in a good God. He became an outspoken opponent of belief in God and wrote *Farewell to God: My Reasons for Rejecting the Christian Faith*. Billy Graham faced a similar crisis of faith but came to a different conclusion about God and the Bible. He obviously chose a very different path.

Partial theory of inspiration

I use this term to describe a theory that the Bible **contains** the Word of God but is not necessarily **the** Word of God. Not everything included in the Bible is God’s words. Through various kinds of “higher criticism” a

person must sort out what God really said and the words that were put in His mouth by human authors. When I was in seminary this was the prevailing theory. In a New Testament class a Professor read a quote of Jesus in the Gospels and confidently claimed, “We know that Jesus could not have said this. It was inserted years after He died by beliefs of the first century church”. This was not a liberal seminary that I attended. I am pleased to say that things have changed and the seminary now holds to a verbal/plenary theory of inspiration.

Dictation theory of inspiration

This theory of inspiration espouses that the writers passively recorded God’s words without involvement of their own experience or personalities. They simply wrote down verbatim what God said to them. This takes the human element completely out of the revelation of God. There is no contradiction in saying that God used the experiences and unique personalities of people to communicate His truth.

Verbal/plenary theory of inspiration

This option contends that God used man’s experience and personality when He gave us the Bible. The actual words of the Bible are conveyed exactly as God intended them to be and are without error. On day two’s study of inspiration we will look at evidence that supports this theory of inspiration.



REFLECT AND RESPOND

Take some time right now to review and reflect on what you have just read. Write a definition of inspiration in your own words.

WHAT ARE THE CONSEQUENCES IF INERRANCY IS DENIED

A belief in the Bible as the inerrant, inspired Word of God is the rock that anchors us in our faith in God. Jesus made this clear as He concluded His sermon on the mountain. Jesus warned the people that it was not enough to just claim to know Him but it was essential to do the will of the heavenly Father. Jesus said,

Matthew 7:21

²¹ “Not everyone who says to me, ‘Lord, Lord,’ will enter the kingdom of heaven, but only he who does the will of my Father who is in heaven.

Jesus then explained how people could know and do the will of the heavenly Father.

Matthew 7:24-27

²⁴ “Therefore everyone who hears these words of mine and puts them into practice is like a wise man who built his house on the rock. ²⁵ The rain came down, the streams rose, and the winds blew and beat against that house; yet it did not fall, because it had its foundation on the rock. ²⁶ But everyone who hears these words of mine and does not put them into practice is like a foolish man who built his house on sand. ²⁷ The rain came down, the streams rose, and the winds blew and beat against that house, and it fell with a great crash.”

People were to make the words of Jesus their foundation by putting them into practice. His exact words would be the rock that would keep them anchored when they faced the storms of life. Jesus warned that

there would be severe consequences if they did not build their lives on the rock of His Word. They would certainly fall when the storms came. It is interesting to note that the people who heard this teaching recognized that it was different than the teaching they were used to hearing from the teachers of the law. They said,

Matthew 7:28-29

²⁸ When Jesus had finished saying these things, the crowds were amazed at his teaching, ²⁹ because he taught as one who had authority, and not as their teachers of the law.

Even though the people recognized that Jesus was different than the teachers of the law they did not know that the very words that Jesus spoke were the words of God. They recognized that Jesus spoke with authority but they did not know the extent of that authority. We do. To deny that authority in any way is to suffer some or all of the following consequences:

Consequence #1: If we do not believe that the Bible is the inspired, inerrant Word of God we have no source of authority for truth.

To be anchored in truth we must have an anchor. That anchor is the inspired, inerrant Word of God. What we do and say is not to be based on our authority or the authority of anyone or anything else. Without the authority of Scriptures we have no “true north” for our life. There is nothing to guide us.

Consequence #2: If we do not believe that the Bible is the inspired, inerrant Word of God it will erode our belief in the Father, Son and Holy Spirit and other foundational doctrines of the Bible.

If we doubt that the Bible is the inspired, inerrant Word of God we open the door for many more doubts. The cracks widen and we will begin to doubt the very nature of God. Other doctrines such as sin and grace will begin to erode. When our doctrinal beliefs crumble our faith crumbles.

To deny inerrancy it is to deny that which the Scripture claims is true. If the Bible contains some errors, how can we be sure that its claims concerning the Holy Spirit, Christ, salvation, heaven, etc. are true? The Bible does not give us that option. The Bible claims for itself inerrancy. The Psalmist says,

Psalms 19:7-8

⁷ The law of the LORD is perfect, reviving the soul. The statutes of the LORD are trustworthy, making wise the simple. ⁸The precepts of the LORD are right, giving joy to the heart. The commands of the LORD are radiant, giving light to the eyes.

Consequence #3: If we do not believe that the Bible is the inspired, inerrant Word of God we have no authoritative standard for right and wrong.

If you were to ask the person on the street how they decide right from wrong you would most likely hear one of two things. First would be, “If I feel something is right then I do it. If I don’t feel something is right then I don’t do it.” This standard for right and wrong is based on how a person feels. A second criterion for choosing right and wrong is what a person believes. When asked this question many others would say they decide what is right and wrong based on their thinking. In both cases people decide for themselves what is right and wrong. You can see from history where this leads.

Hitler based right and wrong on what he believed. Because of his standard for right and wrong the world was sent into turmoil and millions of innocent people died. The Soviet Union with no God or moral law to guide them also killed many people and refused to give citizens their God mandated rights. In both cases this occurred because there was no objective standard for right and wrong but was based only on human thoughts and feelings. There are national and personal consequences when there is no objective standard for right and wrong.

What I experienced

For a while I began to be intrigued by the partial theory of inspiration that I was being taught in seminary. Two things occurred. I found that it appealed to my intellect but was destructive to my spiritual life. I found that once I started to decide for myself what was true or not true in the Bible my confidence in the Bible as the true Word of God began to erode. I made a decision that I would accept all of the Bible as God's Word. You can't have it both ways. Either God has given us His complete revelation and the Bible is trustworthy in every way or it is not reliable. A theory that makes man responsible for choosing what is true or not true in the Bible is not only risky but arrogant.

What Billy Graham experienced

When Billy Graham experienced his trial of faith he struggled for months over doubts about whether or not the Bible was the inerrant, inspired Word of God. Following is a brief excerpt of his struggle and his decision.

For months doubts about the Bible swirled through my mind, finally coming to a boil during a conference at which I was speaking in the mountains east of Los Angeles. One night, alone in my cabin at the conference, I studied carefully what the Bible said about its divine origin... Finally I went for a walk in the moonlit forest. I knelt down with my Bible on a tree stump in front of me and began praying. I don't recall my exact words, but my prayer went something like this: "O Lord, there are many things in this book I don't understand. There are many problems in it for which I have no solution. ... But, Father, by faith I am going to accept this as Thy Word. From this moment on I am going to trust the Bible as the Word of God." (The Journey, Billy Graham)



REFLECT AND RESPOND

Ponder for a while the importance of what has been said about how the Bible came to us.

Consider the three consequences that happen when a person does not believe that the Bible is the inspired, inerrant Word of God. Have you observed any of these consequences? Have you ever questioned or had a crisis of faith over complete reliability of the Bible?

DO! "Watch your life and doctrine closely. Persevere in them..."

➤ What did today's study say to you about watching your life and doctrine closely?



WEEK 7 MEMORY ASSIGNMENTS AND REVIEW

Following are key Scriptures to learn this week. Memorize and meditate on this key Scripture and write it in the space that follows. Memorize the doctrinal covenant.

- Memorize 2 *Timothy* 3:16-17

- Memorize the doctrinal covenant

Lord, I believe the Bible is i_____ and I c_____ this day to make Your Word
my s_____ and a _____ a _____ for all I think and do, obeying
You in all things.

DAY 2: INSPIRATION

THE MIRACLE OF THE BIBLE

That God should give us a perfect book that contains everything that He wants us to know while we are here on earth should not surprise us. A sovereign, omnipotent, omniscient God who breathed the heaven and earth into being certainly would have no problem breathing a book into existence that would contain His exact thoughts and contain no errors. The Psalmist proclaimed,

Psalm 33:6, 9

⁶ By the word of the LORD were the heavens made, their starry host by the breath of his mouth...⁹ For he spoke, and it came to be; he commanded, and it stood firm.

The composition of the Bible gives overwhelming evidence that it is a divine miracle of God. There can be no other explanation for how one volume containing 66 books written by 40 different authors on three different continents over a period of 1500 years could have perfect unity. The Bible shares a common storyline and theme. It is the story of God's redemption of mankind supported by indisputable archeological evidence and thousands of ancient manuscripts. How could such a phenomenon be explained apart from the miraculous?

THE BIBLE CLAIMS TO BE THE INSPIRED WORD OF GOD

We start with the fact that the Bible itself claims to be the Word of God. The phrase "And God said" occurs ten times in the first chapter of the Bible. In addition there are almost 4,000 other instances of writers claiming to speak for God, saying "God said," or "The Lord said," or "The Word of the Lord came..."

"God-breathed"

The word "inspiration" is found only in Paul's letter to Timothy and in *Job 32:8*. Inspiration literally means "God -breathed," that God Himself through His Holy Spirit put into the writer's souls what He wanted in His Holy Book. Paul says,

2 Timothy 3:16-17

¹⁶ All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness, ¹⁷ so that the man of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work.

God "breathed" into the writers' souls exactly what He wanted them to communicate. All the words of the Bible from *Genesis* to *Revelation* were given to men from God for our benefit. The Bible is God speaking to us through human beings. God worked through men's personalities and speech patterns but the content of what was written came from Him.

"Carried along"

The Holy Spirit was the agent of inspiration. Men were the instruments used in the process of writing down what God wanted to communicate to man. The origin of all Scripture was in the will of God not the will of man. Peter says,

2 Peter 1:20-21

²⁰ Above all, you must understand that no prophecy of Scripture came about by the prophet's own interpretation. ²¹ For prophecy never had its origin in the will of man, but men spoke from God as they were carried along by the Holy Spirit.

If the will of man was the author of Scripture there would be errors. Imperfect people would author imperfect works. God did not allow this to happen. Men were “*carried along*” by the Holy Spirit. The origin of Scripture was in the will of God not man. The Holy Spirit empowered men to carry along that message in a form that could be communicated to all men in all cultures in all ages. The Greek word for “*carried along*” is the same word that was used in the book of Acts to describe what happened to a ship on which Paul was a passenger. It is reported that a wind of hurricane force caused the ship to be “*driven along*.”

Acts 27:15

¹⁵ The ship was caught by the storm and could not head into the wind; so we gave way to it and were driven along.

In this account of a shipwreck even an experienced captain and sailors could not navigate the ship because the wind was so strong. This gives us a picture of the Holy Spirit steering, directing and driving along human authors of the Bible according to God's will. The human authors of the Bible were in no more control of the Bible than were the sailors on the ship. The word translated “*driven along*” indicates the complete control of the Holy Spirit but using human authors. The Spirit directed all of the writing.

“Inerrant”

Inerrancy means exactly what it says—No errors-perfect.



SEARCH THE WORD

Following are some additional Scriptures that support the inerrancy of the Bible. Look up these Scriptures and write in the space that follows the evidence that each gives for inerrancy.

- *John 10: 34-38*

- *John 17: 17*

- *John 14: 25-26*

- *Psalms 119: 89, 144*

- *Habakkuk 2:2-3*

Perfection is no problem for a perfect God who created the universe and mankind without error. It is no stretch, therefore, to believe that He could pass on His truth to us without error. The Psalmist had no trouble believing this (*Psalm 19:7*). Jesus testified to the Jews about the complete authority and reliability of the Old Testament when He said, "...the Scripture cannot be broken." (*John 10:35*) When praying for His disciples Jesus referred to His Fathers' words as "truth." (*John 17:17*) Jesus also assured the disciples that the Holy Spirit would remind them "of everything I have said to you." (*John 14:26*) When the disciples quoted Jesus or told about what He had said or done they did so without error because the Holy Spirit reminded them. The words were "God breathed." The Psalmist refers to the Scripture as being "eternal" and "forever right". (*Psalm 119:89, 144*) The prophet Habakkuk says the revelation of God "...will not prove false..." (*Habakkuk 2:3*) Throughout the entire Bible all that is written is always regarded as coming from God and therefore without error.

INSPIRATION AND THE OLD TESTAMENT

No doubt

There was no doubt in the minds of those who authored the books of the Old Testament that that the words they spoke in the name of God were from God. They always gave credit to God as the source of their words. We can see this in Jeremiah's account of his calling to be a prophet.

- Read *Jeremiah 1:4-9* and write the words or phrases in this passage that prove that what Jeremiah wrote was inspired by God.

We see the Word of God emphasized in the calling of Jeremiah. It was the "Word" of God that came to Jeremiah. Jeremiah was to "say" whatever God commanded. God says "Now I have put my words in your mouth." Is there any doubt that Jeremiah knew that he would be communicating God's words to the people? Following are some other Old Testament authors who attribute what they wrote to God: (*Isaiah 1:2; Jeremiah 10:1, 2; Ezekiel 1:3; Hosea 1:1, 2; Jonah 1:1; Micah 1:1; Zech. 1:1; Joel 1:2; Amos 1:3; Obad. 1:1; Zeph. 1:1; Hab. 2:2; Deuteronomy 30:9,10; Numbers 12:6-8; 23:5,12,16,19*)

Authors of New Testament books also claimed that the Old Testament books were the inspired Word of God. The following reference from Hebrews is one of many.

Hebrews 1:1-2 (NIV)

¹ In the past God spoke to our forefathers through the prophets at many times and in various ways, ² but in these last days he has spoken to us by his Son, whom he appointed heir of all things, and through whom he made the universe.

The writer of Hebrews reminds believers that in the past God revealed himself through Scripture through the Old Testament (Old Covenant) writers but in the present days (New Testament era) he revealed

Himself through Jesus. The Old Testament writers prepared people for the coming of the Messiah and the New Covenant. There was no doubt that the books of the Old Testament and the New Testament were inspired by God.

God also made it clear to Ezekiel when He called Him to be a prophet that He would be speaking words to the people that God gave him through the Spirit. Ezekiel recounted his calling:

Ezekiel 2:1, 7

¹ He said to me, "Son of man, stand up on your feet and I will speak to you." ² As he spoke, the Spirit came into me and raised me to my feet, and I heard him speaking to me...⁷ You must speak my words to them, whether they listen or fail to listen, for they are rebellious."

All that was written

God used real people in real life situations to give us His truth. He used imperfect people to reveal to us His perfect truth. We can trust that the Bible does not merely contain the word of God but it is the Word of God—all of it! The writers knew what must be written down. Moses mentions writing down all of what God said to Him.

Exodus 24:3-4

³ When Moses went and told the people all the LORD's words and laws, they responded with one voice, Everything the LORD has said we will do." ⁴ Moses then wrote down everything the LORD had said. He got up early the next morning and built an altar at the foot of the mountain and set up twelve stone pillars representing the twelve tribes of Israel.

The writers wrote all that God intended for them to write so that we would know and do all that God intended for us to know and do (*Joshua 1:7-8*). Jesus in quoting from the Old Testament said,

Matthew 4:4

⁴ Jesus answered, "It is written: 'Man does not live on bread alone, but on every word that comes from the mouth of God.'"

By the Spirit

The Old Testament writers as well as the New Testament writers recognized that it was the Holy Spirit who was speaking through them. David, king of Israel, said,

2 Samuel 23:2-3

² "The Spirit of the LORD spoke through me; his word was on my tongue. ³The God of Israel spoke, The Rock of Israel said to me: 'When one rules over men in righteousness, when he rules in the fear of God,

Many Old Testament passages quoted in the New Testament were said to have the Holy Spirit as their author, even though a human prophet actually spoke the words (see *Mark 12:36; Hebrews 3:7; 10:15-16*). Peter spoke of the Holy Spirit's role in Old Testament Scripture when he addressed the hundred and twenty believers after Jesus had ascended to heaven.

Acts 1:16

¹⁶ "Brothers, the Scripture had to be fulfilled which the Holy Spirit spoke long ago through the mouth of David concerning Judas, who served as guide for those who arrested Jesus —

Paul made a similar statement about the inspiration of the Holy Spirit to a group of Jews when he was held in house arrest in Rome

Acts 28:25

²⁵ They disagreed among themselves and began to leave after Paul had made this final statement: "The Holy Spirit spoke the truth to your forefathers when he said through Isaiah the prophet:

INSPIRATION AND THE NEW TESTAMENT

We can plainly see that the New Testament writers believed that the Old Testament writings were inspired by the Holy Spirit. But what about what was written after Jesus died? The New Testament was written by men who had been with Jesus. They were eyewitnesses of what He did and said. The Christian Church already believed these writings to be inspired Scripture with the same credibility and authority as the Old Testament. There can be no doubt that the Gospels which recorded the words and actions of Jesus were inspired Scripture. Jesus claimed to be the truth and reveal the truth of His Father (*John 1:1-14; 14:6*). The promised Holy Spirit was to reveal further truth to the Apostles (*John 16:13-15*).

The Apostles, inspired by the Holy Spirit, taught the early church about Jesus. (*Acts 2:42*) Their teaching was regarded as the revealed truth of God and inspired Scripture. Peter acknowledges that Paul's letters were Scripture:

2 Peter 3:15-16 (NIV)

¹⁵ Bear in mind that our Lord's patience means salvation, just as our dear brother Paul also wrote you with the wisdom that God gave him. ¹⁶ He writes the same way in all his letters, speaking in them of these matters. His letters contain some things that are hard to understand, which ignorant and unstable people distort, as they do the other Scriptures, to their own destruction. (*See 1 Cor. 14:37*)

It is significant that the books of the New Testament were called "Scripture" so soon after they were written. Paul does not hesitate to put the writing of the Gospel of Luke on the same level as the Old Testament in his letter to Timothy. Paul says,

1 Timothy 5:18

¹⁸ For the Scripture says, "Do not muzzle the ox while it is treading out the grain," and "The worker deserves his wages."

Paul refers here to *Deuteronomy 25: 4* and *Luke 10:7*. Only three to six years had elapsed between the writing of the Gospel of *Luke* and the writing of *1 Timothy*. *Luke* was written in about A.D. 60 and *1 Timothy* in A.D. 63.

New Testament Writers Claimed Their Message Was from God

The New Testament writers believed that what they wrote was from God and equal with the Old Testament. Paul, who wrote the majority of the New Testament letters said,

1 Thessalonians 2:13

¹³ And we also thank God continually because, when you received the word of God, which you heard from us, you accepted it not as the word of men, but as it actually is, the word of God, which is at work in you who believe.

Paul certainly believed that what He wrote was a direct revelation from God. It was, He said, "...the word of God..." The believers in Thessalonica accepted what He wrote as the word of God. Paul referred to what God had made known to him as "revelation." To the church at Ephesus he wrote:

Ephesians 3:2-5

² Surely you have heard about the administration of God's grace that was given to me for you, ³ that is, the mystery made known to me by revelation, as I have already written briefly. ⁴ In reading this, then, you will be able to understand my insight into the mystery of Christ, ⁵ which was not made known to men in other generations as it has now been revealed by the Spirit to God's holy apostles and prophets.

According to Paul what was revealed to Old Testament writers was now revealed by the Holy Spirit to the apostles and prophets who laid the foundation for the first century church. His insight came directly from God.

Other related Scriptures

1 Corinthians 14:37; 1 Timothy 4:1; 2 Thessalonians 3:12; John 12:48-50; Acts 16:32; Romans 1:16; 1 Thessalonians 1:5; Matthew 1:22; Matthew 2:15; Acts 1:16; Acts 28:25; Hebrews 1:1, 2; Matthew 15:4; Matthew 22:29-32

THE CANONIZATION OF THE BIBLE

The final question we will address is how we know that the books we have in the Bible today are inspired by the Holy Spirit. How were the 66 books selected? The 66 books that we have in our Bible went through a process that is called "canonization". The word canon comes from the root word reed which was used as a measuring stick in ancient times. The word describes the process by which the early church fathers "chose" the books that would be included in the Bible. The early church began to face the threat of heresy, and false books were being circulated. Church leaders, led by the Holy Spirit, met in several councils to decide which books were divinely inspired by God. Norman Geisler gives five guidelines they used to select the books in the New Testament: (Final recognition of the Old Testament books came at the Synod of Jamia).

- Does it speak with God's authority?
- Is it written by a man of God speaking to us as a prophet of God?
- Does it have the authentic stamp of God?
- Does it impact us with the power of God?
- Was it accepted by the people of God?

Final recognition of the 27 books of the New Testament came at the Council at Carthage in 397 A.D. However, the Council really only recognized that these 27 books had already been in use by the church and were believed to be the inspired Word of God.



FALSE RELIGION-FALSE TEACHING ALERT!

As you learned in the beginning, all false teaching has at its basis, some distortion of Scripture. We also noted that our present culture is extremely vulnerable to this because of two things. First, there has been a lack of teaching the basics of doctrine in churches. Secondly, there is a strong cultural current of relativism which contends that there is no absolute truth. This philosophy holds that there are many sources of truth, and whatever you believe works for you should be your anchor and source of authority.

Especially troubling is the growing acceptance among Christians of false teachings that contain a wide range of New Age teaching. The Pew Forum on Religion & Public life, a secular research organization found the following:

“Elements of Eastern faiths and New Age thinking have been widely adopted by 65% of U. S. adults, including many who call themselves Protestants and Catholics. Syncretism — mashing up contradictory beliefs like Catholic rocker Madonna’s devotion to Kabbalah—light version of Jewish mysticism — appears on the rise. And according to the survey’s other major finding, devotion to one clear faith is fading.”

The Gospel according to Oprah

This false teaching alert focuses on the New Age Spirituality promoted by Oprah Winfrey. Now I am aware that Oprah is compassionate and really wants to help people. I don’t question her intentions. What I question is her beliefs. She believes in a New Age God and belief system that is vastly different from the God of the Bible and the Scriptures. On her show she provides a constant diet of false religion and yet many Christians would never miss her program.

The Pew forum provides an example of how Oprah Winfrey, a promoter of New Age Spirituality, has teamed up with one of its most popular authors, Tolle Eckhart. His most recent book is, *A New Earth: Awakening to Your Life’s Purposes*, a sequel to his earlier best seller, *The Power of Now*, which sold 6 million copies. When Oprah Winfrey read it, she was so inspired that she invited him to co-host a 10 week set of internet seminars on how to simply “be”. So far, 35 million people worldwide have viewed these “webinars.”

Here is just a sample of what He teaches:

“Having access to that formless realm is truly liberating. It frees you from bondage to form and identification with form. It is life in its undifferentiated state prior to its fragmentation into multiplicity. We may call it the Unmanifested, the invisible Source of all things, the Being within all beings. It is a realm of deep stillness and peace, but also of joy and intense aliveness. Whenever you are present, you become “transparent” to some extent to the light, the pure consciousness that emanates from this Source. You also realize that the light is not separate from who you are but constitutes your very essence.”

This mishmash of new age thinking is typical of what he teaches and Oprah endorses. It stands in direct opposition to the God of the Bible and the Holy Scriptures. These subtle lies are especially dangerous for new or immature believers but also can have an effect on other more mature believers. The writer of Psalms warns against associating with people of the lie:

Psalm 1:1-3 (NIV)

¹ Blessed is the man who does not walk in the counsel of the wicked or stand in the way of sinners or sit in the seat of mockers. ² But his delight is in the law of the LORD, and on his law he meditates day and night. ³ He is like a tree planted by streams of water, which yields its fruit in season and whose leaf does not wither. Whatever he does prospers.

DO! “Watch your life and doctrine closely. Persevere in them...”

➤ What did today’s study say to you about watching your life and doctrine closely?



WEEK 7 MEMORY ASSIGNMENTS AND REVIEW

Following are key Scriptures to learn this week. Memorize and meditate on this key Scripture and write it in the space that follows. Memorize the doctrinal covenant.

- Memorize 2 Timothy 3:16-17

- Memorize the doctrinal covenant

Lord, I believe the Bible is i_____ and I c_____ this day to make Your Word my s_____ and a _____ a _____ for all I think and do, obeying You in all things.

DAY 3: INTERPRETATION

Today we look at the Bible study skill of interpretation. The word “interpretation” means to arrive at the original meaning and intent of the writer. In the case of the Bible it means discovering the meaning that God through the Holy Spirit wants to be made known to men. The miracle of the Bible is that although it is thousands of years old, written in ancient cultures in other languages it can still be interpreted accurately by us today. The only explanation for such a phenomenon is the power of the Holy Spirit. Interpretation is a skill but also a discipline with certain rules that must be followed to arrive at the original intent of a verse or passage.



SEARCH THE WORD

Correct interpretation will only happen when we devote ourselves to the disciplined study of the Bible. We need to fall in love with God’s Word and develop the principles of sound interpretation that will enable us to understand what a verse or passage says and means. The Bereans were held up as an example as people who diligently searched the Word. The book of Acts reports,

Acts 17:11 (NIV)

¹¹ Now the Bereans were of more noble character than the Thessalonians, for they received the message with great eagerness and examined the Scriptures every day to see if what Paul said was true.

