

LESSON 1: AUTHORITIES IN OUR LIVES

Read *Acts 15:1-29*

▶ How did the Jews feel about the Gentiles being circumcised and the eating of meat with blood?

This is the account of the Jerusalem council meeting to discuss what would be required of the Gentile believers. They decided that they did not have to be circumcised to be saved, but for the sake of fellowship with the Jewish believers they should not eat meat with blood. This was so objectionable to the Jews that they insisted on the Gentiles not doing this.

Read *John 6:47-58*

In view of the knowledge of how the Jews felt about eating meat with blood.

- ▶ What is Jesus telling them they must do to have eternal life?
- ▶ Considering Acts 15:1-29, how do you think the Jews responded to this command?

As referenced in Acts 15:1-29, it is clear that the Jews strongly opposed eating any meat with blood. Therefore, for God to ask them to drink His blood and eat His body in order to have eternal life is very extreme and out of the ordinary for the Jews.

Read *John 6:66-69*

- ▶ What is the response of the Jews?
- ▶ What is the response of His disciples?

Peter responds by saying; "Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the Words of eternal life. We have believed and have come to know that you are the Holy One of God.

The response Jesus is looking for in a disciple is not that we feel good about Him and His truth, but that we believe He is who He says He is, and no matter what He says or has us do, we are staying with Him to the end.

The key to our lives is that He is the One we look to as the ultimate Authority in our lives.

- ▶ Who or what is currently the ultimate authority in your life?

WHAT DOES GOD WANT FOR ME

- ▶ How do you know what Jesus Christ wants for us?

There are two authorities that Jesus uses to show us what He wants us to do. The first one is the **Bible** and the second one is the **Holy Spirit**. We will look at the Bible first.

THE BIBLE IS THE AUTHORITY

Read *Matthew 22:29-33*

Jesus is talking to Sadducees- the liberals of this day that did not believe in angels, demons, or the resurrection. In verse 32 Jesus quotes Exodus 3:6.

- ▶ Who does God say that He is?

God describes Himself to Moses, using a present tense verb, I Am the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob even though they have been dead for hundreds of years. This statement reinforces the truth of a resurrection and life after death.

Principle: Jesus just based His doctrine of eternal security and resurrection on the verb tense of "I Am". Since this is true we must regard every word in the Bible as extremely authoritative in our lives.

Read *John 10:34-35*

- ▶ What does Jesus say about the Scripture?
- ▶ What does it mean to you that the Scripture cannot be broken?

Jesus is stating here that the Bible cannot be deprived of its inerrancy and binding authority.

AUTHENTICITY OF THE SCRIPTURE

How do we know that the 66 books of the Bible are the real word of God? How were they written? Who decided that these 66 books are God's Word to man?

Read *2 Peter 3:15-16*

- ▶ What does Peter say about the letters of Paul?

Peter equates Paul's letters with the rest of Scripture. The same Scripture that Jesus stated cannot be broken. The early church was in agreement that the 66 books we call the Bible today are the Word of God.

Read *2 Peter 1:20-21*

- ▶ Where do these verse state that the origin of the Bible is?

Three Truths about the Bible

1. The Holy Spirit wrote the Bible through men and allowed the men's individual personalities to be seen in the writing. The men did not decide what to write but were moved by the Holy Spirit.
2. Jesus regarded the scriptures so true that He based His doctrine of the resurrection and eternal security on the verb tense of who God says that He is in the Old Testament.
3. The Bible is without error and cannot be broken.

MEDITATE ON GOD'S WORD

Read *Hebrews 4:12*

- ▶ What does this verse tell us about the Word of God?
- ▶ What do we have to do to have God's Word have this effect in our life?

We must go beyond just reading the Bible and learn to meditate on what it says.

HOW TO MEDITATE

Read *Joshua 1:8-9*

- ▶ What do these verses state that we should do to be careful to do according to all that is written in it?

In the Bible one will find two main types of literature.

1. Narrative: these are the stories and accounts of the lives of people, I Samuel is an example
2. Didactic: these are the teachings of truths, Ephesians is an example

We will learn first how to meditate on didactic passages. To meditate on a didactic passage first read the passage several times. As you read the passage what is the Main Point of the passage. We will call this main point the Forest. Second, look for the supporting truths that point toward the main truth. We will call these supporting truths the trees.

Example: Read *Ephesian 1:3-14*

After reading this passage several times you will see that the main point is: God has saved me. This will be the forest of this passage. Three supporting truths you can see are:

1. *God the Father chose me*
2. *Jesus the Son accomplished it*
3. *The Holy Spirit applied the redemption*

As one focuses on the main truth, and the supporting truths that point toward the main truth, one can begin to apply the truth of the passage to their own life. This is where we make the passage personal for us. Ask yourself; how is the Holy Spirit applying this truth to my life.

Principle: One must learn to meditate on God's Word or they will not hear His Word and will never understand or be able to apply the scriptures to one life.

THE HOLY SPIRIT DIRECTS OUR LIFE

Read Acts 13:2

▶ How did the church in Antioch know that God wanted them to set apart Barnabas and Saul for the work He had planned for them?

Read Ephesians 1:15-17

▶ What two things did Paul pray that God would give the people in the church?

Wisdom: The capacity to understand and as a result, to act wisely. The Holy Spirit, as Author, will give you an understanding of the Bible

Revelation: to make visible, to disclose things before unknown. The Holy Spirit will reveal things to you beyond the Bible. Acts 13:2 and Acts 16:6-7 are examples of this.

God wants us to have both wisdom and revelation so that we will be fully accountable to God. The Scripture teaches that God has a call on each person's life, but it does not tell each person what that call is. The Holy Spirit will reveal this when He is sought and listened to. In the Acts 16 passage, God changes the course of history by having the gospel spread to Europe and eventually the United States instead of Africa. We need the Holy Spirit to direct us as we walk by the principles of Scripture.

Current example can be found in Ephesians 4:12. This scripture states that it is the responsibility of the pastor/teacher to equip the saints for the work of service. It does not tell the preacher/teacher what to preach on each week. The Holy Spirit will never contradict the Word of God. The Author of the Bible will not reveal something for you to do that is contrary to what He wrote in the Bible. So always check revealed truth against what the Bible says.

Galatians 1:8 tells us to not even believe anything an angel from heaven should preach if it is contrary to the Word of God.

Philippians 4:7 Tells us that the peace of God will guard (same word as would be used for a prison guard) your heart and mind (keep your emotions and your thoughts) from going the wrong direction.

HOW GOD SPEAKS

Read I Kings 19:11-13

- ▶ How does God speak to Elijah?

God will most often speak to us in a **still small voice**. God will yell at times to get us back on track but most often whispers to us. An example of God yelling in the Old Testament is Moses and the burning bush, where Moses is off in the desert instead of where he should be. A New Testament example would be Paul on the road to Damascus where God speaks to him and blinds him. Paul was killing Christians and God wanted to stop him and get him started on the path of being a missionary for God.

Most of the time God will speak to us in a still small voice and we will have a sense of peace. If we want to hear God and receive wisdom and revelation we need to learn to listen: get quiet and be still (meditate on God's Word) to get the maximum guidance from the Holy Spirit. The number one threat to Christian maturity is not immorality or bad preaching, but noise. We must learn to be quiet before God so that we can hear from Him.

God directs us by influencing us by Scripture and the Holy Spirit. We are like chess pieces on a board where every piece moves differently. The spiritual battle is God's influence through His children versus Satan's influence through his children. If we want Jesus to be the number one authority in our life, and to achieve maximum benefit, then the Scriptures and the Holy Spirit will need to be the driving force in our life.

LESSON 2: MOTIVATION IN LIFE

REVIEW:

Two authorities in a Christian's life: 1. Scripture 2. Holy Spirit

Today we are going to focus on what the motivation is in your life. You can either be motivated to do what brings you glory and pleasure or motivated to do what brings God glory and pleasure.

Often people know what they *should* do; but are not motivated to *do* it.

▶ If you know what the Bible and the Holy Spirit as the two authorities in your life say, will you be motivated to be obedient?

Motivation is critical to someone being obedient to what God has told them to do.

Example: *When a person has sin in their life, and they ask God to remove the sin their motivation for asking God to remove the sin can be many different things. One motivation a person might have is that they will be more effective in living out their calling from God if this sin is removed. This sounds good, but it is the wrong motivation. God says sin is wrong in our lives, not because it damages our testimony but because it damages Him.*

Sometimes God will tell you to do what you want to do, so it is easy to obey and respond to His authority. Other times, God will tell you to do something you do not want to do.

Example in the Bible: *The Holy Spirit directed Jesus to the cross, but Jesus asked with great emotion if this task could be removed from His life. Mark 14:34 tells us that Jesus was deeply grieved to the point of death. Yet Jesus went to the cross because there was a motivation in Him that was greater than His own personal desires.*

Example in Marriage: *When people decide to get married, they often go through counseling to learn how to build a God-honoring marriage. At some point, the couple will wound each other simply because of the many natural differences between men and women. In general, men want respect and women want love. When their needs are not met, they often become self-focused and the marriage is damaged. The couple could wake up one day upset and if their motivation is not right, they may pack up and leave.*

▶ What is the correct motivation?

Galatians 6:16 tells us that the purpose God originally had for Israel, He now has for us, the Gentiles. Since Israel is God's chosen people, He gave them many special blessings all throughout the Bible. When Israel turned its back on Jesus Christ, God chose to extend those blessings to the Gentile church which includes us today. Therefore, we should pay close attention to the commands and promises given to Israel in the Old Testament, because those now apply to us as part of the Gentile church blessed by God.

Read Exodus 3:14-15

- ▶ What does God say that His name is?

God tells Moses that His personal name is Yahweh (I Am who I Am).

Read Exodus 9:16

- ▶ What is the purpose that we were raised up for?

If God raised us up so that He could show us His power, and so that we can proclaim His name in all the earth, then this should be at the core of our motivation.

One example of this was God talking to Pharaoh. **Read Exodus 9:7, 12, 34**

- ▶ What do you see different in these three exchanges between God and Pharaoh?

In verse 7, we see Pharaoh hardening his heart and choosing to do what he wants instead of what God wants. In verse 12, we see where God hardens the heart of Pharaoh. Then in verse 34, we see God giving Pharaoh another chance, but Pharaoh hardens his heart again and follows his own will. From this point on, *God* hardens Pharaoh's heart.

God desires that every living being, both saved and lost, bring glory to His name.

Example of Barbara Streisand: *God gave her a lovely voice to glorify His name, but she has chosen not to use her voice to bring glory to God's name. Rather she uses her voice for her own fame and glory.*

The purpose for every one of us is for our lives to bring glory to God's name.

Read Exodus 20:24

- ▶ Where does God say that He will come to us and bless us?

What does it mean, "Where I cause My name to be remembered?"

It is not about me and my name being blessed, but rather it is all about God and *His* name being blessed.

Read *John 15:4-5, 7-8*

- ▶ What is essential if we are to bear much fruit?

We must abide in the vine or be in the Word and communication with God.

- ▶ What do these verses tell us to do so that the Father's name will be glorified?

Bearing fruit brings glory to God's name and not our own. We cannot bear fruit unless we abide in Him and His Word abides in us.

Read *Leviticus 22:31-32*

- ▶ What does God ask of us in these verses so that we do not profane His name?
- ▶ What is it that allows sanctification to occur?

Only those who keep His commandments will bring glory to God and honor His name. The Bible and the Holy Spirit will tell us how to honor His name. If I will honor His name, then these two things will be true in my life:

1. I will yield to what the Bible says
2. I will yield to the leading of the Holy Spirit

My motivation will be that I *want* God's name to be honored.

Read *Numbers 6:22-27*: Aaron's blessing and benediction.

- ▶ In verse 27, what are we told needs to happen for us to be blessed?

What is meant by "invoke My name on the sons of Israel"?

According to dictionary.com invoke means "to call for with earnest desire; make supplication or pray for: to invoke God's mercy." Therefore those who pray for God's Name to be made known to all people will be blessed.

Read *I Samuel 7:1-14* and summarize.

DAVID DESIRES TO BUILD A TEMPLE

David wanted to build a temple for God; but God told him no. God makes a promise to David; that his offspring will be allowed to build a temple for God. The purpose for this temple was to honor God's name and not to honor Solomon or David. The church should also purpose to bring glory to God's name and not any person or country.

Read 1 Kings 8:43: Solomon's prayer when dedicating the temple.

- ▶ What does Solomon pray will happen to all the peoples of the earth?
- ▶ What about the people of Israel?

The purpose for God's blessing on Israel was for all people to know and embrace God. Israel does not understand this because they think God belongs only to them. Instead of God's name being something they share, they think it is something they possess only for themselves. In the New Testament, the Jews hate the Gentiles and Samaritans because the Jews think they are better than these people because God belongs to them. God blessed the children of Israel so that they could tell others about Him so that they might believe.

Read Psalm 31:3

- ▶ Why does God lead and guide me?

God leads and guides me for *His* name's sake. People often say that they do not know what God wants them to do. To seek God's guidance for what I should do, God wants me to:

1. Pray through it.
2. Want *His* name glorified in my life. If I do, then He will lead and guide me.

His purpose is *personal*- he wants *His* Name glorified in my life. If that is my motivation and He is my heart beat, then my direction is being led by Him. He will not let me miss His blessing and direction if this is my true desire and purpose. We often miss what He wants because at the end of the day, *His* name is not what we want.

Read Psalm 89:24

As in Psalm 89:24, the horn is used as a symbol of power. If you want His power in your life, then the motivation must be His name—not *your name* or *your power* or *your glory*. If you are concerned about His name being first in your life, then His power will surface in your life, and then you will be able to conquer sin. If want His power, you must choose to want His name glorified and not your own.

Read Matthew 10:22

- ▶ If we live our lives in such a way to bring glory to God's name, what will be the result for us?

If I live for His name, the world will hate me. They will hate me not because of my name, but Jesus' name. If you live for Jesus Christ, the world will hate you. His is the name we live by, honor and glorify. If say you say the name Jesus and state His impact in your life instead of using the name God, then people will hate you. We must yield to the name of Jesus. Most of

the turmoil in the Middle East is due to the hatred of His name. If we use the name "God", not as many will hate us because God is a more generic name and even the Arabs believe in God. If we who love Jesus did not claim the God of the Jews, there would not have been planes flown into our buildings.

BENEFIT FOR US:

Read *Matthew 19:27, 29*

▶ When Peter states that the disciples have left everything to follow Jesus and ask what will there be for them, what is Jesus' answer?

He responds that I will receive these things after I die because I lived for His name.

Read *I Corinthians 3:10-15*

▶ What happens to the treasures we build up for ourselves? What happens to the treasures we build up for God?

Whatever you do for yourself and not for God will be burned up and will be of no benefit. *All* things are burned up if not done correctly and built on the right foundation. If these things do not reflect God's glory, then no blessing will be received after you die. Your actions must be for His sake. If we live for the name of Jesus, then we are rewarded in heaven depending on what we choose to do here. Your choice is to do either what you want or to live in a manner that causes His name to be glorified.

Marriages do not work if both spouses do not live to glorify God but are selfish and self-seeking. If a woman is in a loveless marriage where the husband exhibits no emotional love, then this marriage will not be healthy; but there is not a scriptural basis to get out of the marriage. If you choose to honor Jesus and the teaching in I Corinthians 7, then you will have to live in a loveless marriage. This will be very painful here on earth, but when you die, Jesus will say that you stayed in a loveless marriage because it was not about your pleasure but about My pleasure in your life. You will receive rewards in heaven when you die because you chose to honor God's name on earth. There are 12 main thrones, as well as many other thrones in heaven. When we die, because we are the highest beings God ever created, He gives us quadrants in the universe to rule under Him. The size and position will be based on how we lived here on earth. The reward there will be great. Here, you will be hated and possibly persecuted for standing for the name of Jesus, but you will gain far more in eternity than you could ever lose here.

Read *John 14:13-14*

▶ If we want our prayers to be answered, how are we to pray? What does it mean to ask in Jesus' name?

Our prayers should be focused on what will best bring glory to God's name. When our prayers are focused on God's plan and *His name*, then our prayers will be answered.

My motivation should be that God is pleased and that He alone is glorified in my life. It comes down to my decision to honor His name or my own. It is not about what makes me happy, but about what honors *His name*.

God the Father said of Jesus when He was baptized; *This is my son in whom I am well pleased*. Jesus lived to please His Father and not Himself. When we finish each day, we should ask ourselves one question, "Are people talking about my name today or are they talking about God's name because of my life reflecting the glory of God?"

Many times we get where we know what God says...BUT... We cannot add exclusions to what God commands us to do. We must change this attitude to get to the place where we say... I know what God wants, so therefore I will obey Him. His name, not mine is what is most important in my life. When other are around me, whose name are they talking about -- His or mine? This is a great struggle in our lives—especially when we are in the public light. When we fail in this, it is most often because of pride and the fact we are self-centered. His name (and not my own) being the driving force in my life will be a struggle, but it is important to remember that it is not about your name—it is about *His name*.

We cannot allow our emotions to control our walk with Christ. Our attitude can be bad but we must stay in the relationship. How we feel does not matter- obedience matters. If you look at Jesus, He did not feel good about going to cross, but He did it anyway. When we do not want to be obedient but we are anyway, this may honor God even more.

It's your choice: whose name will be glorified first through your life -- Your name or God's?

LESSON 3: INTERCESSORY PRAYER

REVIEW:

The motivation for our life should be to glorify God.

PRAYING IN GOD'S WILL

Read *Ecclesiastes 5: 1-3*

- ▶ What are the instructions in these verses about how we should pray?

Prayer is the personal communication between man and God. We often think this means simply talking to God, but for suitable communication to occur there must be a balance between talking and listening. When addressing God, it is important to first listen. "Do not be hasty or impulsive in thought... but let your words be few." When you listen to God first, you will then have God's list on what you should pray about rather than your own list.

Read 1 *John 5:13-15*

- ▶ What are the two requirements we need to insure that God will answer our prayers?
 1. Be a Christian
If I do not have a personal relationship with Jesus, then God will not listen to my prayers except when I ask Him to reveal Himself to me so that I can have a personal relationship with Him.
 2. Pray according to the will of God
The basis of my prayer must be according to God's will and not my own.

If I will do these two things, then God says He will hear my prayers and He will answer them.

- ▶ How do I know God's will and His list?

Look at the Scripture and listen to the Holy Spirit these are vital components for us to know God's will.

Read *Matthew 16:13-19*

The Greek says that whatever you loose shall already have been loosed. Whatever you bind shall have already been bound. "Most versions translate it as "I bind what I want to bind". In this case, Jesus is telling Peter that he will be given the keys, and whatever Peter binds, God will also bind."

The Greek on the other hand, says that what I bind shall already have been bound. What I have to do is figure out what God has decided to loose, and what God has decided to bind. Then I respond by stepping in and allowing myself to become the instrument through prayer that accomplishes God's will.

POWER IN PRAYER

Read 1 John 5:13-15

The gates of Hell cannot prevail if I pray God's list. If I pray my list in the community we will lose, but if I pray God's list, He will prevail. He won't answer my list unless I accidentally have something on my list that is also on His list. This is why we pray and get an answer and think we have figured it out and then go back to praying and do not get an answer. This occurs because we are praying our list that may have something on His list. The Scripture says I have to find what is on God's list and pray accordingly.

Read James 5:16-18

- ▶ What do these verses say about how Elijah compares to us?

He is a man just like us. Not better than us.

- ▶ What is it that Elijah controls?

The weather- to rain or not

Read 1 Kings 18: 20-21; 27-29; 36-38

- ▶ Do we have this same power in our prayers? How did Elijah know that he had this power?

These verses talk about an amazing, incredible miracle. There is a contest between the priest of Baal and Elijah. The priests who pray to Baal have nothing happen even though they prayed all day and went to the extremes of cutting themselves to draw attention from their gods. Elijah prays a very short prayer, yet because he prayed in God's will, his prayer brought down fire from heaven and even consumed the water in the trench and burned up the sacrifice. He said 37-38" *let them know that You, O LORD, are God, today let it be known that You are God in Israel and that I am Your servant and I **have done all these things at Your word.***

His prayer calls down fire from heaven not because of his own desire and design but because he did everything that God told him to do. He prayed God's list for Israel and God answered in a mighty way.

Read 1 Kings 18:41-46

This is the account referenced in James 5. The reason he controlled the weather is because he did everything according to God's word. Elijah prayed for rain and then expected and looked for God's answer. The reason Elijah controlled the weather is because God wanted King Ahab to see that Elijah's God was master of the universe and could control the weather.

Both the fire from heaven and the rain occurs because Elijah prays God's list. God told him what to pray, he prayed, and God answered. A miracle occurs when our prayer is not based on our list but when it is connected to His list.

HOW THE HOLY SPIRIT PRAYS

Read *Romans 8:26-28*

- ▶ How does the Holy Spirit pray for us? Why does the Holy Spirit need to pray for us?

The Holy Spirit dwells within the heart of every believer. In our weakness and when we do not know how to pray, the Holy Spirit will intercede with the Father on our behalf. When we are distanced from God by pain, weakness or sin, we do not have the list within us. This list must come from the Holy Spirit and from the words of the Bible.

The Holy Spirit intercedes with unspeakable groaning. We do not hear His intercession. But the One who searches the heart (GOD the Father) knows the mind of the Spirit because He intercedes for the saints according to God. When the Holy Spirit in you prays, He prays according to God. Although He is equal to God, He still prays what God the Father directs Him to pray in response to the struggles in our life that are causing us to not know how to pray.

- ▶ Why do we know that everything always works for good?

The Holy Spirit prays for us, and He prays God's list in our lives. So that even when I am knocked down and do not know how to pray, the Holy Spirit takes over and prays on my behalf. The Holy Spirit does not pray my list or my heart. He prays God's list and God's heart in my life. So that whatever is coming will end up being a great rich blessing in my life because of His prayers on my behalf. Even the Holy Spirit prays exactly as the Bible commands me to pray as far as intercessory prayer.

HOW DO WE KNOW WHAT TO PRAY

Read *Acts 13:2-3*

- ▶ Who is telling them what to pray?

Sometimes it is the Holy Spirit that tells us what to pray. This is the time when Barnabas and Saul were called out for service and the church has been fasting. Once the Holy Spirit said "these are my guys", then the church prayed for them in response to the direction of the Holy

Spirit. He gives the entire church a direction. They pray and their prayers then impact the lives of Barnabas and Saul.

Read 1 Timothy 2:1-2

- ▶ Who/What is telling them what to pray?

Sometimes it is the Bible that tells us what we need to pray.

Read Acts 13:2-3 and 1 Timothy 2:1-2

The Bible says we are to pray for leadership in the place we live. In Acts 13:2-3 the Holy Spirit tells us what to pray and in 1 Timothy 2:1-2 the Bible tells us what to pray.

Think back to the first lesson. We want to know God's list is from the two authorities in our life: the Holy Spirit and the Bible. These two things are going to give me the list to pray.