When Paul and Silas visited Berea they found a group of people who were totally committed to understanding the Scriptures. They were eager to listen to what Paul had to say and they “examined” the Scriptures to see if what Paul taught was true. The Bereans would have been studying the Old Testament Scriptures; the New Testament was in the process of being written. They searched the Word to see if Paul’s interpretation was correct. They did this every day. They gave study of the Scriptures their best effort. Paul encouraged Timothy to do the same. He wrote.

2 Timothy 2:15 (NIV)

¹⁵ Do your best to present yourself to God as one approved, a workman who does not need to be ashamed and who correctly handles the word of truth.

For us to correctly interpret Scripture we also need to present to God our best efforts. A careful examination of Scripture is hard, painstaking work. God has entrusted His Word to us. As disciples who are reproducing others to be fully devoted followers of Jesus it is our responsibility to set an example for those we are training.

There are six basic rules of interpretation that will help you do your best to interpret Scripture correctly. These rules will be familiar to you if you went through *Spiritual Book Camp*. Today’s study will expand your understanding and application of these rules.

1. CONTENT

Rule number one is examining the content. Content is the exact words of a passage of Scripture. This is the observation stage of searching the Scriptures. You observe exactly what the Scripture has to say. Most Scripture can correctly be interpreted by first observing what it says. Often the meaning is clear

and you do not have to look for further interpretation. For example when Jesus was asked, “What is the greatest commandment in the law” He answered,

Matthew 22:37-40

³⁷ Jesus replied: “Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind.’ ³⁸ This is the first and greatest commandment. ³⁹ And the second is like it: ‘Love your neighbor as yourself.’ ⁴⁰ All the Law and the Prophets hang on these two commandments.”

Jesus’ answer is clear. We are to love God and our neighbor as ourselves. There should be no dispute over this interpretation. In this case the plain sense makes sense. The rule of content is that we should always accept the literal meaning of a passage first. Unless there is compelling evidence otherwise we should go by the rule, “If the literal sense makes sense, don’t look for further sense or you will end up with nonsense!” There are times when symbolism or a figure of speech is used that will require further examination of the passage in the light of culture and other Scripture. If there is something that seems to contradict other Scripture then further investigation is called for because God’s Word does not contradict itself.

2. CONTEXT

The next rule is to consider the context. There is nothing more critical to understanding an author’s original intent than to understand the context in which it was written. Context is what surrounds a verse or passage. What immediately precedes and follows a word or passage can help clarify its meaning. Every word in the Bible is part of a verse, which in turn is part of a paragraph. Every paragraph is part of a book, and every book is part of the entire Bible.

What comes before and after the verse or passage?

In interpreting a verse or passage of Scripture we must always ask the question, “How does it fit into the whole?” Every word that you read must be understood in the light of the words that come before and after it. False religions and cults can only exist because of an abuse of this rule of interpretation. An example of this is how the Mormons interpret *1 Corinthians 15:29* to support their practice of baptizing the living for the dead. Paul says,

1 Corinthians 15:29

²⁹ Now if there is no resurrection, what will those do who are baptized for the dead? If the dead are not raised at all, why are people baptized for them?

Now if you were to look at this verse by itself you could make a case for securing salvation by baptizing for the dead. You could do a lot of good will by finding people who were not saved or who had not been baptized and be baptized for them thus assuring them of eternal life. This, of course, would be violating the rule of context in interpretation. There is something that comes before and after this verse that enables us to understand its meaning. If we look at verse 12 we see the theme that Paul is addressing,

1 Corinthians 15:12

¹² But if it is preached that Christ has been raised from the dead, how can some of you say that there is no resurrection of the dead?

Verse 29 is an important part of Paul's answer to this question. You cannot say what this verse means without consider the context and everything else Paul says in conjunction with this statement. Read 1 Corinthians 15:12-58, especially noting verse 12 which helps clarify the issue. The real issue is not baptism for the dead, but how people could deny the resurrection from the dead of believers while practicing baptizing for the dead of non-believers. Paul was using the practice of some pagan religions of baptizing for the dead to support the universal belief of life after death.

How does the verse or passage fit into the whole issue?

What comes after verse 29 is more teaching on the main issue of the resurrection of the body from the dead. As you can clearly see verse 29 is a minor part of the whole. Furthermore nowhere in the Bible does it teach that baptism for the dead is a Christian practice. This is the sole reference to the practice in the Bible. This is a clear example of the importance of always examining a verse in the context of what comes before and after and considering what else is said about it in the Bible.

3. COMPARISON

This brings us to the principle of comparison. A single passage should always be interpreted in conjunction with the systematic teachings of that topic. All the passages dealing with a topic should be considered. This is especially true when dealing with a major biblical doctrine.

Biblical consistency

A doctrine is not biblical unless it sums up all that Scripture has to say about it. Scripture is consistent. The Bible does not contradict itself. No one Scripture says all there is about a topic or doctrine. It is only when we look at all the Scriptures related to a topic or doctrine that we can make an informed decision about its meaning. No one verse or passage should be taken apart from the whole.

Let Scripture interpret Scripture

An important part of comparison is to let Scripture interpret Scripture. When there is a controversial or unclear verse or passage the rule is that it should be interpreted in light of a verse or passage that is clear on the subject. Then look for the whole truth as you compare it with other Scriptures on the topic. A Topical Bible or Concordance is a useful aid to find these references.

4. COMMUNICATION

To interpret Scripture correctly we must take into consideration how the people at the time of the writing communicated. We must especially do our best to understand the use of symbolic language or figures of speech to understand whether a passage should be taken literally or figuratively. For example when Jesus took the bread, blessed it said, *"Take and eat; this is my body"* was He speaking literally or was He using symbolic language? (*Matt. 26:26*) If you were raised Catholic then you were taught that this was to be taken literally. The bread and wine were literally changed into the body and blood of Jesus. When the Priest administered Holy Communion you actually partook of the blood and body of Jesus. If you were raised Protestant then you would have been taught that the bread and the cup were symbolic of the blood and the body of Jesus Christ. This is one of the issues that have divided Catholics and Protestants for centuries.

Figurative or symbolic language

Whenever we read the words of the Bible, we face a choice: Was God's original intent of this passage to be taken literally, or was the meaning to be symbolic? Is the language strictly literal or could it be a figure of speech? Since there are clearly times that God intended a literal meaning and at other times a figurative meaning it is necessary for us to explore the context to discover how to interpret the passage.



SEARCH THE WORD

Following are some figures of speech that can be found in the Bible. Look these up in your Bible and write the example that you discover in that Scripture:

- **Metaphor:** One thing described as some other thing. (*Luke 12: 32*)
Example:

- **Anthropomorphism:** God described in human terms. (*2 Chronicles 16:9*)
Example:

- **Word association:** One word stands for something else. (*Galatians 2:9; Romans 8:36*)
Example:

- **Personification:** Personal qualities assigned to an object. (*Psalms 114:4*)
Example:

- **Hyperbole:** Extreme exaggeration to make a point. (*Luke 14:25-26*)
Example:

- **Irony:** The literal meaning is opposite the real meaning. (*1 Corinthians 4:8*).
Example:

Some things to consider

When deciding whether a word or Scripture should be interpreted symbolically or literally take the following principles into consideration:

- If a word seems clearly symbolic consider it a figure of speech. (Jesus called himself a shepherd, a gate, a light. These are clearly figures of speech and we should not interpret them literally).
- Interpret words considering their historical meaning in the time and historical setting of the author.
- Compare the use of words or passages to other Scripture where they are used to discover whether they are being used in a literal or figurative sense. What light does the whole counsel of God bring on the word or passage?

5. CULTURE

To understand the Bible we need to have an understanding of the historical/cultural setting of people to whom it was written. Every book in the Bible was inspired by God but was also written by a person to people in a particular language in a specific country and in a unique culture. We have already seen how we need to take into consideration language and culture when interpreting a verse or passage of Scripture. The miracle of the Bible is that in spite of all of the historical differences, God has made it possible for us to have a clear meaning of Scripture today. Here are some cultural considerations when interpreting Scripture:

- Every book in the Bible was originally written by someone chosen by God to specific people in a historical-geographical situation for a specific purpose.
- Every book in the Bible occurred in a cultural setting—a time and place in history which affected how it was written.
- Every book in the Bible was written in specific language with its own thought patterns, grammatical structure and figurative language.
- Each book in the Bible was accepted and understood in the context of its historical/cultural setting.
- For us to interpret the Bible accurately we must have a basic understanding of the culture in which the specific was written.

Practicing the principles of interpretation

I want you to do a very brief study of *Acts 2:38* using the five principles of interpretation so you can practice this disciplined approach to searching the Word. We will use the controversial topic of baptism for the focal point of the study. The controversy is over both the mode of baptism—whether by immersion or sprinkling and the meaning of baptism and whether it is for the literal forgiveness of sins or whether water is used as a figure of speech or symbol of the forgiveness of sins. The purpose of this exercise is only to familiarize you with how to interpret a difficult Scripture not to do a thorough study of the topic and reach a definite conclusion. That would be impossible in such a short amount of time.



SEARCH THE WORD

The key Scripture you will study is *Acts 2:38*. Read this Scripture carefully and then work through the five principles of interpretation to help you understand its meaning. Record your thoughts in the space provided after each principle.

- **Content**

What does it say? Remember the rule of content is that we should always accept the literal meaning of the words in the passage first. **What is the literal meaning of baptism?**

- **Context**

How does the verse or passage fit into the whole? Every word in the Bible is part of a verse, which in turn is part of a paragraph. Every paragraph is part of a book, and every book is part of the entire Bible. **Is there anything that comes before or after this verse that can help explain baptism?** What is the larger context of which this verse is a part?

- Use a concordance and look up the other references to baptism in the book of Acts. What light do these verses shed on the meaning of baptism in *Acts 2:38*?

- **Comparison**

Similar to the principle of context, a verse or passage should always be interpreted in conjunction with the systematic teachings of that topic.

- Again use a concordance to continue to look up all verses on baptism. What do these verses add to your understanding of the meaning of baptism? Do these verses support a literal interpretation that baptism is for the forgiveness of sins or do they support a figurative interpretation?

- **Communication/Culture**

To understand whether a passage should be taken literally or figuratively we must understand the use of symbolic language or figure of speech in a culture. For example when deciding whether to interpret baptism as literally washing away or forgiving sins or a symbol of God washing away sins by the blood of Jesus investigate how water was historically viewed by the Hebrew people.

- Look up the words such as “water”, “cleansing” and “washing” in a Bible Concordance or Bible Dictionary. Record your observations in the following space.

- **Consultation**

Consultation is the use of extra biblical resources to help us understand what is not obvious to us in a verse or passage. Fortunately for us we have many Bible tools that can help us understand the history, cultural and original languages of biblical times. Consultation should come after we study the text on our own. I usually start with my Study Bible. Study Bibles have brief introductions to the books with invaluable background information. There are commentaries to help us understand the meaning of difficult verses. There is a concordance to aid us in looking up verses and passages on specific topics.

- For a list of resources you can consult look at the section on how to study the Bible in the *Spiritual Boot Camp* book.

Your conclusion

I know that you have not had time to do a thorough study of *Acts 2:38* and the meaning of Baptism. This would take many hours. Volumes have been written on the topic. There is still much debate about whether it is symbolic or literal. I do hope that through this brief practice you see how the process of interpretation by using these principles can help you have a deeper understanding of Scripture. Write your conclusion about baptism in the following space.

GRACE AND TRUTH

I want to conclude this section with something I think is very important. There are doctrines we will never agree on. There are Scriptures that can be looked at in various ways with Scripture that seems to support both views. For example there will never be total agreement on how to interpret prophecy of future times. There will always be strong disagreements over Armenianism and Calvinism. There will never be total agreement on the meaning of baptism.

What we should do is agree to disagree in grace and truth. When Jesus came to earth he was an example of both (*John 1:14*). There was some wise counsel attributed to St. Augustine that should guide our attitudes and discussions on controversial topics. On the 4th of November, 1852 Von Fallersleben wrote:

*St. Augustine says:
In necessariis unitas,
In essentials unity,
In dubiis libertas,
In doubtful things liberty,
In omnibus autem caritas,
But in all things love.*

DO! "Watch your life and doctrine closely. Persevere in them..."

➤ What did today's study say to you about watching your life and doctrine closely?



WEEK 7 MEMORY ASSIGNMENTS AND REVIEW

Following are key Scriptures to learn this week. Memorize and meditate on this key Scripture and write it in the space that follows. Memorize the doctrinal covenant.

- Memorize 2 *Timothy* 3:16-17

- Memorize the doctrinal covenant

Lord, I believe the Bible is i_____ and I c _____ this day to make your Word my s_____ and a _____ a _____ for all I think and do, obeying you in all things.

DAY 4: ILLUMINATION

WHAT IS ILLUMINATION?

The meaning of illumination *is to bring additional light to something—to brighten. In a spiritual sense it is to enlighten.* By inspiration the Holy Spirit provides us with truth through the revealed Word of God. By illumination the Holy Spirit empowers us to interpret truth and apply it to our lives. It is only the Holy Spirit who searches all things and can bring us understanding of spiritual things. In our natural state we have no natural inclination to understand spiritual things. They are like a foreign language us. Paul gives us insight into this:

Romans 8:26-27

²⁶ In the same way, the Spirit helps us in our weakness. We do not know what we ought to pray for, but the Spirit himself intercedes for us with groans that words cannot express. ²⁷ And he who searches our hearts knows the mind of the Spirit, because the Spirit intercedes for the saints in accordance with God's will.

It is the Spirit who translates the incomprehensible words of God for us. The Holy Spirit knows the mind of the Father. The Holy Spirit who searches all of the deep things of God is able to help us understand the deep things of God. Paul writes:

1 Corinthians 2:9-10 (NIV)

⁹ However, as it is written: "No eye has seen, no ear has heard, no mind has conceived what God has prepared for those who love him" — ¹⁰ but God has revealed it to us by his Spirit. The Spirit searches all things, even the deep things of God.

WITHOUT THE HOLY SPIRIT NO ONE CAN KNOW THE TRUTH

1 Corinthians 2:14 (NIV)

¹⁴ The man without the Spirit does not accept the things that come from the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness to him, and he cannot understand them, because they are spiritually discerned.

It is not possible for the non-believer to accept the things of God. The Bible simply doesn't make sense to those who have not received Christ. The things of God can only be discerned when we have the Holy Spirit living in us to enlighten us. That only happens at the time of the new birth. This does not prevent the Holy Spirit speaking to unbelievers. On the contrary while the Holy Spirit does not indwell an unbeliever He convicts the person of sin and his lost condition. The Holy Spirit is active, drawing all people to Christ.



SEARCH THE WORD

Read *John 16:8-11* and write in the space provided what truth the Holy Spirit makes available to the non-believer. If you need any help interpreting this verse refer to your Study Bible or another Commentary.

Jesus tells His disciples about a very special work that the Holy Spirit does in the lives of non-believers. First we see that it is the work of the Holy Spirit to “...convict the world of guilt in regard to sin”. Without the convicting work of the Spirit a person can never see themselves as a sinner and needing the grace of God. They can never believe in Jesus as the Son of God. The Holy Spirit also convicts in regards to “righteousness”. This is the righteousness that was brought about by the death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus. (Rom. 1:17; 3:21-24)

Only the Holy Spirit can convince the non-believer that he cannot achieve righteousness on his own good works but can have the righteousness of Christ by grace through faith in Jesus. When Jesus speaks of the Holy Spirit convicting a person “...in regard to judgment...” He is referring to his power over Satan. This is not just a final defeat of the prince of this world but the victory Jesus’ death and resurrection gives to the believer in this present world. Satan and sin no longer have power over the believer.

THE HOLY SPIRIT GIVES ALL BELIEVERS A BASIC KNOWLEDGE OF THE TRUTH

Illumination is the Holy Spirit enlightening our minds so we can understand and apply Scripture. It is a gift from God to all believers. It is impossible to understand God’s Word without the illumination of the Holy Spirit. Everyone who has been born again has been anointed by the Holy Spirit so they will know the truth.

1 John 2:20

²⁰ But you have an anointing from the Holy One, and all of you know the truth.

Of course the believer does not know all truth through the anointing from the Holy Spirit alone. However there are some basic truths that the Holy Spirit makes clear to everyone who has received Christ.

The Spirit testifies

The Bible says that the Holy Spirit testifies about some basic essential truths that involve a believer’s relationship with Christ. This is the inner testimony of the Holy Spirit. Paul told the believers in Rome,

Romans 8:15-17

¹⁵ 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.” ¹⁶ The Spirit himself testifies with our spirit that we are God’s children. ¹⁷ Now if we are children, then we are heirs—heirs of God and co-heirs with Christ, if indeed we share in his sufferings in order that we may also share in his glory.



SEARCH THE WORD

To further explore what the basic knowledge to which the Spirit testifies, study *1 John 5:6-12* and answer the following questions:

- Who is it that testifies?

- What is the testimony that has been given?
- Who is it that receives this testimony?
- Why do you believe this testimony is essential for all believers?

The Father, Son and Holy Spirit collaborate together to testify about some basic truths that we all should know (V. 7). First we see that the focus of this testimony is “*that which He has given about His Son*” (V. 9). The main point of this testimony is this; “*...God has given us eternal life, and this life is in His Son*” (V. 11). It is the person who believes in the Son of God that has this testimony in his heart (V. 10). This basic belief is essential if we are to know for sure we are saved. If we doubt our salvation it will affect every area of our life. It is essential to believe that as adopted children of God we are secure in His unconditional love (*Romans 8:15-17*). The Apostle John expands on this essential belief. He says,

1 John 5:18-20

¹⁸ We know that anyone born of God does not continue to sin; the one who was born of God keeps him safe, and the evil one cannot harm him. ¹⁹ We know that we are children of God, and that the whole world is under the control of the evil one. ²⁰ We know also that the Son of God has come and has given us understanding, so that we may know him who is true. And we are in him who is true—even in his Son Jesus Christ. He is the true God and eternal life.

The Holy Spirit gives us a spirit of wisdom

Illumination is not new revelation or information. It is the work of the Holy Spirit unclouding our minds. It helps us understand and apply Scripture to our lives so that our minds are renewed and our actions are transformed (*Rom. 12:2*). Illumination reinforces the truth of Scripture and enables us to discern doctrinal error. The Holy Spirit through illumination opens up our souls (mind, will and emotions) to the truth. The Apostle Paul says,

Ephesians 1:17-19 (NIV)

¹⁷ I keep asking that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the glorious Father, may give you the Spirit of wisdom and revelation, so that you may know him better. ¹⁸ I pray also that the eyes of your heart may be enlightened in order that you may know the hope to which he has called you, the riches of his glorious inheritance in the saints, ¹⁹ and his incomparably great power for us who believe. That power is like the working of his mighty strength,

The “*...Spirit of wisdom...*” that Paul refers to here is the Spirit of illumination. Jesus prays that the Father, Son and Holy Spirit will illuminate the eyes of the hearts of believers so they will be able to discern three

vital truths: (1) that they will grasp the true meaning of hope, (2) the riches of their inheritance as adopted children of God, and (3) the incomparably great power, that God has made available to all His children.

Paul prayed for illumination for the believers in Colossi as well:

Colossians 1:9

⁹ For this reason, since the day we heard about you, we have not stopped praying for you and asking God to fill you with the knowledge of his will through all spiritual wisdom and understanding.

The Holy Spirit enables us to apply truth to our lives

The Bible repeatedly reminds us that we are to depend on the Holy Spirit's illumination to gain insights into the meaning and application of Scripture (*John 16:12-15, 1 Corinthians 2:9-11*). Martin Luther once said, "If I meditate on any portion of the Holy Writ, it shines and burns in my heart." How true this is. It is the Holy Spirit's work to enlighten our minds but this also depends on the extent that we discipline ourselves to study, memorize and meditate on the Word of God. It does little good to pray for the Holy Spirit to enlighten us if we neglect our responsibility to use the instrument the Holy Spirit makes available to us.

The sword of the Spirit

When the Apostle Paul told the believers in Ephesus to put on the armor of God to protect themselves from the devil's schemes He said,

Ephesians 6:17 (NIV)

¹⁷ Take the helmet of salvation and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God.

The primary instrument that the Holy Spirit uses for illumination is the Word of God. The sword is an essential part of our armor. We are to practice and use it. The armor does us no good unless we use it.

The sword that enlightens us enables us to apply Scripture to our lives so that we will obey it. The writer of Hebrews says,

Hebrews 4:12 (NIV)

¹² For the word of God is living and active. Sharper than any double-edged sword, it penetrates even to dividing soul and spirit, joints and marrow; it judges the thoughts and attitudes of the heart.

The double-edged sword judges our thoughts and our attitudes so they will be changed. God provides the power but we must respond to what the sword reveals. The Psalmist made this point,

Psalms 119:34 (NIV)

³⁴ Give me understanding, and I will keep your law and obey it with all my heart.

When the sword of the Spirit operates, we must cooperate. God will enlighten us through His Word but we must use that understanding to obey God. Through illumination our minds are unveiled to the pure truth of God's Word. We are able to stop resisting the truth and face it. When we face the truth we are then able to embrace it and apply it to our lives. The Holy Spirit uses what we read, study, and memorize to enlighten us. These disciplines place us in a position to receive the illumination of the Holy Spirit. We then are able to "...live by the Spirit..." (*Gal. 5:16*). When we live by the Spirit we open our lives to the Spirit's enlightenment and we will obey the Word.

The Holy Spirit transforms us

The study of God's Word is meant to transform us not to merely inform us (*Romans 12:2*). God's Word renews our minds and transforms our behavior. We study and understand Scripture so we will know the mind of God and obey His commands. This is why the memorization and meditation of Scripture is so important. It empowers us to "...*Do what it says*" (*James 1:22*). To do what Scripture says we must constantly use it. The writer of Hebrews says,

Hebrews 5:13-14

¹³ *Anyone who lives on milk, being still an infant, is not acquainted with the teaching about righteousness. ¹⁴ But solid food is for the mature, who by constant use have trained themselves to distinguish good from evil.*

It is by this constant use that we are able to discern truth from lies, false doctrine from solid doctrine, good behavior from sinful behavior. When studying Scripture always ask, "What does this Scripture say to me? What does God want me to do?" And then do it! Just remember it is through the Spirit's power and our practice that transformation occurs. Paul prayed for this transformation to happen in the lives of the believers in Ephesus.

Ephesians 3:14-19

¹⁴ *For this reason I kneel before the Father, ¹⁵ from whom his whole family in heaven and on earth derives its name. ¹⁶ I pray that out of his glorious riches he may strengthen you with power through his Spirit in your inner being, ¹⁷ so that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith. And I pray that you, being rooted and established in love, ¹⁸ may have power, together with all the saints, to grasp how wide and long and high and deep is the love of Christ, ¹⁹ and to know this love that surpasses knowledge — that you may be filled to the measure of all the fullness of God.*

Notice that transformation is being "... *filled to the measure of all the fullness of God...*" This occurs through the work of the Holy Spirit. It is the Spirit who strengthens us through "*power through his Spirit in your inner being,*", so that Christ may *dwell* in our hearts.

Illumination and transformation begin and end with the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit initiates and completes our transformation into the likeness of Christ. Between initiation and completing is our cooperation. We respond in obedience to what the Spirit is doing in our lives. Paul gives us a wonderful picture of how the Holy Spirit transforms us. We are being transformed into the Lord's likeness through the Holy Spirit.

2 Corinthians 3:16-18

¹⁶ *But whenever anyone turns to the Lord, the veil is taken away. ¹⁷ Now the Lord is the Spirit, and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is freedom. ¹⁸ And we, who with unveiled faces all reflect the Lord's glory, are being transformed into his likeness with ever-increasing glory, which comes from the Lord, who is the Spirit.*

DO! "Watch your life and doctrine closely. Persevere in them..."

➤ What did today's study say to you about watching your life and doctrine closely?



WEEK 7 MEMORY ASSIGNMENTS AND REVIEW

Following are key Scriptures to learn this week. Memorize and meditate on this key Scripture and write it in the space that follows. Memorize the doctrinal covenant.

- Memorize 2 *Timothy* 3:16-17

- Memorize the doctrinal covenant

Lord, I believe the Bible is i_____ and I c_____ this day to make your Word
my s_____ and a _____ a _____ for all I think and do, obeying
You in all things.

DAY 5: AUTHORITY

FOUR SOURCES OF AUTHORITY

All people live their lives and make decisions based on some source of authority. Even when they are not aware of it people use some source of authority as a reference point to distinguish between right and wrong. Moral choices are not made in a vacuum. In today's culture of tolerance there is tremendous pressure to accept one source of authority as equal to all others. According to many there is not just one truth that serves as a source of authority, but many equally reliable sources.

There are four basic sources of authority people use to make moral choices. To simplify this I will use the acronym **TIES**. I first introduced this acronym in *Spiritual Boot Camp* so this will be a review for those of you who have completed that course. The first three sources of authority we will look at are inadequate. The final source is the only true and adequate source of authority. (TIES is borrowed from *Survival Kit*)

Tradition

Intellect

Experience-emotions

Scripture

- **T**radition - *living life and making moral choices based on traditions—human patterns of beliefs and practices handed down from previous generations that are regarded as having the same or higher authority as Scripture.*

Some people use tradition as their primary source of authority. There are also some religions that use tradition as their primary source of authority. Usually people put great importance on a belief or practice and through the generations it becomes increasingly important until it finally becomes a source of authority that no one dares challenge. While traditions have their place in a culture and faiths, they should never serve as a source of authority. The Apostle Paul warned against such traditions.