God accomplishes His kingdom through His church. One of the major ways He does that is when the Church prays in a way that He answers their prayer. For the church to pray in the proper way, they must pray His list not their own list. When we begin to pray His list from the Holy Spirit and the Word of God, then we start to get the "yes answers" and God begins to move.

If your prayer life is such that you guess what God's list is and once in a while get an answered prayer for your intercessory prayer, then one main reason is you are praying your own list and not listening. We must learn to be still and quiet and listen to God.

Read Ecclesiastes 5:1-3, Psalm 46:10, and 1 Kings 19: 11-13

- ▶ How must we approach God in order to be able to hear Him?

All these verses talk about having to be quiet when I step into God's presence. For most people, one of the hardest things we face is not immorality but noise.

Example: many college students have many surrounding sounds and distractions. If I want to hear God's voice I need to turn off the noise and be quiet.

When Jesus picked the disciples, He prayed all night. He had no sin in His life and perfect fellowship with the Father and yet found it important and necessary to spend all night with the Father. We want a McDonald's Christianity... our way and immediate gratification. That is not how God works. If you are going to get the list prayed, it may take all night.

Example: A lady with a brain aneurism was prayed for by the church. They planned to pray all night for her. At around 1:00 a.m. one church member said "God told me she is going to be okay"

and we can now go home". Others felt the same direction. They went home and sure enough she did well.

IF I DON'T PRAY WHAT HAPPENS

I can't really answer but firmly believe that there are people who don't survive an illness because we as a church or individuals do not pray. There are people who do not see fruit in their lives because we do not pray. We are so busy praying our list instead of His list. That is the genius of what the enemy does in our life. We think that just because we have our Bible open and we are praying that we are doing the right thing. But in reality, we must pray His list!

As we have discussed, the two sources for learning God's list are the Holy Spirit and the Scriptures. We must pray what He desires (Rom 8:28). When we go in the prayer rooms we are praying more for what we want than what God wants. This is why we have prayer rooms in churches, but we still don't have an impact. If we are close to the issue, we can be too close and cannot hear the Holy Spirit and His guidance. We may need a brother or sister to come along side us that is not as close to the situation and can hear the Spirit and will pray in such a way to get us through the circumstance. Our prayers may be changed then based on what the Holy Spirit tells us to pray for.

Example: Lady was sick. Staff member changed prayer from the person to her family as the Holy Spirit told her that the lady was not going to live. The normal desire of the staff would have been to ask God for healing for the lady. But as God already told her what He was going to do, the list was shifted to the husband and the kids to get through it.

We have an obligation to pray for each other. When we are so busy that we often do not hear what God's list is, and we damage our community and our brothers in Christ by praying our own desires rather than God's.

LESSON 4: HEARING GOD SPEAK

REVIEW:

The Holy Spirit and the Bible are the authorities in our life.

Our motivation is to glorify God's Name in all that we do.

We look to the Holy Spirit and the Bible to teach us to pray.

Introduction: God speaks to us through a variety of ways. It is imperative that we learn to hear and discern God's voice.

GOD SPEAKS THROUGH ANGELS

Read *Daniel 9:20-23*

- ▶ Who speaks to Daniel in these verses to give him insight and understanding?
- ▶ Who are the angels that we know by name in the Bible?

Only two angels are named in the Bible (Michael and Gabriel) plus Satan
Michael was Archangel who replaced Satan.

Read *Daniel 10:12-13*

- ▶ How long did it take Gabriel to get to Daniel to answer his prayer?
- ▶ Why did it take so long for Gabriel to get there?

Gabriel said it took three weeks for him to get to Daniel after leaving God. He was delayed due to a battle with the prince of the Persian kingdom. Gabriel was not referencing a man. A man could not stop an angel. In the Old Testament we see one angel in one night kill 186,000 men. Gabriel is referring to demonic organizations that are ruling at least in part over this planet. Paul referred to the fact that we wrestle against spiritual powers, authorities, and rulers. There was a spiritual battle in Persia that was able to stop Gabriel in midflight. Gabriel and the prince of Persia battled for 21 days. Gabriel cannot get the upper hand so he calls on Michael, the archangel of God, to come and assist him. Gabriel finally breaks through and gets to Daniel. It took 3 weeks for God to answer Daniel's prayer. We cannot have the McDonalds' point of view (wanting it our way and quickly). If we want to hear God, we must accept the fact that it may take a period of time.

(There will be separate lessons on angels and demons that will explain more about them in detail.)

Read Acts 8:26, 29

²⁶ But an angel of the Lord spoke to Philip saying, “Get up and go south to the road that descends from Jerusalem to Gaza.” (This is a desert road.) ²⁷ So he got up and went; and there was an Ethiopian eunuch, a court official of Candace, queen of the Ethiopians, who was in charge of all her treasure; and he had come to Jerusalem to worship, ²⁸ and he was returning and sitting in his ^[i]chariot, and was reading the prophet Isaiah. ²⁹ Then the Spirit said to Philip, “Go up and join this ^[i]chariot.”

- ▶ Who leads Phillip in these verses?
- ▶ What are the two ways Phillip was directed?

1. Angel giving directions to go to road
2. Holy Spirit tells go to chariot

One time He used one way and another time used a different way to communicate and give directions with Phillip. I do not know the reason for the different choice by God.

There is a tendency for us to sometimes think that angelic speaking is done only in the Old Testament. But this verse clearly shows that angels speak to people in both the New Testament and the Old Testament.

GOD SPEAKS THROUGH DREAMS

Not all dreams are messages from God. Some dreams are caused by what we eat or what we have been watching. This section will look at how dreams work, and how you know if they are God telling you what to do.

Read Mathew 2:12-14

- ▶ How did Joseph know that God wanted him to go to Egypt?
- ▶ Was it very clear to Joseph what God wanted him to do?

Read Genesis 37:5-11

- ▶ How did Joseph know what God had planned for his future?
- ▶ Did his brothers and father have a clear understanding of what the message of the dream was?

When Joseph told his father and brothers the dream, all of them understood it to mean that Joseph would reign over and rule them.

In *Genesis 41:1-37* Pharaoh has a dream that Joseph interprets. Pharaoh prepares for the coming good years and then the famine.

Two things to remember about God speaking through dreams:

1. God can speak through dreams
2. There will never be a difficult issue in understanding the meaning of the dream
 - a. When Joseph has dream, Joseph, Mary and Jesus leave and goes to Egypt
 - b. When Daniel interprets Nebuchadnezzar's dream—God tells him the dream and God interprets the dream. Nebuchadnezzar accepted answer and acted accordingly.
 - c. Joseph tells his brothers of his dream and they quickly understand that it means that he will rule over them. They act quickly and throw him in a pit and then later sell him.

If you have a dream that you do understand, then maybe it is from God. But if have a dream that you do not understand, it is not from God. If God is speaking through a dream to you, you will know and understand the dream. There has to be absolute clarity in what the dream means in order to attribute the dream to God. If not do not understand the dream, then do not accept the dream as from God.

GOD SPEAKS DIRECTLY AND LOUD

Read Acts 9:1-7

- ▶ How does God speak to Saul in these passages?
- ▶ Was Jesus loud or a still small voice?

Everyone with Saul heard a voice but only Saul was able to understand the words. This was a loud moment for Saul.

At times God will speak to us in a loud manner. This usually occurs when we are not walking with the Lord.

Another time in the Bible when God is loud is when He speaks to Moses through the burning bush (Exodus 3).

The reason Saul had a loud moment is because he was killing Christians and was not a believer. Moses has a loud moment after killing a man and running away from the plan God had for him.

We seldom see God speak in this manner in the Bible. This will not be the primary way God speaks to you. For most people this will not occur more than once in their lifetime.

GOD SPEAKS THROUGH OTHER PEOPLE

Read Acts 11:27-28

- ▶ Who tells the people in Antioch that a great famine was coming?
- ▶ By whose authority does he speak this message?

God designed us to be a people that fellowship together. Sometimes God will speak to us through a Christian brother or sister. God will often confirm to you through another Christian what He has been speaking to you.

GOD SPEAKS THROUGH CIRCUMSTANCES

There are events that happen in your life, that when they happen, they bring clarity to God's word and how it applies to you.

Read Mark 6:49

- ▶ How does God use this circumstance to speak to the disciples?

These verses are the account of Jesus walking on water and calming the storm. Even though the disciples had just watch Jesus feed 5000 plus people with five loaves and two fish they did not understand that He is God. When they experience Jesus walking on water and calming the storm their hearts were softened to where they could understand what Jesus had been teaching them. It was their circumstances that helped them to understand.

Circumstances, by themselves, should not be seen as God speaking. When God speaks to you through circumstances He will confirm the message with the Bible.

This following passage is a guiding light for understanding anything you hear. This controls how you interpret what you hear or dream.

Read 2 Peter 1:20-21

- ▶ How can we know that what we learn in circumstances is truly from God?

²⁰ *But know this first of all, that no prophecy of Scripture is a matter of one's own interpretation,*
²¹ *for no prophecy was ever made by an act of human will, but men moved by the Holy Spirit spoke from God.*

The Holy Spirit wrote the Bible. If the Scripture was written by the Holy Spirit, and you understand a clear objective truth from the Scripture, and you have a dream that contradicts the Scripture, then what you are saying is that the Holy Spirit contradicts Himself. He will never do this. If anything you hear violates the Scripture, then you should not pay attention to it. You should be very cautious in trusting this means of communication from God in your life. Everything learned through circumstance should be tested against Scripture before you accept it as truth.

GOD SPEAKS THROUGH A LOW WHISPER

Read 1 Kings 19:9-19

- ▶ How does God speak to Elijah?

Elijah had just experienced the challenge between God and the prophets of Baal and had seen God prove Himself as the only true God. Being a prophet, Elijah was accustomed to hearing God's voice. When it appears that God is speaking loud in the wind, earthquake, and fire Elijah does not come out because Elijah knows that God is not in the wind, fire, and earthquake. When Elijah hears the low whisper, he comes out and listens as he knows this is from God. This is the main way the Holy Spirit will speak to you.

Read Philippians 4:6-7

⁶ Be anxious for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God. ⁷ And the peace of God, which surpasses all comprehension, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.

- ▶ What two things do these verses tell us that God guards?

God's peace will guard your heart and your mind to keep you from missing what God has for you.

1. Heart= emotions
2. Mind= intellect

God will guide in a low whisper as He guards your emotions and thoughts. This is the **predominant way** that God will speak to you. You will have a "Holy Hunch" on what God is speaking to you.

Read 2 Peter 1:20-21 again

These verses teach on both the written word and the spoken word.

- Logos= written word
- Ramas= spoken word

The most powerful way that God speaks to you is when both written word and spoken word come together in your life.

Example: You are reading a passage and the words jump off the page and speak application into your life. You know that God has a message for you in what you are reading. This is the written word and spoken word coming together in your life. This perfect combination of the peace of God and the word of God occurs and you can move out in confident obedience of God.

OBEDIENCE IS MANDATORY

Read *John 14:15-21*

- ▶ These verses teach us that if we love God we will...
- ▶ How is the Holy Spirit described in these verses?
- ▶ In verse 21 what does God promise He will do if I will walk well with Him?

God tells us that if we truly love Him we will obey His commandments. God gives us the Holy Spirit as a Helper to strengthen us and to disclose God to us as we walk well with Him.

Jesus says that for me to hear God, I must be obedient. If I want to have God's guidance in my life, then I will have to be obedient. You cannot ignore God and His Word in your life and then expect to hear from Him. The basis of God disclosing Himself to you is based on you keeping His commandments.

It is your obedience in Christ that gives you your ability to hear God and to experience the peace and unrest that God uses to drive your life through His word and through Holy Hunches. When you hear God's voice then you can know exactly how to pray; know exactly what to do and what God wants for your life.

If you disobey, you damage your ability to pray and to hear God. How you live affects how you hear God's voice. Most people know what God wants, but do not want what God wants. You must choose to be obedient to what God is telling you; even when it does not fit your agenda!

LESSON 5: PRAYER LIFE- MEDITATING AND HEARING FROM GOD

REVIEW:

We look to the Holy Spirit and the Bible to teach us to pray.

Scripture points out two important principles concerning prayer and hearing from God.

1. We must go to a place of solitude and quietness
2. We must be able to meditate on God's Word

Read *Philippians 4:7* *And the peace of God, which surpasses all comprehension, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.*

In order to hear the soft quiet voice of God, we must find a way to be sensitive to hear His voice. It is necessary for Christians to develop sensitivity to the voice of the Holy Spirit in their life. Although this can be difficult and requires practice, we do have examples in the Bible to look at. The first example we are going to look at is the Perfect Example, Jesus Christ.

Read *Matthew 3:13-17*

- ▶ What is baptism a picture of?

Some people believe that baptism is a picture of a person being cleansed from his sins. But it cannot be, because Jesus was baptized, and He was without sin. Instead, baptism is actually a picture of death. It is a picture of a person drowning to who they are in the flesh and coming out of the water to the new life in Jesus. The old man is drowned, and a new life in Christ is begun that desires to be all that Jesus wants him to be. Baptism is the symbol of Holy Spirit indwelling and guiding the new believer just like we see the Holy Spirit guiding Jesus.

- ▶ How did this relate to how Jesus lived after baptism and how we should live after salvation?

When Jesus was baptized

1. He did not say He had quit being God
2. We know that He drowned to His reliance on being God
3. Jesus comes up out of the water and relies on same two things we do
 - a. He relies on the **Holy Spirit** in His life
 - b. He relies on the spoken **Word of God** – His Father

Likewise, we as Christians should rely on the same two things in our Christian walk. Just like Jesus, there are two things we need to be driven by:

1. We must **hear His Spirit**
2. We must **understand His Word.**

To do these two things we must

1. Have **silence** as part of our day
2. We must be able to **meditate**

If those two things are not a part of your life, you are never going to achieve what you need to achieve as a Christian.

PRAY TO RECEIVE DIRECTION

Read Luke 6:12

- ▶ What are the two things we are told about how Jesus prayed?
 1. Goes to a desolate place (a place of solitude and silence)
 2. Jesus prayed all night even though He was in perfect communion with the Father
- ▶ Why does Jesus need to go to a desolate place?

Jesus knows that He needs to go to a place that does not have distractions. We see Jesus on many different occasions getting away from the people so that He could be alone with God.

- ▶ Why does Jesus pray all night?

Jesus prays all night because that is how long it takes for Him to receive the complete directions from His Father. If He quits praying early, then He does not receive the complete directions from God. Jesus' relationship with His Father was perfect, and Jesus did not have any sin in His life.

- ▶ Why does Jesus not get the directions automatically and quickly?

That is not how God works! In this example of Jesus we see Him going to God to receive direction. ***Therefore one reason we should pray is to get direction from God in our lives.***

PRAY IN TIMES OF GRIEF

Read Matthew 14:10-13

- ▶ How does Jesus respond to the grief in His life?

When Jesus hears about what has happened to John, Jesus again goes to a desolate place where He seeks the Father alone because of the grief in His life.

Times of grief are another time when we need to get alone with God.

Read Matthew 26:36-44

Jesus once again went to a desolate place and prays because of His need to be sure there was no other way to secure our redemption. If there was another way, Jesus would not have gone

to the cross because He knew what it was going to cost Him. This is the most desolate hour in Jesus' life.

Chris's theory — During this time with Jesus in the garden, Satan was fighting for his very life. Satan did not put Jesus on the cross. Satan did everything he could to keep Jesus from going to the cross. Satan understood that he would be judged under the cross, and his judgment would be secured. All of the demons were surrounding Jesus during this time to attack Him and to do their best to get Jesus to fail.

Jesus takes His disciples with Him and picks three of them to go with Him and He asks them to pray **for** Him. He does not ask them to pray **with** Him, but to pray **for** Him. When Jesus faces the most desolate hour of His earthly life, He goes to a place of solitude to be alone with God.

SUMMARY

We see Jesus going to a place of solitude to get alone with God when:

1. He needs **instruction** from the Father
2. He is **suffering grief** from the loss of a friend
3. He is facing the most **difficult time** in His earthly life as He faces the attack of all the demons and Satan

Jesus feels the need to be alone and quiet at His most trying time.

NEED-DRIVEN PRAYER LIFE

When we look at Jesus's life, we see that He has a need-driven prayer life and not rule-driven prayer life. This means that what drives Jesus' prayer life is His own personal need and not preset rules or regulations on when and how to pray.

Some principles we can learn from Jesus' prayer life:

1. It was not at a preset time of day
2. The time spent in prayer varies by His Father's direction and not His own direction
3. Jesus did not follow a prescribed ritual
4. Jesus did not follow an agenda or rules, but it was based on need

Women often want others beside them as they seek answers from God. It is critical that you get alone with God so that you can hear His voice.

To have a need driven prayer life, a person will need to be broken so that they see how they need Jesus as the focus of every area of their life. (We will have a whole lesson on brokenness later) When a person is truly broken in Christ, he does not have a single day that he doesn't need to hear from God for something.

A person can pray while driving, washing clothes, making dinner or anytime throughout the day. Night or day and anywhere you happen to be, you can pray. But you cannot have your attention on doing other things and effectively focus on prayer with the Father and hearing His voice. You will be distracted by other things and not totally focused on listening and talking to Christ. It is okay to pray in this manner, but this type of prayer does not take the place for your need to get away and be quiet and pray to God.

In order to maximize who you are in Christ you need to get away, be alone, and focus on God. You must find a place where you can be absolutely alone with Him without the distractions of the world. This place can be anywhere you feel alone with God. Use that place when you are in need, and when you are seeking a time of renewal.

In summary our prayer life should not be rule-driven but need-driven. As God breaks you, you will find that need in your life on a daily basis, and your prayer life will increase. You may have noticed that when you have a need in your life, you tend to pray better. You will also pray better when you hit difficult times in your lives as long as you are relying on the Lord. Part of the difficulty of those times is for God to bring us to a place of being broken so that we are exactly like Jesus Christ. If Jesus as the Perfect Example was need-driven in His prayer life, then we too should be need-driven in our prayer life.

HOW DOES JESUS PRAY

Read *Matthew 14:23*

- ▶ What time of day did Jesus pray?

Read *Mark 1:35*

- ▶ What time of day did Jesus pray in this verse?

We see Jesus praying in the evening and in the morning. God does not care when you pray. He just cares that you do pray. Some pray better in morning, and some pray better at night. At times it will change when it is better for you to pray. The Bible does not stress when to pray; but it does stress being alone, and that we have a need to pray. Pick the best time for you as individual. Do not be rule or ritual driven.

Read *Isaiah 30:15-16*

¹⁵ For thus the Lord GOD, the Holy One of Israel, has said, "In repentance and rest you will be saved, In **quietness** and **trust** is your strength." But you were not willing,¹⁶ And you said, "No, for we will flee on horses," Therefore you shall flee! "And we will ride on swift horses," Therefore those who pursue you shall be swift.

- ▶ Where do we find strength when praying in the desolate place?

- a. You must have a **quiet time alone with God**. Get in a desolate, quiet place. This will be key to being able **to hear** God.
- b. Truly trusting God is a difficult thing when we have a need, and we sit alone with God. If we are not truly **trusting God**, then we will end up *talking* to God rather than *listening* to Him.

PROMISES IN THE BIBLE

There are promises in the Scripture that handle many of the issues in our lives. What the enemy will do is make you pray over issues that the Bible has already promised will be handled. When that happens, you are not operating out of trust. You are bringing God your list and not trusting Him to handle His list in your life. When you are done, you are exhausted, and then you leave. You will never hear Him unless you are dead quiet and depend on the promises of God and let Him handle the issues in your life.

*Example: In the Bible, **Matthew 6:33** says: "If you seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, then all these things will be added unto you."*

My response should be... I have no need to lay all of my financial needs in front of Him if I am seeking His kingdom first and I'm living out that promise. I need to trust Him to honor His Word in my life. I don't have to ask for something that God has already promised to give me. Unfortunately, we waste a lot of our prayer time doing this very thing.

▶ How can we learn to know God's promises to us and how to trust God to honor these promises?

One way is to get the book, **All the Promises of the Bible** by Herbert Lockyer. With the book in hand take a piece of paper and make two columns on it. In column one put the things you stress over, and in column two put the corresponding promise of God that covers that area of stress. Once you have the list made, claim the promises of God that cover your stress areas and give them to God. Make the decision that you will not talk to God about these issues but will find peace in God's promise as you learn to trust Him. Often times, when the needs are great, it is very hard to live this decision out. But it is in quietness and in trust that you will find the strength for this to work.

When Jesus spent time with the Father He could have easily just complained about how bad the disciples were and spent the entire night telling God how stupid they were. But He was not a whiner. You just come and get quiet and say God tell me what you want me to pray for today.

You must bring your Bible with you in your time of desolation before God. You don't need anything else. You need to hear what God says not what a man says that God says. There may be times when you open your Bible, and then feel the need to shut it and pray. Other times, you will spend more time in the Scripture and not as much time in prayer. In a need-driven prayer life, there will be times when you need the Bible more and other times when you need

prayer more. That will be orchestrated by the guidance of the Holy Spirit. You must make sure you are sensitive enough to the Holy Spirit that you let Him direct you in the way He wants you to go, so that when you come out of your quiet time, that your need has been met as directed by God.

MEDITATION

Meditation requires practice. It does not happen overnight. It takes looking at small sections of Scripture to meditate not whole chapters.

Joshua 1:8

*⁸ This book of the law shall not depart from your mouth, but you shall **meditate** on it day and night, so that you may be careful to do according to all that is written in it; for then you will make your way prosperous, and then you will have success.*

Psalms 1:2

*² But his delight is in the law of the LORD, And in His law he **meditates** day and night.*

Psalms 49:3

*³ My mouth will speak wisdom, And the **meditation** of my heart will be understanding.*

These verses talk about meditation, which is a key component of understanding the Scripture.

Two types of scripture:

- 1. Didactic: doctrine or teaching—i.e. Paul's teaching in NT**
- 2. Narrative: story of people's lives-i.e. The gospels and a lot of OT**

You need to meditate on both types. In order to meditate, you must look at the forest (The main point) and the trees (the details) in the passages.

In a narrative you will look at the details and those details will lead to the main point. In a didactic passage you will look at the teaching inside the passage, and the teaching will lead to the main point. There is a main point in each. What we need to do is to look for the details. If you do not get the details then you will miss the main point of the passage.