Colossians 2:8

⁸ See to it that no one takes you captive through hollow and deceptive philosophy, which depends on human tradition and the basic principles of this world rather than on Christ.

Paul is addressing a heresy. There were false teachers who claimed that for a person to be saved they must combine faith in Christ with man-made regulations. Jesus rebuked the Pharisees and teachers of the law for placing external traditions above the authority of Scripture.

Matthew 15:1-3

¹ Then some Pharisees and teachers of the law came to Jesus from Jerusalem and asked, ² "Why do your disciples break the tradition of the elders? They don't wash their hands before they eat!" ³ Jesus replied, "And why do you break the command of God for the sake of your tradition?"



FALSE TEACHING ALERT!

Scripture clearly indicates that tradition is not to be considered on the level of Scripture and if elevated to or above inspired Scripture will contaminate truth faith. I want us to look at a false teaching of the Catholic Church as an example. I am not condemning the Catholic Church or calling it a false religion. I simply want to point out what happens when Scripture is not our sole and absolute authority.

In an official Catholic website "The Beginning Catholic" Catholic tradition is clearly placed on the same level as Scripture. It says,

"Catholic Tradition stands with Scripture in forming the one single deposit of the Faith. For Catholics, Sacred Tradition is not in opposition to Scripture: they compliment and confirm one another".

Pope Benedict XVI wrote,

Thanks to Tradition, guaranteed by the ministry of the apostles and their successors, the water of life that flowed from the side of Christ and his saving blood comes to the women and men of all times. In this way, Tradition is the permanent presence of the Savior who comes to meet, redeem and sanctify us in the Spirit through the ministry of his Church for the glory of the Father.

As you can see tradition is passed on from the "Church Fathers", leadership in the church that followed the apostles and certain other "successors" (those in the line of authority) who speak with the same authority as Scripture. Their Authority is not in Scripture alone but in high level church councils and successors such as the Pope. The Beginning Catholic website continues:

"To ensure the success of this mission, Christ gave his Church the ability to teach, govern and sanctify with Christ's own authority. The Apostles appointed successors to ensure that the Gospel would continue to be handed on faithfully as "the lasting source of all life for the Church" (Vatican II, "Lumen Gentium" 20; also Catechism #860).

It is not difficult to see how so many extra-biblical traditions in the Catholic Church have the same authority as Scripture. Once you believe tradition has the same authority as Scripture the meaning of inspiration (God breathed) is changed. Now you have man not God deciding doctrine and morality. Many extra-biblical traditions are regarded as having the same authority as Scripture. If you have ever wondered about the source of Catholic traditions that cannot be found in the Bible, this is where they began. Traditions such as sainthood, the Pope as the head of the Church, priests as being the only ones who can serve communion, and praying to Mary, all have their origin in tradition.

An example of where tradition can lead is the Catholic sacrament of penance. It goes something like this. If a Catholic sins he separate himself from God. To repair the damage done by sin and be forgiven a person must confess their sin to a priest. There are venial sins and mortal sins. Mortal sins are the more serious and must be confessed to a priest a year before taking Holy Communion. Contrition must accompany this confession and some kind of reparation is to be performed before absolution or the remission of sins.



SEARCH THE WORD

Go to the Concordance in the back of your Study Bible and research the New Testament scripture on confession. Summarize what you believe are key scriptures regarding the place of confession in a believer's life. Write a brief definition of confession. To understand the impact of tradition, Consider how your biblical definition differs from the Catholic practice of confession and penance.

- Key Scriptures

- Definition of confession

I am sure you found that it is only God who forgives sins (*Romans 10:9-10; Hebrews 3:1; James 5:16; 1 John 1:9; 1 Timothy 2:1- 5*). All of our sins, past, present, and future are forgiven at the time of our new birth. We are still told to confess our sins that separate us from communion with God (*1 John 1:9*). We are also instructed to confess our sins to one another (*James 5:16*). There is no indication in Scripture that we need any human go-between between us and God (*Hebrews 3:1; 1 Timothy 2:1-5*).

- **I**n intellect - *living life and making moral choices based on the authority of reason and what a person thinks is right and wrong.*

Many people use their own intellect or reason as their source of authority. In this case people determine their own truth based upon what they think is right and wrong. How many times have you heard someone say things like, "A good God would never allow that to happen" or "I think religion is a crutch" or "I believe there are many paths to God."? All of these conclusions are based solely on the authority of one's own intellect. The problem with this source of authority is that right and wrong becomes the subjective judgment of each person based on what he/she thinks. Intellect as a source of authority has never been a very reliable source of authority. Paul says,

1 Corinthians 1:25

²⁵ *For the foolishness of God is wiser than man's wisdom, and the weakness of God is stronger than man's strength.*

Compared with God's wisdom, the wisdom of man and the principles of this world always come up short. Man's reasoning is often faulty. We are warned by Paul not to get caught up with the reasoning of the world and its manmade principles. He says,

Colossians 2:20

²⁰ *Since you died with Christ to the basic principles of this world, why, as though you still belonged to it, do you submit to its rules:*

- **E**xperience-emotions - *living life and making moral choices based on the authority of experiences and what a person feels is right or wrong.*

There are some people who look to what they have experienced or what they feel as their primary source of authority. Emotions become the basis for choosing right or wrong. It is how they feel about a choice that determines what they will do. Of course that opens up Pandora's Box with some scary consequences in its contents. Feelings and experiences can be very deceiving, and make a very poor and sometimes dangerous source of authority. What feels good can often be morally wrong.

Many false religions and cults have started with the so-called spiritual experience of one man. Islam had its beginning when Mohammed claimed an angel gave him what is now called the Koran. Mormonism claims its validity and authority based on the experience of one man who also claimed an angel visited him and gave him tablets of gold from which the book of Mormon was translated. Millions of people base their morality on the authority of these two religious leaders. They also base their eternal destiny on experience alone. Paul warns about the dangers of trusting in the experiences of man. Paul warns,

Colossians 2:18-19

¹⁸ Do not let anyone who delights in false humility and the worship of angels disqualify you for the prize. Such a person goes into great detail about what he has seen, and his unspiritual mind puffs him up with idle notions. He has lost connection with the Head...

- **S**cripture - *living life and making moral choices based on the authority of the Bible, a book of absolutes that claims to speak for God and is given to man by the sovereign Lord of the universe.*

The fourth and only adequate source of authority is Scripture. The only objective basis for making moral choices is God Himself and what He says in the Bible. There is only one source of truth. The Bible claims to have come from God Himself. Without reservation or apology the Bible claims to be the Word of God. Over four thousand times the Bible uses phrases such as "Thus says the Lord", or "Listen to what God says".

The Bible claims to be a record of what God has said and done. Following is just one of the thousands of claims that the Bible is the authoritative word of God. Just prior to the day of Pentecost Peter said,

Acts 1:16

¹⁶ ...Brothers, the Scripture had to be fulfilled which the Holy Spirit spoke long ago through the mouth of David concerning Judas, who served as guide for those who arrested Jesus-

THE INSPIRED WORD OF GOD IS OUR SOLE AND ABSOLUTE AUTHORITY

What God has breathed into the Scriptures is our sole and absolute authority. It is what the all-powerful, all-knowing, sovereign God of the universe has revealed as truth and is therefore our sole authority and standard for all we think and do. God gave Moses the Ten Commandments and other laws for the Israelites to follow. These were to be their sole and absolute authority. Moses said to the people:

Deuteronomy 4:1-2

¹ Hear now, O Israel, the decrees and laws I am about to teach you. Follow them so that you may live and may go in and take possession of the land that the LORD, the God of your fathers, is giving you. ² Do not add to what I command you and do not subtract from it, but keep the commands of the LORD your God that I give you.

It is obvious that these commandments came directly from God. They were not to be altered in any way. They were to be obeyed. God did not mean for the Ten Commandments to be merely ten suggestions. They carried with them the authority of the sovereign creator of the universe. God meant them to have absolute authority in the lives His people. There was to be no other standard for truth. Saul, King of Israel learned this the hard way. He decided to only partially obey when God told him to completely destroy the Amalekites. Saul saved some of the spoils of battle for himself. He became his own authority and standard for truth. Listen to how he rationalized his disobedience:

1 Samuel 15:13, 15 (NIV)

¹³ When Samuel reached him, Saul said, "The LORD bless you! I have carried out the LORD's instructions." ...¹⁵ Saul answered, "The soldiers brought them from the Amalekites; they spared the best of the sheep and cattle to sacrifice to the LORD your God, but we totally destroyed the rest."

The Prophet Samuel informed Saul of the consequences of becoming his own authority and standard for truth:

1 Samuel 15:22-23 (NIV)

²² But Samuel replied: "Does the LORD delight in burnt offerings and sacrifices as much as in obeying the voice of the LORD? To obey is better than sacrifice, and to heed is better than the fat of rams. ²³ For rebellion is like the sin of divination, and arrogance like the evil of idolatry. Because you have rejected the word of the LORD, he has rejected you as king."

There is only one authority and standard for truth. God's Word must be our sole and absolute authority for our thoughts and actions. God is uncompromising in this area and expects us to be as well.



REFLECT AND RESPOND

Take some time to make a careful evaluation of the authority of Scripture in your life. Answer the following questions to determine if you are fully committed to God's Word as your sole and absolute authority for all that you say and do.

- Do you ever revert to tradition, intellect or experience/emotions as your authority for truth and a standard for right and wrong?
- To what degree are you fully committed to Scripture as your sole and absolute source of authority and obeying God in all things? Are there areas in which you need to improve?

SCRIPTURE IS HOW GOD EXERTS HIS LORDSHIP IN OUR LIVES

Matthew 7:21 (NIV)

²¹ "Not everyone who says to me, 'Lord, Lord,' will enter the kingdom of heaven, but only he who does the will of my Father who is in heaven.

When Jesus addressed His disciples along with a large crowd, He taught that Lordship included obeying His Word. It was not just calling him Lord that indicated lordship. It was only those who were willing to "...do the will of His Father" that demonstrated that He was Lord (Matt. 7:21). When Jesus is Lord of our lives it means we have given Him full authority and control of all we do and say. We demonstrate that He truly is Lord when we are willing to obey His Word in all things. That is how God exerts His Lordship in our lives. And it is how we show that we love Him above all other things. Jesus said,

John 14:21 (NIV)

²¹ "Whoever has my commands and obeys them, he is the one who loves me. He who loves me will be loved by my Father, and I too will love him and show myself to him."



REFLECT AND RESPOND

Can you honestly say without reservations that God is the Lord of your life? Explain.

DO! "Watch your life and doctrine closely. Persevere in them..."

- What did today's study say to you about watching your life and doctrine closely?



WEEK 7 MEMORY ASSIGNMENTS AND REVIEW

Following are key Scriptures to learn this week. Memorize and meditate on this key Scripture and write it in the space that follows. Memorize the doctrinal covenant.

- Memorize 2 Timothy 3:16-17

- Memorize the doctrinal covenant

Lord, I believe the Bible is i _____ and I c _____ this day to make Your Word my s _____ and a _____ a _____ for all I think and do, obeying You in all things.

- Review previous memory projects from your card index file.

PRAYER

Spend time in prayer using the five components of the Lord's Prayer.



WEEK 7

WEEKLY ACCOUNTABILITY

"All you have to do from the time you get up in the morning until the time you go to bed at night is love the Lord with all your heart, trust His promises, obey His commands. Everything else flows from that." (Bill Bright)

Be ready to share the following with your group:

- **Love the Lord with all your heart**

In what ways did I or didn't I demonstrate my love of God by seeking Him with all my heart?

In what ways did I or didn't I allow God's love flow through me to others including spouse, family and others?

- **Trust God's promises**

To what degree did I or didn't I demonstrate complete trust in God's promises this week?

What was my greatest test of faith?

- **Obey God's commands**

Are there weaknesses or sins I need to confess?

Did I faithfully complete all assignments this week?

In what ways did I witness to the lost this week? (prayer, share, serve, encourage)

WEEK 8

THE DOCTRINE OF THE CHURCH

“But the Church of Christ has survived. Nothing can destroy it. It has the supernatural protection of God. It is His church. It remains His Bride and will be His perfect Bride in heaven.”

INTRODUCTION

This week we will look at how the first century church grew from infancy into the most powerful agent for change that the world has ever seen. We will see how the “Dirty Dozen” were changed from fearful, faithless disciples into faithful, powerful Apostles that led the church through a time of unprecedented persecution and expansion. The few became many and changed the world forever. It is important during this week’s study to observe the biblical structure and basic functions of the church. We will examine the foundation for the Church that was laid down by Jesus and the Apostles.

We will compare the first century church with the church as it exists today. Are we being true to the church foundation and pattern as revealed in the New Testament? Does how we do church today follow the original pattern? During the first two days of this week’s study you will go through a very brief overview of the history of the church from Pentecost to the 21st Century.

WEEK 8 STUDY

- DAY 1: THE HISTORY OF THE CHURCH PART 1
- DAY 2: THE HISTORY OF THE CHURCH PART 2
- DAY 3: A PORTRAIT OF THE CHURCH
- DAY 4: THE FUNCTIONS OF THE CHURCH
- DAY 5: THE LEADERS OF THE CHURCH

ASSIGNMENTS:

- **Memorize and meditate on *Ephesians 2:19-20***

Ephesians 2:19-20

¹⁹ Consequently, you are no longer foreigners and aliens, but fellow citizens with God’s people and members of God’s household, ²⁰ built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, with Christ Jesus himself as the chief cornerstone.

- **Memorize the doctrinal covenant**

Christ, as a committed member of Your body, the Church, I covenant to honor You as the head, and love and accept all other members as You love and accept me.

- Complete all study and review assignments. Review memory work from past courses at least once a week.

- Prepare your memory/review index card. Write your memory verse for the week on one side and the doctrinal covenant on the other.

DAY 1: THE HISTORY OF THE CHURCH PART 1 - PENTECOST TO A.D. 1517

We start our study of the doctrine of the church with a very brief history of the church from its beginning until now. We do this because it is our family history--the history of the family of God. To understand the church today we must understand what it was in the beginning. It is important to know how it has changed and how those changes have affected doctrine and church life throughout the centuries. We will take a bird's eye view of the important events, people, and issues of six time periods.

THE NEW RELIGION – PENTECOST TO A.D. 300

We start our journey through history on Pentecost, the day the church of Christ was birthed. It exploded onto the scene in a spectacular way.

THE EXPLOSION

The church started as the Apostles and other faithful disciples were gathered together. A violent wind filled the house and they saw what looked like tongues of fire resting on them. Filled with the Holy Spirit they began to speak in foreign languages that were not their own. Peter preached a sermon and three thousand people were added to the family of God that day (*Acts 2*). The explosion started a fire of evangelism that spread throughout the entire Roman Empire in the next few years. Thousands more were saved and formed house churches in many countries and cities. The Apostles were God's appointed leaders. They equipped other leaders to equip and shepherd the church. This was simple church with a simple structure. There were not church buildings and people met in houses and the temple courts (*Act 2:42-47*). There was sound doctrine and limited government. The church was seen as an organism—the body of Christ—rather than an organization. (*Eph. 4:25*).

THE PERSECUTION

The church was like no other religion the world had ever seen. There were no temples, no sacrifices and only one God. The people followed a Jewish Messiah. The early Christians were largely misunderstood. The Romans who ruled considered them a sect of the Jews. Hostilities mounted during the last half of the first century and by A.D. 100 the church had suffered thirty years of persecution. There were two major events that altered the history of the church.

Rome burns

In A.D. 64 the Roman emperor Nero blamed Christians for a fire that destroyed much of Rome. Believers were an easy target because they were misunderstood and unpopular. It was during this time that Peter was killed.

Temple is destroyed

In A.D. 70 another event further ostracized Christians. A Jewish rebel uprising infuriated Nero and he gave permission to attack Jerusalem. General Vespasian who succeeded Nero finished the task by burning Jerusalem and destroying the temple. The result was that Jewish leaders began to exclude Christians and other minority groups from their synagogues. Under Emperors Domitian and Trajan persecution increased. It was during this time that Polycarp, pastor of Smyrna who had known the apostle John, was martyred. During the time of persecution the church experienced phenomenal growth. As people escaped persecution they spread the gospel in new places. The Holy Spirit prevailed.

THE GNOSTIC HERESY

One of the most important events in the history of the church was the Gnostic controversy that raged between A.D. 90-150. This heresy emerged around A.D. 60. Gnostics believed that everything about the human body which is matter is evil. The body was contrasted with spiritual things which were pure and true. Salvation was attained by an escape from the body not by faith and by special or secret knowledge. The Apostle John addresses this controversy in his first letter (1st John).

A prominent proponent of Gnosticism was Marcion. He altered the doctrine of God to fit his view of Gnosticism. He taught that God was an all-loving Father who would never punish anyone. Jesus was seen as a spirit and only seemed human. Because matter was evil, Marcion and his followers denied themselves of all earthly pleasures. To support his theories Marcion created his own list of 11 authoritative writings for the church.

The solutions

With so many Christians believing in some version of Gnosticism the Roman church leaders knew they must confront the heresy. They addressed three basic questions about the faith.

What should Christians believe?

The Gnostic controversy made it necessary for churches to define the basic doctrine of salvation. What did it mean to be a Christian? They did this by asking a series of questions for new believers. It was called "The Rule of Faith." Today a slightly different version is, "*the Apostles Creed.*" Following is the "*The Rule of Faith.*"

"Do you believe in God the Father, Ruler of all? Do you believe in Christ Jesus, God's Son, who was born by the Holy Spirit through the virgin Mary, was crucified under Pontius Pilate, died and was buried, and rose again on the third day, alive from the dead, sat at the Fathers' right hand, and will come again to judge the living and the dead? Do you believe in the Holy Spirit, the holy church, and the resurrection of the flesh?"
(Apostolike paradosis, 21)

What are the authoritative teachings?

A second major question confronting the church was which of the hundreds of writings that were circulated in those first two centuries were the Inspired Word of God? By the year A.D. 200 churches recognized most of the books we have in the Bible now. The question of who wrote *Hebrews, James, 2 Peter, 2 & 3 John* were debated until the late 300's. With the exception of *Hebrews, James, and John*, the Muratorian Canon recognized the books of the New Testament that we have today. The acceptance of authoritative books helped refute heresy and provided a foundation of sound doctrine for all Christians.

How can these teachings be protected?

The third question that was addressed resulted in some serious side effects. Here is where we begin to see how the cure can cause other issues. The Church wanted to protect the Apostles' true teachings. To do this there was a major shift in church structure and leadership.

From Presbyter to "Pope"

In the first century the church was led by elders (*presbyter*) or overseers (*episcopos*) or bishops. They were considered one and the same. A group of elders or overseers provided leadership for a local congregation (*1 Peter 5:1-4*). By the third century a hierarchy began to emerge. In most cities one elder or overseer was selected to direct the other congregations. Churches moved from houses to buildings which they owned. The motive was pure—to protect the truth, but the result was a gradual departure from the church primarily as an organism to the church primarily as an organization.

Overseers began to trace not only their teaching to the apostles but their authority as well. They became the sole and official guardians of the apostles' teachings. They began referring to one another as "*popes*"—Latin for "fathers". This was a serious departure from the limited structure of the first century church as revealed in Scripture. The priesthood of all believers began to slowly be replaced by a priesthood of church leaders (*1 Peter 2: 5, 9*). Servant leaders were replaced by those who led by authority and control.

THE CHURCH OF THE ROMAN EMPIRE – A.D. 300 TO A.D. 590

PEACE AND PRIVILEGE – 300 A.D. to 400 A.D.

The conversion of Constantine

A.D. 303 to A.D. 305 is referred to as "The era of the martyrs". It was during this time that Emperor Diocletian issued decrees that resulted in some of the harshest persecution of the church. He also divided the empire into the East and West and appointed a co-emperor to help rule. After Diocletian retired, a power struggle over the rule of the empire ensued between Maxentius and Constantine. Before a battle with Maxentius, Constantine prayed. It is doubtful that his prayer was to God but probably some idol. Tradition reports that when Constantine prayed he saw a cross and the words, "*By this sign you will win.*" Constantine won the battle and marched into Rome beneath the symbol of the cross. For the first time in history the cross of Christ was associated with the blood of battle and human power.

The Edict of Milan

Constantine considered himself a Christian but there is considerable debate about what he believed and practiced. Constantine and his co-emperor, Licinius did issue the Edict of Milan. This allowed Christians and all others freedom of worship. This was one of the ways by which Constantine tried to unite the Empire.

CHURCH AND STATE UNITE

Peace and privilege for the church was not without a steep price. Be careful what you bargain for. What you get may not be a bargain at all but a cheap counterfeit with a steep price. The church relished peace and privilege after years of persecution but there were strings attached. They would be under the power and authority of those who granted the privileges.

Constantine settles a church dispute

Up to this time the church and government had always been separate. This was about to change. Because of a dispute in North Africa around 312 A.D., Donatists requested that Constantine settle a dispute about who had the authority to ordain an overseer. Constantine decided against the Donatists thus bringing about a change that would last twelve hundred years. The state and the church were united.

Constantine forms “the Counsel of Nicaea.”

Constantine’s next challenge came when Arius, an elder in Alexandria, Egypt, promoted the belief that Jesus was not God but the first being that God created. To resolve the problem and unify the church Constantine invited overseers, elders and deacons to Nicaea, a village in northern Asia Minor. Constantine as self-appointed overseer and apostle led the council. What came out of the council was a compromise statement of faith called the Creed of Nicaea and brought a degree of peace to the churches.

The official religion of the state

It was Theodosius, the Emperor of the Eastern Empire who finally declared Christianity as the official religion of the Empire. While he was able to unite the church he struggled with Ambrose, overseer of Milan. The church and the empire became inseparable with the church usually yielding more power.

THE DESERT MONKS

While the church and empire were united there were more than a few Christians who disliked this unholy alliance. Influenced by Gnosticism some people exited to the desert and founded monasteries which served as communities. Adherents came to be called monks (men) and nuns (women). They renounced the physical and focused only on the spiritual. The most well know of the monks was Jerome. He defended the idea that Mary was a virgin throughout her life. Jerome translated the Bible into Latin from Hebrew. It is referred to as “Vulgate”, which means “common” or “vulgar”.

THE GREAT DIVIDE

During the fifth century two cracks became increasingly noticeable as a result of the unholy alliance between church and state.

The division between clergy and lay people

Leaders of the western church gained powers that separated them from the masses. The gap between leaders and the people widened not only in power but in lifestyle. This was caused in part by the migration of the “barbarians.” The Empire began having problems managing this influx of tribes who didn’t fit into the culture. Because of this the church began to take on some of the responsibilities normally handled by the empire. As the power of the church leaders grew so did the gap between clergy and lay people. It was during this time that the tradition of unmarried “priests” was instituted.

The division between the East and the West

The East and the West faced issues over doctrine in their own territories. The controversies over doctrinal differences between the churches in the Eastern and Western Empires also continued. This East-West divide continues to this day. Eastern Orthodox churches and the Catholic Church while similar in many areas are totally separate.

Most of the controversies between the East and the West concerned the doctrine of God—especially the nature of Jesus. Augustine, who wrote *“The City of God,”* was a major player in the East. He began as a monk after his conversion and eventually became the overseer of Hippo, a city in North Africa. Augustine’s ideas on the sin nature of man went beyond Paul’s in some areas. He believed that people were born sinful and that through infant baptism sins could be purged and prepared a person for grace.

THE DISINTEGRATION OF THE ROMAN EMPIRE

Rome is invaded

The Roman Empire disintegrated in stages. The Barbarians got tired of being treated like second class citizens. In 408 A. D. Alaric the Goth requested that the Western emperor give him farmlands for his people. The emperor refused the request and so in 410 A. D. Alaric attacked Rome and pillaged the capital. The Roman Empire was forever changed. Its glory days were gone. With the Empire in disarray Attila the Hun attacked Italy in 452 A. D. Nothing stood in the way except Leo the overseer of Rome. He persuaded the Huns to retreat but they still looted Rome. In 476 A. D. the Barbarian Odovacer dealt the final blow to the Western Empire. Only the Eastern Empire remained.

The “Rule of Benedict”

The Empire may have ceased to exist but God’s church did not go away. God always calls a remnant to preserve His Bride. Even though the church was corrupted by power during these times there were the devout people such as the monks. In 520 Benedict started a religious community and built a monastery. He instituted the *Rule* which became a guide for religious communities. The *Rule of Benedict* gave monks a daily routine of Bible reading, prayer and work.

The first “Pope”

It was during this time that Gregory became the Roman overseer. Previous overseers had the title “Pope” or “father” but Gregory was the first Roman bishop who had the power that would later be given to the “office” of Pope. Gregory is therefore regarded as the first “Pope.” When Gregory became the Roman overseer he liked what he saw of Benedict’s monks. He sent them on a mission trip to England.

The doctrines of “purgatory” and “penance”

Gregory was greatly influenced by the writings of Augustine of Hippo. Augustine was concerned about what happened to the unconfessed sins of people when they died and if there was not possibly a place between heaven and hell where sins could be removed. Gregory took this idea and developed the doctrine of “purgatory.” He saw this as a place where God would remove all sin that would prevent a person from fully enjoying the presence of God. Gregory also developed the theology that God’s forgiveness sometimes requires works of penance.

THE CHURCH OF THE MIDDLE AGES – A.D. 590 TO A.D. 1517

The Middle Ages were a time of chaos in the former Western Empire. Without a central government a “feudal system” took its place. Landowners known as “lords” used peasants (have nots) to farm the land. In return the peasants received just enough to survive. The “lords” hired their own priests for their manors. Since few people could read, you can imagine the state of the church during this period. There were other significant events shaping the world.

MUHAMMAD

A religious-political force was emerging that would change the world forever. In 610 Muhammad claimed that he received a message from the angel Gabriel. Over a period of years he received more messages that were written down and became known as the Koran, the Muslim Bible. The Muslim expansion spread rapidly and violently through conquest by Muhammad and his followers. After his death Muhammad's followers continued the spread of Islam as they conquered Arabia, Syria, North Africa, Portugal, and Spain. They conquered Jerusalem in A.D. 638

FRANKS

At the beginning of the Middle Ages the Franks who originated in Germany were the most significant power in the western world. By A.D. 600 the Franks ruled much of central Europe. In A.D. 496 Clovis, the Frankish battle-chief acknowledged the God of Christianity and accepted and affirmed the Nicene Creed. As the power of the Franks grew so did their support of the Roman church. In 754 King Pepin III gave central Italy to the Roman church. Pepin's son, King Charles, spread "Christianity" through conquest. When he conquered a new territory he required everyone to be baptized or die. As you can imagine there was quite a revival.

In 800 King Charles formed a close association with the Roman Pope Leo III. As a result Leo crowned King Charles, and proclaimed him, "Charles Augustus, crowned by God as supreme and peaceful Emperor." For the first time in history the church helped create an emperor. He was referred to as the "Charlemagne, Holy Roman Emperor." It is no surprise that corruption followed this unholy alliance. During the late 800's-900's the Roman bishops' office was characterized by corruption. However God's hand never left His church. While the church desperately needed reformation a few more events would transpire before in God's perfect timing a reformation would take place

FINAL EAST-WEST SPLIT

The church in the west and east did attempt to unify many times but the differences always seemed to reemerge. The Nicene Creed created in the early 300's became an issue again in 867. The dispute again revolved around the nature of God—this time the role of the Holy Spirit in the Trinity. The Roman Church believed the divine dwelt equally in the Father, Son and Holy Spirit. The Eastern Church believed that the divine dwelt in the Father and proceeds from the Father through the Son and Holy Spirit. A compromise was offered by the Roman Church but it required the Eastern Church to acknowledge the supremacy of the pope over all churches. This was unacceptable to the Eastern Church. In 1048 Pope Leo IX further divided the Church by the belief that God had given the pope complete authority over all Christians. The Roman Church excommunicated the Eastern Church in 1084.

Before we conclude the Middle Ages I want to mention some major differences between Roman Catholicism and Eastern Orthodoxy that exist today.

Roman Catholicism

The word "catholic" means universal. The Pope is the Bishop of Rome and represents Christ's leadership and authority over all the churches. All doctrine and rules for the individual and church life proceed from the Pope and his cardinals downward. Ultimate authority is from Scripture and tradition as interpreted by the church hierarchy.

Eastern Orthodoxy

The word “orthodoxy” means “correct glory.” The term is understood to stand for the adherence to the Church’s ancient teachings and traditions. There is not a Pope but there are groups of churches that are led by priests who can marry and are accountable to territorial overseers. Authority is through the Scriptures, tradition and a strong emphasis on the teaching of the early church Fathers.

THE CRUSADES

In the Middle Ages people believed that they could become more spiritual and ensure their salvation by making pilgrimages. The ultimate pilgrimage was to Jerusalem. But there was a problem. Jerusalem had been controlled by Muslims since 638 A.D. They also controlled the roads leading to Jerusalem and required Christians to pay tariffs.

In 1095 Pope Urban II preached an earth shaking sermon. He said, “*Turks and Arabs have conquered their territories (the Eastern Church). I—or rather, the Lord—beg you...destroy that vile race from their lands!*” Thus one of the greatest blights on the church commenced. People believed that they were doing God’s will when they went to war against “infidels.” A series of crusades began (including a children’s crusade) in which Christians bearing crosses on their clothing massacred people in the name of Christ. On July 15, 1099 Jerusalem fell. On the Temple mount Christians slaughtered Muslims and Muslims slaughtered Christians. To this day there continues to be tension between Muslims, Christians and Jews.

THE REMNANT

As disgusted as we may feel about the church in the Middle Ages and the Crusades we must remember the church was still the Bride of Christ. God never gave up on His church. The Bride was disfigured but there was always a remnant of people who sought the truth—who were devout followers of Jesus. God has always touched people who would work to restore His church to its original pattern. There has always been a remnant of people whose theology might be lacking in many areas; nevertheless they had pure hearts for God. There were the monks and nuns in the Monasteries. There were other missionaries such as the “mystics” and the “scholastics.” Many other individuals and groups longed for a more personal relationship with God and a holy life.

PREPARATION FOR THE REFORMATION

The Middle Ages came to a close with a church that bore little resemblance to the 1st century church. Popes live in palaces and were politicians not church leaders. Corruption was the rule of the day as the popes continued their unholy alliances with kings. With no true leadership for the church the time was ripe for reform. Following are just a few of the key people who helped prepare the world for the Reformation.

John Wycliffe

When John Wycliffe came onto the scene in the early 1300’s the Roman Catholic Church taught that only the Church could interpret and understand Scripture correctly. Wycliffe, a philosophy professor at Oxford University in England, believed every church member should be able to interpret the Bible for himself. To facilitate this Wycliffe and his disciples translated the Bible into easy-to-read English. For his efforts he was labeled a heretic by the Catholic Church. The Bible began to be available to the common man. Wycliffe’s ideas spread.

John Hus

In the early 1400's, John Hus, a Bohemian professor and priest taught that people should obey the church only when it agreed with what was specifically written in the Bible. For this "heretical" stand Hus was burned at the stake.

Johan Gutenberg

A huge step forward that helped prepare the way the Reformation occurred in 1453 when a printer named Johan Gutenberg discovered movable metal type which made it possible to mass-produce books for the first time. Now books became affordable and began to flood Europe. This included Bibles and the classics.

Desiderius Erasmus

When Erasmus became a priest he was sent to the University of Paris to study Greek. He created a tool that would lead the way to reform. In 1516 Erasmus published the first Greek New Testament. It was now possible for the common man to read the words of the writers of the New Testament in their original language.

DO! "Watch your life and doctrine closely. Persevere in them..."

➤ What did today's study say to you about watching your life and doctrine closely?



WEEK 8 MEMORY ASSIGNMENTS AND REVIEW

Following are key Scriptures to learn this week. Memorize and meditate on this key Scripture and write it in the space that follows. Memorize the doctrinal covenant.

- Memorize *Ephesians 2:19-20*

- Memorize the doctrinal covenant

Christ, as a committed m_____ of Your b_____, the
C_____, I covenant to honor You as the h_____, and I _____ and
accept all other members as You love and accept me.

- Review previous memory projects from your card index file.

PRAYER

Spend time in prayer using the five components of the Lord's Prayer.

DAY 2: THE HISTORY OF THE CHURCH PART 2: A.D. 1517 TO A.D. 2000

THE REFORMATION – A.D. 1517 TO A.D. 1648

MARTIN LUTHER

In “the fullness of time” God touched the heart of a man who would launch the Reformation. A young German lawyer by the name of Martin Luther was knocked to the ground by a bolt of lightning. Laying there on the ground he cried out, “Saint Anne, save me. I will become a Monk.” He kept His promise and in 1505 he entered a monastery. But Luther could find no peace. He would confess his sin for six hours at a time. He was sent to Wittenberg University to study. An aging Bible professor there thought if Martin Luther would take his place perhaps he could find peace through the study and teaching of Scripture.

The question of righteousness

There was one question that plagued Martin Luther. How can a sinner like me please a righteous God? Luther found the answer to his question in Erasmus’s Greek New Testament. As he studied Paul’s teaching on righteousness he discovered that righteousness was first being proclaimed righteous by God. Then being righteous in God’s eyes, man was empowered by God to become righteous in his thoughts and actions. The insight that righteousness was God’s gift to everyone who trusted in Jesus was new to Luther. Now the peace that had eluded Luther for years became a personal reality and a passion to pass on to others.

The 95 Theses

At the time of his revolutionary understanding of grace and righteousness Martin Luther was a pastor of a small church in Mainz, Germany. There was an archbishop who was also the ruling prince of Mainz. When Pope Leo X was short on cash to finish St. Peter’s Basilica in Rome he “franchised” indulgences. The Pope gave Archbishop Albert the right to sell indulgences and keep half the profits. An indulgence was the full or partial remission of the temporal punishment due for sins that had already been forgiven—sort of. An indulgence removed some or in some cases the entire earthly penalty for a sin and restored favor with God. You can see why this was popular, especially for a person with a strong conscience or someone involved in a “serious” sin.

One of Prince Albert’s “salesmen” was a Dominican monk by the name of Tetzel. Tetzel’s abuse of power and lust for money enraged Martin Luther. He wanted to debate the monk so he hurriedly wrote down 95 topics to debate and nailed them to the door of the chapel in Wittenberg. His intent was to challenge Tetzel’s teaching and practice of indulgences. What happened with Luther’s 95 Theses on October 31, 1517 launched the Reformation. Luther’s revolutionary ideas spread like wildfire. As you can imagine Pope Leo X, the Holy Roman Emperor, was more than a little upset. He sent for Luther and assured him of safety. This proved to be a false promise and because of his radical beliefs Martin Luther had to go underground for a time.

The Protestants

Up to the time of the 95 Theses the church had differences but was united. It was “catholic” which means “universal”. Because the church is the Body of Christ it will always be “catholic” in the sense that everyone who is saved by grace is a member of the world-wide body of Christ. But with the Reformation came a new term.

The Reformers came to be known as “Protestants”. This term distinguished between the Roman Catholic Church and the Reformers. The term protestant is derived from the Latin *protestari* meaning to *publicly declare/protest*. The term came to represent the groups that protested against some of the beliefs of the church following Luther’s 95 Theses. Since then it has come to signify Christians who do not belong to the Roman Catholic, Orthodox, or Anglican churches. The primary beliefs that separate Protestants from Catholics can be summarized in this Latin statement of faith: *Sola gratia, sola fide, sola scriptura*, translated, “grace alone, faith alone, Scripture alone”. These protestant beliefs remain the fundamental differences between Protestants and Catholics today.

The Reformation spawned a variety of beliefs and groups that eventually became referred to as denominations. A denomination can be defined as a group of churches with a common name, teachings, traditions, and identity. In the beginning the reformers did not set out to become separate from the Roman Catholic Church but to reform it. The Protestant movement and the denominations were necessary to restore *sola gratia, sola fide, sola scriptura*.

The dominant groups that emerged from the Reformation were Lutherans, Calvinists, Anglicans, Catholics and Anabaptists. Later came the Puritans and Baptists. While division is never desirable it is sometimes necessary when truth is at stake. The division that resulted from the Reformation meant millions of people would understand what it meant to be saved by grace through faith alone. People would have a renewed awareness of the sovereignty of God. People would learn to accept the authority of the Bible alone and have the confidence that they could study and know the Bible themselves. It is also important to understand that the Church of Christ is still “catholic”. It is still universal. There is only one church. The Body of Christ cannot be divided. We need to accept everyone who has been **saved through faith in Christ by grace alone** as our brothers and sisters in Christ. That is the only criteria we need for unity.

THE CHURCH COMES TO AMERICA – 1600’S-1700’S

Reform also came to England. There was a desire to purify the Church of England. The people in this movement were called Puritans. The goal of the Puritans was to purify the church of practices that were not specifically required in the Bible. It was the Puritans who suggested a new translation of the Bible which King James commissioned. The first King James Bibles rolled off the presses in 1611. This was not enough for the Puritans. In 1606 some separated from the Anglican Church. They became known as “Separatists”. Some still hoped they could purify the church from within. They were the Puritans. Because both groups continued to be persecuted for their beliefs they moved to Holland.

The Church in Plymouth Rock

The Separatists and Puritans were never completely satisfied with their status in Holland so they availed themselves of the opportunity to establish themselves in a new land. In 1620 some left Holland for what was to become the United States of America. While still on board the Mayflower they signed the Mayflower Compact. It begins by stating its purpose:

In the name of God, Amen. We, whose names are underwritten, the Loyal Subjects of our dread Sovereign Lord, King James, The Grace of God, of England, France and Ireland, King, Defender of the Faith, etc. Having undertaken for the Glory of God, and Advancement of the Christian Faith, and the Honour of our King and Country, a voyage to plant the first colony in the northern parts of Virginia;

In a sense the Separatists planted the first church in America. Their colony was to glorify God and for the “Advancement of the Christian Faith”. From these humble beginnings came a nation founded on biblical principles where there was freedom to worship or not to worship. These freedoms were developed gradually and not without imperfections and controversy. There were even divisions between the Puritans and the Separatists. As people migrated to the new land the religious landscape became more diverse. What we have today is hundreds of dominations and religious groups.

The Enlightenment

The Enlightenment was an intellectual movement in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries that still influences the way people think about religion today. This movement’s main focus was reason. As people like Isaac Newton were able to explain nature and nature’s laws a movement began to evolve that would remove God or at least a personal God from the equation. The question became, “If man can explain the workings of the universe why do we need the Bible? Naturalism, a theory that the universe is a closed system and does not need a God to create or maintain it, became popular.

Deism

The Enlightenment paved the way for Deism. Deism came from the Latin word *dues* or “deity”. Deists believed in a divine being that created the universe and natural laws. God was not personal and was not involved in the personal affairs of man. Jesus was a man not God. Some of the Founding Fathers were deists.

Revival

During the 1600’s the spiritual condition of the new land and Europe began to deteriorate. Interest in religion and church membership declined. Moral conditions were affected. Then came the “Great Awakening”. This term refers to a period of religious revivals. There were several waves of awakenings that occurred starting in the early to mid-1700’S. These were characterized by revivals where people were convicted of sin, repented, prayed and turned to God and the church. Notable leaders of the awakenings were Jonathan Edwards in America, Moravians, John Wesley, and George Whitfield in England. John Wesley through his small groups and focus on right conduct based on Scripture brought revival to England and probably prevented a revolution. His movement became known as the Methodists.

Revolution

The revivals set the tone for revolution in America. People wanted complete political and religious freedom separate from England. Because of the Revolutionary War, America freed itself from the tyranny of England and became independent. The Declaration of Independence describes a nation that was founded on biblical principles—a nation that would secure life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness for all. The Constitution would assure religious freedom for all.

THE CHURCH IN THE 19TH CENTURY 1800’S

MODERNISM

With the nineteenth century came unparalleled progress. Optimism began to abound. The industrial revolution began. There was an abundance of products for people to purchase. The world was relatively free of war. Times were good. People became consumers. The emphasis of the Modern Age was human potential, progress and physical possessions. The church again was faced with challenges of spiritual darkness.

RENEWAL

Possessions and progress never satisfy. People are always left empty and wanting more. As usual God raises up people with a desire to restore 1st century Christianity to its original form. So it was at the beginning of the 1800's. In 1801 revival broke out at a camp meeting in Cane Ridge, Kentucky, where 20,000 Baptists, Methodists and Presbyterians met. There was a lot of emotion as people fell on their faces, repenting and crying out to God for His forgiveness. This remote camp meeting launched the Second Great Awakening across America.

From this revival came the Restoration Movement. Barton W. Stone and Alexander Campbell had a vision of uniting all Christians by going back to the essentials of the Bible alone. Their pledge was "*Where the Scriptures speak, we speak. Where the Scriptures are silent, we are silent*". They urged Christians to become "Christians only" and reject denominations. While this was a noble cause, the dream was short lived. There were soon many divisions among the Restorationists. What remains of this movement today is Christian Churches, Churches of Christ and Disciples of Christ. The Restoration legacy is that it broke some of the strongholds held by major dominations.

Charles Finney was another key figure in the Second Great Awakening. He became a high pressure evangelist. He instituted "New Measure" where people were pressured not to leave his meetings until they were sure of their salvation. He also believed people could attain "perfect holiness" in this life.

MISSIONS

William Carey launched the modern missionary movement of the 1800's. His mission field was India where he translated the New Testament into 24 dialects of the Indian language. His work laid the foundation for thousands of future missionaries and countless mission fields. After William Carey's death in 1834 there were missionaries deployed all over the world. In 1860 Hudson Taylor founded the China Inland Mission. He ventured inland in China and opened new doors for the advancement of missions in China and India. The modern missions movement opened the door to obey Jesus' command to make disciples of every nation.

MODERN THEOLOGY

The Modern Age brought with it modern theology. Immanuel Kant, a German philosopher wrote *Critique of Pure Reason* in which he attacked reason beyond time and space. Since God is beyond time and space this book was also an attack on the Christian faith. This was followed by Friedrich Schleiermacher another influential thinker who contended that it was not the historical event of Jesus' supposed resurrection that was the core of Christianity but true religion was based on an awareness of God. Deity was to be discovered in oneself and the world around him or her.

This thinking was a catalyst for liberal theology that questioned the inspiration and accuracy of the Bible. It brought about "higher criticism" where biblical scholars made decisions as to what was accurate and what was false in the Bible. There was a search for the "historical Jesus." Liberal theologians argued that Jesus' miracles were legends and that He only symbolically died for the sins of the world. In reality all of humanity was assured of eternity (Universalism). The "social gospel" with good works apart from historic Christianity began to infiltrate theological seminaries and churches.

REFORM

There were many factors that contributed to the demise of the Modern Age of optimism. The stock market crash in 1857 caused people to face the fallacy of depending on money as a source of happiness. The conflict over slavery resulted in the Civil War that tore families and the nation apart. Liberal Churches stripped of anything divine offered little hope.

Reform in the Catholic Church

In an effort to reverse the effect of Modernism on the authority of the Catholic Church, in 1854 Pius IX made a decree called the “Immaculate Conception” which stated that Mary never sinned. This was without the church council’s consent. This stirred quite a controversy so the Pope called a council to settle the question. Bishops met at the Vatican and The First Vatican Council was convened. The conclusion of the council was that the Bishop of Rome was infallible only when he defined “outward expressions of the faith” not essential doctrine.

Return to the fundamentals

At a conference in Niagara, New York, a group of conservative Christians met to see if they could bring reform to the Church by agreeing on some basic fundamentals of the faith. They settled on these five essential fundamentals:

1. Jesus is uniquely divine
2. Jesus was born of a virgin
3. Jesus died as a sacrifice for sin
4. Jesus will come again
5. The Bible is inerrant—contains no errors.

From this conference came a series of booklets that were called *The Fundamentals*. People who embraced these fundamentals were called “fundamentalists”.

THE CHURCH IN THE 20TH CENTURY 1900’S

FUNDAMENTALISM

We begin our review of the 20th century where we left off with the 19th Century. The Fundamentalist movement was to become a significant part of the church during the next hundred years. After World War I American culture began to embrace a new kind of moral and sexual freedom that alarmed many with fundamentalist leanings. Convinced that one of the main problems with America was liberalism, fundamentalists separated themselves from everything that they considered liberal. It was during this time that the evolution debate during the “Monkey Trial” in 1925 further separated fundamentalists from liberals.

Moral crusades such as Prohibition were created to combat these trends. Evangelists like fundamentalist evangelist Billy Sunday railed against all kinds of evils. (As an interesting side note, my mother received Christ at a Billy Sunday crusade. My parents were definitely Fundamentalists all of their lives).

EVANGELICALISM

Some fundamentalists were not comfortable with what they considered an extreme separation from the world and those who were labeled as liberals. The result was a meeting at Moody Bible Institute where some fundamentalists with these leanings formed the National Association of Evangelicals. This group was committed to a more positive, less legalistic approach to the Christian life and unity with other believers. From these beginnings came evangelical organizations such as Youth for Christ, InterVarsity Christian Fellowship and Campus Crusade for Christ. In the 1940's Billy Graham became the voice of evangelicalism through his crusades and enormous influence. The *Christianity Today* magazine was started to present a balanced, thoughtful view of evangelical values. The differences between fundamentalism and evangelicalism while having diminished to some degree remain significant today.

PENTECOSTALISM

Pentecostalism is a movement that places a special emphasis on a direct personal experience of God through the baptism of the Holy Spirit and speaking in tongues. Pentecostalism had its beginnings in the Holiness branch of American Methodism where there became an emphasis on spiritual experience and a "second blessing" of the Spirit that led to perfection. In 1900 a Holiness evangelist by the name of Charles Fox Parham sparked a fire through his teachings that would spread throughout the world. Parham started a Bible College in Kansas where he taught that the "second blessing" of the baptism of the Holy Spirit and speaking in tongues of Pentecost was for everyone.

A few years later when a student of Parham's preached this Pentecostal message at the Apostolic Faith Gospel Mission on Azusa Street in Los Angeles many adherents began speaking in tongues. The word spread and the great "Azusa Street Revival of 1906" began. A merging of several holiness groups formed The Assemblies of God which became the first Pentecostal denomination. The Pentecostal movement has spread all over the world with millions of followers and has some of the world's largest churches. The African Independent church became one of the world's fastest growing dominations. The world's largest church is a Pentecostal Church in Seoul, Korea. In Latin America the Pentecostal church dominates the religious landscape.

While there are some fundamental differences on how Pentecostals and non-Pentecostals view the work of the Holy Spirit there are many similarities. Much of the suspicion and criticism of the early years has diminished as both sides have learned to accept the differences and value one another as brothers and sisters in Christ.

POSTMODERNISM

The Enlightenment (scientific reason) of the 1700's and the optimism of the Modern Age of the 1800's set the stage for Postmodernism of the 1900's. America was still reeling from two world wars and The Great Depression. So much for a utopian society with unlimited potential for progress, wealth, and happiness! A new emerging world view began to become clear at the end of World War II. By the 1950's the Civil Rights movement began to emerge. Then came the Baby Boomers with protests against traditional structures and values and the belief in sexual freedom.

A new way of thinking emerged that formed a new world view. Rather than absolute truth, relativism took its place. Truth now had many faces. People became the authority for their own truth. "It may be true for

you but it is not true for me” became the new mantra. Perception became reality. It is how you see things that is important. You must find your own truth.

I’m sure you can see where this is leading. If there is no absolute truth then morality is how you see it. There is no fixed truth or standard for behavior. Sin becomes relative or non-existent. The result is that people have an increasing tendency to reject the Bible as the sole and absolute authority and standard for right and wrong. Doctrine becomes less important. With the loss of absolute truth comes the loss of spiritual discernment. Even those professing to be Christians believe that there are many ways to God and that all beliefs are equal. Those who believe that the Bible is the only source of truth and that Jesus is the only way to God are looked at as narrow-minded, intolerant and bigoted.

Political correctness and tolerance are now defined as endorsing every sexual lifestyle as equally acceptable and moral. This trend has been well documented by pollsters such as The Barna Group and Pew Research. The younger generations are especially vulnerable to Postmodern thought because they have grown up with it. Postmodern thinking has impacted the church and will remain one of the great challenges of this decade as there is increasing pressure to redefine truth.



REFLECT AND RESPOND

What can be learned from the history of the church? Reflect on what you have just read and write the five most significant lessons about doctrine and living the Christian life that can be learned from the past 2,000 years.

DO! “Watch your life and doctrine closely. Persevere in them...”

➤ What did today’s study say to you about watching your life and doctrine closely?



WEEK 8 MEMORY ASSIGNMENTS AND REVIEW

Following are key Scriptures to learn this week. Memorize and meditate on this key Scripture and write it in the space that follows. Memorize the doctrinal covenant.

- Memorize *Ephesians 2:19-20*

- Memorize the doctrinal covenant

Christ, as a committed m_____ of Your b_____, the
C_____, I covenant to honor You as the h_____, and I _____ and
accept all other members as You love and accept me.

- Review previous memory projects from your card index file.

PRAYER

Spend time in prayer using the five components of the Lord's Prayer.

DAY 3: A PORTRAIT OF THE CHURCH

SEARCH THE WORD STUDIES

The approach to today's study will be somewhat different. You will study a portrait of the church presented by Paul in the book of *Ephesians*. There are six different dimensions of the portrait each corresponding to one of the six chapters. There will be a Search the Word study for each dimension. First read the entire chapter. Next find what you believe is the key verse or passage that best describes that dimension. By the end of today's study you will uncover a beautiful picture of Christ's Church.

THE HEAD OF THE CHURCH (*Ephesians 1*)



SEARCH THE WORD (Read *Ephesians 1*)

- What key verse or passage best pictures Christ as the head of the church?

- What does this verse or passage say about Christ being head of the church?

After Paul reviewed how we are chosen by God and adopted into His family he concludes the first chapter by focusing on Christ as the head of the church. Paul sums up Christ's headship with these two verses:

Ephesians 1:22-23

²² And God placed all things under his feet and appointed him to be head over everything for the church, ²³ which is his body, the fullness of him who fills everything in every way.

Christ is the head of His body, the church. As the head He gives life and direction to His body. Everything depends on His leadership. With that leadership comes absolute power and authority. Christ is head over "everything" for the church. In his letter to the Colossians Paul adds,

Colossians 1:18

¹⁸ And he is the head of the body, the church; he is the beginning and the firstborn from among the dead, so that in everything he might have the supremacy.