*Example: **Read Matthew 2:1-12***

This passage tells of the birth of Jesus. Some of the details that you will see are:

- a. Jesus was born in Bethlehem*
- b. Herod was king--jerk*
- c. Wise men came- astrologers*
- d. Star showed the way*
- e. Came to worship Him*

- f. Troubled wise men
- g. All of Jerusalem troubled === KEY**
- h. Herod seeks to find child
- i. Come and worship Jesus
- j. Go back another way

Question: Who goes to see Jesus? Matthew was written to the Jews. See the details of wise men. They will stand out from the locals in Jerusalem. All the people in Jerusalem are troubled. It is only 5 miles from Jerusalem to Bethlehem. Word is out to the chief priests that these different people have come and they say that the King of the Jews has been born. This news troubles all of Jerusalem yet not one Jew goes to Bethlehem. It is the Gentiles that go to seek out this new King. Matthew is getting across in the narrative that the Jews will spit on the King that they do not even care about enough to go see if true. They do not seek Jesus even when they are troubled. It is the Gentiles that seek Jesus. Matthew wrote this after Paul dies. He has already seen how the Gospel was rejected by the Jews and has been taken to the Gentiles. He puts this in there so the Jews can look at this letter and see exactly what they did. These details teach us what the real point of the story is. If you do not meditate on these details or think about them, then you will only read the story, and you will come away with superficial information and miss the main point. We must meditate on the Bible.

The same process works with didactic passages. You will list the supporting teachings in a passage (the trees), and then see how they make one main point (forest).

God may use a passage of Scripture to speak to you in different ways based on your need at the time.

Read Joshua 1:8

You may read this passage and God speaks to you in the promise that God will never leave you, and another time God may speak to you about the importance of meditation on the Word. The Holy Spirit may apply the Word differently at different times and in different ways.

There is no shortcut to hearing the voice of God. If you do not meditate in a quiet place, then you will not walk like Jesus Christ did and in the manner He wants you to walk.

We do not direct God He directs us in our prayers!

LESSON 6: ASSURANCE OF SALVATION

REVIEW:

Angels provide support in response to our walk with Christ.

There is an old Baptist adage that says “once saved always saved.” In order to make this statement more accurate it should be “once you are really saved, you are saved.”

HOW SALVATION WORKS

Read John 16:7-11

- ▶ What is the role of the Holy Spirit in salvation?

This passage is where Jesus is talking to the disciples on the way to Gethsemane. He had previously told them the parable of the seeds, but they did not understand it. His meaning behind the parable goes far beyond intellectually understanding it, but rather has a deeper spiritual meaning.

THE PARABLE OF THE SEEDS

Read Matthew 13:18-23

Two things you need to understand. There are two schools of thought (Calvinism and Armenianism). Our church takes a stance somewhere in the middle of these two schools of thought.

In order for salvation to occur, the Holy Spirit must convict you of your sins. It is then your chance to respond with either “no I don’t think so today,” or “yes.” Every time you tell the Holy Spirit no, Satan comes and takes the conviction that God put in your heart and pulls it out while hardening your heart. The Bible says in Hebrews 3:12-13, 4:7, that we are to listen today and respond if you hear the call of salvation today. You need to pay attention to it because of the hardness of your heart. You do not get many opportunities to be saved because of the hardening of your heart.

Example: Chris’s testimony- I grew up hearing great preachers; participated in many church events, including weekly Bible studies; and was very active in the church. I grew up in this home, but I did not hear the Holy Spirit speak to me in my heart until I was 17 years old.

You do not get that many chances at being saved. The reason is that when God speaks: He thinks that He is God, and you are not. He thinks that you ought to respond to Him **when** He

calls. You can say to God that you do not want this today, but you may not fully understand the importance of that decision, regardless... you will lose. If the Holy Spirit convicts you and you respond to that conviction with yes, the Bible says in Acts 2:21 and Joel 2:32 "...Everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved." This means that you are immediately saved after you call upon the Lord.

There are two parts to salvation: God's call and my response. Both of those things are vital and at that juncture, you are saved. Once you are legitimately saved, you cannot in anyway lose that salvation.

DOUBTING MY SALVATION

Most Christians doubt their salvation at some point in time. Just because you doubt your salvation does not mean that you are losing your salvation. Satan would never cause a lost person to doubt because then they would start to think about being saved. He does not want you to doubt if you are not a Christian. If you are a Christian, then he does want you to doubt. If he can get you to doubt, then you cannot claim a single promise, you won't pray, you won't read your Bible because of not knowing if you really believe it. Doubting is not the same as losing your salvation. I do not believe that you can lose your salvation PERIOD!

Read I Peter 1:3-7

Peter is writing to people who have been run out of town because of their faith.

- ▶ What was the way He caused us to be born again?

We are" born again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ." This means that we can live in confidence that Jesus Christ really died on the cross to take away our sins and that He rose again to conquer death once and for all. Our hope is not how we view hope as a wishful statement but rather our hope is defined as "to look forward to with desire and reasonable confidence" (dictionary.com). We can have confidence in eternal life with Jesus Christ in heaven and that God will uphold His promise that He will protect us.

Just like the people Peter is writing to, we often struggle with the fact that sometimes being a Christian is not easy but rather is very painful. It is encouraging to know that even when we struggle, this will not undermine our faith because God promises to keep it for us by His power. Nothing is bigger than God, and since he holds your salvation, nothing can ever cause you to lose your salvation. You do not hold on to Him. He holds on to you through His power (Psalm 37:23-25). So no matter how stupid you and I are, His power will overwhelm your stupidity. He will hold on to you so this inheritance is a guarantee, and it is yours. That is imperative.

SEALED WITH THE SPIRIT

Read Ephesians 1:13-14

- ▶ How do we become sealed with the Spirit?

First you must hear the word of truth through the Holy Spirit, then believe that truth and respond correctly to that truth. After that God promises that He will seal you with the Holy Spirit.

- ▶ What does it mean to be sealed?

There are two Greek words for sealed or guarantee *sphragizo* and *arrabon*.

Sphragizo is a Greek word that means “the King’s seal”. Whenever the king had a document that he wanted sealed so no one could open it except him, he would take his ring and put it in some hot wax and put his sign on it. No one would then touch it, as they did not have the authority. He said you have heard and you believed. The Spirit has spoken to you, you heard from God, you believed, you responded correctly to the Spirit. So you are legitimately saved. Paul is very precise in his writing. You heard from God and you believed. You did not figure this out on your own. As a result God has sealed you. He has placed His Holy Spirit in you. That Holy Spirit is God’s seal indicating that only He has the authority to be inside of you. This is why no demon can ever own you, or possess you. They can talk to you, whisper to you and bother you, but they cannot ever come into you again because you are sealed by the Holy Spirit of God.

Arrabon means “the down payment.” The Holy Spirit in you is God’s down payment to you. If you made a down payment in Biblical times, you had to make the purchase. It was a guarantee that you would finish the purchase. This word also means that if I am going to purchase something with gold, then my down payment must also be gold. If I purchase something with money, then my down payment must be in money. My down payment must match what is coming. He gives you what’s you will one day have in full: this perfect connection with God in eternity. The down payment is God Himself. You have two things.

1. You are kept by God’s power and are sealed by God.
2. God gives you a down payment that is His promise to you that He will redeem you.

Read Romans 8:39

- ▶ How does this verse relate to your assurance of salvation?

Clearly nothing can ever separate us from the love of God once we are saved.

Those who say that you can lose your salvation often use the passage Hebrews 6:4-6 (we will look at that in just a second). It is a difficult passage. People that have a pet doctrine will always give you a portion of scripture.

Example: Read 1 Peter 3:21- *This partial verse sounds like you are saved by the act of being baptized. But the next part of the verse says “not the removal of dirt from the flesh, but an appeal to God for a good conscience.”*

Therefore baptism is not about the act of the water washing you clean, but rather that it is the symbol of the Holy Spirit washing away your sins and you dying to the old man and being raised up in the new man. Baptism is an appeal to God that you have a good conscience and a statement to God that you surrender to His blood. Baptism does not save you, but the blood of Jesus does.

YOU CANNOT LOSE YOUR SALVATION

Read Hebrews 6:4-6

*“4 For it is impossible, in the case of those who have once been **enlightened**, who have **tasted** the heavenly gift, and have **shared** in the Holy Spirit, ⁵ and have **tasted** the goodness of the word of God and the powers of the age to come, ⁶ and then have fallen away, to restore them again to repentance, since they are crucifying once again the Son of God to their own harm and holding him up to contempt.”*

▶ Who enlightens us?

The One who enlightens us in our life is the Holy Spirit. Obviously the Holy Spirit has dealt with this person. According to this if a Christian falls away, it is impossible for him to ever be saved again. Look closely at the wording. It says you have been enlightened, tasted, but not digested. He has shared, but He has not come to indwell in you. You have tasted but not eaten.

▶ Carefully examine this verse. Are these verses talking about Christians or non-Christians?

This passage does not reference a Christian based on verse 9.

Verse 9 *“Though we speak in this way, yet in your case beloved we feel sure of better things— [says that I know that this is not true of you...] things that belong to salvation”—* in other words these things do not belong to salvation.

This is not a statement of a Christian falling away. This is a statement in detail of blasphemy of the Holy Spirit. You will get some chances to hear the Holy Spirit. You can say “no.” Satan comes along and snatches out the conviction. Now God will come along and reconvict you. You will not get that many opportunities. You will come to some point in your life, everyone does, where they say to the Holy Spirit, “I don’t want this, I don’t like this, I don’t ever want to hear this again. They have been enlightened. They know they are facing judgment. They know Jesus Christ is who He says He is. They have tasted the good power. They have shared in the Holy

Spirit. He has brought conviction on them. He has worked in their life. He has ministered to them. He has dealt with them. But they have rejected Him. Once you have come to that final rejection; once you commit the blasphemy of the Holy Spirit once you do this; it is impossible to repent. That is the point in Hebrews 6:4-6. It is not a reference point for those of us that have heard and believed. It is a reference point to those that have heard, but have finally said that I do not want to hear ever again. Once you commit that ultimate blasphemy of the Holy Spirit no matter the age you make this decision. Once you achieve this, you cannot be brought back to repentance. It is the final rejection of Holy Spirit's offer of salvation. You are headed for hell.

SIN AFTER SALVATION

- ▶ What about people that sin?

Read 1 John 1:8-10

He is talking us, brothers and sisters in Christ. If you think you are not a sinner, then His Word is not in you. There is a correlative to that statement

Read 1 John 3:6

This passage indicates that as a child of God I am a sinner, but I do not keep on sinning.

- ▶ How do I not keep on sinning?

Read James 4:4-6

I do not keep on sinning because of two things. God is zealous in His jealousy toward us. First, the Bible will talk about that we are not to grieve the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit is going to be zealously jealous of anything in your life that squeezes Him out or diminishes His calling or His role in your life. When you get involved in some kind of sin, and you will do something stupid and sin, the first thing that will happen is that the Holy Spirit of God will be grieved. He does not keep that grief to Himself. You will sense and feel that grief. It is past having a conscious. He may utilize your conscious, but you will sense His grief. There is a jealousy in Him. You will begin to feel ill at ease about where you are or what you are doing. At that point you are sensing the grief of the Holy Spirit. If I don't respond to that grief, then we move into a different realm. Second, God brings discipline in your life as His child.

Read Hebrews 12:5-11

He says that when I sense this grief but choose to ignore it, then God is going to discipline me. Discipline is not God's punishment. Punishment was taken on the cross. He does not punish you for what you do ever again. But He will discipline you if you do not yield to the Holy Spirit's zealous jealousy in your heart. Here is the bad thing....

Read 1 John 5:16

It is possible to commit a sin that leads to death.

Read 1 Corinthians 11

- ▶ What do these verses say about sin?

He is talking about the Lord's Supper. Some of the people at Corinth were enamored with the old life and were getting drunk and did not know what they were doing when they were taking the Lord's Supper. God then took some of their lives. We also have the example of Ananias and Sapphira being killed by God because they lied about the money (Acts 5). You have examples of God taking Christian lives out because of certain aspects of their response to their sin. It is a rare occurrence but possible. It is possible for you to sin in such a way that God pulls you out of the world. But on the whole, the reason you will not stay in sin is because the Holy Spirit is going to make you grieve, and if you do not respond to that grief, God will discipline you. You cannot stay in that sin. Refusing to listen to God's discipline and obey Him could cause Him to remove you from this world.

SUMMARY

As a child of God, the reason that you cannot lose your salvation is that you will never come to a place where you sin completely and walk away from Jesus Christ. That is not possible in the life of a Christian. You are not going to lose your salvation. It is eternal. If it is real, and if it is a response to the Holy Spirit and not just a response to feeling like you need "fire insurance", then you are saved and you cannot lose it. It is kept for you by the power of God. If you see a person whose entire life style is continually moving towards sin, he is not a believer. We do not have the right to make that judgment in his heart, but we do have the right to make that call in his life. The realization of grieving the Holy Spirit and God's discipline will pull you back out of your sin and back to a relationship with Jesus.

LESSON 7: TRINITY

INTRODUCTION

The Trinity is an odd thing in that it is in scripture but is not explicitly taught in scripture. The reason it is so critical is because every single cult denies 2/3rds of the Trinity. There are two kinds of cults; main-line (Jehovah's Witness, Mormon) that do not really employ brainwashing and extremist groups that do employ brainwashing. The cults get 75% of their converts from main line denominations (Baptists, Methodists, and Presbyterians).

Cults will never identify God the Father as anything except Jehovah in the Bible, and will always deny that Jesus is God, and the Holy Spirit is either a Person or God. As a Christian, if I can get others or myself locked down on the truth about the Trinity, then the cults cannot have me. It is important to know what the Bible says concerning this issue.

PROOF OF THE TRINITY

Read Genesis 1:26-27

- ▶ How does this verse tell us that the Trinity exists?

²⁶ Then **God** said, "Let **Us** make man in **Our** image, according to **Our** likeness..."

Notice that in this passage, there are pleural terms when discussing God. That does not mean that there are three Gods. This cannot be explained nor understood in our human minds.

The Bible teaches I think that I am spiritual in body. I understand the distinction that God created me physically to relate to other people physically. He also created me with a soul so that I can relate to other people emotionally. The Bible says that Jonathan's soul was knit together with David's soul (1 Samuel 18:1).

My emotional binding with the Holy Spirit enables me to connect with the Father through the Holy Spirit. It is clear that inside the God-Head, there is the basic idea of the Trinity that there is one God in three persons in that God Head. The Bible said "let us make man in our image" and this shows communication within the God Head and always agreement in the God Head. There is never a disagreement or division in the God Head.

Read Matthew 28:18-20

- ▶ Why are you baptized in all three parts of the trinity?

God the Father chose to redeem us; God the Son accomplished the redemption; and God the Spirit applies the redemption. It is never clearly stated in Scripture, but can be seen throughout Scripture.

Read Ephesians 1:3-14

This is one sentence that deals with God the Father (v.3-6), God the Son (v.7-12) and God the Spirit (v.13-14) and the role in our redemption.

THREE CHARACTERISTICS OF GOD

Read Psalm 139:1-6

- ▶ What characteristic of God is shown in these verses? God is omniscient or all knowing.

Read Psalm 139:7-10

- ▶ What characteristic of God is shown in these verses? God is omnipresent or everywhere.

Read Psalm 139:13-16

- ▶ What characteristic of God is shown in these verses? God is omnipotent or all powerful.

We have this God that David says embodies all three characteristics. He knows everything, He is everywhere and He is all powerful, He can do anything. This defines God. If your God does not have all of these 3 then he is not a god. Jesus as a man does not possess all three of these characteristics while He was on earth. This is where the cults get us.

JESUS

Read Matthew 24:36

- ▶ What characteristic of God is Jesus limited to in this passage?

Jesus is not **omniscient**. This is Christ talking, and He says that the Son does not know of “the day and hour when He will be coming back.” Jesus doesn’t know everything.

Read Mark 6:45-47

- ▶ What characteristic of God is Jesus limited to in this passage?

Jesus is not **omnipresent**. Jesus is alone because He cannot be everywhere. He is not and does not have the ability to be anywhere and everywhere at the same time.

Read John 4:6

- ▶ What characteristic of God is Jesus limited to in this passage?

He is not **omnipotent**. He is not all powerful. He’s tired and exhausted.

This is what Jehovah’s Witness use to show that Jesus isn’t God. They will get you to agree with them that the description of God in the Bible is that he knows everything, He is everywhere and He is all powerful. But this description does not apply to Jesus. He does not know everything,

He cannot be everywhere, and He is not all powerful. What do you say to them?? How do you answer them? They catch you really easily. Most Baptist will say “Uhh well I don’t know” Then they will pull you in with the fact that he prayed to the Father. That he is in subjection to the Father. I Corinthians 15:27 ²⁷ *For HE HAS PUT ALL THINGS IN SUBJECTION UNDER HIS FEET. But when He says, “All things are put in subjection,” it is evident that He is excepted who put all things in subjection to Him.*

When the Jehovah’s Witness pull out these scriptures, this is how they get our children. Most Baptists have no idea how to explain this. The answer is very simple. If these aren’t true in Jesus’s life, He can’t die for you and cannot be your redeemer.

JESUS IS GOD

Read John 14:7-9

- ▶ How does this Scripture define Jesus as God? Jesus says knowing Him is like knowing God.

Read John 1:1-3

- ▶ How does this Scripture define Jesus as God? Jesus is defined as the Creator.

Read Colossians 1:13-20

▶ How does this Scripture define Jesus as God? He talks about Jesus being the fullness of God. He is also defined as the Creator.

Read John 8:58

- ▶ How does this Scripture define Jesus as God?

The Jews killed Jesus because they knew He was claiming to be God despite the fact that He did not exhibit the three major characteristics of God. The Jehovah’s Witness claim that Jesus was just a good man. This cannot be rightly claimed. You must either say that Jesus was God, or He was a liar and a lunatic. You cannot be a good man and run around telling people you are God when you are not.

Also in this verse Jesus calls Himself “I Am” which is one word in the Greek and is used in the Old Testament to refer to God. When Jesus says “I am the way, the truth, and the life,” He is calling Himself God.

Read Philippians 2:6 in as many versions as you have available.

[Philippians 2:6](#) (New American Standard)

*... did not regard equality with God **a thing to be grasped***

[Philippians 2:6](#) (New Kings James)

who, being in the form of God, **did not consider it robbery** to be equal with God,

Philippians 2:6 (Holman Christian Standard)

*...did not consider equality with God something to be **used to his own advantage**;*

The Greek word, emphasized in each version above, is difficult to translate. It does not refer to the act of robbery but rather what is actually stolen. If I break into a house, that would be robbery. What I am taking is the plunder, or what I am grasping. The reason that is important is because he says that Jesus did not consider His equality with God as plunder. In other words, if a man goes in a house and steals a gun, the first thing he does is sells it or uses it. Paul is saying that Jesus did not consider equality with God as something to be grasped, grabbed hold of, pulled into His life and used. That is the absolute key point. Instead He goes on and says that *“he emptied Himself taking the form of a bondservant, being made in the likeness of men, and appearances of men, He humbled Himself by becoming obedient to the point of death- even death on a cross!”*

WHY WAS JESUS BAPTISED?

As is seen in Philippians, Paul believed that Jesus was God, but that he lived life as a man dependent on God.

- ▶ But Jesus never sinned, so why was He baptized?

Baptism is not a picture of the washing away of sin, but rather it is a picture of drowning or dying to the old man and being raised to life in the new man. The baptism of Jesus was so critical to His time on earth. Even though John the Baptist did not want to baptize Jesus, Jesus said no “this it fulfills all righteousness” (Matthew 3:15). Jesus was drowning to being God to become dependent on God. Jesus never quit being God, but He did quit relying on being God and instead started relying on God Himself.

Read John 12:49

“I speak to what I hear, I do not do anything except what the Father allows me to do.”

Everything Jesus did was based on what God told Him, what God empowered Him to do, and what God led Him to do.

- ▶ Why would Jesus give up being God?

He quit relying on being God so that as a man could be tempted and could die. The only way for Jesus to be tempted by sin and to die is that He had to give up these Godly attributes and come here and take on flesh, live for 33 years as a man. As Adam should have lived under God is exactly how Jesus did live, absolutely dependent on God.

The reason He did not know when He was coming back is that He **chose** not to know. The reason He was not omnipresent is that He **chose** to take on flesh. The reason He was not

omnipotent, is because He **chose** to live in dependence on the Father. He died to who He was and came up in dependence to His Father. That is why He prayed to Him. That is why He surrendered to Him. By doing that, He was able to die with 2 kinds of righteousness in His life. He died with a righteousness He has that is innate as God, and a righteousness that is earned as the perfect man. He faced every temptation we face and He said “No”. That is why He *says* “*I fulfill all righteousness*” (Matthew 3:15) *not* just that which is innate as God but what I am fixing to earn as a man in the next few years.

▶ How would you answer to the Jehovah’s Witness now from what we have learned about how Jesus is God?

Tell them that your Jesus is too small to redeem me. I need a bigger Jesus. I want the one in the scripture and not the one you don’t have. Christ is God. He does not reflect the qualities of deity because He gave those up. He did not quit being God but he quit relying on those qualities by choice so that He could redeem us.

THE HOLY SPIRIT IS GOD

Read Matthew 4:1

▶ How do we know the Holy Spirit is God?

This is the greatest point proving the Holy Spirit is God. Right after the baptism, the Holy Spirit led Jesus. Jesus has chosen to be in submission to the Father. If Jesus allows anything but God to lead Him, He sins. The only reason He can yield to the Spirit is because the Spirit is in fact, God.

Read Matthew 12:26-32

▶ How does this scripture prove that the Holy Spirit is God?

The only way for the Spirit of God to cast out demons is that He is God Himself.

THE HOLY SPIRIT IS A PERSON

Read Ephesians 4:30

▶ How does this illustrate that the Holy Spirit is a person?

The Holy Spirit is able to grieve; therefore He has some characteristics of a person. One of the reasons you feel bad at times in your walk, is because what you are sensing is the grief of the Holy Spirit in your life.

Read Acts 13:2

▶ What does this verse tell us about the Holy Spirit?

The Holy Spirit speaks and does the calling of people out. This implies that He is both a person and God. The only way He can call people out in the church to a particular agenda that they have to respond to is if He is in fact God. So the facts that he speaks, feels grief, and calls people out, prove that He is in fact God and a person.

PRAYER

- ▶ What is the role of the different parts of the Trinity in prayer?

What you do is pray to the Father, thru the access granted to you by the son, Jesus, under the direction of the Holy Spirit. The best way to put the Trinity in my prayer life is to pray to God through Jesus with the Holy Spirit directing my prayer life. This takes us right back to 1 John 5 and Matthew 16. For my intercessory prayer to work, I must pray God's will not my will.

SUMMARY

The scriptures teach and exemplify that there is God the Father, God the Son and God the Holy Spirit. All three are God. All are part of the God Head. So although the Trinity is never explained, it is clearly taught.

The Trinity has an impact in my prayer and an impact in keeping me out of a cult. If you understand those things then you will not have a cult bother you.

LESSON 8: THE CHURCH

INTRODUCTION

The church. Some think of it merely as the building that you go to worship in every Sunday and Wednesday. It is a physical place. Others believe that the church is made up of all the Christians in the world. What do you believe is the Church? Who is included? Are there criteria to be involved in the church?