Christ established His church

The Church was founded on Christ who is the head. He is the supreme authority of the church (*Col. 1:18*). Jesus revealed to His disciples that He would "...build my church..."

Matthew 16:16-18

¹⁶ Simon Peter answered, "You are the Christ, the Son of the living God." ¹⁷ Jesus replied, "Blessed are you, Simon son of Jonah, for this was not revealed to you by man, but by my Father in heaven. ¹⁸ And I tell you that you are Peter, and on this rock I will build my church, and the gates of Hades will not overcome it.

What does Christ's headship and authority mean to the church today? It means what it has meant from the beginning. What Christ revealed to His Apostles and they recorded in the Bible is our sole authority for the doctrine and pattern of the church today. The authority is not based upon Church Fathers or Councils or traditions. It is based what the Spirit revealed to the Apostles.

Ephesians 3:4-5

⁴ In reading this, then, you will be able to understand my insight into the mystery of Christ, ⁵ which was not made known to men in other generations as it has now been revealed by the Spirit to God's holy apostles and prophets.

THE MEMBERS OF THE CHURCH (*Ephesians 2*)



SEARCH THE WORD (Read *Ephesians 2*)

- What key verse or passage best pictures the members of the church?

- What does this verse or passage say about members of the church?

Paul begins this chapter by stating what qualifies us to be members of His body, the church. It is "...by grace...through faith..." –nothing more—nothing less.

Ephesians 2:15-16

¹⁵ ...His purpose was to create in himself one new man out of the two, thus making peace, ¹⁶ and in this one body to reconcile both of them to God through the cross, by which he put to death their hostility.

The barrier between Jews and Gentles was torn down through grace. Through the cross all men could be reconciled to God and be part of His family. All who were saved by grace became one. All were a part of His body the church.

The word "church" is derived from two Greek terms. *Curiake* means "belonging to the Lord", or "the house of the Lord". The second word is *Ecclesia* that comes from the Greek words *ek*, which means "out" and

kalein, “to call.” Put these words together and the church is “*the called out ones who belong to the Lord.*” We were called out of the world to be part of a new family of God. Paul explains how this all fits together:

Ephesians 2:19-22

¹⁹ *Consequently, you are no longer foreigners and aliens, but fellow citizens with God’s people and members of God’s household,* ²⁰ *built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, with Christ Jesus himself as the chief cornerstone.* ²¹ *In him the whole building is joined together and rises to become a holy temple in the Lord.* ²² *And in him you too are being built together to become a dwelling in which God lives by his Spirit.*

The moment we believed we were no longer on the outside of God’s house looking in, we became “*fellow citizens*” with all of God’s people. We became members of His household. The foundation and the building are built by God. It is God who builds us together so that He can live in His household through His Spirit. This does not mean that what God builds always functions perfectly. What God does is lay a perfect foundation so that imperfect parts can live with each other in a way that is humanly impossible.

The family bonds in the first century church were incredible. What happened after Pentecost was a depth of love and acceptance never seen before in history. Jews and Gentiles learned to love one another. There was no caste system in the early church. A complete new meaning of family was instituted by the church. The following account of what happened early in the days of the infant church gives an indication of the strength of family bonds in the family of God. What you see is supernatural, sacrificial love.

Acts 4:32

³² *All the believers were one in heart and mind. No one claimed that any of his possessions was his own, but they shared everything they had.*

THE PURPOSE OF THE CHURCH (*Ephesians 3*)



SEARCH THE WORD (Read *Ephesians 3*)

- What key verse or passage best pictures the purpose of the church?

- What does this verse or passage say about the purpose of the church?

In this chapter Paul speaks about “*The mystery*” of God that was revealed to himself and the other Apostles (*Eph. 3:2-5*). In verse 6 he reveals that mystery.

Ephesians 3:6

⁶ *This mystery is that through the gospel the Gentiles are heirs together with Israel, members together of one body, and sharers together in the promise in Christ Jesus.*

Notice that the mystery involves one key word repeated three times—“together, together, together”. The great mystery was that through Jesus Christ and His Church all people were united into one body. The mystery was revealed in the church for the whole world to see. Through the unity of the body the wisdom of God is revealed. Paul goes on to say,

Ephesians 3:10-11

¹⁰ *His intent was that now, through the church, the manifold wisdom of God should be made known to the rulers and authorities in the heavenly realms, ¹¹ according to his eternal purpose which he accomplished in Christ Jesus our Lord.*

It is to the degree that the church displays unity that the world is able to understand the wisdom of God’s grace. God has made the Church of Christ a reflection of His love for all mankind. His eternal purpose is that God be glorified through the church so that the mystery of His grace will be understood by everyone. This happens when God’s people demonstrate His grace to one another and to others. It is through the unity of the church and our love for all people that God is most glorified.

After explaining how God’s wisdom is demonstrated through the unity of the one body, Paul stresses that the power for unity is supplied by the Spirit (*Eph. 3: 14-17*). It is only through God’s power that the love necessary for unity dwells in us. It is through the power of the Spirit that we are filled to overflowing with God’s love (*Eph. 3: 18-19*). Paul concludes this discussion by revealing how that power of love empowers the church to glorify God.

Ephesians 3:20-21

²⁰ *Now to him who is able to do immeasurably more than all we ask or imagine, according to his power that is at work within us, ²¹ to him be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus throughout all generations, for ever and ever! Amen.*

As a chosen people we were placed here on earth to glorify God. It is the church united that does this best. Scripture says,

1 Peter 2:9

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.*

THE UNITY OF THE CHURCH (*Ephesians 4*)



SEARCH THE WORD (Read *Ephesians 4*)

- What key verse or passage best pictures the church as united?

- What does this verse or passage say about how the church is united?

The church is universal

The Church is one. Not which one, but one! The body of Christ cannot be divided. In that sense the term “catholic” meaning universal is appropriate. Paul says,

Ephesians 4:4-5 (NIV)

⁴ There is one body and one Spirit— just as you were called to one hope when you were called— ⁵ one Lord, one faith, one baptism;

Paul clearly teaches that the Church of Christ is universal. There can only be “...one body and one Spirit...” The New Testament writings reveal there was only one church. The book of Acts speaks of “...the church...”

Acts 9:31 (NIV)

³¹ Then the church throughout Judea, Galilee and Samaria enjoyed a time of peace. It was strengthened; and encouraged by the Holy Spirit, it grew in numbers, living in the fear of the Lord.

When the church began there were no Protestants and Catholics. There were no Baptists and Lutherans. Denominations did not exist. Denominations are man-made. All who received Christ by grace through faith were immediately members of His body. There is nothing in the New Testament that would indicate that you had to do anything other than put your faith in Christ to become a member of the world wide body of Christ. As you have seen through the study of church history there have always been differences that have divided believers. Differences should never divide. Differences naturally occur but we should always look at other believers as brothers and sisters in Christ. We are all one in Christ!

The church is local

There are also local churches. These local churches belonged to the universal Church of Christ. During the early days of the church they met in large groups in the temple courts and in small groups in homes (*Acts 2:42-47; 5:42; Romans 16:5*). The book of Acts speaks of one church being established in many different locations.

Acts 13:1 (NIV)

¹ In the church at Antioch there were prophets and teachers: Barnabas, Simeon called Niger, Lucius of Cyrene, Manaen (who had been brought up with Herod the tetrarch) and Saul.

We are to pursue unity

While the church is one, as members of the body we do not always act as if we are one. Scripture tells us to be one but we ask “Which one?” Our differences cause us to compete with one another rather than complete one another. Practical unity within the body of Christ requires our effort. It means we must do nothing out of “...selfishness or empty conceit...” (Read *Philippians 2: 1-11*) Practical unity involves an attitude of humility and actions of selflessness. We are to “pursue” unity. Paul says,

Ephesians 4:3-6

³ Make every effort to keep the unity of the Spirit through the bond of peace. ⁴ There is one body and one Spirit— just as you were called to one hope when you were called— ⁵ one Lord, one faith, one baptism; ⁶ one God and Father of all, who is over all and through all and in all.

CONDUCT OF THE CHURCH (Ephesians 5)



SEARCH THE WORD (Read *Ephesians 5*)

- What key verse or passage best pictures the conduct of the church?

- What does this verse or passage say about the conduct of the church?

The letter Paul wrote to the church in Ephesus is a very practical letter. In it Paul not only explains how the Church is the Body of Christ but also tells believers how they are to conduct themselves. To be one they must act as though they were one.

Be imitators of God

How are we to pursue unity? We pursue unity by imitating God. We are to live a life of love. The example of how to do that comes from Christ who gave himself up for us to glorify His Father. Sacrificial love is the key. Paul says,

Ephesians 5:1-2

¹ Be imitators of God, therefore, as dearly loved children ² and live a life of love, just as Christ loved us and gave himself up for us as a fragrant offering and sacrifice to God.

Ephesians 6:10-13

¹⁰ Finally, be strong in the Lord and in his mighty power. ¹¹ Put on the full armor of God so that you can take your stand against the devil's schemes. ¹² For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the powers of this dark world and against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms. ¹³ Therefore put on the full armor of God, so that when the day of evil comes, you may be able to stand your ground, and after you have done everything, to stand.

If you have been in the church very long you are well aware of the attacks of Satan on individual congregations. Many of these attacks are supernatural attacks of the evil one whose goal is to weaken, divide and conquer. Some of the attacks come from outside and regrettably many are from inside the church as a result of "selfish ambition or vain conceit" (Phil. 2: 3). To guard against these attacks God has given individuals and His church supernatural protection. It is pictured here as the Armor of God. This Armor is available for everyone but we have the responsibility of putting it on with prayer and using it effectively.

As we have seen from history the church has gone through all kinds of trials. At times it has not looked remotely like the 1st century church we have just observed. But the Church of Christ has survived. Nothing can destroy it. It has the supernatural protection of God. It is His church. It remains His Bride and will be His perfect Bride in heaven. As Jesus said to Peter, "...on this rock I will build my church, and the gates of Hades will not overcome it" (Matthew 16:18).

DO! "Watch your life and doctrine closely. Persevere in them..."

➤ What did today's study say to you about watching your life and doctrine closely?



WEEK 8 MEMORY ASSIGNMENTS AND REVIEW

Following are key Scriptures to learn this week. Memorize and meditate on this key Scripture and write it in the space that follows. Memorize the doctrinal covenant.

- Memorize *Ephesians 2:19-20*

- Memorize the doctrinal covenant

Christ, as a committed m_____ of Your b_____, the
C_____, I covenant to honor You as the h_____, and I _____ and
accept all other members as You love and accept me.

- Review previous memory projects from your card index file.

PRAYER

Spend time in prayer using the five components of the Lord's Pray

DAY 4: THE FUNCTIONS OF THE CHURCH

INTRODUCTION

If you participated in *Spiritual Boot Camp* you will already be familiar with the basic functions of the church detailed in *Acts 2:42-47*. In today's study we will focus on four of those functions that were at the heart of everything in the 1st century church. A function as defined in today's session is an essential value or action for which something exists. It is an essential contribution to the success of an organization or organism. In this case the organism is the body of Christ. The four functions we will study today constituted almost everything the church did. These functions anchored the body of Christ.

The following passage of scripture offers the first view inside the infant church after it was birthed on the Day of Pentecost. We are able to see how the church functioned from the very beginning. The body immediately devoted itself to four major activities.

Acts 2:42-47 (NIV)

*⁴² They devoted themselves to the apostles' **teaching** and to the **fellowship**, to the breaking of bread and to **prayer**. ⁴³ Everyone was filled with awe, and many wonders and miraculous signs were done by the apostles. ⁴⁴ All the believers were together and had everything in common. ⁴⁵ Selling their possessions and goods, they gave to anyone as he had need. ⁴⁶ Every day they continued to meet together in the temple courts. They broke bread in their homes and ate together with glad and sincere hearts, ⁴⁷ praising God and enjoying the favor of all the people. And **the Lord added** to their number daily those who were being saved.* (Bold added)

The Word: This included the Apostles' teaching, Scriptures from the Old Testament, the teaching of other leaders and encouraging one another in the Word.

The Fellowship: This included communion, common meals, sacrificial giving, including all spiritual and relational activities mentioned in this passage.

Prayer: Prayer and worship were of first importance and demonstrated dependence on God.

Outreach: Outreach was a natural expression of devotion to Christ. People were added by God to the fellowship because of the exemplary, loving lives of believers.

SIMPLE CHURCH

The church met in small groups in houses and in large groups in the temple courts (*Acts 5:42*). What we are able to witness in this passage of Scripture is simple church—a church organic in nature—unencumbered by buildings, organizational hierarchy or traditions. It was simply groups of believers meeting in homes and the temple courts, studying the Word together, praying and praising God, fellowshiping by sharing all things, and sharing the good news with non-believers through example and word. These basic functions kept the new church from being distracted from non-essentials. This kept them focused on the mission of glorifying God by making disciples of all the nations.

Reflect for a moment to the first two days of this week when you studied Church History. When the 1st century church began to neglect the basic functions of the church it became susceptible to disease and deterioration. The further it departed from the simple/organic functions of *Acts 2:42-47*, the less it looked and acted like the original. There is a lesson here for us today. Stick with the basics. Don't depart from the original doctrines and pattern laid down by Jesus and the Apostles. God revealed the church of the New Testament in detail for a purpose. That is why Paul told Timothy,

2 Timothy 1:13-14

¹³ *What you heard from me, keep as the pattern of sound teaching, with faith and love in Christ Jesus.*

¹⁴ *Guard the good deposit that was entrusted to you—guard it with the help of the Holy Spirit who lives in us.*

These sound doctrines were in turn to be entrusted to others who would teach others and hold firmly to the original patterns. Paul stressed,

2 Timothy 2:1-2

¹ *You then, my son, be strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus.* ² *And the things you have heard me say in the presence of many witnesses entrust to reliable men who will also be qualified to teach others.*

THE FUNCTION OF THE WORD

Acts 2:42

⁴² *They devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching...*

It is no accident that God's Word is the first thing mentioned in this passage (*Acts 2:42*). Throughout the history of the early church devotion to the Scriptures was one of its highest priorities. The book of Acts and the letters of the Apostles repeatedly stressed the importance God's of Word in the life of believers and the church. It was faith in Christ and sound doctrine that anchored people in hope. It was the truth revealed in Scripture that kept the church pure. The Apostles appointed deacons to take care of the needs of the widows so they could, "...give our attention to prayer and the ministry of the word" (*Acts 6:4*). The church was founded on Christ and His Word.

Believers studied the Word

The 1st Century Church was privileged to learn from the Apostles to whom God, "breathed" the Word (*2 Timothy 3:16-17*). The Apostles and those they entrusted with Scripture taught in homes and the temple courts.

Acts 5:42

⁴² *Day after day, in the temple courts and from house to house, they never stopped teaching and proclaiming the good news that Jesus is the Christ.*

As the Word spread among the believers, the church grew in numbers. Church growth was never a result of human strategy but a result of the power of the Word of God.

Acts 6:7

⁷ So the word of God spread. The number of disciples in Jerusalem increased rapidly, and a large number of priests became obedient to the faith.

Believers shared the Word with one another

The Apostles could not be in every house church all of the time so other leaders took responsibility for teaching the Word. Individual believers were also encouraged to not only learn the Word but share what they knew with one another. Paul told the believers in Colossae,

Colossians 3:16 (NIV)

¹⁶ Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly as you teach and admonish one another with all wisdom, and as you sing psalms, hymns and spiritual songs with gratitude in your hearts to God.

This happened in small groups. Imagine people teaching one another "...with all wisdom..." Picture Christians singing Psalms and praising God with all of their hearts. These 1st century Christians truly knew what it was like to be part of one another in the Body of Christ.

They applied the Word to their lives

The Word of God was not only to be studied but applied. The New Testament stresses the "do" of doctrine. James says "Do not merely listen to the word, and so deceive yourselves. Do what it says." (James 1:22) Christians were continually encouraged to "do" what the Scripture said. It was the power of Scripture that transformed lives. Paul reminded the believers in Philippi,

Philippians 4:9

⁹ Whatever you have learned or received or heard from me, or seen in me—put it into practice. And the God of peace will be with you.

THE FUNCTION OF FELLOWSHIP

⁴² They devoted themselves to... fellowship...

The new believers in the Church of Christ were also devoted to "...the fellowship..." (Acts 2:42). This was not just hanging out together with friends. The Greek word for fellowship is *Koinoonia*, which means association for religious or spiritual purposes. Fellowship in the new church was for the specific purpose of growing together in the Lord. It was based on their common bond in Christ. They shared a common love of God, a common love of God's Word, and a common hope. Fellowship was for the purpose of sharing what they had in common with one another. They had "everything" in common.

⁴⁴ All the believers were together and had everything in common.

They shared all of their possessions

Because of their common bond in Christ they were willing to share all of their possessions with one another.

⁴⁵ Selling their possessions and goods, they gave to anyone as he had need.

They sacrificed for one another so that there were no needs that were not met within the Body of Christ
Because of their willingness to sacrifice for one another there were no needs within the body that were not met.

Acts 4:32-34

³² All the believers were one in heart and mind. No one claimed that any of his possessions was his own, but they shared everything they had. ³³ With great power the apostles continued to testify to the resurrection of the Lord Jesus, and much grace was upon them all. ³⁴ There were no needy persons among them...

Believers knew the importance of regular fellowship. They were aware of the necessity of encouraging one another.

Hebrews 10:25 (NIV)

²⁵ Let us not give up meeting together, as some are in the habit of doing, but let us encourage one another — and all the more as you see the Day approaching.

Shared faith

The essence of communion is worshipping Christ as we remember what He has done for us on the cross. The "... *breaking of bread*..." seems to indicate communion or the Lord's Supper (*Acts 2:42*). This was probably done in conjunction with a common meal. In doing so they were obeying Jesus' instruction to observe this supper in remembrance of His sacrificial death on the cross (*Luke 22:19-20; 1 Cor. 11:26-29*). Communion could be considered a part of prayer/worship or fellowship. It really involves both.

THE FUNCTION OF PRAYER/WORSHIP

Acts 2:42-47 (NIV)

⁴² They devoted themselves...to prayer.

It is impossible to read the New Testament and not see that prayer was an essential function of the church. The 1st century church was a praying church. When you see believers meeting together you see them praying. Before the Day of Pentecost when believers were together waiting for the promised Holy Spirit they were "...*constantly*..." in prayer. The devotion to prayer before Pentecost continued to be a basic function of the church.

Acts 1:14

¹⁴ They all joined together constantly in prayer, along with the women and Mary the mother of Jesus, and with His brothers.

Worship and prayer are inseparable

Worship involves prayer. Worship and prayer while somewhat different in focus are inseparably linked together. When we worship God we pray. We praise Him with our internal thoughts and spoken words. We honor God for who He is and what He does. Worship is an essential element of prayer.

- ❖ Prayer involves worship. When we pray we are taught by Jesus to enter God's presence through worship. Jesus taught his disciples,

Luke 11:2

²He said to them, "When you pray, say: "Father, hallowed be your name, your kingdom come".

Prayer is a priority

Jesus taught His disciples through example the priority of constant communication with His Father. The Apostles continued to emphasize the priority of prayer after the church was established. Complete the Search the Word study that follows on the priority of prayer:



SEARCH THE WORD

Read *1 Timothy 2:1*; *1 Thessalonians 5:18*; *Ephesians 6:18* and answer the questions that follow.

- What in these verses indicate that prayer was a priority in the 1st century church?

- What important principles of prayer do you find in these verses? What key word do you find in these verses?

Paul clearly says that prayer was of first importance. "...*First of all...*" we are to pray for everyone (*1 Tim. 2:1*). We are to pray all kinds of prayers all of the time. Prayer is always to include thanksgiving. Underline in your Bible the word "all" in these verses.

Prayer releases God's power

It is obvious that the early church constantly met for prayer. They were completely dependent on prayer for everything they did (*Acts 1: 14*; *4:23-31*; *6:7*). They knew that prayer released the power of God to shape the world. A dynamic example of this occurred early in the life of the church as the following "Search the Word" study will reveal.



SEARCH THE WORD

Read the account of the believers' prayer in *Acts 4:23-31*.

- In this passage what indicates that prayer was a priority in the life of the church?

- What did the believers believe about the power of prayer?

- What were the results of this time of prayer?

After reading this account is there any doubt about the priority and power of prayer in the 1st century church?

Prayer and fasting were a regular practice of the church

Jesus began His ministry by fasting for forty days in the desert (*Matt. 4:1-11*). In *Matthew 6:16-18* when Jesus instructed His disciples on how to fast He began by saying “*When you fast...*” Notice that Jesus did not say “if” but “when”. He assumed that His disciples made a regular practice of fasting. It is not a surprise then that prayer and fasting was a vital part of the Church of Christ. To see how important fasting was in the church read *Acts 13:1-3*. In a local congregation in the city of Antioch, five leaders were fasting, praying, and “...*worshiping the Lord*” (v. 2). It was during this time of fasting, prayer and worship that the direction and power of God needed for effective ministry was given them.

Acts 13:2-3

² While they were worshiping the Lord and fasting, the Holy Spirit said, “Set apart for me Barnabas and Saul for the work to which I have called them.” ³ So after they had fasted and prayed, they placed their hands on them and sent them off.

When we look at chapters 13 and 14 of *Acts* we can see that collective prayer and fasting played an important role in the development and growth of the New Testament church. When Elders were appointed it was with prayer and fasting.

Acts 14:23

²³ Paul and Barnabas appointed elders for them in each church and, with prayer and fasting, committed them to the Lord, in whom they had put their trust.

These Scriptures should alert us to the fact that fasting and prayer should be a regular practice for us as well. This practice will release the power of God to shape our lives and the world.

THE FUNCTION OF OUTREACH

Acts 2:47 (NIV)

⁴⁷ praising God and enjoying the favor of all the people. And the Lord added to their number daily those who were being saved.

The first three functions affected believer’s lives so deeply they were transformed. We know this because they enjoyed, “...*the favor of all the people...*” (*Acts 2:47*) Because of their exemplary lives people wanted what they had. As a result, “*the Lord added to their number daily those who were being saved*” (*Acts 2:47*). Throughout the book of *Acts* and the rest of the New Testament letters, outreach was something that was a natural expression of their devotion to Christ.

Acts 4:20 (NIV)

²⁰ For we cannot help speaking about what we have seen and heard."

Acts 5:42 (NIV)

⁴² Day after day, in the temple courts and from house to house, they never stopped teaching and proclaiming the good news that Jesus is the Christ.

THE MISSION OF THE CHURCH

The function of outreach brings us to the all important mission of the church. The Church is here to glorify God by making disciples of the nations.

Just as Jesus came to "...seek and to save that which was lost," the Church was called to do the same (*Luke 19:10; Rom. 10:14-18*). When people received Christ it was a starting point for the believer. The goal was to "make disciples" teaching them Scripture and equipping them to become spiritually mature (*Matt. 28:18-20; Ephesians 4:11-16*). When a person comes to faith in Christ it is the beginning not the end. We belong to God for the express purpose of declaring His praises.

1 Peter 2:9 (NIV)

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.

One essential way we are to declare God's praises is by being disciplined and discipling others. The function of discipleship is to glorify God through production and reproduction. Jesus told His disciples that bearing fruit would demonstrate that they were true disciples and glorify the Father. (*John 15:8*). The fruit Jesus was referring to was the fruit of outreach, service and character (*John 15; Galatians 5:22-26*).

DO! "Watch your life and doctrine closely. Persevere in them..."

➤ What did today's study say to you about watching your life and doctrine closely?



WEEK 8 MEMORY ASSIGNMENTS AND REVIEW

Following are key Scriptures to learn this week. Memorize and meditate on this key Scripture and write it in the space that follows. Memorize the doctrinal covenant.

- Memorize *Ephesians 2:19-20*

- Memorize the doctrinal covenant

Christ, as a committed member of Your church, the
Covenant, I covenant to honor You as the head, and I will accept all other members as You love and accept me.

- Review previous memory projects from your card index file.

PRAYER

Spend time in prayer using the five components of the Lord's Prayer.

DAY 5: THE LEADERS OF THE CHURCH

INTRODUCTION

In the 1st century church congregations there was simple organization with limited hierarchy. As we have seen, believers met in small groups in homes and in large groups in the temple courts for specific functions and a united purpose. Leadership was limited to a few roles and functions. Believers were members of local churches and the worldwide body of Christ. There was only one church.

Conflicts in congregations were resolved by the Apostles and local elders. Their decisions were considered to be binding for all churches. Shortly after the Council of Jerusalem resolved the conflict over circumcision, Paul and Barnabas had a disagreement serious enough that they went their separate ways (*Acts 15*). There is no indication in the books of Acts that there was one person who was the final authority or that there was any kind of hierarchy that dictated the succession of leaders in a local church or group of churches. A church hierarchy began to develop by the end of the 1st century with the emergence of bishops and became formalized with the legalization of christianity by Constantine and the Edict of Milan in 313 A.D.

LEADERS: GOD'S GIFT TO THE CHURCH

It was the Lord Himself who gifted His Body with leaders. Jesus gave His church the perfect balance of leaders to assure that the church would function properly. Paul refers to four categories of gifted leaders:

Ephesians 4:11 (NIV)

¹¹ It was he who gave some to be apostles, some to be prophets, some to be evangelists, and some to be pastors and teachers,

Apostles

The Apostles are mentioned here because of their unique role in establishing the church. The church was built on the foundation of the prophets and the apostles as they taught God's infallible Word (*Matt. 16:18; 1 Cor. 3: 10-11*). Paul is included in this group as he was also an apostle. As Paul taught, the church was,

Ephesians 2:20

²⁰ built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, with Christ Jesus himself as the chief cornerstone.