JESUS' DEFINITION OF THE CHURCH

Read Matthew 16:13-19

- ▶ What is the church based upon?

¹⁸ *"...upon this **rock** I will build My church"*

At first glance, this passage appears to say that the church is built upon the rock (Peter). But upon closer examination of the original text, one sees that Jesus takes Peter through two different questions. First Jesus asks, *"Who do you say that I am?"* Peter responds with, *"You are the Christ the Son of the living God."*

Peter's answer is correct not because he as man knew the answer, but because the Holy Spirit revealed the answer to him. When Jesus goes on to say *"this rock,"* He is referring to the act of Peter saying *"You are the Christ the Son of the living God."*

Ultimately, the Church is based on **people who believe that Jesus Christ is who He says He is. This knowledge was revealed to them through the Holy Spirit** and not any man. These two elements are critical.

There are many beliefs currently and in the past that these two elements are not needed for someone to be saved and become part of the Church. In this passage, Jesus clearly teaches...

1. Correct understanding about Christ is revealed by the conviction of the Holy Spirit.
2. The conviction of the Holy Spirit must bring about a conversion in your life leading to salvation.

These two qualities are the requirements of membership in the Church.

Read 1 Corinthians 1:13-17

- ▶ Do you have to be baptized to be part of the Church?

A current debate amongst different religions is whether or not baptism should be sprinkling or dunking in the water. The word used throughout the New Testament is *baptismo* which means to dip in to and immerse. Another Greek word, *rantizo* means to sprinkle and it is not found in the New Testament. Therefore, the Bible appears to indicate the plunging or dunking in water for baptism. But is this an issue of salvation or membership into the Church? (NO!)

1 Corinthians discusses the fact that Paul was sent to the church in Corinth not to “*baptize but to preach the gospel.*” A clear distinction is drawn between the Gospel and baptism. Throughout Scripture, it is clear that baptism is an act of obedience and discipleship. Baptism is not a requirement for salvation.

As a church, we do not believe that you have to be baptized in order to participate in the Lord’s Supper. We do however believe that it is an important part of the discipleship process and that the Bible demands baptism. If someone understands that the Bible calls all Christians to baptism through immersion and decides that he or she simply does not want to be baptized, then that person is living in disobedience.

The purpose of baptism is not for salvation but as proof of your church membership. It is also a public display of your faith. In Biblical times, baptism was done in the public square and often times that person was cut off from the family and friends they previously knew. The Greek word for church is *ekklesia* which means out and called. As members of the church we are called out from the world and into Jesus Christ. Baptism is the first outward representation of this inward change.

In conclusion, the two requirements for membership in the Church is conviction by the Holy Spirit and believing that God is who He says He is. The first proof of your church membership is baptism.

WHO IS THE HEAD OF THE CHURCH

Now that we have a description of how Jesus defined the Church and who the members of the Church are, we will take a look at the makeup of the church and its function in our lives.

Read Colossians 1:16-18

- ▶ Who is the head of the Church?

First, we must decide who could be head of the church. This passage indicates that there are only two being in the universe: the Creator and what He created. “*For by Him all things were created... all things have been created through Him and for Him... He is the firstborn from the*

dead.” The firstborn from the dead is Jesus, therefore Jesus was the Creator and not part of the creation. This indicates that Jesus is God Himself.

“He is also head of the body, the church.” Jesus is the dictator of the Church. He is the head or the controlling factor. No man, even the pastor and the deacons, control what happens in the church. Because of this, no man should ever refuse membership to the church to anyone who has met Christ’s criteria as previously discussed.

Read Proverbs 11:14, 24:6, and 11:4

- ▶ So if Christ is the head of the Church, then why do we vote on anything?

The staff often makes decisions that the answers cannot be found in Scripture (e.g. Upward sports, AWANA, youth program, buy 10 more acres...). These verses indicate that the best way to find answers is through an abundance of counselors. This means that the Church should pray about the issue and be committed to the head of the Church (Jesus Christ). When a vast majority comes back saying that they believe God is leading them in a certain way, then victory can be found through the abundance of counselors.

In the history of Central Baptist Church, most votes have been in favor of the decision of the staff. Unanimity is not required, but it must be a loud decision and not a close call for us to move forward. Therefore, voting is used as a means of hearing from the head of the Church and being safe and victorious in our actions.

WHAT IS THE PURPOSE OF THE CHURCH

There are two purposes within the church that can be summed up as vertical and horizontal. The vertical pertains to one’s relationship with God, while the horizontal aspect involves relationships with other people.

Read Zechariah 8:20-23, Matthew 18:19-20, and John 15:6-8

- ▶ What are some aspects of the vertical purpose of the Church?

- ❖ **Relationship with God: worship and prayer**
- ❖ **God reveals Himself through you to others around you**

Others should be able to see Christ in us in our everyday lives. This is achieved by a close relationship with God containing both worship of God and prayer to God. As individuals and a church, we should show God to others through our lives in a way that makes them want to be a part.

- ▶ What are some areas of our lives that we can show other Christ?

Marriages/ relationships, work, love for other in the church and our neighbors...

Read Romans 15:5-7

- ▶ What are some aspects of the horizontal purpose of the church?

The main idea is that we have to accept and welcome one another.

In John 17, Jesus prays for them to be unified. In Ephesians 3, Paul talks about the most amazing thing he saw is that the Jew and Gentile come together in worship. In the Old Testament, the Gentiles had to become Jews in order to be part of the same life. In the New Testament, both the Jews and Gentiles give up their identities to become unified as Christians. The basis of their unity, and our as a church, is the love for Christ.

- ▶ So, can Christians never disagree?

If it is concerning an issue that is a black and white statement in the Scriptures, then no we cannot disagree. There are times in the church where gray areas such as drinking or small things such as pews or chairs and the color of the carpet that Christians will disagree on. We are all humans and have different opinions. But if these opinions cause distention in the church then they are wrong, because we need to be unified as the body of Christ.

Examples: homeschool vs private school vs public school. Or the use of birth control or not.

As a family you must decide what God wants for you. This includes praying for a clear direction and following the guidance of the Holy Spirit. We are now under freedom by the Holy Spirit and are no longer bound by a strict set of rules (The Law) that we must obey. It is important to remember that just because the Holy Spirit tells you this is right for your family does not mean that it is right for every family.

Unity is based on the Word of God and our relationships with Him.

WHAT IS OUR RESPONSIBILITY IN THE CHURCH

Read Hebrews 10:24-25

- ▶ What are our responsibilities as Christians in the Church?
 - ❖ We can't neglect being together. We need the support of others.
 - ❖ Disciple each other, encourage and bless each other.
 - Although worship can happen anywhere even alone, encouragement and discipleship can only happen when you are part of a group of believers.

Read Romans 12:4-5

- ▶ What kind of gifts does God give to the church?

Each Christian is given a personal, spiritual gift that is to be used to enhance people within the church. Some gifts can be transferred and used outside the church such as the gift of wisdom. But in general, if you do not use your gifts in the church, then you actually damage the church.

One gift that God gives is the gift of leadership. The people with this gift have special callings to fulfill within the church. These positions are listed in Ephesians 4:11-13 and including elders, deacons, and pastors. A pastor or teacher should have the gifts of teaching and shepherding. Deacons on the other hand are seen more in service and protection of the unity of the church.

In Central Baptist, we see these positions as the paid staff. Deacons are used more as a sounding board and a body of believers that pray over decisions and give guidance.

Every Christian has personal gifts and gifts given to the Church. Both must be used for the Church to reach its fullness. As Christians, we are designed to need the guidance and fellowship of the church to be able to be our best for Christ. That is why it is important to get involved in a church where you can be disciplined and where you can also use your gifts to help others and the Church.

It is important to remain working in your area of giftedness to avoid fatigue. In general 20 % of the people do 80% of the work in the church. If everyone did their little part and used their gift, fatigue and frustration with ministry could be greatly minimized.

Read 1 Thessalonians 5:12-13

- ▶ What is our responsibility to those in leadership of the church (Pastor and staff)?

First we must be thankful and respectful of those that God has chosen to place in authority over the church. This includes, if you have an issue with a staff member that you go to them in person and handle the situation directly without bad mouthing them to anyone else.

Read 1 Peter 5:1-3

- ▶ What is the responsibility of the leadership of the church to the members?

First, they have a responsibility to live life well with Christ as an example to the members. They do not have the right to lord over or dictate to the members. Leaders must also maintain the same responsibilities of the members of the church including using their gifts and live a life worthy of our respect. They need to promote unity and following what Christ as the head of the Church has called us a church to do. We vote to help see what the Head of the Church wants us as a church to do.

Conclusion

There needs to be a unity in the church based on the understanding that the church is composed only of people that have been convicted by the Holy Spirit and are surrounded by that Spirit. We believe that Christ is the head of the Church, and even though we vote, we are voting to find what the head of the Church says. We have a horizontal responsibility to encourage and disciple each other, but even more importantly we have a vertical responsibility to have a strong relationship with God. We need to live in such a way and use our giftedness to impact others. Our lives should be so different that people that will pull us to them and ask what is it that we have and they do not that is different and how they can have that.

Extra Points that Might Need to be Addressed

There are times in our lives when we need to step back from using our gifts. These times should be looked at as a leave of absence and not moving out or “retiring.” There will come a time again when you are called to use your gifts in the Church.

Examples: young mom has a family priority and is exhausted, going through a spiritual issue and need to get priorities right, going through a divorce or loss and need to put life back together. Old age or my children are no longer in the children/youth/college ministry is not an excuse to not be working in the church. There is an area for everyone and that is needed to fulfill the purpose of the church.

LESSON 9: THE TRUTH: NOT TWO NATURES BUT ONE

INTRODUCTION

We know we are born with a sin nature, but after we become saved, do we now have two natures? As is commonly seen in commercials and movies, many believe that we have the good nature or the angel on one shoulder telling us the right thing to do while the bad nature or the devil is on the other shoulder trying to talk us into doing wrong. This belief that we have two natures is wrong! We can only have one nature in us.

THE FALL OF MAN

Read Genesis 2:17 and 3:1-7

- ▶ If Adam and Eve do not have a sin nature, how do they end up sinning?

This all took place in the Garden of Eden. At this point, sin had not entered the world and Adam and Eve did not have a sin nature, but a nature committed to obeying God. Satan had already sinned and was kicked out of heaven.

Look at God's command in Genesis 2:17. All He commands is **not to eat** from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. In Genesis 3:3, Eve says that God told them **to not eat or touch** the tree. We already begin to see a shift in Eve's thinking as she begins to debate and doubt what God has said and what the serpent is now saying.

- ❖ Satan makes Eve question God's word leading to doubt **(v.1)**
 - She misquotes God opening up to Satan the opportunity to lie to her.
- ❖ Satan gives a clear refuting of God's word and says God is a liar **(v.4-5)**
 - This leads to even further doubt in Eve.
- ❖ Desire arises that drives Eve's decision to believe Satan's lies **(v. 6-7)**
 - Eve now begins to see the tree as good for food even though she previously had not.
 - An emotional shift occurs in her that causes her to feel that this fruit is a delight and desirable to make her wise.

The desire itself is not a sin, but it is the source of temptation. If Eve had realized that her desires went against what God said and turned back to God, then she would not have sinned. The basis of her sin is that she believed Satan and not God.

From the point that Adam and Eve sin, we now see sin being transferred from one generation to the next and controlling every person in the Old Testament. Adam and Eve sinned not because they have an "old man," but once they sinned that "old man" is now within them. The

sin principle now lives within them. The nature that they had that loved God is now corrupt and no longer in them.

DEATH OF THE OLD NATURE

If you examine the morality of the godly men of the Old Testament and the New Testament, you will see a drastic difference. In the Old Testament people like Abraham, Jacob, and David all had moral issues. They are married to several women and cannot control their sexual desire. On the other hand, the godly men of the New Testament like Paul, Peter, and James did not have affairs or have children out of wedlock.

Read Romans 6:6-12

- ▶ Why is there such a difference in morality from the Old Testament to the New Testament?

In the Old Testament you have a combination of the Law that told them what to do and the old nature that rebelled against everything in the Law. Without the new nature given to us after salvation, even the godly men of the Old Testament had a difficult time following the Law because the old nature was constantly in rebellion.

In the New Testament we see that the flesh or old nature is crucified or killed with Christ. Crucifixion and death on the cross was one of the most violent ways for someone to die in their time. It was a place of shame and death. The cross could be compared to the electrocution chair of our day. With this killing of the old nature, the sin principle in man is no longer effective.

In the Old Testament the people were enslaved to sin as the lost are still enslaved to sin. Once you come to Christ and accept His sacrifice and Him as Lord and Savior, then your sin nature has been crucified or killed. At the point of salvation we have died together with Christ and the old man is killed off.

Romans 6:8 clearly states that “we have died with Christ; we believe that we shall also live with Him.” Because Christ rose from the dead, death no longer reigns over us. The old man that we are born with is now gone and the new nature has come in us.

THE NEW NATURE

Read Romans 8:8-11

- ▶ What is this new nature?

The new nature in us is the Holy Spirit.

Read Romans 7:24-25

- ▶ Why is Paul struggling between the law of God and the flesh?

It appears that this struggle occurred before Paul was saved. Paul says that Christ is the one who will deliver him from the problems he has and he needs deliverance. Through salvation, Christ delivers us from sin and gives us victory. The beginning of the book of Romans walks through salvation, the old nature, and the new nature.

- ❖ Romans 1-4: Out salvation and how to come to Christ.
- ❖ Romans 5: Jesus being our Victory and all that He did.
- ❖ Romans 6: Our old man is dead
- ❖ Romans 7: The struggle we had before salvation
- ❖ Romans 8: We no longer have that struggle because we now possess the person of the Holy Spirit.

Read Romans 8:8-11

- ▶ How do Christians still sin if the old man is no longer in us and the Holy Spirit dwells in us?

In Genesis 3 we see this process of falling into sin...

No sin principle → believe Satan → Killed off good nature → now in rebellion against the law

According to Romans 8 the sin nature led to...

Jesus died on the cross → the old nature was crucified on the cross → new nature as the Holy Spirit dwells in us → we have the choice to live according to the flesh or the Spirit

- ❖ We believe the lies of Satan because we are spiritually immature. **(Romans 8:8-11)**
 - Just as Adam and Eve sinned without a sin nature, so we sin by believing what Satan says and not God.
 - The battle is against what God writes in the Bible and our hearts vs. the whispers of the enemy.
 - God only writes down what we should do once, but the enemy whispers in our ears all day long.
- ❖ We are prideful. **(2 Corinthians 12:7-10)**
 - Pride leads to a focus on ourselves and not the Holy Spirit.
 - God was forced to give Paul a thorn in the flesh to keep him humble and dependent on the Holy Spirit.
 - Become prideful → Judgment → God disciplines → Humility and dependence on the Holy Spirit.
- ❖ Conforming to the world and not renewing our minds in Christ.
 - Much like Adam and Eve we no longer live in the flesh.
 - We sin when we believe the teachings of the age instead of what God tells you.
 - Example: Our age teaches us (we teach it to our children) that they have to have a good self-image, but children don't need a good self-image but need a bad self-image. They need to understand that their value is not tied to who they are but

tied to who they are in Jesus Christ. You don't want them to start loving themselves. They are born to love themselves. This is the reason Jesus Christ says to deny yourself which means "I can't let my self-love drive my life." I have to love Him with all my heart, mind, soul and strength. I have to love others as I love myself. Those 2 things become truth. The idea that I must love myself is in error.

CONCLUSION

Desires themselves are not sin. Believing the lies of the enemy and no longer listening to God is sin. Desires for the wrong things follow after we decide to believe the lies. If you have a desire in your life that is moving you away from Christ then don't fight the desire. Figure out what it is in the Word of God that you don't believe that has created that desire.

Read Ephesians 5:18

- ▶ How do we stop sinning and believing the lies of the enemy?

Keep on being filled with the Spirit. The Holy Spirit will remind you of passages of Scripture, interpret those passages, warn you, direct you, and show you what to believe. If you are continually allowing the Holy Spirit to work in you, then the lies and desires will no longer erupt from you in the wrong way.

We have one nature: the Holy Spirit. The old man has been killed off. How do you live under the old man? You believe the wrong thing by listening to the whisper of the enemy instead of what God writes in His word. So the Bible better be at the center of your life. The enemy is good and if you don't know the principles in God's Word he will talk you into something that is not true. You do not ask for the Holy Spirit, but believe that He dwells in you. God uses brokenness as a way to make us dependent on the Holy Spirit.

LESSON 10: BROKENNESS

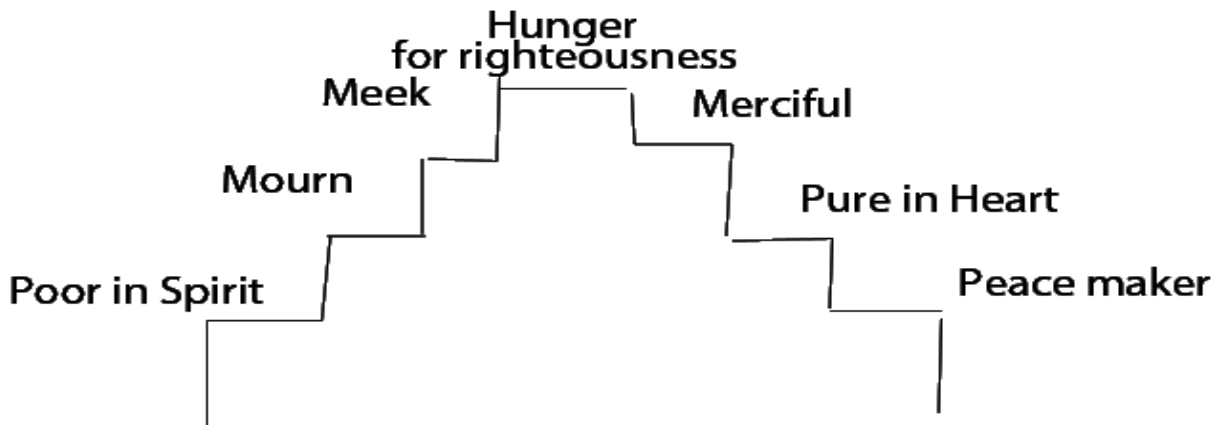
INTRODUCTION

At some point in your life, Christ will break you. There has been an argument in Dallas theological journal that the Sermon on the Mount is not for Christians because it is too difficult to live for even Christians. This is correct in that it is impossible to live out the Beatitudes. As Christians, we must come to the place where our Christian life is not difficult to live but impossible on our own. This is why Jesus gave us the Beatitudes.

THE BEATITUDES

Read Matthew 5:3-9

The Beatitudes can be seen as stair steps. First you climb up the stairs of being poor in spirit, mourning, and being meek. On the other end of the staircase is a stark contrast of mercy, pure, and peacemakers.



▶ 3. “Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.”

Poor in spirit—mourn---meek—hunger // mercy/ pure/ peacemaker

There are two Greek words in the New Testament for poor. One means you are poor but can pay your bills but do not have anything left over. The second word for poor means you have nothing and are reduced to begging to be able to live your life. This second Greek word is the word that appears in the Beatitudes.

In this scripture, the meaning of poor in spirit is when you are reduced to begging in your own spirit and not in the Holy Spirit. You are in spiritual poverty.

▶ **4. “Blessed are those who mourn, for they shall be comforted.”**

Once you have reached a place where you are spiritually poverty stricken, you have reached a place where you mourn over the fact that you are a sinner. When you reach the place where you realize these two things, then you also realize that you cannot live the Christian life on your own and you are actually producing bad things instead of good things.

▶ **5. “Blessed are the meek, for they shall inherit the earth.”**

The word meek or gentle in this passage does not refer to being cowardly, but rather having a teachable spirit. The same word is also used in James 5:20 where it says *“in humility (meekness) receive the word implanted, which is able to save your souls.”* It is important to maintain a teachable spirit. This often occurs after realizing you are spiritually poor and mourning over the fact that you are a sinner and cannot live the Christian life on your own.

▶ **6. “Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they shall be satisfied.”**

After reaching this point of meekness or having a teachable spirit, you then reach a place where you begin to hunger after God’s righteousness. God will then produce this character in you which leads to the second half of the Beatitudes.

▶ **7. “Blessed are the merciful, for they shall receive mercy.”**

8. “Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God.”

9. “Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called sons of God.”

Once reaching the point where you hunger and thirst for righteousness, you will then receive the first character of being a person of mercy. There will be a pureness in your heart, and you will wish God’s best for others no matter what that means.

▶ **Brokenness**

Sometimes God has to take us to a point of breaking in order to build us back up to the point of depending on the Holy Spirit. You will never reach a deep hunger for the things of God and He will never produce this character in your life until these things occur in your life. If you still think you can live a Christian life, then you are not to the point of hungering for God. If you have the spirit that says, “I know what the Bible says but...” then you are not hungering after God. If you do not ever get to this point, then God will break you.

WALKING ON WATER

Read Matthew 14:22-32 and Mark 6:47-52

- ▶ What is Jesus response to Peter's falling away?

Frequently in Peter's life, you see a common refrain.

Peter does something good → Jesus praises him → Peter does something stupid → Jesus rebukes him

Peter starts out successful in obeying Christ's demands. He does it right at first, but fails and is then rebuked by Jesus. Jesus clearly rebukes him by saying "You of little faith, why did you doubt?" Jesus assumes that the success Peter exhibited should have lasted.

Read John 15:5

- ▶ What does this verse say about success in our lives?

Success should be consistent in your life. As seen earlier, when success does not last, then God rebukes us.

JESUS QUESTIONS THE DISCIPLES

Read Matthew 16:13-28

▶ How does Peter respond to Jesus' question? Is this in a similar manner as the previous passage where Peter walks on water?

v. 13-19: He asks the disciples who they think the Son of Man is. Peter replies that He is the Messiah, the Son of the Living God. He is correct and Jesus responds by blessing Peter as this was not revealed to him by man but by God. Peter once again reached a point of success.

v. 20-28: Jesus tells the disciples that He will be killed and then raised up again to life. Peter responds to this by pulling Jesus aside and rebuking Him.

- ▶ If Peter recognized Jesus as the Messiah, then why does he rebuke Him?

Success in our lives often leads to pride and arrogance if we are not broken. Jesus responds to this pride in Peter by rebuking him once again even to the point of calling him Satan. Once again Peter had success, then failed, and was rebuked by Jesus.

MOUNT OF TRANSFIGURATION

Read Matthew 17:1-5

- ▶ Does Peter follow the same pattern in this passage?

Once again Peter shows success by being one of only three chosen to go up on the Mount. Jesus is on the mountain talking with Elijah and Moses about His upcoming events in Jerusalem

including His death. Having already been rebuked about this once, Peter should have been listening to what was being said. Instead Peter speaks up and says that he will build three tabernacles on the mountain. The problem was that Moses, Elijah, and Jesus were not supposed to stay on the mountain. This time instead of Jesus rebuking him, God Himself rebukes Peter by telling him to listen to His Son.