Prophets

Prophets were people who the Lord gifted to present special Holy Spirit directed messages for particular needs or circumstances. (See *Acts 11:27; 2 Cor. 12:10*)

Acts 11:27

²⁷ During this time some prophets came down from Jerusalem to Antioch.

Evangelists

Evangelists were those who were especially gifted in sharing the good news of the gospel with non-believers.

Acts 21:8

⁸ *Leaving the next day, we reached Caesarea and stayed at the house of Philip the evangelist, one of the Seven.*

This term is used only three times in Scripture so we do not have detailed information on exactly how this gift was implemented. We can assume evangelists not only witnessed effectively but encouraged others to share the good news as well. Among Paul's many other duties was the work of an evangelist. He encouraged Timothy also to do the work of an evangelist (2 Tim. 4:5).

Pastors/Teachers

The grammatical construction of "...and some to be pastors and teachers..." places these two leadership functions together. The one who has pastoral care or shepherds the flock also has a responsibility to feed the flock. Elder, overseer, and shepherd or pastor is used interchangeably in the Bible.

1 Timothy 3:2

² *Now the **overseer** must be above reproach, the husband of but one wife, temperate, self-controlled, respectable, hospitable, **able to teach**, (Bold added)*

LEADERS: EQUIPPING THE BODY

The leaders who are mentioned here were to train members of the body of Christ to be productive members of the body.

Ephesians 4:12-13

¹² *to prepare God's people for works of service, so that the body of Christ may be built up ¹³ 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.*

Equipped to serve

Leaders were to equip people to serve. It was in this way that the whole body of Christ would be built up. The goal was to prepare members to be productive, using their individual gifts to build the whole body.

United in faith and knowledge

The focus was not in just serving but serving because they were united together through the power of the Word of God. Preparation was so that all could "... reach unity in the faith and in the knowledge of the Son of God..." (Eph. 4:13). The truth and action of Scripture united people in service. The Word of God through the Spirit empowered them for service for God.

Mature in Christ

The ultimate goal of preparing people for works of service is maturity in Christ. We glorify God when our service is a result of our character. Maturity is measured by "...the whole measure of the fullness of Christ" (Eph. 4:13). It is Christ-like character demonstrated by love that glorifies God and builds the body of Christ (Ephesians 3:17-19).

Growing up together

When people are equipped through the Word for works of service and become Christ-like in their character three things happen. Complete the following "Search the Word" study to discover these three things.



SEARCH THE WORD

Read *Ephesians 4:14-16* and record the three results of being prepared for works of service:

1.

2.

3.

First we see that when members of the body become mature they will **not be vulnerable to false teaching**. They are “*no longer infants*” (v. 14). With maturity in Christ and His Word comes discernment. We also see that members of the body **grow up into Christ, the head** (v. 15). Christ is everything to the church. Christ is in us and we are in Christ. Spiritual growth is growth in Christ. The final result of being equipped for works of service is that members of the body **grow together in love and service**.

Ephesians 4:16

¹⁶ 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.

We have a beautiful picture of the body of Christ as it matures. It builds itself up in love as each part does its work. There are no infants. Everyone works together in love. Each part does its work. Believers are “*no longer infants*.” They are growing, loving, working, members of the body. There is no time or inclination for pettiness or divisions.

- ❖ Leadership should ask itself these questions, “Is my (our) focus on preparing people for works of service? Is the majority of our time and resources used to train up producing and reproducing disciples?”

ELDERS: SHEPHERDING THE CHURCH

Now we will examine how elders fit into the organization and structure of the church. As the church began to grow so did the need for some basic organization within the local churches. We see in *Acts 6:1-7* that seven *diakonoi* (ministerial servants) were appointed to help with providing for the needs of widows. Up to this point the Apostles were doing just about everything and needed relief so they could focus on prayer and the ministry of the Word.

Soon elders were appointed to “shepherd the flock” in each church. Paul and Barnabas appointed elders in Lystra, Antioch, and Iconium.

Acts 14:23

²³ Paul and Barnabas appointed elders for them in each church and, with prayer and fasting, committed them to the Lord, in whom they had put their trust.

The appointing of elders continued until all churches were led by multiple elders. The titles of *presbuteroi* (elders), and *episkopoi* (overseers), are used interchangeably in the New Testament as you can see in Paul's letter to Titus.

Titus 1:5-9

⁵ The reason I left you in Crete was that you might straighten out what was left unfinished and appoint **elders** in every town, as I directed you. ⁶ An elder must be blameless, the husband of but one wife, a man whose children believe and are not open to the charge of being wild and disobedient. ⁷ Since an **overseer** is entrusted with God's work, he must be blameless—not overbearing, not quick-tempered, not given to drunkenness, not violent, not pursuing dishonest gain. ⁸ Rather he must be hospitable, one who loves what is good, who is self-controlled, upright, holy and disciplined. ⁹ He must hold firmly to the trustworthy message as it has been taught, so that he can encourage others by sound doctrine and refute those who oppose it. (Bold added)

Peter also used the terms *presbuteroi* (elder) and *episkopoi* (overseer) together. He adds the term *poimaenoi* (shepherd).

1 Peter 5:1-4

¹ To the elders among you, I appeal as a fellow **elder**, a witness of Christ's sufferings and one who also will share in the glory to be revealed: ² Be **shepherds** of God's flock that is under your care, serving as **overseers**—not because you must, but because you are willing, as God wants you to be; not greedy for money, but eager to serve; ³ not lording it over those entrusted to you, but being examples to the flock. ⁴ And when the Chief Shepherd appears, you will receive the crown of glory that will never fade away. (Bold added)

Poimaenoi in English is often translated “pastors” but a more literal translation is “shepherds”. The word *presbuteroi* literally means “elder”. The third descriptive word, *episkopoi* translated “overseer” is sometimes translated “bishops”. This translation is influenced by the seventeenth-century King James translation that has its roots in the ecclesiastical hierarchy of that era. In the Apostle Paul's farewell address to the elders in the church at Ephesus he uses the same three words to describe the leadership role of elders.

Acts 20:17, 28

¹⁷ From Miletus, Paul sent to Ephesus for the **elders** of the church...²⁸ Keep watch over yourselves and all the flock of which the Holy Spirit has made you **overseers**. Be **shepherds** of the church of God, which he bought with his own blood. (Bold added)

Elders as shepherds

There are several things that are abundantly clear about how elders are to shepherd the Church of Christ.

First we see that they are shepherds who are assigned the oversight of a flock. The overall protection and wellbeing of the flock is their responsibility.



SEARCH THE WORD

- Shepherds **lead** their flocks.

Read the *23rd Psalm* and write in the space that follows the words or phrases that indicate the responsibilities of a shepherd in leading a flock. In this beloved Psalm we have the example of the perfect shepherd.

We see in this passage that the shepherd “*leads*” (v. 2), and “*guides*” (v.3). The care and safety of the sheep is of utmost importance to the shepherd. This leadership role of elders/shepherds was also important in the 1st century church. All elders/shepherds were leaders but some had specific leadership responsibilities in the local congregations. Paul told Timothy,

1 Timothy 5:17

¹⁷ The elders who direct the affairs of the church well are worthy of double honor...

- Shepherds **feed** their flocks.

In *Psalm 23* we observe the shepherd taking his flock to green pastures where they can eat and drink of the cool waters. It’s obvious that the shepherds want their flocks to be well fed as the following verse assures:

Psalm 23:5

⁵ You prepare a table before me in the presence of my enemies. You anoint my head with oil; my cup overflows.

In the 1st century church the feeding of the flock was essential. One of the most important qualifications of an elder was teaching (feeding) the flock. Paul stressed this in his instructions to Timothy:

1 Timothy 3:1-2

*¹ Here is a trustworthy saying: If anyone sets his heart on being an overseer, he desires a noble task. ² Now the overseer must be above reproach, the husband of but one wife, temperate, self-controlled, respectable, hospitable, **able to teach**, (Bold added)*

Later in this letter Paul again emphasized the important role of elders/shepherds feeding their flocks.

1 Timothy 5:17

*¹⁷ The elders who direct the affairs of the church well are worthy of double honor, especially those whose work is **preaching and teaching**.*

- Shepherds **protect** their flocks.

In the *23rd Psalm* the Lord as our Shepherd protects us from evil. He is always with us.

Psalm 23:4

⁴ Even though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil, for you are with me; your rod and your staff, they comfort me.

Elders are given the responsibility to be God's shepherds of His church to protect their flocks with due diligence. Paul instructed the elders at Ephesus to,

Acts 20: 28

*²⁸ **Keep watch over yourselves and all the flock** of which the Holy Spirit has made you **overseers**. Be **shepherds** of the church of God, which he bought with his own blood. (Bold added)*

THE FLOCK'S RESPONSIBILITY

Elders/shepherds are responsible to lead but the flock is responsible to follow. Often we are like sheep that really don't follow our leaders all that well. We want to go our own way and of course to our own detriment. The writer of *Hebrews* reminds people to remember their leaders and follow their example:

Hebrews 13:7

⁷ Remember your leaders, who spoke the word of God to you. Consider the outcome of their way of life and imitate their faith.

Leaders are to be examples and the flock is to imitate them as they imitate Christ. Paul wrote,

1 Thessalonians 1:6

⁶ You became imitators of us and of the Lord; in spite of severe suffering, you welcomed the message with the joy given by the Holy Spirit.

We are also to submit and obey. This really doesn't fit well with the independent spirit of American individualism. However God's Word is clear on this matter. It says,

Hebrews 13:17

¹⁷ Obey your leaders and submit to their authority. They keep watch over you as men who must give an account. Obey them so that their work will be a joy, not a burden, for that would be of no advantage to you.

DO! "Watch your life and doctrine closely. Persevere in them..."

➤ What did today's study say to you about watching your life and doctrine closely?



WEEK 8 MEMORY ASSIGNMENTS AND REVIEW

Following are key Scriptures to learn this week. Memorize and meditate on this key Scripture and write it in the space that follows. Memorize the doctrinal covenant.

- Memorize *Ephesians 2:19-20*

- Memorize the doctrinal covenant

Christ, as a committed m_____, of Your b_____, the
 C_____, I covenant to honor You as the h_____, and I _____ and
 accept all other members as You love and accept me.

- Review previous memory projects from your card index file.

PRAYER

Spend time in prayer using the five components of the Lord's Prayer.



WEEK 8

WEEKLY ACCOUNTABILITY

"All you have to do from the time you get up in the morning until the time you go to bed at night is love the Lord with all your heart, trust His promises, obey His commands. Everything else flows from that." (Bill Bright)

Be ready to share the following with your group:

Love the Lord with all your heart

- In what ways did I or didn't I demonstrate my love of God by seeking Him with all my heart?
- In what ways did I or didn't I allow God's love flow through me to others including spouse, family and others?

Trust God's promises

- To what degree did I or didn't I demonstrate complete trust in God's promises this week?
- What was my greatest test of faith?

Obey God's commands

- Are there weaknesses or sins I need to confess?
- Did I faithfully complete all assignments this week?
- In what ways did I witness to the lost this week? (prayer, share, serve, encourage)

WEEK 9

THE DOCTRINE OF FUTURE THINGS

“The Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit will live among us. We will be present with God. Our adoption will be completed and we will live in perfect fellowship with God for eternity.”

INTRODUCTION

We conclude our study of the seven great doctrines with The Doctrine of Future Things. This is a prominent Bible Doctrine. Approximately one third of the Bible deals with prophecy. Many of these prophecies deal with end times. There are 318 references in 216 chapters to the second coming. *First & Second Thessalonians* and *Matthew 24* are devoted to this subject. This week we will only cover some of the highlights of future things. For further study I recommend *Understanding Bible Prophecy for Yourself*, by Tim LaHaye, and *Heaven* by Randy Alcorn.

WEEK 9 STUDY

DAY 1: LOOKING FORWARD TO THE LAST DAYS

DAY 2: THE SECOND COMING

DAY 3: THE MILLENNIUM

DAY 4: THE GREAT WHITE THRONE

DAY 5: THE NEW HEAVENS AND EARTH

ASSIGNMENTS:

- **Memorize and meditate on 1 Thessalonians 4:16-17**

1 Thessalonians 4:16-17

¹⁶ For the Lord himself will come down from heaven, with a loud command, with the voice of the archangel and with the trumpet call of God, and the dead in Christ will rise first. ¹⁷ After that, we who are still alive and are left will be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. And so we will be with the Lord forever.

- **Memorize the doctrinal covenant**

Lord I know that You might return for Your people at any moment. Therefore I covenant to live each day prepared for Your return by being alert, self controlled, standing firm in the faith and giving myself fully to Your work.

- Complete all study and review assignments. Review memory work from past courses at least once a week.
- Prepare your memory/review index card. Write your memory verse for the week on one side and the doctrinal covenant on the other.

- Review and practice the Bridge presentation with someone this week

DAY 1: THE SIGNS OF JESUS' SECOND COMING

INTRODUCTION

Today we deal with some signs that will indicate the final years, months, and days that lead up the second coming of Jesus. For now, it is important to know there is biblical evidence showing that the second coming of Jesus occurs in two phases, seven years apart, with the tribulation occurring in-between. If at this point you feel a little lost don't despair. It should all make sense to you before the week is over.

The first phase of the second coming is the **rapture** of Christians. This will precede the tribulation. This is not to be confused with the "end of the age" that includes things that happen during the tribulation that precede the **glorious appearing** of Jesus which is the second phase of the second coming and the start of the thousand year reign of Christ on earth.

Most of the signs that indicate last times are signs that occur during the tribulation which precedes the glorious appearing of Christ. Since the tribulation lasts only seven years we can assume that some of the signs will be evident before the rapture as the world as we know it winds down. While the signs of last times are interesting they should not be our major focus when studying the prophecy of future things.

SIGNS JESUS REVEALED

In what is called "The Olivet Discourse" Jesus revealed some signs that would indicate the time was getting near for His return. The Mount of Olives is located in the Kidron Valley. In this valley east of Jerusalem there is a ridge a mile long with an elevation of 200 feet. It was here that Jesus brought up the discussion of the end of the age:

Matthew 24:1-2

¹ Jesus left the temple and was walking away when his disciples came up to him to call his attention to its buildings. ² "Do you see all these things?" he asked. "I tell you the truth, not one stone here will be left on another; everyone will be thrown down."

We know from history that the destruction of the temple that Jesus mentioned has already happened. Under the Roman leader Titus in A. D. 70, Jerusalem and the temple were destroyed. Stones were literally pried apart to salvage the gold leaf that melted from the roof of the temple. No stone was left in place! Jesus' statement aroused the disciples curiosity. They asked Him three questions regarding His return to earth.

Matthew 24:3

³ As Jesus was sitting on the Mount of Olives, the disciples came to him privately. "Tell us," they said, "when will this happen, and what will be the sign of your coming and of the end of the age?"

It appears that Jesus answers these questions by distinguishing between the signs leading up to the **rapture** and the signs that will happen during the seven years of the tribulation that follow the rapture and precede His **glorious appearing** and thousand year reign on earth. The first two questions are answered in *Matthew*

24:1-8 and the final question is dealt with in verses 9-35. Today we will deal primarily with the first two questions.



SEARCH THE WORD

Read *Matthew 24:4-8* to find out Jesus' answer to the first two questions. Write what He revealed to His disciples in the space that follows:

- *When will this happen?*

Notice that Jesus does not answer this first question directly. Instead He warns them not to be deceived.

Matthew 24:4

⁴ *Jesus answered: “**Watch out** that no one deceives you.” (Bold added)*

Deception is a major concern as the return of Christ approaches. Jesus warns of leaders who will come in His name claiming to be Christ. I believe the point Jesus makes here is that it is more important to watch out for deception than for the exact signs of His second coming. During the last days there will be those who will deceive by presenting themselves as representatives of Christ and truth.

The Apostle Paul also warns of false teachers and apostasy as the time of Jesus' second coming draws near. He warned Timothy,

2 Timothy 4:1-5

¹ *In the presence of God and of Christ Jesus, who will judge the living and the dead, and **in view of his appearing and his kingdom**, I give you this charge: ² Preach the Word; be prepared in season and out of season; correct, rebuke and encourage—with great patience and careful instruction. ³ For the time will come when men will not put up with sound doctrine. Instead, to suit their own desires, they will gather around them a great number of teachers to say what their itching ears want to hear. ⁴ They will turn their ears away from the truth and turn aside to myths. ⁵ But you, keep your head in all situations, endure hardship, do the work of an evangelist, discharge all the duties of your ministry. (Bold added)*

During this study we have spent considerable time discussing heresy and false teachers. This trend of false teaching and heresy will continue to increase as we draw near to the end times. Following is the second question the disciples asked.

- *What will be the sign of your coming?*

Jesus mentions some “minor” signs that will happen before the rapture, the first phase of his second coming. It seems that there have always been **wars and rumors of wars** but we certainly have seen an increasing number of nations in the Middle East with internal struggles. There is presently a major

threat to world peace as Iran moves towards nuclear weapons and threatens to eliminate Israel and the U. S. Other nations such as Russia and China continue to be a concern to world peace.

The world food supply is not increasing while the world population continues to grow. Food shortages and **famines** certainly seem to be on the increase.

- Over 70 million died of starvation in the 20th century. (Source: Famine in the 20th Century Stephen Devereux)
- 925 million people worldwide go hungry every day and 5 million children will die of hunger worldwide annually according to the World Food Program.
- Several regions in Africa have struggled with food shortages for years.
- North Korea has witnessed 1.5 million people starve to death under the reign of communist leaders. There are currently 6 million people threatened by famine with UN food aid as the only means of avoiding catastrophe.

Earthquakes

There is a difference in opinion as to whether earthquakes are increasing or whether advanced technology to detect them is skewing the figures. Analysis of seismic charts show that the number of major earthquakes has been growing gradually over the past 10 years and that the numerous major earthquakes that we are expected to have in 2012 could surpass all previous years. According to the USGS's research, the number of magnitude 5.0 to 9.9 earthquakes reached 2,117 in 2010. In 2000, by contrast, the number of such quakes recorded by USGS was 1,505.

There is much more come!

Jesus says these are just the beginnings of the birth pains. The most catastrophic events are going to happen after the Church has been raptured (caught up with Jesus to heaven) during the seven year tribulation. Read *Matthew 24:9-35* to see the rest of Jesus' answer.

THERE WILL BE A RISE IN GODLESSNESS

The New Testament writers had a lot to say about what would happen in the end time. These signs may occur after the rapture but it certainly seems there will be an increase in the following tendencies as the rapture draws nearer. Paul warns about some terrible times that are coming. There will be a dramatic rise in ungodliness.

Paul says to Timothy,

2 Timothy 3:1-5

¹ But mark this: There will be terrible times in the last days. ² People will be lovers of themselves, lovers of money, boastful, proud, abusive, disobedient to their parents, ungrateful, unholy, ³ without love, unforgiving, slanderous, without self-control, brutal, not lovers of the good, ⁴ treacherous, rash, conceited, lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God— ⁵ having a form of godliness but denying its power. Have nothing to do with them.

There are alarming trends in ungodliness that are taking place in our country right now. Numerous surveys and statistics, secular and religious, indicate an unprecedented moral decline in the U. S. To see how ungodliness is growing in our nation I suggest you read my book *America's Vanishing Anchors*. You can download it free by going to www.anchorsofgod.com.

THERE WILL BE AN INCREASE IN SCOFFERS

I don't know of any statistics on scoffers and mockers but it seems to me that mocking Christians and Christianity is certainly on the rise. The percentage of atheists is rising. Militant atheists like Richard Dawkins write books that mock those who believe in the Bible. At a recent Reason Rally of 20,000 atheists Dawkins called on the crowd not only to challenge religious people but to "ridicule and show contempt" for their doctrines and sacraments, including the Eucharist, which Catholics believe becomes the body of Christ during Mass.

The Apostle Peter wrote that there would be scoffers in the last days. Notice that the issues may not be the same but the ridicule and contempt is the same. Many atheists have no respect for Christians. Their goal is to silence us. Peter warns,

2 Peter 3:3-7

³ First of all, you must understand that in the last days scoffers will come, scoffing and following their own evil desires. ⁴ They will say, "Where is this 'coming' he promised? Ever since our fathers died, everything goes on as it has since the beginning of creation." ⁵ But they deliberately forget that long ago by God's word the heavens existed and the earth was formed out of water and by water. ⁶ By these waters also the world of that time was deluged and destroyed. ⁷ By the same word the present heavens and earth are reserved for fire, being kept for the day of judgment and destruction of ungodly men.

THERE WILL BE AN INCREASE IN FINANCIAL CRISES

In my book *America's Vanishing Anchors* I talk about a "perfect storm" that could bring our country to its knees. It is interesting that America is not mentioned in end of time prophecy. Why would a world power such as the U. S. not be mentioned? It could be that as we approach the end of time and Jesus' return that America will no longer be a major player on the world scene. A "perfect" storm including an economic meltdown, moral decline and some kind of terrorist attack could strip America of its influence among the nations. There is no way to know for sure. James spoke of *last days* when he wrote about what happens when people become selfish and foolish with finances.

James 5:1-7

¹ Now listen, you rich people, weep and wail because of the misery that is coming upon you. ² Your wealth has rotted, and moths have eaten your clothes. ³ Your gold and silver are corroded. Their corrosion will testify against you and eat your flesh like fire. **You have hoarded wealth in the last days.** ⁴ Look! The wages you failed to pay the workmen who mowed your fields are crying out against you. The cries of the harvesters have reached the ears of the Lord Almighty. ⁵ You have lived on earth in luxury and self-indulgence. You have fattened yourselves in the day of slaughter. ⁶ You have condemned and murdered innocent men, who were not opposing you. ⁷ Be patient, then, brothers, until the Lord's coming... (Bold added)

We know that our debt in America cannot be sustained. You don't have to be a financial wizard to realize that if you spend more than you make there will be a day of reckoning. Who knows at what time the world economic system which is so closely and perilously tied together will collapse?

INCREASE OF TRAVEL AND KNOWLEDGE

Read *Daniel 12:1-5*. Here Daniel prophesies about what will happen in the end times. The time of distress that he refers to is the tribulation. He mentions that during the time leading up to the tribulation there will be an increase in travel and knowledge. He says,

Daniel 12:4

⁴But you, Daniel, close up and seal the words of the scroll until the time of the end. Many will go here and there to increase knowledge."

We can certainly see how the globe is shrinking as air travel allows us to go almost anywhere on the globe in a day. Even more amazing is the knowledge available to us through the internet. As I write this I can do research in minutes that would have taken me hours not that long ago. As you are probably well aware the computer brings us blessings and curses. There is good and evil available at the stroke of a key. Sometimes I wonder if the world-wide web that connects us all together will end up being like the Tower of Babel. The pride of knowledge and of being irreversibly connected could end up with the Tower of Babel crashing on all of us causing a world-wide panic.

HOW WE ARE TO BE PREPARED

There are many other things that will happen before the two phases of the second coming. There is a one world government that is prophesied (*Daniel 2*). There is a one-world church that is mentioned in *Revelation 17*. There is a coalition of nations that will rise in the last days to attack Israel. *Ezekiel 37-40* is considered to be an outline of what will happen to Israel in the last days. There are different interpretations about who will be the major nations in the last days but no one knows for sure.

Be prepared

The main thing that we should remember as the last days draw near is that we need to be prepared. We may not know the day or the hour of Jesus' return but we can discern the season. In the parable of the Ten Virgins Jesus warns:

Matthew 25:13

¹³"Therefore keep watch, because you do not know the day or the hour.

Paul said,

1 Thessalonians 5:1-2, 6

¹ Now, brothers, about times and dates we do not need to write to you, ² for you know very well that the day of the Lord will come like a thief in the night...⁶ So then, let us not be like others, who are asleep, but let us be alert and self-controlled.

We should live our lives as if each day was our last day. What would you want to say or do for Jesus if you knew today was your last day on earth? How would you live that day? What sense of urgency would you have?

Be anchored

Paul told the believers in Corinth that when Jesus returned they would receive new imperishable bodies in "...a twinkling of an eye..."

1 Corinthians 15:52

⁵² in a flash, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet. For the trumpet will sound, the dead will be raised imperishable, and we will be changed.

Because of this, Paul said, they should be anchored in the faith and fully devoted to the work of the Lord:

1 Corinthians 15:58

⁵⁸ Therefore, my dear brothers, stand firm. Let nothing move you. Always give yourselves fully to the work of the Lord, because you know that your labor in the Lord is not in vain.

Be hopeful

As we see signs of the last days approaching, we should all be hopeful. Our hope is in the resurrection of Christ. We have hope because we know that we will be with Him forever no matter what happens on earth. We should also encourage others to have hope.

1 Thessalonians 5:10-11

¹⁰ He died for us so that, whether we are awake or asleep, we may live together with him. ¹¹ Therefore encourage one another and build each other up, just as in fact you are doing.

DO! "Watch your life and doctrine closely. Persevere in them..."

➤ What did today's study say to you about watching your life and doctrine closely?



WEEK 9 MEMORY ASSIGNMENTS AND REVIEW

Following are key Scriptures to learn this week. Memorize and meditate on these key Scriptures and write them in the space that follows. Memorize the doctrinal covenant.

- Memorize *1 Thessalonians 4:16-17*

- Memorize the Doctrinal Covenant.

Lord I know that You might r_____ for Your people at any m_____. Therefore I covenant to live each day p_____ for Your return by being a_____, s_____ c_____, standing firm in the f_____ and giving myself fully to Your w_____.

- Review previous memory projects from your card index file.

PRAYER

Spend time in prayer using the five components of the Lord's Prayer.

DAY 2: THE SECOND COMING

TWO PHASES OF THE SECOND COMING

When the time is perfect, Jesus will visibly return to earth with a shout and all believers will be ushered into His presence to be with the Him forever. There are three major events that will occur in conjunction with Christ's return to earth. We will look briefly at each one of these. They are: The rapture, the tribulation, and the glorious appearing.

To look at the biblical support that the second coming occurs in two phases we will study *Thessalonians 2:1-12*. As you study this passage you will be able to see how the two phases of the second coming occur. First Jesus returns for His church. We are raptured (caught up) to heaven before the terrible days of the tribulation. Then at the end of the seven years of tribulation Jesus' glorious appearing occurs as He brings us back to earth to reign with Him for 1,000 years.



SEARCH THE WORD

Read 2 *Thessalonians 2:1-12* and answer the following questions:

- Read verse 1. Note the two phases of the second coming.
- Read verse 2. What two things will happen before "*the day of the Lord*"?
- Read verses 3- 4. What are the two names for the Antichrist? What two things will he do?
- Read verse 8. What is the Antichrist called, when will he be revealed and what will happen to him?
- Read verse 9. Who is behind the Antichrist? What accounts for his supernatural signs?

- Read verse 10. What will the Antichrist do to non-believers? Why will they be vulnerable?
- Read verses 11-12. What will God do to non-believers? What are the two reasons for His actions?
- Read 2 *Thessalonians 2: 1-12* again. What verse indicates the rapture, and glorious appearing?

As you can see most of this passage is to inform Christians about some facts about the second coming. In verse 1 the words “*the coming*” refer to Jesus’ return to earth for His thousand year reign. “*Our being gathered to Him*” in this same verse refers to the rapture. Believers are assured that the second coming has not yet happened and the two phases will not be consummated until the Antichrist is revealed. Christians are reminded of some ominous facts about “*the man of lawlessness.*” He will oppose everything about God and even set himself up as God.

Note that the secret work of lawlessness was already at work when this was written as it is today. The moral decay of our culture is not by accident. It is not just because man has a tendency toward selfishness and pride. It is because of Satan and his powers. These powers can deceive and delude. The people described in 2 *Thessalonians 2:9-12* are unsaved people who because they have heard the gospel and still not believed will face the terrors of the tribulation. They will be left behind!

FIRST PHASE - THE RAPTURE

Christians have always looked forward to the return of Christ. From the time that Jesus promised the disciples He would prepare a place for them and come again to receive them unto Himself, there has been a great anticipation of this event. Only once did Jesus mention the rapture to His disciples. After Jesus began to reveal to them that He must leave them, He gave them this assurance:

John 14:1-3

¹ “Do not let your hearts be troubled. Trust in God; trust also in me. ² In my Father’s house are many rooms; if it were not so, I would have told you. I am going there to prepare a place for you. ³ And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come back and take you to be with me that you also may be where I am.

We know this first phase of the second coming as the rapture but will not find this word in the Greek New Testament. The Greek word for “caught up” is *harpazo* which means literally “snatched up”. The word *rapture* appeared when the New Testament was translated from the Greek into Latin. It was used to describe being “snatched up” or “caught away” because of a joyous happy occasion.

EVENTS OF THE RAPTURE

I want to look at some of the key events of the rapture in a very succinct way. Look up each verse or passage associated with the event and note any important word or phrase in the space provided.

- **Christ appears** (*Read 1 Thessalonians 4:16-17*).
- **Christ will resurrect those who have fallen asleep in Him** (*Read 1 Thessalonians 4:14-15*).
- **The Lord will shout when He descends** (*Read 1 Thessalonians 4:16*).
- **We will hear the voice of an archangel** (*Read 1 Thessalonians 4:16*).
- **We will hear the trumpet call of God** (*Read 1 Thessalonians 4:16; 1 Corinthians 15:52*).
- **The dead in Christ will rise first** (*Read 1 Thessalonians 4:16-17*).
- **We who are alive and remain will be changed** (*Read 1 Corinthians 15:51, 53*).
- **We will be caught up into the clouds where the living and the dead will be united** (*Read 1 Thessalonians 4:17*).
- **We will meet the Lord in the air** (*Read 1 Thessalonians 4:17*).
- **We will stand before the judgment seat of Christ** (*Romans 14:10; 2 Corinthians 5:10; 1 Corinthians 3:8-15*).

Immediately after the Rapture all Christians will stand before the judgment seat of Christ to be judged for their **works** and receive their **rewards**. This is not a judgment about salvation. Only those who are saved will be raptured. Paul said,

2 Corinthians 5:10

¹⁰ For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, that each one may receive what is due him for the things done while in the body, whether good or bad.

Wow, what a spectacle! This will be an exciting day no matter whether we have died or are still alive. When the archangel announces that the King is coming and we hear the trumpet call of God several incredible things will happen to us. Those who have already died and are in the “present” heaven will be first in line. The corruptible ashes of their dead bodies will be made incorruptible and united with their spirits that are already in heaven. We who are alive have also been promised these incorruptible bodies.

Those who are deceased are in the “present” or “intermediate” heaven where they have been waiting the end time events. Those who die go immediately to this heaven into the presence of God. Jesus told the thief on the cross, “*Today you will be with me in paradise*” (Luke 23:43). Jesus also described Lazarus in heaven and the rich man in hell after they died (Luke 16:22-31). This is not the final heaven which will come down to earth, but the present heaven where people will wait until all has been fulfilled. Jesus promised His disciples that they would be with Him in this place (John 14:1-3).

All those believers who are alive at the time of the rapture and all saints that have died will be united into a brief but joyous reunion in the present heaven. (Rom. 14:10-12; 2 Cor. 5:10; 1 Cor. 3:11-15).

THE TRIBULATION

No one wants to be around for the tribulation. If you have read any of the Left Behind series you have a sense of what it will be like for those who were not “snatched up” into heaven. Earth will not be a pleasant place to be. Nothing like it has ever been seen. Jesus said,

Matthew 24:21-22

²¹ For then there will be great distress, unequaled from the beginning of the world until now—and never to be equaled again. ²² If those days had not been cut short, no one would survive, but for the sake of the elect those days will be shortened.

A great tribulation on earth begins after the rapture. Jesus makes it clear that this time of trouble will be unequaled in the history of the world. You don’t want to be there for it! And of course you won’t be if you are a believer. The tribulation period is given more space in Scripture than any other comparable event.

What happens during that seven year period is laid out in the book of *Revelation chapters 6-18*. This 7 year period that was predicted by the prophet Daniel will end with the events surrounding the Battle of Armageddon (*Dan. 9:24-27*). You might wonder why God would allow such terrible events to happen to mankind. There are several answers to this question. One reason is to fulfill the end time prophecies of the Bible. Another primary reason for the tribulation is to shake people out of their false sense of security and make them face their lack of control in hope that they will turn to God. The tribulation is to give everyone a second chance to receive Jesus before the end of time on earth.

While it is impossible in this brief study to go into much detail about what will happen during the tribulation, I want to point out just a few key people and events. I suggest you read the Scriptures with each of these key points.

The Antichrist

The Tribulation will begin at some point after the Antichrist makes a covenant of peace with the nation of Israel (*Revelation 13*). No one knows for sure how long after the covenant that the tribulation will begin. The Antichrist will be the head of a world government that exerts almost total control over the entire world. In the book of Revelation he is referred to as the “Beast”. He will offer peace to the world while allowing Israel to rebuild their temple and reinstitute their sacrificial system. But the Beast, being the Beast, breaks the treaty in three and one half years. The Antichrist along with his equally evil partner, the False Prophet, launches a reign of terror that ends with the Battle of Armageddon.

The Judgments of God

There are three series of judgments that God makes during the tribulation. There are the seal judgments (*Rev. 6-8:1*); the trumpet judgments (*Rev. 8:7-11:19*); and the bowl judgments (*Rev. 15, 16*). These judgments bring horrific consequences to the inhabitants of the earth. With each judgment the end draws nearer.

The Battle of Armageddon

The armies from the east and west will gather in a final battle. As the armies of evil march toward Jerusalem to destroy it, God will intervene and Jesus will return to rescue the people of Israel. The armies will be destroyed and the Antichrist and the False Prophet will be cast into the lake of fire. (*Rev. 19:11-21*)

THE GLORIOUS APPEARING

The tribulation ends with Jesus’ *glorious appearing*. This is the second phase of the second coming of Christ. The first phase is before the rapture when He comes to reunite those who have died and those who are alive in heaven where they await the second phase. The first phase was for believers and the second phase also includes the world of unbelievers. Jesus said,

Matthew 24:27-31

27 For as lightning that comes from the east is visible even in the west, so will be the coming of the Son of Man. 28 Wherever there is a carcass, there the vultures will gather. 29 “Immediately after the distress of those days “ ‘the sun will be darkened, and the moon will not give its light; the stars will fall from the sky, and the heavenly bodies will be shaken .’”30 “At that time the sign of the Son of Man will appear in the sky, and all the nations of the earth will mourn. They will see the Son of Man coming on the clouds of the sky, with power and great glory. 31 And he will send his angels with a loud trumpet call, and they will gather his elect from the four winds, from one end of the heavens to the other.

Paul said,

Titus 2:13 (NIV)

13 while we wait for the blessed hope—the glorious appearing of our great God and Savior, Jesus Christ,

Now Jesus returns to end the tribulation and to begin His thousand year reign on earth. Jesus comes with great power and glory and every eye sees Him (*Revelation 1:7*). There will be great mourning by those who have rejected Him

DO! “Watch your life and doctrine closely. Persevere in them...”

➤ What did today’s study say to you about watching your life and doctrine closely?



WEEK 9 MEMORY ASSIGNMENTS AND REVIEW

Following are key Scriptures to learn this week. Memorize and meditate on these key Scriptures and write them in the space that follows. Memorize the doctrinal covenant.

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- Review previous memory projects from your card index file.

PRAYER

Spend time in prayer using the five components of the Lord’s Prayer.

DAY 3: THE MILLENNIUM

INTRODUCTION

Before the final judgment the Bible says Jesus will reign on earth for a thousand years. There is much controversy about when the “millennium” will occur. This word in Latin is *mille* (thousand) and *annus* (year). Jews and Christians alike agree that the Messiah will rule on earth ushering in a great time of peace and joy. Of course there is disagreement on the identity of the Messiah. Jews believe that the Messiah is yet to come. Christians believe that the Messiah has come and will come again to set up His Kingdom on earth.

Numerous Old and New Testament passages give important details about the millennium. The book of Isaiah has many significant prophecies concerning the thousand year reign. The first one we will look at is in *Isaiah 11*.



SEARCH THE WORD

Study *Isaiah 11* and answer the following questions:

- Read v. 1. How do we know this passage is speaking about the Messiah?
- Read v. 2-8. What divine attributes are mentioned here that show that this prophecy is about Jesus?
- Read v. 6-9. What are some highly unusual signs of the millennium?
- Read the rest of the chapter. What will be glorious about the Messianic age?

A SPIRITUAL AND LITERAL KINGDOM

In the New Testament there are some 200 references to the kingdom. Most of these references are about the *spiritual kingdom*. When Pontius Pilate asked Jesus if He was a king Jesus answered,

John 18:36

³⁶“My kingdom is not of this world. If it were, my servants would fight to prevent my arrest by the Jews. But now my kingdom is from another place.”

The spiritual kingdom

Jesus taught that there was an aspect of His Kingdom that was purely spiritual. It had nothing to do with this world. Jesus came to establish a Kingdom to which people could belong by repenting and putting their faith in His death and resurrection.

Matthew 3:1-2

¹ In those days John the Baptist came, preaching in the Desert of Judea ² and saying, “Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is near.”

The spiritual kingdom of Jesus is one where we are born again into His royal family and where He establishes His rule in our hearts. Because we are part of His spiritual kingdom we are entitled to enter his literal kingdom on earth for the thousand year reign and heaven for eternity.

The literal kingdom

The literal kingdom that Christ will establish during His thousand year reign will be made up of three groups of people.

- There will be the Jews who survive the tribulation, repent and are born again into the spiritual kingdom of Christ (and still have their natural bodies).
- There will be the Gentile believers (all non-Jews) who still have their natural bodies.
- There will be resurrected believers of every age that have their resurrected bodies.

CONDITIONS OF THE KINGDOM

What will the literal kingdom of Christ be like? This is described in detail in *Revelation 20*. Jesus will set up this kingdom when He returns. I want you to discover on your own what the kingdom will be like.



SEARCH THE WORD

Now we will search the Word to discover some exciting things about the conditions during the thousand year reign. Read *Revelation 20* and answer the following questions:

- Read v. 1-3. What will happen to Satan at the start of the kingdom?
- Why is Satan bound and what will be the effects.

- Read v. 4. Who will enter the kingdom? What will these people do and for how long?
- How many times is the length of the kingdom mentioned in verses 2-7? Why is this important?
- Read v. 6. What will the resurrected saints do during the thousand years?
- Read v. 7-9. What will Satan attempt and how successful will he be when he is released at the end of the millennium?
- Read v. 9-10. What happens to Satan? Who will be his company? How long will the suffering last?
- Read v. 11-15. What happens next?



CONTROVERSY ALERT!

There is much controversy about the thousand year reign of Christ. There are three schools of thought on how the millennium is to be interpreted. When you see the following three basic views you will understand why there is so much controversy over this topic.

There is the premillennial view

The premillennial view is what I have just presented. This view teaches that Jesus will come for His people in the air, resurrect the dead in Christ and then establish a literal kingdom where He will rule on earth for one thousand years. This view holds that the first phase of His coming will be before the tribulation and His glorious appearing will occur when He returns to earth as King. There is another premillennial view that believes the Rapture is a part of Christ's single return to earth and happens after the tribulation.

There is the amillennial view

This view contends that the millennium isn't a literal thousand years nor is it a future state. Instead amillennialists believe that the events in *Revelation 20:3-7* are happening right now.

There is the postmillennial view

In the postmillennial view, the Kingdom of Christ is presently transforming the world. When Jesus returns the world will be Christianized and the period will close with Christ's return.

There is sometimes great and heated debate over these views. You will find some churches do not emphasize one view over another while in other churches only one view can be taught. It is part of its statement of faith.

One thing there can be no controversy about. This should bind us all together no matter what our millennial view. **Christ is coming again for His people and we will be with Him in the new Heaven and the new earth forever!**

THE MILLENNIUM

We do not have a lot of information on what will happen during the thousand year reign of Christ on earth. The only specific account where the millennium is mentioned by name is in the book of *Revelation* chapter 20. We do know that it will be a prelude to the new heavens and new earth and the end of earth as we know it. Here are some things we do know about what the millennium will be like:

Satan will be bound for one thousand years

Revelation 20:2-3 (NIV)

² He seized the dragon, that ancient serpent, who is the devil, or Satan, and bound him for a thousand years. ³ He threw him into the Abyss, and locked and sealed it over him, to keep him from deceiving the nations anymore until the thousand years were ended. After that, he must be set free for a short time.

Satan is referred to here as the dragon. This makes sense because in Genesis he approaches Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden in the form of a serpent (See also *Rev. 12:15*). Satan is thrown into the abyss and locked up for one thousand years so he will not be able to deceive the nations. The abyss was understood to be a subterranean abode of demons (*Luke 8:31*). The Greek word means "very deep" or "bottomless." The point is that Satan "ain't going anywhere" for a long, long time!

We know that the martyrs and the resurrected will reign with Christ for 1000 years

You will see from the following verses that those from the first resurrection and the martyrs will reign with Christ. The rest of the dead don't come to life until the end of the millennium (v. 5).

Revelation 20:4, 6 (NIV)

⁴ I saw thrones on which were seated those who had been given authority to judge. And I saw the souls of those who had been beheaded because of their testimony for Jesus and because of the word of God. They had not worshiped the beast or his image and had not received his mark on their foreheads or their hands. They came to life and reigned with Christ a thousand years...⁶ Blessed and holy are those who have part in the first resurrection. The second death has no power over them, but they will be priests of God and of Christ and will reign with him for a thousand years.

It is clear that true believers will reign with Christ as priests. How we will reign and what we will reign over is not clear. We can only know that we will be a significant part of Christ's Kingdom on earth.

There will be unprecedented peace and prosperity

Since Satan will be bound during this time the curse and consequences of original sin will be partially curtailed. Those who previously rebelled against God will not be there at the beginning of the Kingdom. This time will be a precursor to heaven. I suggest you read the following Scriptures when you have time.

- The environment will change (*Isaiah 35:1-2; 30:23-24; 35:7; 11:6-7*)
- Physical conditions for bodies will change (*Isaiah 29:18; 33:23; Jeremiah 31:12-14*)
- Spiritual and moral conditions will change (*Isaiah 11:9; 59:20-21; Jeremiah 31:31-34; 32:37-40; Ezekiel 16:60-63; 37:21-28*)
- Jesus will reign in Jerusalem (*Read Isaiah 2:1-4; Jeremiah 23:5-8; Ezekiel 34: 23-25*)

There will be a final rebellion and Satan will be cast into the lake of fire

Revelation 20:7-8 (NIV)

⁷ When the thousand years are over, Satan will be released from his prison ⁸ and will go out to deceive the nations in the four corners of the earth—Gog and Magog—to gather them for battle. In number they are like the sand on the seashore.

Even during the reign of Christ and the almost perfect conditions men will still rebel. Because the complete effects of the fall have not yet been removed people still can choose between right and wrong—good and evil. The day when righteousness and justice will prevail forever is yet to come. Now there is one final rebellion.

Satan will be let loose for a limited amount of time. Then Satan, the Beast, and the False Prophet will be thrown into the lake of fire. This is the last event! They will gather for what they hope will be an epic battle of evil against good. They will march against “the city God loves” and surround it (*Rev. 20:9*). This will be their last stand because fire comes down and kills them all. The three bad guys are thrown into the lake of fire where they will remain forever.

Revelation 20:10 (NIV)

¹⁰ And the devil, who deceived them, was thrown into the lake of burning sulfur, where the beast and the false prophet had been thrown. They will be tormented day and night for ever and ever.

THE GREAT WHITE THRONE

The millennium will end with the Great White Throne Judgment of the unbelieving dead (*Revelation 20:11-15*). We will look at this judgment in tomorrow's study.

DO! "Watch your life and doctrine closely. Persevere in them..."

➤ What did today's study say to you about watching your life and doctrine closely?



WEEK 9 MEMORY ASSIGNMENTS AND REVIEW

Following are key Scriptures to learn this week. Memorize and meditate on these key Scriptures and write them in the space that follows. Memorize the doctrinal covenant.

- Memorize *1 Thessalonians 4:16-17*

- Memorize the Doctrinal Covenant.

Lord I know that You might r_____ for Your people at any m_____. Therefore I covenant to live each day p_____ for Your return by being a_____, s_____ c_____, standing firm in the f_____ and giving myself fully to Your w_____.

- Review previous memory projects from your card index file.

PRAYER

Spend time in prayer using the five components of the Lord's Prayer.

DAY 4: THE GREAT WHITE THRONE

The final judgment comes at the end of Christ's 1,000 year reign. *Revelation 20* gives the details of the Great White Throne judgment. There will come a day when everyone who has ever lived will be ushered into God's presence for a final accounting. The writer of Hebrews says,

Hebrews 9:27

²⁷ Just as man is destined to die once, and after that to face judgment,

From the beginning of the Bible to the final book of *Revelation* we are warned that there will be a final day of reckoning. After death comes judgment. No one can escape it. Jesus taught that He would judge all people with the righteous spending eternity with Him shining like the sun and the unrighteous separated forever from God. Jesus did not mince words with the seriousness of the final judgment (*Matt. 13:37-43*).



SEARCH THE WORD

We will study *Revelation 20: 11-15* to discover the details of the Great White Throne judgment. Read the following verses and answer the questions.

Who will judge?

- Read *Revelation 20:11*. What did John observe in his vision?

Who is seated on the Great White Throne is not identified here but other Scriptures identify the judge as the Son of God. It is the Lamb that will judge the all men. Jesus Himself made that clear.

- Read *John 5:22* and *Acts 17:30-31*. What do these verses say about the identity of the judge?

Who will be judged?

- Read *Revelation 20:12-13*. Describe the dead in verse 12. Where do these people come from?

How will people be judged?

- Read *Revelation 20:12-13, 15*. How are these people to be judged?

What books will be used?

- Read *Revelation 20:12-13*

What will happen to people whose names are not written in the Book of Life?

- Read *Revelation 20:14-15*

SOME CONCLUSIONS

From this study of *Revelation 20* and some other related passages there are some conclusions we can reach.

The Judge and the judged

We can know for sure that Jesus the Savior of the world will be the Righteous Judge on that day. There is a resurrection of “the dead” both “great and small.” These are people who have rejected Jesus Christ. Believers will not be involved in this judgment. Their names are already written in the Lamb’s Book of Life (*Rev. 21:27*).

In this resurrection, death gives up the bodies of lost sinners; Hades (not “hell” as in v. 13) gives up the soul. The body and soul of the lost are joined before Christ’s judgment throne. After that all sinners who have rejected Jesus will be cast into hell (*Heb. 9:27*).

The books

The Bible speaks of three books that will be opened in “the final judgment.”

- **The Bible**

John 12:48

⁴⁸ *There is a judge for the one who rejects me and does not accept my words; that very word which I spoke will condemn him at the last day.*

According to *John 12:48* the Word of God that sinners rejected will be used to judge them on the last day. There will be no excuse of people saying “We did not know.”

- **The book of works**

There is a book containing the deeds people have done (*Revelation 20:12-13*). God is a Righteous Judge who keeps a record of their deeds and will punish each one justly. It seems that those who know truth and have rejected it will face greater punishment than those who do not know the truth. There will be degrees of punishment in hell in the same way that heaven will have degrees of reward (*Matt. 11:20–24*). There is no amount of good works that can save sinners, but God is a just and Righteous Judge and will treat each person fairly.

- **The Lamb's Book of Life**

The Lamb's Book of Life contains the names of all believers. If a person's name is not found in the Lamb's Book of Life, he or she will be cast into hell (*Revelation 20:12, 15*). Every believer's name is recorded in this book at the moment they place their faith in Jesus and are saved by grace. They are granted entrance into heaven because they have been given the righteousness of Christ and are pure.

Revelation 21:27 (NIV)

²⁷ Nothing impure will ever enter it, nor will anyone who does what is shameful or deceitful, but only those whose names are written in the Lamb's book of life.

Those who are impure do not have their names recorded in this book. Those who are impure cannot enter heaven. This means that those who have not put their trust in Christ and have had their sins forgiven cannot enter heaven. Only those who have the righteousness of God are qualified. And here is the great tragedy. All those who are lost will be judged and cast into the lake of fire which is the second death. There they will spend eternity separated from God.

WHAT QUALIFIES US FOR HEAVEN?

Many people have the misconception that on the Day of Judgment God will compare a person's good deeds and his bad deeds and if the good deeds outweigh the bad deeds they will make it to heaven. Although it is true that everything we have done will be judged, our entrance into heaven is not based on our works. The Bible makes it clear that we are saved by grace through faith alone. Everything comes down to whether or not we accept Jesus Christ. Paul says,

Ephesians 2:8-9

⁸ For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith—and this not from yourselves, it is the gift of God—⁹ not by works, so that no one can boast.

Titus 3:5

⁵ he saved us, not because of righteous things we had done, but because of his mercy. He saved us through the washing of rebirth and renewal by the Holy Spirit,

WHAT ABOUT HELL?

The Bible is not politically correct. The Bible does not try to please everyone and make everyone feel good about themselves. The Bible is about God's truth. It is about man's lost condition and God's love. He wants all people to spend eternity in heaven in His presence. Therefore God could not be clearer about heaven, hell and how to be saved. God agonizes over the lost. He wants all his lost children to be saved. That is why we are encouraged to pray for the lost. Paul tells Timothy,

1 Timothy 2:3-4

³ This is good, and pleases God our Savior, ⁴ who wants all men to be saved and to come to a knowledge of the truth.

God is a loving, just, and righteous judge

What we know about God's nature does not suddenly change on judgment day. A loving, just, and righteous God does not become vengeful, mean, and abusive as He judges on the Great White Throne. We know that all those whose names are not written in the Lamb's Book of Life will be judged by their works (*Rev. 20:12-15*). The kind of punishment they will receive will vary with the nature and number of their sins (*Luke 20:45-47; Romans 2:3-6*). Punishment will fit the evil committed (*Matthew 5:21-28; 12:36; 1 John 3:15*).

If the essence of heaven is being present with God forever, then the essence of hell is being apart from God forever. It is solitary confinement separated from everything good. The rich man had no company in hell (*Luke 16*). Paul referred to this separation of the lost from God.