THE CRUCIFIXION

Read Matthew 26:31-35 and Luke 22:31-34

- ▶ At this point has Peter reached a point of brokenness?

No. Peter's response that he will stay with Jesus even though Jesus says he will leave him clearly shows that Peter thinks he knows better than Jesus. Despite Jesus and God rebuking Peter, he still is not broken. At this point Jesus decides to use a different method.

Satan has come to Jesus' followers and wants a shot at Peter. Satan sends demons to attack Peter. Jesus knows that Peter will fail and deny Him three times, but He still says that he prays for him. Jesus prays...

- ❖ For Peter's faith that after he denied Christ, his pain would not be so deep that Peter won't come back to Christ.
- ❖ That when Peter returns after denying Christ, he will strengthen his brothers.

Read Matthew 26:50-54 and Luke 22:51

- ▶ Is Peter successful in these verses?

Peter is doing exactly what he said he would do by facing death and prison by attempting to fight off the angry mob and cutting the ear off Malcheius. He is successful in his eyes.

Read Matthew 26:57-59

Peter still is successful by not leaving Jesus completely, but we do see a shift in that he following from afar. The demons clearly are attacking Peter and Peter is now scared when before he was fearless.

Read Matthew 26:69-75 and Luke 22:61-62

- ▶ Is Peter successful in these verses?

Right after Peter denies Christ three times, Jesus is being walked out, and according to Luke, Peter and Jesus make eye contact. Peter sees Jesus beaten, swollen, bleeding, and bruised and is devastated at what he has done and wept bitterly. Peter has finally after three years reached a point of brokenness. Remember the first step to brokenness is reaching the point where in your spirit you realize that you cannot do anything on your own.

AFTER THE RESURRECTION

Read John 21:15-23

- ▶ How does Peter respond to Jesus questions this time?

Three times Jesus asks Peter if he loves him. Every time Peter responds that he does, but the last time he also is grieved that Jesus would continue to ask. Jesus goes on to tell Peter about what will happen to him in his life to come. Peter does not argue, but simply asks about John. Jesus tells Peter not to worry about John. The big change is that Peter listens, accepts Jesus' statement, and does not argue. These are signs of being broken and depending on Jesus.

PENTECOST

Read Acts 2:22-24

In the same place, Jerusalem, that Peter denied Christ, he now stands up for Him. He looks into the face of those whom he denied Christ to and tells them that they killed Jesus, but God raised Him from the dead. He also preaches of the need for repentance. This bold preaching leads to Peter being imprisoned and ultimately crucified. Legend has it that Peter told them he was not worthy of dying as His Lord did and he wanted to be crucified upside down.

It took Christ 3 years of this scenario to break him, and what finally broke him was when he saw the face of Jesus. When Jesus looked at him, Peter finally realized I can't do it. Peter does mess up in one place before the Holy Spirit comes into the disciples. Even after brokenness, we all keep our personalities and will continue to mess up sometimes.

CONCLUSION

If you look back at the stair steps at the beginning of the lesson, you can see that Peter went through every step throughout his life. He realized when Jesus looked him in the eyes right after Peter denied him that he was poor in spirit and could not do it on his own. He then mourns because he hurt Jesus. He shows that he has a teachable spirit when Jesus tells him that he will die for his beliefs. He hungers after the truth and is merciful, pure in heart, and a peacemaker throughout the rest of his life by preaching salvation to others and willingly accepting the imprisonment and death he faced for Christ.

We all must go through a similar situation before we can live out the Sermon on the Mount. Have you had this moment yet? Are you depending on Christ for everything or do you still think you can do it on your own? This is the first step to being broken. God will continue to pursue you and break you. Everyone's situation is different, but we must learn to depend on God for everything before He can work effectively through us.

LESSON 11: REPENTANCE VS. REMORSE

INTRODUCTION

As we talked about last week, God sometimes has to break us to ultimately bring us closer to Him. How we respond to God's rebuke is vital in determining if we are truly broken or not. In order to be broken we have to be repentant and not just remorseful over what we have done. Although there are many similarities between repentance and remorse, there are two key differences which can be seen when we look at the lives of Judas and Peter.

SIMILARITIES BETWEEN PETER AND JUDAS

- ▶ From your knowledge of scripture, how are Peter and Judas similar?
 - ❖ Both men got the same calling to be an apostle. They are not called to betray Jesus. After an entire night in prayer, Jesus appoints them as disciples to take His message into the world. (**Matthew 4:18-19, Luke 6:12-16**)
 - ❖ Their training is the same. Although Peter, James, and John were allowed to see some things the others did not, all the disciples still had the same training and teaching.
 - ❖ Both have the authority inside the group of disciples. Peter is one of the big three and Judas has the money.
 - ❖ Their warnings were the same. (**Matthew 26:24, 34**)
 - In verse 24, Jesus tells Judas "The Son of Man will go just as it is written about Him." In other words, He was saying, I am going to die on the cross, and you do not have to betray me. If you do betray me, then great damage will come to your life.
 - In verse 34, Jesus warns Peter that he will betray Him. He does not tell Peter that he has to betray Him. He simply warns him of what is about to happen.
 - ❖ Each had an act of betrayal.
 - **Matthew 26:47-50:** There are 3 different words for kiss... Kataphilio is the word used when Judas kisses Jesus. It was passionate as if they were very best friends. Deep emotions were tied into his betrayal.
 - **Kataphilio**-great passion and earnest-super emotional use of hugs and kisses was used only on the most RARE occasions of deep and profound emotional circumstances
 - **Phileo**-, affectionate, passionate fondness
 - **Philemo**- simple kiss" and nothing else-"holy" kiss is merely a pure, sacred, ceremonial kiss—a simple kiss
 - **Matthew 26:73-74:** By the intense cursing, we see that Peter's betrayal is just as emotional and passionate as Judas's betrayal.
 - ❖ The initial reaction of the two men to the betrayal is identical.

- **Matthew 27:1-5:** When Judas realizes what he has done, he is sorry for his action. He comes in tears and says that he has betrayed innocent blood. He displays outward grief.
 - **Matthew 26:75:** When Peter meets Jesus eyes after the betrayal; he instantly exhibits emotional grief and weeps bitterly.
- ❖ Peter and Judas were the only men to stay when Jesus faces the Sanhedrin

DIFFERENCES BETWEEN JUDAS AND PETER

Read Matthew 27:5 and Acts 2:14, 37-41

- ▶ How are their consequences of betrayal different?

Judas is so upset with what he has done that he goes out and brutally hangs himself. Peter on the other hand, goes on to preach to thousands and people come to Christ. Peter betrays God in front of a handful of people, but after his brokenness, he is bold enough to preach in front of thousands including the Jewish leadership.

Basically, it comes down to the difference that Judas was remorseful, but Peter was repentant.

REPENTANCE AND REMORSE

Read 2 Corinthians 7:10

- ▶ How can sorrow be different and lead to different consequences?

According to this passage there are two types of sorrows. One is a worldly sorrow (remorse) that leads to death. The other is godly sorrow where there is no regret as it leads to life.

Read Matthew 27:3-5, John 21:17, Matthew 26:75 and Acts 2:14, 37-41

- ▶ What kind of sorrow is seen in this passage?

Remorse. Worldly sin leading to death is seen in Matthew 27. The rest of the passages indicate repentance or godly sorrow leading to life.

REMORSE

Read Matthew 27:3

- ▶ Why is Judas upset in this passage?

It is commonly believed that Jesus was picked up on Thursday night around 6:00 pm. It is now Friday around 6:00 am. There has been 12 hours that Judas never says anything. When it says that Judas “saw that Jesus was condemned,” it appears that Judas never thought Jesus would actually be killed. Judas was mad at Jesus for rebuking him publicly a few days before when the woman wanted to pour the expensive oil on Jesus feet and Judas tries to stop her (Matthew 12:1-8). Judas is mad at Jesus and just wants to get even.

While Peter's grief was instant, Judas's grief was hours later. He also does not grieve that he has hurt Jesus, but rather grieves over the consequences of his betrayal (Jesus death).

Remorse is when you are grieved over the consequences of your actions.

REPENTANCE

Read Luke 22:60-62

- ▶ Why is Peter upset in this passage?

Peter is distraught over the fact that he had hurt Jesus. His reaction is instant when he meets Jesus' eyes and realizes what he has done.

Repentance is when you are grieved over the fact that you hurt Jesus.

Read Psalm 51:1-4

- ▶ What kind of sorrow is seen here?

This is the Psalm of David when Nathan the prophet came to David after he had gone into Bathsheba, gotten her pregnant, and killed her husband, one of his mighty men. Despite the fact that David harmed Uriah, Bathsheba, his children, and the nation of Israel, this is not why David is sorry. He says to God "against You, You only have I sinned."

CONCLUSION

There is no way that a person can be saved unless they are repentant. If you have a sin that controls you, and you find yourself weeping, crying, and moaning, over it but never stops, then you are remorseful and not repentant. The Holy Spirit must speak to your heart, and it is He that makes you sorry or repentant. With true repentance comes victory.

Read 1 John 3:6

If you are walking in the Spirit, then the moment you sin, He will convict you. If it is a long time before you bothered by the sin, then you are probably not walking in the Spirit. At some point when the Holy Spirit speaks to you, if you are really repentant, then you will be sorry for the sin. There is no way that when God Himself indwells you that it does not have a profound impact on your life.

Today if you hear His Voice, then respond. You cannot be saved without hearing His Voice. We have made Christianity so easy. In the end it has to be the voice of God in your heart to be saved. If a person is repentant then they will change. There must be a consistency of righteousness. If there is a consistence of sin and that stays until you die, then you were never a Christian. True repentance brings about life-long changes that bring you closer to God and His will for your life.

LESSON 12: TRIALS IN LIFE

INTRODUCTION

Some men are really good at speaking and can talk people out of the truth simply with their words. An example of this is many of the TV preachers today. They are great at rhetoric, but can lead masses away from the truth. The common basis of their teachings is that if you have faith in Jesus then you will never have any money problems, health problems, or trials in your life. These preachers sometimes also speak heresy by trying to add things to the gospel. Some believe that Jesus Christ died to suffer in hell to pay penalty for our sins. Paul clearly states that if you add anything to the blood of Jesus Christ then you are guilty of heresy and are cursed by God. It is important to not be swayed by great speakers, but cling to the truth of God's Word. Today, we are going to look into what Scripture has to say about trials in our lives.

TRIALS

Read James 1:2-4

- ▶ What do these verses say about trials?
 - ❖ You don't rejoice over the trial, but you count it as joy.
 - ❖ You will meet trials of various kinds; therefore there are no limits as to what they may be.
 - ❖ The testing of your faith in Jesus Christ (not you) produces steadfastness.
 - Lost people do not get tested.

Read Hebrews 12:2

- ▶ How do we handle the trials in our lives?

We must look beyond the trial. This verses talks about how Jesus faced the ultimate trial in pain. Think about a time when you sinned and were shamed because of it. Jesus was filled up with that shame, embarrassment, and humiliation from every person that has ever been born. There was no joy in the cross for Jesus which is why He asked God if there was any other way. Jesus endured the cross because of the "joy set before Him" in knowing that through that trial, people for generations to come would be able to begin a new relationship with God through Jesus Christ and grow in His Word.

James says to handle trials in a similar fashion by looking for the joy to come which is the true testing of your faith. You will not have joy in the trials; otherwise they would not be trials. You have to assume that no matter what you are facing, God can pull you through.

PURPOSE OF TRIALS

Read Proverbs 17:3 and Psalm 66

- ▶ Why do we go through trials?

The analogy of a furnace is used in both sets of verses. If you have a rock filled with a bunch of different metals and you want to get the silver out, then you burn it and melt all the other metals away and you are left with silver. Likewise, if Jesus Christ is in you and God wants to make sure at the end of the day you are left with a perfect stance of Jesus Christ, then he will put you through the furnace so He burn out those impurities in your life.

Like a furnace, trials are going to burn and be difficult, but through these trials, God is pulling out what should not be in your life. To reach maturity in Christ, you must go through trials. This can be difficult to grasp, but you must understand this and be willing to suffer in order to grow closer to Jesus Christ.

Read Romans 5:1-4, Romans 8:18, and Ephesians 2:4-7

- ▶ What do these verses say about the reason for trials?

Romans 5 talks about the deepening of our faith in Jesus Christ because trials bring about “perseverance, proven character, and hope.”

Romans 8 mentions the fact that our suffering is nothing compared to the glory that is to be revealed. This coming glory is further defines in Ephesians 2 where God says that He will show us (Christians) off to eternity. Some day in the future, God will hold us up and show us off to eternity because of our redemption. Man was created as the highest created being and we crave that importance in our life that was lost through Adam and Eve. God wants to hold us up and go through every detail of our trials and say that we stood up for Him no matter how hard the trial.

Example: Jesus sent out 70 men who began to see all these miracles. They come back excited about what they saw and tell Jesus everything. Jesus is also excited but tells them that He saw Satan fall from heaven because of the impact these men had on him. He warns them not to rejoice because the spirits are subject to them. On the other hand, He says to rejoice because their name is written down in heaven.

The centerpiece of my rejoicing is my redemption so that I can handle the times when joy is removed through the trial because the joy that I know is coming one day is that I stand before God and He shows me off to the universe as a man that stood well for Him amidst of trial.

IS THERE A LIMIT TO OUR SUFFERING?

Read Genesis 15:13

- ▶ Is there a limit to our suffering?

God sets a time limit for your trials. In this passage, God tells Abram that his children will suffer for 400 years. Usually, trials are episodic, but some can have a lifetime effect. However there is either a time limit to the trial itself or a time limit to your adaption to the trial.

Example: Joni Eareckson Tada- Girl who was diving and broke her neck and is paralyzed from the neck down. She will never be able to walk, but there was a timeframe where she learned to adapt and overcome the trial. She went on to share the Gospel with many.

Read Genesis 50:19-21

- ▶ How can our trials change our lives?

This is the passage where Joseph is talking to his brothers, years after they sold him into slavery. Joseph assures his brothers that it was God's work and not anyone's sin that caused everything to happen. Even though they meant it for bad, God used the circumstances for good. When God gets you through a trial and releases you, God will bless both you and those around you.

- ▶ What are two truths about trials that these verses indicate?
 1. God could have prevented it, but did not.
Any trial we experience, God either allows or causes to happen. This can be difficult to accept in the face of the trial, but ultimately we must accept it and turn to God because He is in the trial with us.
 2. Some trials that come to you are because of your sin.
Joseph used the knowledge and insight that God gave him to mock his brothers and parents. This led to being sold in slavery (the trials in his life) which God ultimately used for His glory.

CAUSES OF TRIALS

Read Matthew 24:9 and James 5:13-15

- ▶ What are some of the causes of trials?
 - ❖ Sin (**Genesis 50:19-21**)
 - ❖ Standing up for Christ (**Matthew 24:9**)
 - ❖ Problems in your life (**James 5:13-15**)
 - Sometimes you will have problems in your life as a result of God disciplining you for sin. Once you are repentant, God can send somebody to pray for you and anoint you leading to removal of the trial.
 - ❖ To bring glory to God (seen in earlier passages)

WHEN TRIALS SEEM TO OVERCOME US

There are times in our lives when trials are so painful and difficult on your faith that it will be impossible to utilize your faith. God has a special way of handling this.

Read Romans 8:26-28

- ▶ What do we do when we cannot seem to withstand the trial?

There is nothing we can do, but the Holy Spirit has promised that He will intercede for us. Faith can never be burned away because even when it is difficult to utilize, the Holy Spirit steps in and God honors His prayer. Your faith is never lost and good comes out of the trial.

CONCLUSION

All Christians will face trials for various reasons. We will not have joy in the trial, but in the coming joy promised by God. There is a time frame for our trials, and no matter how bad they are we cannot lose our faith because the Holy Spirit will intercede for us. Ultimately, we will endure the trial and God will bring about good by blessing us and others and bringing us to greater maturity in Christ.

LESSON 13: SATAN

REVIEW:

Some of the reasons that the Bible shows we should fast over are:

1. Anointing of elders
2. To seek God
3. In the middle of a national crisis
4. In the middle of Grief
5. Need for protection

The fast is the instrument used to seek God so we can hear from Him

INTRODUCTION: WHAT IS SATAN'S PLAN?

If you are listening to God and living out your life under His direction you will find that you have an enemy, Satan. This enemy is going to develop in your life. From day one he does not like you.

Read John 10:10

- ▶ What does this verse state that Satan's plan is?
- ▶ What is God offering to you?

You start out with an enemy, but his direction towards you is going to develop based on how well you live your life for Christ.

Read 1 Peter 5:6-8

- ▶ These verses tell us that Satan is seeking someone to devour, but how does Satan choose who he really wants to go after?

Satan makes that choice based on how much a person is impacting the world for Christ. If our life is leading people to trust in God and to walk with Him, then Satan will bring his attacks to try to stop us. We talk about spiritual warfare often, but we often miss the point that we are the weapon that damages Satan's kingdom.

Life is a chess game between God's people with their godly influence and the lost people and their sinful influence. Like chess pieces, everyone has unique abilities and gifts. Satan moves his pieces in response to how God is moving His pieces. Satan's ultimate goal is to limit the number of people having a positive influence on the unsaved and leading them to the kingdom of God. We must make sure we are prepared for this battle.

We often overrate Satan. Thankfully, he is not equal to God, and he does not have God's capacity. He has to rely on a demonic organization made up of the 1/3 of heaven that fell with Satan (Revelation 12:4, 9).

DEMONS ARE ORGANIZED

Read Daniel 10:13

In this passage, there is one demon that heads up Persia, and he had enough demons under him that he was able to resist Gabriel's mission, that was from God Himself, for 3 weeks until Michael came and gained victory for him. He has demons that are at his beck and call, surrender to him, and work for him. They are organized and careful. How Satan directs them and the number of demons he sends will be based on how much impact your life is having on the world.

Example: Hitler studied and practiced the occult and rituals. He hated God's people. When he decided to go after the Jews, he was frightened of the church and God's people. He knew the church was the only one who could stop him. To judge how the church would react, one night he sent some men out to go to the Jewish business men, beat them up, and tear up their businesses. He waited the next day to see the Churches' reaction. Except for a small group of pastors the church remained silent. Eventually Hitler takes over the church and kills 6 million Jews because the one entity that could have stopped him, and that he feared, refused to stand when they should have.

Example: George Bush failed when he was elected concerning the idea that we would define marriage as between a man and a woman. After he was elected, Laura Bush said she could not see why we were making this a political issue because it was a moral issue, but in reality all law is based on moral issues. Because President Bush and Christians did not push this legislation through, we now see several states that have allowed marriage between people of same sex and even adoption children by same sex couples. This is happening because we had a man who said he loved Christ but did not take the stand he should have.

We know the enemy will come after us, and often that is why we do not take a stand, and why we face defeat. We fear his attack and therefore do nothing. We must be mindful that we have an enemy who will send demons to attack us. We must be ready and willing to stand up.

WHAT CAN STOP DEMONS?

Read 2 Thessalonians 2:1-9

Verses 6-8 tell us that there is something (the Holy Spirit in God's children) stopping the arrival of antichrist in the world. When we are removed in the rapture, then the antichrist is released to come and do as he wills. As you can see, believers make a huge impact on the world today. Even though we are in the minority, we have the power through the Holy Spirit to hold the antichrist at bay.

- ▶ How do I become the ultimate spiritual entity for warfare that I need to be for Christ?

Read Matthew 12:29

In these verses "the strong man" is symbolic of Satan. As Christians we have the power to get into Satan's house and bind him so that we can go into his kingdom and release captives. That is the directive God has for us. Thus we become the spiritual entity that impacts the world. It is imperative that we be able to conquer Satan.

- ▶ How are we able to conquer Satan?

Summary of Romans 6-8

1. Death of old nature (chapter 6)- only one nature in you (one whole lesson on this)
2. What it was like before I was a Christian (chapter 7)
3. Role of the Holy Spirit in my life (chapter 8)

The way that I become the entity that conquers Satan is to first conquer him in my own life by becoming a Christian. My old nature is removed; I am indwelt by the Holy Spirit; and now as I live in the Holy Spirit, I have the capacity to live victoriously in the power of the Holy Spirit. If I allow Satan to conquer me, then I cannot overcome his work in this world.

HOW CAN I MAKE A DIFFERENCE

Read Galatians 5:16

In the Greek it says: If we live by the Spirit then it is impossible to fulfill the love of the flesh. Living under the guidance of the Holy Spirit is the major way we can defeat the enemy.

Read Matthew 5:13-16

- ▶ How do I impact Satan in this kingdom?

These verses tell us that we are salt and light and this is how we impact Satan's kingdom.

Salt was first used in the 1st century as a preservative rather than a seasoning. Likewise, we preserve God's character in this world by living out God's will in our lives.

Read Ephesians 2:1-3

These verses teach us that we are controlled by the culture of our day, and Satan controls our culture. Our culture teaches that it is not your character that matters, but it is your success and your production.

Example: We don't care if Clinton is a womanizer with someone his daughter's age as long as he puts money in my house. I don't care if John Kennedy sleeps around in the White House as long

as he wins the day for me. We, as Americans don't care about character any more. The culture is a reversal of what Jesus said we ought to be.

- ▶ Who is reversing what God wants? (The enemy)
- ▶ How do I bind him, and how do I begin to affect him?

First, I live my life in a manner that shows that God's character is of paramount importance in my life. (*Being the salt of the world*)

Second, share the God's truth through the Gospel and any other truth God states in the Bible that is absolutely clear. If it is an objective black and white directive in scripture, teach it to the world. Do not teach your own interpretation of the Bible in areas that are not black and white, such as Baptists are not allowed to dance. (*Being the light to the world*)

I John 5 states that I need to pray according to God's will and what God wants in order to have an effect on the community I live in. When I pray in this manner, it will impact others. I claim God's promises like we saw in 2 Peter; I believe them; and I begin to allow Him to form Himself in me.

Read Acts 16:6-10

In these verses God directs Paul to go to Macedonia (Europe) instead of Africa (where Paul wanted to go.) Like Paul, it is important to go where God tells you to go, so you can impact the kingdom through fulfilling God's plan in your life.

This passage is where Luke joins the team. Notice that it changes from "they" to "we" in this passage as Luke joins Paul's missionary team. This is also the passage that indicates the reason why the gospel went to Europe instead of Africa and was then eventually spread to America and ultimately us today.

- ▶ How do these verses impact us today?

You go where God says, let your old man die, and live out God's character. Share truth, pray according to God's will, and go where He sends you. Allow God to move you wherever He wants to move you. When you do these things, then you will be God's chess piece, and will impact Satan's kingdom. At this point, Satan will develop an animosity towards you.

DO THE DEMONS KNOW YOU?

Read Acts 19:15

¹⁵ *And the evil spirit answered and said to them, "I recognize Jesus, and I know about Paul, but who are you?"*

Because Paul was walking and sharing Christ as well as praying in God's will, the demons knew his name. Demons know who Jesus is and can also recognize those Christians who are impacting the world for Christ.

▶ How can you live a life so that the demons know your name?

You should strive to live in such a way that the demons in Bryan/College Station, Texas talk about you and know your name because of your impact for Christ. We are the spiritual weapon that God uses to impact others. When we are effective, we overwhelm the satanic influence and begin to anger the demons.

Do not doubt the existence of demonic influence and be careful to not open yourself up to demonic influence by being in the wrong place at the wrong time and not following God's will. Be careful even to not put yourself in danger by going to a place of demonic or occult activity because of curiosity instead of being there to be God's influence.

In this very room, there are angels and demons and those demons strive to undermine who you are in Christ and your impact in this world. Your focus needs to not be on Satan, but on loving Jesus and letting His Spirit flow from you. We must rely on Christ to handle Satan and not try to face him on our own. Satan's demons will double up on you to rip you apart, but remember that you have the 3rd person of the trinity (the Holy Spirit) with you. When He is with you, who can be against you? So no matter how many demons Satan sends against you, they will never outnumber God. You are always the victor when you become a spiritual weapon in the hands of God.

SUMMARY

You have an enemy, Satan, and he has a number of demons that is limited. Satan assigns the demons as he sees fit according to your walk with Christ and impact on the world for Christ.

Satan attacks you by drawing you away from God so that you will no longer negatively impact Satan's plan for this world.

You can withstand Satan by becoming the salt and light of this world through sharing God's truth, praying God's will, and going where God wants you to go. Those in leadership that stand up for Christ need our prayer to support them against Satan's attacks.

Satan is powerful and knows what we are thinking and praying and is the master of distraction.

Example: When Jesus was in the Garden praying before the crucifixion, likely all of Satan's demons were present and attacking Jesus. They could not control Him but they could distract Him by suggesting that there may be some other way.

As Christians our beliefs should drive our desires, but for the lost it is just the opposite. There are places of satanic strongholds. If you find yourself in these places, focus on God instead of Satan and Satan will not be able to pull you away from God for he is scared of God.

LESSON 14: ANGELS AND THEIR ROLE IN MY LIFE

REVIEW:

- We wrestle against the methods of the devil.
- Demons and Satan are spatial.
- It requires a group of beings that Satan leads and instructs to fight against you.

Today we are going to take a look at the opposite of Satan and his demons- Angels. God moves the angels in response to the satanic attacks against you. We are going to look at the angels' role in your life including their purpose and how they work in your life. Neither angels nor demons can be seen, but they are both currently present in the room.

INTRODUCTION

Read 2 Kings 19:35

- ▶ How powerful are the angels?

In one night, an angel killed as many people as the entire Brazos valley population. Angels are more powerful than any man. In Revelations, the angels are going to come and reap judgment at the end of times and do the separation when Jesus comes back

Read Daniel 12:1

- ▶ How are the angels organized?

There are only two angels named in the Bible, Gabriel and Michael (plus Satan). This passage refers to the Israelites as the "sons of your people."

- ▶ So if Michael was to "guard over the sons of Israel", did Michael fail when 6 million Jews were killed by Hitler in WWII?

Think about this as we learn more about angels and their function. We will discuss the answer to this later on in this lesson.

Read Jude 1:9

This verse is a quote out of the book *The Assumption of Moses*, written between the writing of the Old Testament and the New Testament. In this passage, we have Michael and Satan arguing over the body of Moses. Michael does not have the power in and of himself to conquer Satan.

When Gabriel went to speak to Daniel, it took both Gabriel and Michael to overcome the demon in charge of Persia (Daniel 10:13-14).

The angels have an order in which they are arranged according to their power and authority. The archangel is considered the most powerful of all the angels. It is assumed that Satan was the archangel before he fell, and even after he fell, the power and victory he possessed was maintained.

The angels, even Michael the archangel is not powerful enough to defeat Satan. Therefore, Michael says "The Lord rebuke you!" This is why Michael uses his submission to God to overcome Satan.

▶ Why were they disputing over the body of Moses?

In the Old Testament, God buried Moses where he could not be found. The purpose was for the Jews to be unable to find Moses' body and worship him instead of God. Satan knew this and desired to use Moses' body as a relic for the Jews to worship and pray over instead of worshipping and praying to God.

ANGELS CAN APPEAR IN YOUR LIFE

Read Hebrews 13:1-2

Although angels look like men, they cannot become men and cannot have sex with human women.

ANGELS CANNOT REPRODUCE OR TAKE YOU OVER

Read Matthew 22:30 and Genesis 6:1-4

Some people believe that the "sons of God" are angels, but according to Matthew 22:30, that is not possible. Reproduction is a gift that God has given to us created in His image. Angels are not created in His image.

ANGELS ARE NOT MADE TO RULE

There are a finite number of angels. One-third of angels fell from heaven with Satan; therefore there are 2/3rds angels and 1/3 that are now demons and this number will not change.

Read Hebrews 1:13-14

Clearly, God did not design angels to rule, but rather to be "ministering spirits, sent out" to serve for the sake of those who will inherit salvation. Although they are powerful, they can kill only in response to what God says and will be judged by us one day.

ANGELS ASSIST US BASED ON OUR WALK WITH GOD

Read Psalm 34:7

The angels' ability to serve us is based on how well we fear God. If you are not doing what you should be doing, or are somewhere you should not be, you are opening yourself up to demonic assault, and the angels cannot rescue you. If you fear God and live as He wants you to and are where He wants you to be, then you open yourself up to angelic assistance.

We face spiritual battle every day, but we are not on our own. How you view God in your life and understand Him is going to determine how the angelic order will assist or not assist you in your life against demonic activity.

Example: Read Acts 12:5-8. This story shows the direct link between angelic intervention and the prayer of the church. The church is praying for Peter who was imprisoned for preaching. Both the church and Peter were where God wanted them to be and doing what God wanted them to do. Because they were in God's will, the angel appeared and pulled Peter out of danger. It required both following God's will, or fearing Him, and praying for the angelic assistance to be allowed.

OUR "GUARDIAN ANGEL"

Read Matthew 18:10

We are all born with at least one angel that we keep throughout our life. These angels can impact our life in a variety of ways, many of which we have already discussed.

ANGELS CAN INSTRUCT US

Read Acts 8:26-29

In this passage, an angel of the Lord instructed Philip as to what he should do. At times, you may feel motivated to do something. This can be the whispering of an angel as well as the direction of the Holy Spirit.

ANGEL CAN FEEL EMOTIONS

Read 1 Corinthians 11:4-10

*"...¹⁰ Therefore the woman ought to have a symbol of authority on her head, **because of the angels.**"*

A woman wearing a head covering is the same as wearing a wedding band. It means that you are in submission to the man married to. If her head is uncovered it means not submissive.

This is why a wife should have a symbol of authority on her head because of the angelic presence in the worship service.

After the fall, the angels lost 1/3 of their friends when they refused to submit to the Creator of the Universe. When the angels see us not submitting and ignoring leadership of the husband, it reminds them of the pain they went through when 1/3 of heaven fell, and you wound them emotionally when your spirit is non-submissive. Your angels who follow you into worship are wounded by your lack of submission.

Now let us take a look back at the question we asked at the beginning of this lesson.

Read Daniel 12:1

▶ So if Michael was to “guard over the sons of Israel”, did Michael fail when 6 million Jews were killed by Hitler in WWII?

First off, the Jews did not honor God in their life during this time. In fact they have not honored Him since God gave them a chance to have Jesus and they rejected Him. Although the angels did not encamp around the Jews, they still protected the remnants.

Chris believes that those that the angels did serve refused to stand when they should have. Since they were not fearing God and following His will, they did not allow for the angelic assistance to create a shield of protection for the Jewish nation. Like these Jews, when we do not stand up for Christ, we allow satanic activity, such as Hitler’s slaughter of the Jews, rather than angelic assistance to occur.

Example: Hitler and his inner circle were occult, satanic practicing worshippers. The only entity Hitler feared was the church, yet he wanted to kill Jews because they were God’s chosen people. He decided to test the church by sending out his goons to beat up Jewish shopkeepers and to tear up their businesses. When the church in general and the Jewish people refused to stand, those angels were not allowed to minister. The result was that 6 million Jews were killed.

APPLICATION TO TODAY

Similar reasons may be why we have so many issues in America today.

When Roe vs. Wade originally came out, the Christian church did not stand up for the lives of the unborn. If Psalm 34:7 and all the rest we have learned today is true, the angel’s ministry is based on how I live my life. If Christians chose to fear God, follow His will, and allow for angelic assistance rather than demonic attack, then the angels would stand up with us and we could make a mighty difference in this nation. It is time to quit blaming all the lost people in America for how bad America is today. It is the failure of the church to stand. When the church is

raptured out, that is what opens up the demonic activity because all the angelic activity will be gone as well. How well we live in Christ is going to determine the impact of demons and angelic beings in our life.

SUMMARY

- ▶ Philip is living for Christ; therefore the angel speaks to him.
- ▶ Peter is preaching and the church is praying so Peter is delivered.
- ▶ When we look at WWII and the rise of abortion in the United States, we see that angelic activity has been diminished and demonic activity has been increased because the church does not want to stand for anything that would damage us.

LESSON 15: WITNESSING

GREAT COMMISSION

Read Matthew 28:18-20

- ▶ What is your responsibility as a Christian when it comes to witnessing?

If you do not have someone in your life that you are disciplining then you are not living out what Christ wants you to live. You are responsible for the people in your life that God puts there for you to be able to share Christ with.

It can be scary to witness to someone. That is why we will discuss some objectives and principles that can be used when sharing the Gospel.

PRINCIPLES OF WITNESSING

First off, you do not need to understand the Kenosis theory or the incarnation of Jesus to be able to share your faith. What they do need to understand is the difference between the lost person and the saved person.

1. Start out with God loves them. John 3:16 is a great place to start because the focus is on God and His love. Romans 5:8 starts with sin and should be used later. You want to start with God's love for them.
 - a. **John 3:16, Romans 5:8, and 1 John 3:16**
2. Stress that everyone has sinned, and that sin violates God and not them. Sin is anything that violates God. It is important to bring up both of these points so that they will understand that they are not comparing themselves to others. It does not matter how you compare to others when it comes to sin, but how you compare to God when it comes to holiness.
 - a. **Romans 3:23**
3. Any problem you have can be cured by God. Stress these three things: death, eternal life, redemption of the victory. Death is not a ceasing to exist, but separation from God. It is important to emphasize that you will either exist connected with God or you are going to exist separated from God. The payment for sin is death, but Jesus took that payment for us on the cross.
 - a. **Romans 6:23 and Genesis 2:15-16**
4. Explain to them the blood of Jesus Christ and the need to trust Him and receive the gift of salvation. Grace is a gift from God and not a result of works. To receive salvation you must believe that Jesus' blood pays the debt for your sin. Next, you should say with your mouth to God that you believe, accept, and want to ask Christ into your life.
 - a. **Ephesians 2:8-10, John 1:12, Romans 10:9-13**

SUMMARY OF WITNESSING

1. Tell them God loves them
2. They need to know that their sin violates God
3. Jesus Christ took their place on the cross
4. His blood is the payment for their sin
5. They now have the choice to accept or reject this

Repentance is an important aspect of salvation. If they do not understand that their sin violates God, they will not understand the need for repentance. You have to be repentant to be saved. It is important to emphasize that sin violates God and cannot be ignored by God. If you receive His salvation, then your life will change. God's holiness comes in, the Holy Spirit indwells you, and you have repentance and forgiveness.

Read John 16:8-11

- ▶ What does this passage say about witnessing and salvation?

You cannot force anyone into salvation or make the decision for them. You present the Gospel and allow the Holy Spirit to convict them.

When dealing with young children, it is important that the Holy Spirit is the one convicting. It is a good idea to put the child off for a while. If the conviction is true, your child will continue to press you about salvation.

It is important to not argue but to answer questions. Your responsibility is to present the truth in love. It is the Holy Spirit's responsibility to convict people.

COMMON QUESTIONS AND COMMENTS

1. *"The Bible is full of errors"*- A simple response is to ask them for an example. Most non-Christians cannot answer. Some Christians who read the Bible may be able to come up with some passages that are difficult to understand.
2. *"I don't want to be saved because there are too many hypocrites in the church."* Don't try to say that there are not hypocrites in the church. Jesus says that the enemy will sow tares among the wheat. You are going to have lost people who go to church and talk about Jesus. **John 2:23-25** talks about people that said they trusted Jesus, but Jesus did not trust them. One response you can use is "Yes there are hypocrites in the church. But I would rather spend a few years with them here than an eternity with them there."
3. *"I think that Jesus was a good man, but I don't know about what you are saying."* If this occurs you need to tell them that is not an option and read them 2 verses: John 5:22-23 and John 14:9. Jesus is God, so if you believe in one then you believe in the other. Jesus

equates the reverence that is given to God should also be given to Him. Therefore, Jesus was either a good man and lied about being God, or He is who He says He is.

4. *“With all the evil in the world, I have trouble believing God is good”* **Revelation 21:22** says that God does not like this world either. It is broken, but one of these days He will fix it. **Psalm 56:8**, God keeps every tear you cry because He hates what you are going through. He wants to be able to reward you for all the pain you went through in this broken world. God wants to fix this world, but He is waiting on people to decide what they are going to do with Him (**2 Peter 3:9**).
5. *“I don’t buy all that creation stuff, I think that we just evolved.”* You can respond with two statements: I am not going to argue scientific things, and I am not going to argue the anthropic principle or the law of human existence or entropy. You can even bring them to the point that if they believe they are a product of chance, then they have no real purpose or meaning in life. Make sure that you bring it back to the point that they have purpose and significance to God.

CONCLUSION

When was the last time you shared Christ with someone? Are there people in your life that you have felt from time to time you need to talk to about Christ but haven’t? I challenge you to go home and pray “Holy Spirit, I don’t believe that there are lost people in my life by accident. Over the next week, give me the names of the people in my life that you want me to share my faith with.

All you have to do is present the four main aspects of salvation and Scripture to back it up...

- God loves you
- You are broken and we are both in this problem
- Jesus fixes that problem
- If I ask, He will come in and make it real in my life

Don’t try to fix them or convince them they need salvation. Present the truth and allow the Holy Spirit to work in their heart.

Be careful that you are not judging anyone when you witness. Someone may claim to know Christ, but the fruit of their life does not reflect that. Simply go to them with the verses about fruit and tell them what you see and suggest that they look into their own life.

Titus 1:16, Matthew 7:16, Matthew 12:33, Luke 6:43, John 15:5, and Colossians 1:10

Pray for those you know who are lost that the Lord will bring conviction in their lives. That is the only way to salvation.

LESSON 16: SPIRITUAL GIFTS

PURPOSE and SPIRITUAL GIFTS

Read Jeremiah 1:5

- ▶ When is your purpose in life given to you?

Before you were born, God created you for a particular purpose. It does not matter how you came into being. God has a purpose for your life.

Read 1 Corinthians 12:7, 11 and Psalms 139:13-16

- ▶ When are your spiritual gifts given to you?

God has formed you in the womb. There are certain talents, personalities, and physical attributes that God has designed for each of you. When you become a believer and the Spirit indwells you, God gives you certain spiritual gifts to enhance your purpose inside God's church.

Read Ephesians 4:11-13

- ▶ According to this passage, what is the purpose behind God giving spiritual gifts?

God gives some gifts to certain people to enhance your walk spiritually. That would include the staff at church and Sunday school teachers.

Read 1 Corinthians 12:8-12

- ▶ According to this passage, what is the purpose behind God giving spiritual gifts?

God also equips those that are not leaders with particular gifts. The purpose of these people is to assist the leaders in deepening the church so that it reaches fullness in Jesus Christ. The purpose of all gifts is to deepen the church in Jesus Christ. Several gifts are listed in Scripture, but this is not an exhaustive list.

WISDOM VS. KNOWLEDGE

Read 1 Corinthians 12:8-12

- ▶ What is the difference between wisdom and knowledge?

Wisdom is the ability to understand the truth in scripture. Knowledge on the other hand, is the ability to take that word and put it in your life. Any effective pastor has both wisdom and knowledge. Some people are only gifted with wisdom. These would include a lot of seminary professors and Biblical scholars.

FAITH

Read 1 Corinthians 12:8-12, Matthew 17:20, and Luke 17:6

▶ What is the gift of faith?

Faith is required for salvation. Every Christian has faith, but not everyone has the gift of faith. The difference is that people with the gift of faith have great vision and the trust in God to carry the vision out.

Example: Carson Watt came to Chris wanting to start a men's ministry. Carson felt led to do that, implemented it, worked on it, and today we have a thriving men's ministry.

Example: Betty Ward felt that she needed to start leading Celebrate Recovery at Central. She went on to start the ministry which continues to reach out to people in this community.

HEALING

Read 1 Corinthians 12:10-14, 14:39

▶ Is the gift of healing still active and if so how is it used?

No spiritual gifts are no longer in use in the world.

A doctor does not necessarily have the gift of healing. He more likely has the talents to do well in school and is intellectually gifted. The gift of healing is the ability to pray over someone and allow God to use you to bring healing to someone else.

PROPHECY

▶ What is the gift of prophecy and how is it used today?

Prophecy is both foretelling and forth telling. In the Old Testament, the prophets mainly preached the need for repentance. They also told what would happen if they did not repent. The future foretelling was always used to back up the preaching of repentance. Prophets are usually great speakers. They can bring a strong, uncompromising message to large audiences.

Prophets and evangelists are often confused. The major difference is that an evangelist is someone who is good at cross cultural preaching. This includes most missionaries.

DISCERNING OF SPIRITS

▶ What is the gift of discerning spirits and how is it used today?

Some people are gifted with the ability of telling whether something is wise or not or a person is legitimate or not. People must be careful that they do not think they have this gift simply because they enjoy judging people.

GIFTS OF TONGUES AND INTERPRETATION

Read 1 Corinthians 14:2-4, 14:21, 14:39, and Acts 2:6-8

▶ Is the gift of tongues and interpretation of tongues still active and if so how is it used?

Yes the gifts of tongues and interpretation are still active. It is not ecstatic utterances. In Acts and Corinthians, it appears to be actual foreign languages. It is the ability of a person to go into a land with a foreign language he does not know and is able to preach the gospel in a language he does not know. The gift comes on him and he speaks. This gift is a sign for unbelievers and not believers.

The gift of tongues usually impacts a person emotionally in some way. This could be because of the direct connection between the person and what the Holy Spirit is doing right in that moment.

There are a few cautions that surround the gift of tongues. First, the gift of tongues was not designed for use in the church. It is to be used more in the mission field as a sign to unbelievers. Another caution is that it can impact someone emotionally to a point where you want everyone else to have the gift of tongues as well.

APPLICATION OF YOUR GIFTS

Read Acts 22:1-3

▶ How was Paul gifted?

Paul was a highly educated man. Paul knew both Hebrew and Greek, which only the most educated of Jews knew. He studied under Gamaliel who was the Billy Graham of his day. Paul was a Rabbi and a Pharisee, both of which were prestigious positions. Paul knew scripture and had the great ability to expound scripture from the Hebrew.

Read Acts 4:13

▶ How was Peter gifted?

Peter was an uneducated fisherman, but had great confidence in preaching the Word. He did not know the Scriptures as well as Paul; he did not speak Hebrew like Paul, and did not hold a prestigious position like Paul.

Looking at their giftedness, it appears to make more sense for Paul to minister to the Jews since he was highly looked upon. On the other hand, it would make more sense for Peter to minister

to the Gentiles, since many were not as highly educated. God does the exact opposite of these ideas.

▶ Why would God send them in direct contradiction to their giftedness?

God needed someone who would demonstrate to the Jews that it was not their background that got them saved, but a relationship with Jesus that saves them. Peter was perfect for this job. If Paul had been used, then it would have demonstrated that your knowledge of Hebrews, your rabbinic faith, and your biblical skills could save you.

Paul was better equipped because he had the strategy of an evangelist. Paul started on a road that walked all the way through Rome. He went to every major city on that road which contained a synagogue that would recognize Paul's credentials. The people of the synagogue would respect Paul and ask him to speak every Saturday, giving him a perfect opportunity to share the Gospel.

You do not always look at your giftedness to determine where you are supposed to be. You have to allow the Holy Spirit to lead you and guide you to whatever place He has for you in the church. Your giftedness should be used to disciple others. If you are not using your gifts, then you will have to answer to God.

BREAKS FROM USING YOUR GIFTS

▶ Is it ever acceptable to not use your gifts?

If you are a young mom, then your priority is to minister and care for your children. While they are young, you are busy caring for them and are not expected to minister in other ways. When they begin school and living their own life, then you are responsible for using your gifts once again.

You are not gifted so that you can sit around and not use those gifts. You are responsible for using your gifts to build up the church. There are times when you need a break, but these are few and far between.

Everyone has gifts and talents that God has equipped you with to build up the church and bring other closer to God. What are your gifts and talents? Are you using those gifts in the church?

LESSON 17: FAMILY: HUSBAND-WIFE RELATIONSHIP PART 1

JONATHON AND DAVID

Read 2 Samuel 1:25-26

- ▶ What kind of relationship did David and Jonathon have?

“Your love to me was more wonderful than the love of women”

Some people try to take this passage and distort it to support homosexuality. This was NOT the relationship Jonathon and David had. David only had one true consistent friend in his life and that was Jonathan. Most Christians believe that David said those words because it was far easier to get along with another man rather than a woman. For David, Jonathon was easier to live with than Michal, Abigail, or any of the other wives he had. This is a basic principle for all people. It is generally easier to live with/ get along with someone of the same sex than someone of the opposite sex.

Read 1 Samuel 31:8, and 2 Samuel 21:12

- ▶ How did David feel after Jonathon died?

Jonathan ended up dying because he honored his father who tried to kill him. He died on Mount Gilboa with his father and brothers. David laments over the fact that he had to write about his friend's death.

DIFFERENCES IN MEN AND WOMEN

Read 1 Peter 3:7

- ▶ What does this verse say about how men should treat women?

First Peter says that women are weaker than men. Because of this, men are to treat women with honor.

Read Colossians 3:19

- ▶ What does this verse say about relationships in marriage?

First, Paul feels that it is likely that husbands can become embittered against their wives. He clearly warns against this by commanding husbands to love their wives instead.

Clearly, men and women are very different. This makes it difficult for a man and a woman to live together. Peter mentions that women are weaker. It is believed this means that they are weaker emotionally but also gifted emotionally unlike a man.

Example: If you have 4 women at a table for lunch, by the end of lunch, they will all know everything about each other's family. When they communicate, they look each other in the eyes

and have no problem communicating. On the other hand, if you put 4 guys at a table for lunch, by the end of lunch, they will know who the greatest quarterback in super bowl history is, but cannot tell you about the other men at the table or their families. Men do not communicate like women.