2 Thessalonians 1:9

⁹ They will be punished with everlasting destruction and shut out from the presence of the Lord and from the majesty of his power.



FALSE TEACHING/HERESY ALERT!

I will conclude today's study by examining a current debate among the evangelical community. Rob Bell, a popular pastor and author associated with the Emergent Church movement has written a controversial book titled *Love Wins*. The pastor of a 10,000 member mega church, Bell was named by Time Magazine as one of the 100 most influential people in 2011. So how has such an influential person become such a lightning rod of controversy? It is because of what he says about hell. In his book, *Love Wins* Bell says,

"At the heart of this perspective is the belief that, given enough time, everybody will turn to God and find themselves in the joy and peace of God's presence. The love of God will melt every hard heart, and even the most 'depraved sinners' will eventually give up their resistance and turn to God." (p. 107).

Bell sees as "misguided and toxic" the doctrine that "a select few Christians will spend forever in a peaceful, joyous place called heaven, while the rest of humanity spends forever in torment and punishment in hell with no chance for anything better." He does not believe in a real hell as the Bible defines it. There is no such thing as eternal punishment. That would be cruel he contends.



SEARCH THE WORD

I have given you only a brief summary of Rob Bell's version of hell. Of course in "Love Wins" he has a lot more to say, but what I have quoted is a fair representation of his doctrine of hell. Now what I want you to do is use your study skills and what you have learned about discerning false teaching and analyze Rob Bell's doctrine of hell. You will do this by searching some key passages that speak clearly about what the Bible has to say about hell. Study the Scriptures that are listed and refute the false teaching of Bell based on these truths.

Read *Revelation 20:13-15; 2 Peter 3:9; Luke 16; Matthew 25; Mark 9*

- What is your doctrine of hell?

- Where do you think Rob Bell went wrong?

It is clear – hell is eternal punishment

Nowhere in the Bible did Jesus did promote Rob Bell’s belief in universalism, a theory that all will be saved and there is no such thing as eternal punishment. Jesus clearly refuted this theory when He said,

Matthew 25:46

⁴⁶ *“Then they will go away to eternal punishment, but the righteous to eternal life.”*

If Rob Bell is right and there is no eternal punishment why would Jesus use the same word in the same sentence to describe both eternal life in heaven and eternal punishment? Either Jesus is right or Rob Bell is right.

And what about *Luke 16:19-31*? In this passage Jesus taught that there is an unbridgeable chasm in paradise that separates unrepentant sinners from those who have been made righteous by Christ. The rich man who was wicked was conscious, suffered terribly, and could find no relief from his pain. He clearly had no hope. He was denied a second chance as was his family who remained on earth. Abraham told the rich man,

Luke 16:31

³¹ *“He said to him, ‘If they do not listen to Moses and the Prophets, they will not be convinced even if someone rises from the dead.’ ”*

Discerning false doctrine

By now I am sure that you have memorized these four essential ways of discerning false doctrine. Which of these essentials were involved in Rob Bell’s teaching on hell?

- False teaching occurs when the inspiration, inerrancy and authority of the Bible is denied or altered in any way.
- False teaching occurs when salvation through faith by grace alone is added to or altered in any way.
- False teaching occurs when an attribute of God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit is denied or altered in any way.
- False teaching occurs when behavior condemned in Scripture is tolerated or excused in any way.

I think we can see a violation of all four essentials in Rob Bell’s doctrine of hell. All false teaching starts when, *“the inspiration, inerrancy, and authority of the Bible is denied or altered in any way”*. Once this door is opened then man’s opinion trumps God’s authoritative truth. In this case grace is altered because everyone is going to eventually make it to heaven. The nature of God is changed because God is no longer the Righteous Judge but the permissive Father. And of course the most unspeakable of sins are tolerated because even the evil and unrepentant are forgiven.

DO! "Watch your life and doctrine closely. Persevere in them..."

➤ What did today's study say to you about watching your life and doctrine closely?



WEEK 9 MEMORY ASSIGNMENTS AND REVIEW

Following are key Scriptures to learn this week. Memorize and meditate on these key Scriptures and write them in the space that follows. Memorize the doctrinal covenant.

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- Memorize the Doctrinal Covenant.

Lord I know that You might r_____ for Your people at any m_____. Therefore I covenant to live each day p_____ for Your return by being a_____, s_____ c_____, standing firm in the f_____ and giving myself fully to Your w_____.

- Review previous memory projects from your card index file.

PRAYER

Spend time in prayer using the five components of the Lord's Prayer.

DAY 5: THE NEW HEAVEN AND EARTH

After the Great White Throne judgment the old earth will be destroyed and there will be a new heaven and a new earth. Peter described the cataclysmic events that will bring this world to an end:

2 Peter 3:10 (NIV)

¹⁰ But the day of the Lord will come like a thief. The heavens will disappear with a roar; the elements will be destroyed by fire, and the earth and everything in it will be laid bare (See Ps. 102:25-26; Isaiah 65; Luke 21:33).

WHAT WILL THE NEW HEAVENS AND THE NEW EARTH BE LIKE?

In the book of *Revelation*, chapters 21 and 22, John gives us an astounding description about some of the highlights of heaven. He gives us an exciting glimpse of what the new earth will look like and what we will do for eternity.

- Today I would like you to take some time to read these final two chapters of the Bible before we delve into some of the details of heaven.

Heaven and earth will be renovated

First we read that the present heaven and earth have “*passed away*” and been replaced by a new heaven and earth.

John says,

Revelation 21:1 (NIV)

¹ Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth, for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away, and there was no longer any sea.

There will be a transformation of the entire universe. It will be completely renovated. We will have to wait to see all of the details but the Bible gives us a glimpse of what is to come and it is exciting. Randy Alcorn in his excellent book, *Heaven*, makes a sound Biblical case of God restoring the earth to its original condition before the fall. We might look at the new earth as God’s original Garden of Eden on steroids. Throughout Scripture God is always restoring, rebuilding, renewing, making things new.

The new earth could very well be a perfected image of the fallen earth, with added features. We can expect marvels of nature far exceeding what we have seen here on earth. There is no reason not to expect streams, forests, waterfalls; natural beauties beyond our imagination. There will no longer be any night or day and the world will be illuminated by the glory of God (*Rev 21:23, 25*). One thing we can know for sure: Everything will be restored to new, pristine condition.

Revelation 21:5 (NIV)

⁵ He who was seated on the throne said, “I am making everything new!” Then he said, “Write this down, for these words are trustworthy and true.”

There will be the New Jerusalem

One of the most spectacular features of the new earth will be the New Jerusalem. People who have visited Israel all say that they are in awe of the Holy Land—that there is a special feeling in the country where Jesus walked and where God’s chosen people live. It is obvious that God has a special place in His heart for this city. It will be restored beyond imagination. John describes what he saw:

Revelation 21:2 (NIV)

² I saw the Holy City, the new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride beautifully dressed for her husband.



SEARCH THE WORD

Read *Revelation 21:9-27* and answer the following questions about the New Jerusalem:

- How will the New Jerusalem be illuminated?
- Describe the wall.
- Why was there no temple in the city?
- What will not be allowed into the New Jerusalem? Why?

The New Jerusalem will be spectacular to say the least. It is in the form of a cube and will be 1,400 miles in length, width and height. This makes the ground dimensions about two million square miles. Can you imagine this enormous city coming down out of heaven? No Sci-Fi movie could ever capture such a phenomenon.

Billions of people could live in such a place (*Revelation 21:15-18*). This city will have brilliance like costly stones (*21:11*). The city is made of pure gold like glass (*21:18*). The foundation is made of precious stones (*21:19-21*). This city is pre-fab, created by God and will come down from the present heaven to the new earth.

WHAT WILL IT BE LIKE IN THE CITY?

In describing his vision of heaven John gives us just a glimpse into what heaven will be like. Complete the following Search the Word study and answer the questions that follow:



SEARCH THE WORD

- *Read Rev. 21:3.* Who will be living among us? How will this affect us?
- *Read Rev. 22:1-5.* What will be in the city? Who will be in the city with God? What will they do? How long will they do it?
- *Read Rev. 21:4.* What will **not** be present in the city?

The Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit will live among us. We will be present with God. Our adoption will be completed and we will live in perfect fellowship with God for eternity. (*Rev. 21:3*). We know that there will be no evil, no pain, no suffering. We will serve God. We will reign with God forever (*Rev. 22:3-5*).

EVERYTHING WILL BE NEW!

We will have new imperishable bodies

Speaking of our new spiritual bodies Paul says,

1 Corinthians 15:43-44 (NIV)

⁴³ it is sown in dishonor, it is raised in glory; it is sown in weakness, it is raised in power; ⁴⁴ it is sown a natural body, it is raised a spiritual body. If there is a natural body, there is also a spiritual body.

When Paul says, "...*spiritual body*..." he is not talking about spirit that floats about in the heavens. The Bible never defines a body in that way. Body always means flesh and bones. A spiritual body is the new imperishable body God will give us. It will never wear out or die.

We very well might look like we look now. This may distress some people but remember God is going to restore and renew, making all things new. That includes us. We can be assured that our bodies will be perfected as everything else in creation is perfected. We can expect to be upgraded while keeping our identities and personalities. You will like who you are and what you see!

We will enjoy loving relationships

In God's first perfect environment for mankind in the Garden of Eden He stressed the importance of human relationships when he said that it was not good for man to be alone (*Genesis 2:18*). That principle will not end in heaven. Paul showed how important it was to maintain intimate relationships forever. He refers to his friends as his hope and joy and crown in Heaven. His joy in relationships was part of his joy in God. He looked forward to enjoying his relationship with God and people in heaven.

1 Thessalonians 2:19-20 (NIV)

¹⁹ For what is our hope, our joy, or the crown in which we will glory in the presence of our Lord Jesus when he comes? Is it not you? ²⁰ Indeed, you are our glory and joy.

The Bible is all about relationships; relationships with God and others. From *Genesis* to *Revelation* godly relationships are a priority. In heaven we can expect relationships to be restored, perfected and made new like everything else. There is no reason to believe that we will not still enjoy friends and relatives. We will recognize people and continue to have deep, intimate relationships with them. God has hard wired us for relationships and that DNA will continue in heaven.

It is true that there will be no marriage in heaven but that does not preclude great joy in being united with our spouses (*Matt. 22:30*). Our relationships with them will be enhanced because of a higher union we will experience. We will be a part of the one marriage between Christ and His bride—the Church—(*Eph. 5:22-33*).

Revelation 19:7-8 (NIV)

⁷ Let us rejoice and be glad and give him glory! For the wedding of the Lamb has come, and his bride has made herself ready. ⁸ Fine linen, bright and clean, was given her to wear." (Fine linen stands for the righteous acts of the saints.)

This relationship with Jesus will be so satisfying that even the best marriages on earth will pale to our marriage to the Lamb. The closeness to Jesus will make us closer to everyone else. It will be the foundation of all relationships.

WHAT WILL WE DO IN HEAVEN?

We will live in a restored and renewed heaven and earth. We will have restored and renewed bodies. We will have renewed relationships with God and others. All these things will prepare us for a fully productive and enjoyable life in heaven. Here are some of the things we will do:

We will serve God

Revelation 7:15; 21: 3

¹⁵ Therefore, "they are before the throne of God and serve him day and night in his temple; and he who sits on the throne will spread his tent over them..."³ No longer will there be any curse. The throne of God and of the Lamb will be in the city, and his servants will serve him.

The work we do in heaven will be delightful and rewarding. Think of the activity you most enjoy and multiply that by a thousand and you might come close to understanding just how much you will enjoy serving God. You will use your gifts to serve Jesus with joy (*Matt. 25:23*).

We will reign with Christ

Revelation 22:5 (NIV)

⁵ There will be no more night. They will not need the light of a lamp or the light of the sun, for the Lord God will give them light. And they will reign for ever and ever.

Revelation 2:26

²⁶ To him who overcomes and does my will to the end, I will give authority over the nations —

In heaven we will have leadership responsibilities and exercise authority in designated areas (*Luke 19:17-19*). We will have specific responsibilities which allow us to set goals, plan, and carry out those plans that God puts in our hearts. We will rule as shepherds having certain responsibilities in caring for our “flocks”.

We will enjoy our rewards

Matthew 6:19-21

¹⁹ “Do not store up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust destroy, and where thieves break in and steal. ²⁰ But store up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where moth and rust do not destroy, and where thieves do not break in and steal. ²¹ For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.

1 Corinthians 3:13-14 (NIV)

¹³ his work will be shown for what it is, because the Day will bring it to light. It will be revealed with fire, and the fire will test the quality of each man’s work. ¹⁴ If what he has built survives, he will receive his reward.

There is a clear doctrine of eternal rewards in the Bible. We will be rewarded for what we do on earth. The saying, “You can’t take it with you but you can send it on ahead”, is true. The Bible doesn’t tell us exactly what those rewards will be, but we can be sure that they will exceed our wildest expectations. All we are and all we have done here on earth will not be wasted. What God has invested in us and we have invested in His kingdom will be used in heaven. Therefore we need to be diligent in this life to prepare for the life to come.

DO! “Watch your life and doctrine closely. Persevere in them...”

➤ What did today’s study say to you about watching your life and doctrine closely?



WEEK 9 MEMORY ASSIGNMENTS AND REVIEW

Following are key Scriptures to learn this week. Memorize and meditate on these key Scriptures and write them in the space that follows. Memorize the doctrinal covenant.

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- Memorize the Doctrinal Covenant.

Lord I know that You might r_____ for Your people at any m_____. Therefore I covenant to live each day p_____ for Your return by being a_____, s_____ c_____, standing firm in the f_____ and giving myself fully to Your w_____.

- Review previous memory projects from your card index file.

PRAYER

Spend time in prayer using the five components of the Lord's Prayer.



WEEK 9

WEEKLY ACCOUNTABILITY

"All you have to do from the time you get up in the morning until the time you go to bed at night is love the Lord with all your heart; trust His promises; obey His commands. Everything else flows from that."(Bill Bright)

Be ready to share the following with your group:

- **Love the Lord with all your heart**

In what ways did I did not demonstrate my love of God by seeking Him with all my heart?

In what ways did I or didn't I not God's love flow through me to others including spouse, family and others?

- **Trust God's promises**

To what degree did I or didn't I demonstrate completely trust in God's promises this week?

What was my greatest test of faith?

- **Obey God's commands**

Are there weaknesses or sins I need to confess?

Did I faithfully complete all assignments this week?

In what ways did I witness to the lost this week: (prayer, share, serve, encourage)

7 GREAT DOCTRINES OF THE BIBLE COVENENANT

A covenant is an agreement between man and God. It is a promise. I want to encourage you to review these Seven Great Doctrines of the Bible once more and make a covenant with God to review and live by them the for the rest of your life. Make a copy of this covenant and put it in a place where it can be seen.

COVENANT OF THE DOCTRINE OF GOD: *Lord, I acknowledge that you are the sovereign, omnipotent, omniscience, omnipresent, holy, creator and sustainer of the universe. Therefore I will praise, trust, and obey you in all things.*

COVENANT OF THE DOCTRINE OF CHRIST: *I believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God, fully human, fully divine, died for my sins, that he was buried and raised on the third day according to Scriptures, ascended into heaven and is now at the right hand of God advocating for me.*

COVENANT OF THE DOCTRINE OF THE HOLY SPIRIT: *Holy Spirit of God, third person of the trinity, Paraclete, I covenant this day to be filled with your presence and power, obeying you in all things.*

COVENANT OF THE DOCTRINE OF SALVATION: *I have been saved by grace alone through faith alone. I am redeemed by the blood of the Lamb; justified by a verdict of not guilty; made righteous by the righteousness of Christ; born again by the Spirit; sanctified to be holy.*

COVENANT OF THE DOCTRINE OF THE BIBLE: *Lord, I believe the Bible is inspired and I covenant this day to make your Word my sole and absolute authority for all I think and do, obeying you in all things.*

COVENANT OF THE DOCTRINE OF THE CHURCH: *Christ, as a committed member of your body, the Church, I covenant to honor you as the head, and love and accept all other members as you love and accept me.*

COVENANT OF THE DOCTRINE OF FUTURE THINGS: *Lord, I know that You might return for your people at any moment. Therefore I covenant to live each day prepared for your return by being alert, self-controlled, standing firm in the faith and giving myself fully to your work.*

SIGNED _____

APPENDIX A: LEADERS GUIDE FOR - 7 GREAT DOCTRINES OF THE BIBLE

“The Calling Stage” is different than “The Invitation Stage” in several ways. First people must have faithfully completed all assignments and been faithful to group sessions during *Spiritual Boot Camp*. This means that before “calling” people to this stage you need to have evidence that they can recall all memory projects from *Spiritual Boot Camp*. You call those whom you are convinced have shown the potential to become reproducers to become “fishers of men.” Of course it is not all about memory work and completing assignments. It is about being fully devoted followers of Jesus. It is about faithfully walking in the five footprints of Jesus.

During this stage the bar is raised to a significant new level. In *Spiritual Boot Camp* participants are encouraged but not required to complete all the assignments. At this level people will sign a covenant committing to faithfully attend all sessions and complete all assignments. The degree of difficulty is greater than in the first stage. People will memorize slightly over two verses a week and a “Doctrinal Covenant” for each of the 7 *great Doctrines of the Bible*. The time required to complete assignments will be approximately 40 minutes a day, five days a week. In addition there will be times each month to “walk the talk” by doing service and outreach together. There will be a strong emphasis on becoming skilled “fishers of men.”

CALLING “FAT” DISCIPLES

Because the bar of disciple making has been raised it is important to only call people who are “FAT” to “The Calling Stage.” “FAT” is an acronym first used by the Navigators to help identify people who were potential disciple makers.

Faithful

Call people who you already have seen are faithful to the Lord, responsibilities they have already been given, and who have faithfully completed *Spiritual Boot Camp*. The best indication of future behavior is present behavior.

Available

There are faithful people who for a variety of reasons are not available or not willing to set aside the time necessary to join or continue on The Disciple’s Journey. Make sure that you meet with people and go over the time commitments required for group time and assignments. Have them count the cost before commitment to this stage of the journey.

Teachable

There is a teachable spirit a person must have to join the journey. There are some who seem eager to join but then resist doing the assignments as required or balk at the conditions of the covenant and accountability. The people you have mentored in *Spiritual Boot Camp* will have already given you a strong indication of whether or not they are teachable.

ACCOUNTABILITY COVENANT AND QUESTIONS

When you meet with potential disciples make sure you review the weekly assignments with them and show them the *7 Great Doctrines of the Bible Covenant* that they will be asked to sign. Your group will use this covenant weekly to hold one another accountable for the promises they have made.

Following is the accountability covenant for the “The Calling Stage” of The Disciple’s Journey

I covenant to set aside 30-40 minutes a day five days a week to complete all the assignments each week. I will attend all group sessions except in the case of emergencies or sickness. I agree to be held accountable to the group to love, trust and obey God. I am willing to be open and honest in what I share. I understand that anything said during the accountability time is completely confidential.

Signed _____

Following are the accountability questions

In this statement of faith Bill Bright encouraged new Campus Crusade staff to live three commitments. These commitments will form the basis for accountability during this stage of discipleship.

- **Love the Lord with all your heart**

In what ways did I or didn’t I demonstrate my love of God by seeking Him with all my heart?

In what ways did I or didn’t I allow God’s love to flow through me to others including my spouse, family and others?

- **Trust God’s promises**

To what degree did I or didn’t I demonstrate complete trust in God’s promises this week?

What was my greatest test of faith?

- **Obey God’s commands**

Are there weaknesses or sins I need to confess?

Did I faithfully complete all assignments this week?

In what ways did I witness to the lost this week? (Pray, share, serve, encourage)

TOGETHER ON THE JOURNEY

Remember that this journey is transformational, not just informational. It is about how God is renewing your mind and transforming your life. Following is a structure I use for group study time. I only use this as a suggestion as to how to structure your group. Feel free to adapt the group session to fit your style and the needs of the group.

1. The warm up

I have found that it is good to have a warm up time when the group first gets together. The groups I have led have mostly been in my home so I have coffee and sometimes pastry when people arrive. We spend some informal time just chatting. This lasts about fifteen minutes. I suggest that the entire group session last two hours.

2. Enter God's presence

I know of no better way to start a group session than to enter God's presence with praise and thanksgiving (*Psalm 100*). Jesus taught His Disciples to pray, "...Father, hallowed by your name, your kingdom come" (*Luke 11:2*). This cannot be improved on as a way to set the spirit for your times together. Spend some time in praise and thanksgiving. Read a Psalm together. Praise the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit for who They are and what They are doing in your lives. Thank God for His blessings. Then transition into a time of praying for God's Kingdom and His will. Pray for one another. Pray for God to open doors for your group to do Kingdom building for the King.

3. Accountability

This is a very important time. It is not just a check up to see if people have been faithful to complete assignments and other commitments but to openly share your lives with one another. It is a time to honestly talk about what's going on in your life using the accountability questions as a guide. It is a time to share what's happening on your journey. This can be done as a whole group or in twos. If you have a group of men and women I would **always** do the accountability time separate. Men meet with men and women with women.

4. Review memory assignments

- Review the Key Scriptures of the week.
Always review the current week's verses. You can do this with the whole group or in twos to save time. Make sure that people are writing them on their 4X6 spiral bound Disciple's Journey cards.
- Review the Doctrinal Covenant of the week.
The Doctrinal Covenant will include the basic points of the doctrine that disciples will learn each week. Memorizing this doctrinal covenant along with the key Scripture will help them make the doctrine a vital and permanent part of their lives.
- Review some previous week Scriptures and Doctrinal Covenants.
It is important to remind people that they are responsible for reviewing all previous memory work each week. I always review **some** memory work from past weeks just to keep people accountable and sharp.

- Review “The Bridge Illustration.”

One of the most important parts of this stage is to become a skilled “fisher of men.” Remind people to keep reviewing the “The Bridge Illustration” each week. Encourage them to share these tools whenever God opens the door. Every few weeks take some time in group for people to practice the “Bridge” presentation one on one.

5. Discuss the session content

Your group discussion should take about an hour. There is no way to cover all of the content or have people share their answers to all of the assignments. Remember that the weekly assignments are to help people search the Word on their own and learn to feed themselves. Group discussion is a time for everyone to share insights on what the Holy Spirit has shown them. It is a time to encourage one another. It is a time to clarify difficult questions.

To prepare for a group session go through each day’s reading and make a check mark by what you think would be good to discuss. Make sure people have an opportunity to share some of their responses to the written assignments. Those are:

Reflect and respond

“Reflect and respond” assignments give people the opportunity to stop for a moment, reflect on what they have read and write down their responses.

Search the Word

An important part of all The Disciple’s Journey courses is for people to learn Bible study skills so they can interpret and apply Scripture on their own. To help equip them in this area there are “Search the Word” studies included in each of the sessions. These studies will give disciples the opportunity to use the Bible study tools of observation, interpretation and application.

DO! “Watch your life and doctrine closely. Persevere in them...” (1 Timothy 4:16)

The first two letters of doctrine spell “do.” It is essential to remember that doctrine is not just something we study but is something we do. Every doctrine combines truth with action. At the end of each day’s study there is a “do” section. This will help people apply that day’s study in a practical way. Make sure you have each person give at least one of their “Do” responses during your group session.

6. Plan The Disciple’s Journey “adventures”

As I stated in Session 2, the Biblical model for disciple making must include an intentional service-outreach element built into it. Jesus trained disciples on the road—as He walked with His disciples He served, proclaimed the Gospel, and taught His disciples and others.

I encourage you to plan as a group specific outreach adventures to do together. This could include prayer walks in your community, service projects in and around your Church, short term missions trips, community surveys, working at a food pantry or community supper for the poor, follow up on your Church’s first time visitors, visiting a retirement community, a free car wash, etc. I believe each group and each church is better suited to know what outreach activities will best suit the nature of the group and the needs of the community. And remember the 50–50 principle

50% study and prayer in the group

Prepares you for:

50% service and outreach in the field

A final thought on your group sessions. Materials are made for the people not the people for the materials. Take more time if you need it for some sessions. There may be times when something is so important that you spend the entire time in prayer. Other times a topic needs to expand to another week. Peoples' needs are more important than staying on a strict schedule. Just remember that work tends to expand to the time allotted. Be selective when making changes. People often feel like they need more time to grasp the material. Remind them that they will be going through this same material with someone else. When they lead a group they will have the opportunity to review and learn the material in greater depth.

DOCTRINAL CHALLENGE AND COVENANT

A covenant is an agreement between man and God. It is a promise. The Doctrinal Covenant Challenge is a review of the covenants they have made with God to live by the *Seven Great Doctrines of the Bible*. This final session will provide you with a wonderful opportunity to end the course with a very powerful experience.

Read each statement of the covenant out loud together as a group and then encourage people to sign the covenant. Conclude with a prayer time with people consecrating themselves to live by the covenant. Posting this covenant somewhere in the house it can be easily seen would make it even more powerful.

RESOURCES FOR FURTHER STUDY

Of course there is much more that could be said about these great doctrines. You will be teaching only some of the main doctrines in this course. You may want to add to my notes with your own study notes. You can add those notes in the space provided for extra notes. Three excellent resources I recommend for further study are *Concise Theology* by J.I. Packer, *All the Doctrines of the Bible* by Herbert Lockyer, and *The Great Doctrines of the Bible* by Williams Evans.