- ▶ What are some differences in men and women?

In general, women are more relational than men. Women want eye contact during conversation, unlike men. While women want to focus on the conversation, men usually talk better and share more personal things if they are distracted like sitting around a fire, where they do not have to look at each other.

Men and women also converse differently. Men typically like to stay in their box and talk about that one thing until they are done, then you can move to the next box. On the other hand women are more like spaghetti. One idea reminds them of another thing that happened that reminds them of something else. Women tend to chase rabbits in their conversation.

Women also tend to vent in this same fashion. Men want to try to fix everything, but women just want them to listen to them. Other times, women do want feedback from their husbands. As Chris Osborne likes to say, "Men are stupid and women are emotional." Wives, let your husbands, know if you want them to just listen or if you want feedback. Make this clear at the beginning of the conversation. Men, although it can be hard to not jump in and fix everything, allow your wife to just vent sometimes and then do nothing about it.

Women are romanced in their soul, where they feel emotionally. Men, on the other hand, are romanced physically. Women tend to be more emotional and relationship based which can cause them to be emotionally worn out by the end of the day. At the end of the day, men are not emotionally fatigued and just want to have sex because this is their intimacy. The tension comes when the woman is emotionally tired, the man desires his wife, and the wife does not want to yield. Men do not understand that women need to be emotionally recharged before getting into bed. This emotional draining is why Peter says women are the weaker vessel.

Although women often get emotionally tired by the end of the day, this emotion and relationship aspect is also a huge blessing in their lives. Women are more likely to invest more time and energy in praying for someone because they are emotionally involved and do not like to see others hurting. Women pray in detail and are passionate.

Example: In Jewish times, most Jews were farmers or fishermen. It was the man's responsibility to leave the house and work. Until the children were older, the children stayed at home with their mom. God gifted the person at home with the children so she could build in them and nurture in them a connectedness to her and their dad. When she honors the dad when he comes

home, then they are connected because of her connecting to the children and to her husband. The basis of the family working is rooted in what God gave the woman and not what God gave the man.

The very giftedness that blesses other is also what causes the woman to be the weaker vessel. Women need to understand that men will never be able to communicate and relate like women can. One of the reasons that men get embittered is because the woman tries to force the man into the women's camp. Men are never going to be like women. This does not mean that men are without responsibility.

RESPONSIBILITIES OF MEN AND WOMEN

Read Ephesians 5:21-33

- ▶ How are the responsibilities for men and women different in the marriage relationship?

Verse 21 talks about a mutual submission, then in verse 22, it says that the women should be subject to their husbands. This appears to contradict itself. The words be subject in verse 22 are not actually in the Greek. This means that the wives submission to the husband is based off of verse 21. The husband is the head of the household, which is why the wife should submit to him.

The husband has two responsibilities...

1. Love his wife as Christ loves the church and gave Himself up for her. The husband as head of the home has final say on matters. If he gives himself up for you like Christ did, then his final say will be based on what you want and not what he wants. It will be primarily based on his wife's desires.
2. Deepen his wife spiritually. The husband should ask his wife, "Has my being in your life made you love Jesus Christ more and understand Him better?" If the answer is no, then she has the responsibility to tell him that.

Usually, there is no problem for wives to submit to their husbands when she knows that her needs come over his and he walks well with the Lord.

LOVE ACCORDING TO SCRIPTURE

Read Ephesians 5:21-33

- ▶ Is there any difference in the way we love?

There are four Greek words for love: **Eros, Storge, Philia, and Agape.**

Storge: Is found in the New Testament that means "family love that works." It is the idea that everyone is okay.

Eros: This is the Greek word for sexual love. It is never found in the New Testament.

Philia: This is an emotion based word. An example is saying “I am in love with my spouse.” You feel good about your spouse and enjoy being with them.

Agape: This is the word predominantly used in the New Testament. This word contains two main ideas: it is choice and of value. This word means that I choose to love something because of the value I see in the object.

▶ What kind of love is used in the relationship of a husband and a wife?

Both **Philia** and **Agape**.

Philia is both the husband and wife’s responsibility to the other. *Example: whether or not my wife feels good about me or whether or not she is in love with me is my responsibility.* If the husband does not treat the wife well, is embittered toward her, sick of the detail, doesn’t respond well to her, and doesn’t treat her well then his wife will not be in love with him. The flip side to this is that it is the wife’s responsibility to make her husband be in love with her. How she treats her husband will determine how he feels deals with her.

Agape on the other hand is the basis for their love in the home. In Philippians it says, “husbands agape your wives.” Every morning, the couple must choose to agape love each other based on the value God places on that person. This is the man’s core responsibility.

MEN AND WOMEN WANTS IN MARRIAGE

Men and women want different things out of marriage. Men want to be respected; while women want to be valued. Men are called to love their wife. Women are called to respect their husband. Love goes along as part of that respect.

Happiness is not the basis of a godly marriage. Because men and women are different, happiness with each other will not be a constant in your marriage. Your happiness should come from Jesus Christ which should lead you to give to each other rather than take.

CONCLUSION

Men and women are very different and have different roles in marriage. Men will never be able to fully understand women and vice-versa. This is why same sex friendships are important. Just be careful when you are sharing with other women that you do not share too much and disrespect your husband. Wives should respect their husbands, and husbands should love their wives. We will go into more details next week!

LESSON 18: FAMILY: HUSBAND-WIFE RELATIONSHIP PART 2

HUSBAND AND WIFE RESPONSIBILITIES

Read Ephesians 5:33

- ▶ What are the different responsibilities of the husband and the wife?

Husbands are called to love; while wives are called to respect. It is the man's role as the head of the home to make sure things work. The wife must respect that in her husband.

PERSONALITY

It is important to realize that there are differences between men and women that will never change. First, men will never be able to feel what women feel. They will never feel as deeply or be as detailed as women.

Second, there are differences of personalities in every home. There are four general categories, and everyone is generally two out of the four.

- ❖ Sanguine: Happy, go-lucky, friendly, vivacious. These people recharge with people. They often lose things and are not well organized, but they wake up in the morning with a smile.
- ❖ Melancholy: List maker, detailed, self-critical, organized, generally the most gifted of the personalities. These people can be the hardest to live with. A common question used to determine if you are a melancholy is "when your husband tells you that he thinks you are beautiful, do you struggle and have difficulty believing that about yourself?"
- ❖ Choleric: Leaders in the world, type A, able to make the hard decisions. These people usually end up in leadership positions and direct organizations.
- ❖ Phlegmatic: a generally nice person. They don't like conflict and avoid it at all costs, which can be dangerous in a marriage. Some consider them lazy, but they are not. They have difficulty telling anyone "no" and often are worn out.

It is very common for someone to marry someone of opposite personalities. People tend to fall in love with the strengths they do not have and see in someone else. The problems come when you have to deal with their weakness as well as their strengths.

- ▶ What are some of the benefits of having different personalities?

One of the benefits of marrying someone with a different personality is that if you have children, at least one parent will be able to relate to the child better because they have similar personalities. It can also be beneficial to have different personalities because this can enhance your ministry as a couple. If you minister together, then you bring not just one but two types of giftedness into the ministry.

- ▶ So what can we do about the differences in personalities?

Nothing. You cannot change your personality or your spouse's personality.

SEXUALITY

Marriage is comprised of three parts, the body, soul, and spirit. The body is so that we can relate to each other physically. Our soul is so that we can relate to each other emotionally. The spirit is so that we can relate to God.

If your marriage is going to be holistic, then you have to touch each other in all three areas.

- ▶ How is sexuality different between men and women?

Men are romanced in their body, and women are romanced in their soul. Women are romanced by how they are treated, while men are romanced by any kind of physical touch and visibility.

Men do not feel loved unless his wife desires him physically and enjoys him physically. This is why in 1 Corinthians it says that your body is not your own, you have to yield to your husband and the husband has to yield to the wife.

- ▶ What happens when children are thrown into the marriage?

First, the woman usually loses sexual desire for a period of time. The husband does not understand this and it is very hard for him. Next, the couple begins to build their lives around the children. More time is spent with the children than with each other. Communication is affected by centering mainly on the children and not other things in their lives. Intimacy becomes episodic at best. When the children leave the home, the couple often finds themselves staring at each other wondering what to talk about now that the kids are gone.

- ▶ Should there be any limit to the sexuality?

Anything is legitimate sexually as long as the two are in agreement, and it is not in the kinky realm. You have to talk to each other about how you can best please each other.

DIFFERENT LOVE LANGUAGES

There are a variety of different love languages: words of affirmation, quality time, receiving gifts, acts of service, and physical touch. These love languages help us to identify how we are best touched in the soul. Again, like personalities, people often are married to someone with the opposite love language as themselves.

It is important to not belittle the other person's love language and to accept it for the good intentions behind it. You must also learn your spouse's love language and give to him or her in the appropriate manner to touch his or her soul.

RESPECT VS. LOVE and GIVE VS. TAKE

As mentioned in Ephesians 5:33, women are desperate to feel loved while men are desperate to feel respected. It is important to make the decision to love your spouse no matter the circumstances. You must depend on the Lord to provide for your needs and give to your spouse not take.

PRACTICAL STEPS

Here are some practical steps to help improve your relationship with your spouse.

1. Take about 30 minutes a day to simply talk to each other. If you have children, then make the rule that children cannot come up during this 30 minutes.
2. Take one night a week for a date night. During this time share what the Lord has taught you this week.
3. Take a piece of paper and make three columns: physical, emotional, and spiritual. Write down in detail what you want from your spouse in each category. Once you are finished, exchange lists. It is a good idea to reread this list often and try to do at least one item from the list every day. This will help your spouse feel loved and respected and strengthen you relationship.
4. Make time about three times a year to leave town without friends, family, phone calls, etc. and have time with just each other. During this trip, ask each other how you are doing on the other's list. Are they feeling loved and respected? What can be done differently?

LESSON 19: PARENTING AND CHILDREN

HUSBAND AND WIFE RESPONSIBILITIES

Read Psalm 139:13-16 and Jeremiah 1:5

▶ What two things does God say in these passages about children?

1. God forms children – God uses the genetics of the parents and gives all children talents and physical abilities.
2. God times children – God gives everyone a particular number of days to live on earth.

Read 2 Kings 20:1-5

▶ Can you lengthen or shorten those days?

King Hezekiah is the only man that we know of who lengthened his days. God heard his cries and gave him 15 more years. During this “extra” time, he produced the most wicked king in the history of Israel. This evil king would go on to kill Isaiah by cutting him in half.

You can shorten your days. Your sin can overrule what God has planned for your life. If you remain inside God’s will then His time frame is going to be fulfilled.

Example: If I go out and get drunk and flip my car and die, I don’t think that is God’s timing for my life. I think that my sin is overruling what God would have wanted for me.

YOUR CHILDREN ARE NOT YOUR OWN

Read Jeremiah 1:4-5

▶ What does God say about children that leads us to believe that our children are not our own?

God forms me, times me, and has a purpose for my life. God forms me to fit into that purpose.

You did not form your children, time them, and it is not your plan for their life that matters. This is why our children are not our own. They are merely on loan to us to teach them how to fit into God’s purpose.

This also means that all children, even those that are unplanned or a product of rape or incest, have a God ordained plan. Clearly, with this point of view, abortion is never a valid option.

CHILDREN’S ACTIONS

As parents, you must ask yourself two things. Are your children’s actions what you taught them or going against what you taught them?

If they are taking after what you do or what you have taught them, then you should take the blame. On the other hand, if they are doing what you did not teach them or exemplify in front of them, then it is not your fault. All children inherit the sin nature and will mess up.

RESPONSIBILITIES AS PARENTS

Read 1 Thessalonians 2:8

▶ What three major things are said in this verse about parenting?

1. Paul loved the church in Thessalonica. This feeling was automatic. As parents, you do not have to work at loving them. The only unconditional love you will ever learn is learned by having kids.
2. Paul says that he gave them himself. As parents, we need to give ourselves to our children. Your children may not remember presents you gave them for birthday or Christmas, but they should remember times you spend with your children.
3. Paul also tells them that he gave them God's truth. It is important to ensure that your children are in church and that you teach them the truth of God's Word.

It is vital that there be a balance of teaching God's truth as well as being involved in your children's lives. If you only do one or the other, then you will not make a positive effective on your child's life. You must give your children yourself and the Gospel.

Read Ephesians 6:1-2

▶ What two things should you produce in your children?

Obey and respect or honor your parents. To get them to obey, you are going to have to discipline them. According to Proverbs 13:24, your discipline should be physical when they are younger. As they get older, this will change.

PRINCIPLES OF DISCIPLINE

1. Your discipline has to be pretty strong. Your children should know that the pain of the discipline should outweigh the joy of the rebellion. Your children need to get to a point where they anticipate the discipline before doing what is wrong. This leads them to making the right choices.
2. Your discipline should be immediate. You clearly tell them not to do something, explain what the rules are, and only discipline when the rules have been clearly explained. You should discipline actions and not accidents. If they accidentally do something wrong, then do not discipline them. If it is a conscious choice to disobey, then you must discipline them.

3. Your discipline should be consistent. If your children continue to disobey, then you must continue to discipline.
4. Your discipline should not be because of the personality differences.
5. You should explain the discipline to them. If you cannot explain why you are disciplining them, then you should not be disciplining them, especially when you are angry. You explain why you are disciplining and then you love them when it is over. You should never discipline out of anger.

As parents, you must have a balance of teaching and disciplining. When your children are young, you will do more disciplining. Once your children are teenagers, you will begin to teach more than discipline. There is no magic age, but at some point when your children are older, physical discipline is out. At this point, you can begin to take away whatever is valuable to your child.

PRINCIPLES OF TEACHING

1. You teach them directly: It is important to have time as a family to walk through a Bible study together.
2. You teach them indirectly: As your children get older, it is important to continue the Bible study, but also to take opportunities as they come to teach your children. When situations come up, discuss them with your child and what happened as a result.
3. Don't hand your children to a counselor when they are struggling. Get involved in your child's life and give them the teaching they need as they need it. Walk with them through the hard times. Remember that God has a purpose for your child, formed them, timed them, and gave them to you because He knows you are the best person for them. You need to be involved in your children's lives and available when they need to talk to you. Every child will be different, but you need to be available and flexible to fit in your children's lives.
4. It is a good idea when your children are in high school to connect them with a well-grounded, Christian college kid to disciple your child.

Overall, you want your children to know how much you value them. There is no magic age, but when they hit 16, you need to make this a special moment. Get all their friends and the adults in their lives to write your child a letter affirming the character they see in your child. You want to affirm their character and not their giftedness. It is easy to get caught up in the teaching and forget to affirm your children. When your child does something good, praise them.

It is also important to teach your children that when they do fail, God can rescue and redeem them. It is easy to let them know that they can come to you, but they also need to know that they can go to God in the hard times.

You need to teach your children that if they do fail, they can come back to you, must be repentant, and can be redeemed if repentant. They must also know that there will be consequences for their actions, and God is not done with them no matter what they do.

CONCLUSION

You put yourself in their life. You affirm their character. You correct their lack of character. You discipline them. You teach them to love and respect you. You give them truth. You take those opportunities when they are there. Make sure you let them know that they know that when they make a mistake that God can still redeem their life and do something with them.

LESSON 20: DIVORCE AND REMARRIAGE

PRINCIPLES BEHIND DIVORCE IN THE OLD TESTAMENT

When examining Scripture, it appears that there is a shift in beliefs about marriage from the Old Testament to the New Testament. In reality, it is not a shift in God's understanding of marriage but rather a shift in the way He handles it with us.

Read Deuteronomy 21:10-14

- ▶ What truth about relationships between man and woman are found in this passage?

At first glance, this passage appears cruel to the wife, but you have to remember the context behind it. In those days, battles were usually village against village. When one village would win, they would kill all the men in the other village. This would leave the women without income and no government to provide assistance.

God provides for these women by allowing the men to take them as wives. He also protects them by telling the men that they cannot just trash her, but have to allow her one month to mourn the loss of her family. During this time of mourning she is taken in and provided for.

Read Deuteronomy 24:1-4

- ▶ What does this passage say about divorce?

When this passage says, "he has found some indecency in her" it was not necessarily that she betrayed her husband, but that he simply did not like something about her. That was the law of the time.

Read Mark 10:4-8

- ▶ How has the way God handles marriage/divorce change from the Old Testament to the New?

This passage is when the Pharisees have come to Jesus and asked Him if it lawful for a man to divorce his wife. Jesus responds by asking them what Moses commended in the Old Testament or the Law.

God allowed divorce in the Old Testament because of the hardening of man's heart. In the New Testament, God now disallows divorce based on simply not liking something about the woman. In both instances though, God provides some protection for the woman. So if you take a wife, you cannot trash her, and if you do send her away, you have to give her a piece of paper that says that she has not really done anything bad, but that you simply did not like her.

Read Ezra 10:1-3

- ▶ What is the basis of divorce in this passage?

They were married to unbelievers and foreign women which was against the Law. The purpose behind this widespread divorce is that they wanted to bring the land back to holiness so they would be in God's favor again.

Read Malachi 2:14-17

- ▶ What does this passage say about divorce?

The Old Testament ends with a very strong statement from God about marriage. "For I hate divorce says the Lord, the God of Israel." When God describes His relationship with us in the Old and New Testament, He often uses the picture of a marriage. Here He equates divorce with violence. Clearly, God values the home and does not like divorce.

In the other passages, you see that initially the woman is protected. Later you see God make provisions to protect the morals of the home. Now you see where the home itself is protected. This progressive change is because there was a progressive understanding in the hearts of men about God's view of marriage and divorce. Family is sacred and there should be no dissolution of the home.

PRINCIPLES BEHIND DIVORCE IN THE NEW TESTAMENT

Read Matthew 5:31-32

- ▶ What does this passage say about divorce and remarriage?

Jesus clearly says that if the man divorces his wife, and she did not break the marriage vow, and she goes on to remarry that the man forced her into adultery. In the New Testament times, if a woman was divorced, she often did not have any family to go back to and no source of income. She was then forced into either prostitution or remarriage in order to survive.

Adultery in this context would be her being out of God's original intent. Once you marry, you are in the original intent of God for your life. If forced to remarry, then you are now out of that original intent. This passage clearly places the blame on the husband for her being out of God's will. The woman at this time had little choice in order to be able to survive.

The exception to this and the grounds for divorce found in this passage are in the case of unchastity or unholiness.

Read 1 Corinthians 7:10-17

▶ What does this passage say about remarriage?

If the believing wife leaves her husband with no basis for leaving, she has two options: she can stay unmarried or go back to her husband. She is not to remarry.

In Ezra we see if you are married to an unbeliever you have the right to divorce him/her. In the New Testament, you see a shift where this is not a valid reason for divorce.

If you are married to an unbeliever and they leave because of your holiness, then you can remarry. That is why it says that you are no longer enslaved or bound to the marriage. This was commonly seen in Corinth. In the Roman bath everybody got in unclothed. When Christianity came to the area, a lot of Christian women did not want to un-robe in front of other men. These women's husbands got mad because they found joy in showing off their wives to the other men. This tension led to a large number of divorces.

▶ From what we have discussed, what are the two rules concerning divorce?

1. I can divorce my spouse if there is an affair
2. I can let my spouse leave, but I cannot leave my spouse.

REAL WORLD EXAMPLES

▶ What happens when real world situations come up that do not fit into those two rules?

Examples:

1. *A Lady came into my office one day. She said that every night before they went to bed her husband would take out his 357 magnum revolver and put one shell in and spin the cylinder and cock it and put it up against her head. Then he would pull it back and decock it, put it in the drawer and then they would go to sleep. Her question to me was "can I leave him?"*
2. *A lady came into my office and said that whenever my husband wants sex and I refuse then he throws me on the bed and he rapes me. His argument was that you are my wife; your body is not your own so it is not rape. You are to yield to me. He pulls scripture up and pointed out where her body is not her own. She was consistently and constantly raped weekly when he wanted it and she did not.*
3. *Another lady came into my office and said that her husband beat her 2 to 3 times a week. He was smart and would not hit her on the face but on the body where it could not be seen. He did this to her 2-3 times a week.*
4. *Then I had a lady come in and said that her husband is having sex with their daughter. She asked me if she should stay with him.*

What is the correct and godly response in these situations? They do not fit into our rules. It is important to remember that the Bible is not a rule book, but that it lays out the principles by which you must live. You then extrapolate the rules from those principles.

▶ What are the principles about divorce and remarriage that we have seen already?

1. If an act of un-holiness ***defined by God*** is forced in your home or on you, then you have the right to leave.
2. If it is not an act of un-holiness, but you are just unhappy, then you can leave but you can never remarry.
3. If your holiness makes an unbelieving spouse leave, then you are free to remarry.
4. If your spouse leaves you, then you are free to remarry.

If you are a Christian and married to an unbeliever and he wishes to stay with you, then you may not be happy, but you cannot leave the marriage. Unhappiness is not a valid basis for divorce.

SEPARATION

Read 1 Corinthians 7:1-6

▶ What does this passage say is the basis for separation?

This passage talks primarily about a sexual separation. One valid reason is for a time of prayer.

Example: if you are living with an unbeliever that is verbally abusive, you have the right to separate and demand of him that he love you and get help for his problem. These are biblical concepts.

Verbal abuse does not constitute an act of un-holiness forced upon you that can lead to divorce. You can get separation and demand that he love you. If you do leave him, then you are not justified to remarry.

FORGIVENESS

Read 1 John 1:9

▶ If we disobey these principles for divorce can we be forgiven?

Yes you can be forgiven, but that does not remove the consequences. God is merciful to forgive us and restore us when we are repentant.

QUESTIONS BROUGHT UP IN ORIGINAL LESSON

1. Alcohol and drug addiction fit into the separation category. If you or your kids are in danger, then you must separate immediately. If you are not in danger, then this is not a valid basis for divorce.
2. Neglect falls into the category of unhappiness. You can separate, but this is not a valid basis for divorce and remarriage.

LESSON 21: FASTING

REVIEW:

WE WANT GOD'S NAME IN OUR LIFE NOT OUR OWN NAME
WE NEED TO LIVE UNDER THE HOLY SPIRIT OF THE SCRIPTURE
WE MUST KNOW GOD'S WILL IN ORDER TO PRAY
WE LEARNED HOW TO HEAR GOD'S VOICE
WE FOUND THAT SILENCE AND MEDITATION ENHANCE THE HEARING OF GOD'S VOICE

REASONS FOR FASTING

Definition of fasting: Giving up at least one meal to spend extra time praying and seeking God. This could be through prayer or reading the Scripture; the Holy Spirit will direct you on what to do. If you just skip a meal and do not seek God, you are just dieting and not fasting.

There are several reasons that we as Christians are called upon to fast. We will discuss several of these today including anointing of the elders, seeking God, in the middle of a national crisis, in time of grief, in need of protection, and to seek God and increase your ability to hear Him.

SEEKING GOD

Read Acts 13:1-2

- ▶ What did the Holy Spirit tell the church while they were fasting to do?

Inside the church they are fasting. In the middle of their fasting is when God calls out the 1st missionaries (Paul and Barnabas). Evangelist (Greek) means missionary in the New Testament. It does not refer to a guy who travels around the country doing full time evangelism. It refers to giftedness where one goes into another culture and is able to embrace and impact that culture. You find fasting connected with missionaries and the hearing of the Holy Spirit. The people in the church of Antioch are born again believers who are indwelt by the Holy Spirit. Some try to say that fasting was only for those who lived in Old Testament times. This passage shows that New Testament Christians also practiced fasting. The fasting impacts their ability to hear God.

ANOINTING ELDERS

Read Acts 14:20-23

In verse 23, we see Paul and Barnabas appointing elders in the new church.

- ▶ What did Paul and Barnabas do as part of their appointing of the elders?

Paul and Barnabas appoint the new elders, and then to bring a blessing and an anointing on the elders, they pray with fasting over them. They believe that prayer linked with fasting will impact the anointing on the elders that they have picked to lead the church.

INCREASE YOUR ABILITY TO HEAR GOD

Read Matthew 9:14-15

- ▶ What does Jesus say in these verses about fasting?

Jesus assumes that fasting will be practiced by post-Jesus Christians. He assumes that after He leaves and with the arrival of the Holy Spirit, fasting will start to take place in the lives of believers. Fasting was not needed when Jesus was physically with the disciples. But when Jesus left and the Holy Spirit arrived, there would be an immediate need for fasting. The early believers would assume that fasting was necessary to seek God at times. Jesus does not demand that people fast, but He assumes that people will fast when He is gone. There are many examples in the New Testament that show the Christians fasting. There is no Biblical command to fast over elders, to fast on a specific day, or to fast for elders when they are anointed. Jesus assumed the early church would fast, and they did. Most Christians today do not fast, and there not many books or sermons on fasting.

(Suggested Resource for further study) Book on *Spiritual Discipline* by Richard Foster

Even with the indwelling of the Holy Spirit, it is going to require fasting at times to be able to understand and to maximize the ability to hear God correctly in a couple areas.

NATIONAL CRISIS

Read Esther 4:15-16

- ▶ Why did Esther feel the need to call the nation of Israel to fast? Why did she not ask them to pray?

Background: When Mordecai requested that Esther go to the king to intercede for the Jews who were going to be killed, she asked for the Jews to fast, but she did not ask them to pray. Esther assumed that if the people were going to fast then they would also pray. Remember the very definition of fasting means that you will pray to seek God. You can pray without fasting, but you cannot fast without praying. Esther chose to ask them to take the additional step to fast assuming that they would then be very serious in their prayer. It was a national crisis, since

a decree had been made to kill the Jews, and she responded by asking them to collectively and individually fast three days regarding one specific thing, the deliverance of the Jewish people. Esther asked them, as a nation, to fast. It is a legitimate thing for a group of people that are facing a crisis to fast in the middle of that crisis. So another reason for fasting is for a group of people to seek the Lord regarding a crisis facing that group of people.

IN TIMES OF GRIEF

Read 2 Samuel 1:11-12

- ▶ Why do David and his men fast in this situation?

David had one true friend (human) and that was Jonathan. The statement that David said to Jonathan after he died stated that “your love to me was more wonderful than that of women (2 Samuel 1:26)” shows how close Jonathan was to David. This statement did not mean that David was a homosexual but that he had a different special relationship with Jonathan not found in marriage. This fast was for one meal and was because of feelings of grief over the loss of Jonathan.

NEED OF PROTECTION

Read Ezra 8:21-23

²¹ Then I proclaimed a fast there at the river of Ahava, that we might humble ourselves before our God to seek from Him a safe journey for us, our little ones, and all our possessions. ²² For I was ashamed to request from the king troops and horsemen to protect us from the enemy on the way, because we had said to the king, “The hand of our God is favorably disposed to all those who seek Him, but His power and His anger are against all those who forsake Him.” ²³ So we fasted and sought our God concerning this matter, and He listened to our entreaty.

- ▶ Why does Ezra ask the people to fast and pray?
- ▶ What was the result of the people fasting and praying?

This fast lasted for several days. Ezra asked the people to fast and pray for protection from their enemies. The people did not go to the king or others for help but went to God for protection. Verse 23 tells us that God listened to His people.

SUPERNATURAL FASTS

Scripture only records three supernatural fasts of 40 days.

- 1. Exodus 34:27-28 – Moses fasted 40 days**
- 2. 1 Kings 19:7-8 – Elijah fasted for 40 days**
- 3. Matthew 4:1-2 – Jesus fasted for 40 days**

Only three supernatural fasts (fasts of 40 days) are given in the Bible. As humans, we must have some nutrients and fluids. A person should not undergo a 40 day fast unless he has been clearly instructed by God's Spirit to do that. This is a supernatural thing and only God should impose this kind of fast.

HOW WE SHOULD FAST

Read *Matthew 6:16-18*

- ▶ What do these verses teach us about how we should act when we fast?

You are not supposed to show off your fasting and make sure others know you are fasting. Rather, God will bless your fasting when it is done in secret as a means to seek Him and not in way to be praised by man.

Read *Zachariah 7:4-5*

⁴ Then the word of the LORD of hosts came to me, saying, ⁵ "Say to all the people of the land and to the priests, 'When you fasted and mourned in the fifth and seventh months these seventy years, was it actually for Me that you fasted?'

- ▶ What is God concerned about in the manner of how the people fasted and mourned?

Every time we fast God must be the focus and the reason for the fast. You may fast over a specific area, but the focus is to seek and find God in the specific area.

REVIEW

Some of the reasons that the Bible shows we should fast over are:

1. Anointing of elders
2. To seek God
3. In the middle of a national crisis
4. In the middle of Grief
5. Need for protection

The fast is the instrument used to seek God over these areas. The focus is to seek God. If you want to hear God's voice and to know what you should do in that area, then you or the church need to fast to seek God. Again, the focus of the fast is to seek God not the specific need that you think you have. As you seek Him in the fast, then you bring the issue to Him.

The Bible does not give clear defining direction of what to fast over. It does indicate that as you live your life, whatever you face, even as a nation, there will be times that if you are going to face that situation correctly you will need to fast.

Acts 13 does not tell us that they are fasting for any specific reason but focusing on God. It is possible that in the middle of their fast that they hear the Holy Spirit's call for the two missionaries. It is unclear if they were praying and fasting as they were seeking guidance on this specific direction or if in the midst of their fasting and praying the Holy Spirit gave them this specific direction.

There are two major things that will drive fasting in your life:

1. Issues in your life
2. Consistency in your life regarding prayer- consistent regular fasting in your life will increase your ability to hear God. You can hear Him without fasting, but fasting will maximize your ability to concentrate and focus on Him and improve your ability to hear Him.

There are no hard and fast rules on fasting given in the Bible. It does not give a time or length. It may be need-driven or it may be a regular consistent part of our life. One way to do a one day a week fast: Eat Monday breakfast, skip Monday lunch and dinner and then eat again the next morning. This is one way to start fasting. You cannot just skip the meal; you need to take the meal time and use it to focus on the Lord. If you have a medical condition, then check with your doctor first before starting a fast. If you have a medical condition, then ask God and He may let you substitute something else. In the Bible, it is always a fast from food, but don't get legalistic. The Bible does not say that the church is imposed or required to fast. This is between you and the Holy Spirit. There are times that that we may ask, but not require, the church to fast. Journaling when you fast may be revealing to you individually. It is not mandated but may help you to see how God is using the fast to lead you. I can fast over my own strongholds. My fasting doesn't overrule a stronghold in someone else's life, but I can fast and pray for them. My prayer does not overrule their free will. Don't fast like it is magic. You can fast and pray for children that God will show them their strong hold and what got them there. Many are scared of fasting because of the 40 day fasts in the Bible and backs away from it. Fasting can lead you to realizing that you don't need food as much as you thought you did and this leads you to realizing that you do not need other things that you thought you needed. A real fast helps you to see this. When fasting, you are not seeking spiritual food which is simple truth and information and facts, you are seeking God Himself.

LESSON 22: CALVINISM VS. ARMINIANISM

REVIEW:

You cannot lose your salvation once you are really saved.

The grieving of the Holy Spirit with God's discipline will prevent you from continuing in sin.

INTRODUCTION

Today we will look at the differences between Calvinism and Arminianism and where Central Baptist Church under the guidance of Chris Osborne stands on this issue. The descriptions presented are the opinion of Chris Osborne and many will argue against what will be taught today.

TULIP

TULIP is an acronym often used to illustrate the five major points of Calvinism. Some Calvinists believe all five points while many others believe only a few of these points.

T= Total Depravity (The idea is that you cannot come to Christ on your own. You do not have that ability. You are not smart enough or spiritual enough.)

U=Unconditional Election (When God elects and chooses you, it is not based on anything that you do but completely based on God's choice. It is not because you are more or less a sinner than someone else. It is simply based on God)

L= Limited atonement (The blood of Jesus Christ does not apply to the entire world.) There are some today that are moving away from this point. This is where you may see people say they are a 4 point Calvinist and not 5 points. The hyper 5 point Calvinist would say that they believed in all 5 points and because of that there is not really a need to witness to the lost. People will come to Christ according to God's will. You don't need to point them to Christ. Some of the first missionaries in the modern era (William Carey, Andrew Fuller and John Ryland) all grew up with a hyper 5 point Calvinist agenda, but soon began to throw out the limited atonement point because the Scripture clearly indicates that Jesus dies for everybody. These people became the modern day missionaries.

I= Irresistible Grace (When God speaks to you cannot say "no." You may hear some say that He cannot be sovereign if you have the ability to say no to Him).

P= Preservation of the saints- (this means that once you are saved, you are always going to be saved)

These five points are the general beliefs of Calvinists. There all sorts of nuances to this belief. There are many very smart, believers that have debated these nuances and not agreed.

- ▶ Which of these points stick out to you?

TOTAL DEPRAVITY/ UNCONDITIONAL ELECTION

Definition: You cannot come to Christ on your own. When God elects and chooses you, it is not based on anything that you do but completely based on God's choice.

Read Romans 1:19-20

- ▶ What do these verses say about who has knowledge of God?

This passage refers to the Gentiles. God places within everyone a knowledge that He exists.

Read John 6:44, John 16:8-11 and 1 Thessalonians 1:4-5

- ▶ What do these verses say about what is needed for salvation?

Here Jesus is talking to the Jews. Clearly the Holy Spirit must convict you over sin, righteousness, and judgment for you to be saved. In 1 Thessalonians, Paul says he knows God's choice, but this choice is based on the conviction of the Holy Spirit.

Read Hebrews 3:7

God must speak to you through the conviction of the Holy Spirit in order for you to be saved. (A pure Armenian would say that you can just decide one day to come to Christ without the Spirit having to convict you.)

LIMITED ATONEMENT

Definition: The blood of Jesus is only for the elect not the whole world.

Read 1 John 2:2, John 3:16, and 2 Peter 3:9

- ▶ Who did Jesus die for according to these scriptures?

These verses clearly illustrate the blood of Jesus was shed for everyone in the world.

IRRESISTABLE GRACE

Definition: When God speaks to you cannot say no.

Read John 1:11-12, Matthew 23:37, Matthew 26:20-25, Matthew 13:19, Matthew 22:14, Romans 1:18-22

These scriptures talk about how God's chosen people (the Jews), or those whom He called upon (conviction of the Holy Spirit) turned His offer of grace down by saying no to the conviction of the Holy Spirit. In Matthew 23, you see Jesus lamenting over the nation of Israel. Clearly He wanted them all to come to know Him, but they were "unwilling to be gathered under his wing."

In Matthew 26, when Jesus says "I am going to the cross, but woe to the man that betrays me," this implies that Jesus will go to the cross, that is not an option, but it is an option for Judas to betray Him or not.

If irresistible grace were true, then that means that all those people that go to hell were never even offered the grace of God. Calvinists argue that God cannot be sovereign if we can say no to Him, but others argue that He shows His sovereignty by allowing us the option to say yes or no.

SUMMARY

God says that people have an innate knowledge of Him, but people choose to suppress that innate knowledge of God with sin in their life.

CHRIS'S POSITION

Romans 1:19- All people are born with an innate knowledge of God and a predisposition to religion. This should drive you crazy until that hole is filled with Jesus Christ. We don't struggle with this because we choose to suppress it with unrighteousness. If you have rejected God all your life, then I don't think that God calls you to Jesus because you have already rejected Him. Hence "many are called" not all. The "many are called" refers to those who say "God, where are You?" The chosen are those that respond to the call of the Holy Spirit. To the many, God will do everything He can to make sure they hear the Gospel, but they still have the choice to say yes or no.

I don't think anyone can come to Christ on their own. God's offer of Jesus is based on your acceptance or rejection of God in your life personally. I don't think that the atonement is limited or the grace is irresistible. I think that once you are saved, you are always saved, but you have the ability to say no to God if you so choose.

Jerry Bridges wrote a book *Trust in God* and made a statement in the book- "If you take the Bible and you do not meditate [you read it real fast] you get the feeling that it is a love story of a God in love with a planet that will not love Him back". When you really look at the Bible from Genesis to Revelation, that is the feeling that you get. For a Calvinist that is not their opinion. They say that it is God that chooses His own people.

It is an incredible love story that we do not love Him back so he does everything He can to get us.

MAIN CALVINIST PASSAGES

Romans 9-11, the story of Pharaoh and the plagues, and the story of Esau are all accounts in the Bible that Calvinists use to support their ideology. They argue that God hardened Pharaoh's heart and chose Jacob over Esau. The issue is that these are not salvation statements, but rather purpose statements.

If you look at the story of Pharaoh (Exodus 7-11), after the first 5 plagues Pharaoh hardened his heart (7:23, 8:15, 8:19, 8:32, and 9:7). After the 6th plague, it says the Lord hardens Pharaoh's heart (9:12). After the 7th plague, God again gave Pharaoh the choice to repent or not, but once again Pharaoh hardened his heart (9:35). After that, Pharaoh had rejected God so much, that he no longer was able to respond to God, so the Lord hardens his heart (10:20, 10:27, and 11:10). God gave him multiple opportunities to repent, yet he never does, so God gives up on Pharaoh and does not give him the option anymore because God knows he will reject Him again.

When examining the story of Esau and Jacob, you see that it is not a matter of salvation, but rather that God chose for the line of the Messiah to be through Jacob rather than Esau (Exodus 27).

Calvinism is not something that should be argued or people consider one less intellectual because they are not a Calvinist.

SUMMARY

Salvation: God initiates it. You cannot be saved unless He initiates it. It is unconditional in the sense that everyone has the knowledge, but there are some who will choose to reject that knowledge. I don't think that Jesus is offered to everyone, but only to those who are seeking God. Even then, they can say no to Jesus Christ.

A Calvinist will say that God put the tree of the knowledge of good and evil in the Garden of Eden with the intent that man would sin. They say that God intended for man to sin because God was more glorified in our sin and showing the difference in our sin and His holiness. That is just crazy. God's glory is far more revealed in His holiness than in my sin. I will not really see the contrast between them until I die, and then I will see how awful I am and how holy He is. Calvinism can lead to pride through the idea that I am chosen and someone else is not, therefore I am more loved by God than someone else, or a better person in general.

Armenians believe in all free will and that you can come to Christ anytime without the conviction of the Holy Spirit in your life.

LESSON 23: CHURCH ORDER

THE HEAD OF THE CHURCH

Read Colossians 1:15-20

- ▶ Who is the head of the church?

“For by Him all things were created.” This means that everything is created by God, therefore He is the Creator. The virgin birth is vital in this because there is no humanly way that Jesus was created since He was born of a virgin. Jesus cannot die on the cross, pay for your sin, and be your Savior if He is not both God and man. He had to die with two types of righteousness: His native Deity and earned righteousness as man.

“All things have been created through Him and for Him.” Jesus is the head of the body, the Church.

OFFICES OF THE CHURCH

Read Ephesians 4:11-12

- ▶ What different offices of the church are seen in this passage and how are they lived out today?

Apostles: God uses these people to reach a broad variety of people in different denominations.

Example: James Dobson has been used by God to teach people about families and how to rejuvenate your family. People from all denominations use his material.

Prophets: These people are now termed evangelists. They are highly gifted at preaching.

Evangelists: These people are now termed missionaries. They have exceptional ability to cross cultures.

Shepherds/Teachers/Pastors: These people are responsible for leading the church.

Read Titus 1:5-9 and 1 Timothy 5:17-19

- ▶ What characteristics should be found in the elders of the church?

Titus lays out a variety of aspects of holiness that should be found in someone who is an elder in the church.

In 1 Timothy, we see that the elders are called to “rule well.” The Greek word is a strong word that refers to a man that headed up a building almost like a city manager more than a mayor.

The verse goes on to say that the elders were paid staff of the church. The elders are called to live above reproach. They should not be reproached unless a clear charge of immorality is present.

Read 1 Peter 5:1-5

- ▶ What three characteristics of elders in the church are seen in this passage?

In this passage, elder, shepherd, pastor, and overseer all refer to the same position. Elders are called to exercise oversight, but not because they have to. They are also called to not do so because of money and to not be domineering. The elders are called to lead, but are not called to dictate what should happen in the church.

Read Revelation 1:20, James 5:13-14, and 1 Timothy 4:13-14

- ▶ How are the elders to rule well?

In Revelation, we see that the elders are the *aggelos* (angels) of the church. The message is given from God to the *aggelos* who they deliver it to the church. The Greek word *aggelos* means messenger but is transliterated as angels. These people are called to deliver the message of God to the church and are seen as shepherd or pastors.

In James, we see another aspect of the elders, their prayer ministry. They are called to pray for and with those in need.

In Timothy, we again see that the elders are to read the Scripture publically and bring the message of God.

Read Acts 6:1-4

- ▶ What is the role of deacons in the church?

The deacon's role in this passage was to help handle the situation of passing out money to the widows so that the shepherd could live out his role of bringing truth and prayer to the people. The major purpose of deacons is to fix controversy so that the staff can do what they need to do in leading the church.

Today, the average stay for a Southern Baptist preacher is 2.5 years in one church. Deacons on the other hand, are usually in their position for life. When conflict arises, the church is more likely to trust the men that are providing financially for the church and have been there a long time, the deacons. They begin to take on a role of leadership that was never intended for the deacons.

WOMEN IN CHURCH LEADERSHIP

Read Titus 1:5-9

- ▶ What does scripture say about women in leadership of the church?

“Husband of one wife.” This implies that only men should be pastors. Paul also tells Timothy in another passage that women are not allowed to teach and usurp authority. Therefore, there cannot be a woman pastor.

As a church, we believe that not all the full time paid staff are elders. We have limited the elders to those who are in charge of more than one entity in the church. For example, Sherri is only in charge of one entity, the preschool ministry, therefore she is not an elder. Only those staff members in charge of more than one entity are viewed as elders.

Read Romans 16:1

- ▶ Why do we see a female deacon in the Bible?

You have to remember that deacons of that time had a lot less power than deacons of today have.

LESSON 24: TITHES AND OFFERINGS

BIBLICAL PRINCIPLES OF MONEY

Read Matthew 19:16-21 and Luke 19:8-10

- ▶ What principle about money is seen in these passages?

In Matthew, you see Jesus asking the rich guy to give away all his money. On the contrary, in Luke, you see Zaccheus voluntarily gives up a large portion of his wealth even though Jesus did not ask him to do this. These two passages appear to contradict each other, but if you look deeper, you see a common principle...

God is more important than money.

There may be times when you are called to give a lot of money. At other times, you may give a large portion voluntarily out of your heart.

Read Matthew 25:14-30

- ▶ What principle about money is seen in these passages?

The men in this parable were given an allotment of money when their master went away. Two invested the money and doubled their money. For this they were praised by their master. One man chose to bury the money and was rebuked for this. The underlying principle is...

You have a responsibility to increase your money.

There is nothing Biblically wrong with someone being engaged in increasing the amount of money they possess. In fact it is a command to increase your money.

Read Malachi 3:1-18

- ▶ What principle about money is seen in these passages?

Tithes and offerings are two different things, and we are called to give both to the church. If you increase your money, then in turn your tithes and offerings will also increase.

You are called to give tithes and offerings to the church.

A tithe is 10% and offerings are based on what the Holy Spirit tells you to use. Some people may use **Matthew 23:23** to say that tithes were done away with in the New Testament. In reality, God commands us all to tithe at least 10%. This is non-negotiable. We are also called to give these tithes to the church only. Some people may say that they are giving their tithe to a missionary, but this is not biblical. We must finance the church through our tithes.

Although tithes are required, offerings are not. It is between you and God if you should give an offering to the church or not.

HOW CHRISTIANS USE MONEY

Read Psalm 41:1-3 and James 2:14-17

▶ What does this passage say about the use of money by Christians?

If my money is increased, then my tithes and offerings will increase. In turn, the church's ability to move and act in the community is increased. God will place poor people in your life that you have the responsibility to take care of. The more your money is increased, the more you can take care of the poor.

You have a responsibility to care for the poor.

It is important to remember that there are two different types of poverty in America. Some are poor because of circumstances, while others are poor because of choice. In **2 Thessalonians 3:10**, the Bible is clear that if man does not work, then he should not eat. If it is the person's choice to be poor, then we do not take care of him. On the other hand, if the person is poor because of circumstance, then we do everything we can to help them.

One of the reasons that you are to increase your money and remain with the understanding that Jesus is more important than your money is because there are needy people that He will put in your path and you have a responsibility to take care of those people.

REWARDS IN HEAVEN

Read Matthew 25:35-40, Mark 9:41, and 1 Corinthians 3

▶ What does scripture say about giving?

Whatever we give up, we get back eventually. As we have seen already, we are called to give tithes and offerings. Everything outside of that is pretty much yours to use however you want. Just remember, that whatever God asks you to give up, He will return to you.

LESSON 25: GOVERNMENT AND OUR CITIZENSHIP

BIBLICAL RESPECT FOR GOVERNMENT

Read Romans 13:1-7

- ▶ Is this passage only for the times when we have a great leader or at all times?

To understand this passage, it is important to consider the background. Paul is writing this from prison in Rome. He is in prison for being falsely accused of burning Rome when Nero the ruler of that time actually burned the city. Peter and Paul were both accused of burning Rome because they were disliked by many of the Romans. Peter was crucified, and Paul, because he was a Roman citizen and could not be crucified, was later beheaded.

When people try to say that Paul only meant this if you had a good leader, they are teaching falsely. Nero was a terrible leader and the leader when Paul wrote this.

Read Romans 13:1

- ▶ What does this passage say about every authority in our lives?

God says that everyone that is in authority was placed there by God.

- ▶ What is man's ultimate goal in life? What would you say and what would society say?

Society says that man's goal is money, happiness, peacefulness, and pleasure.

- ▶ What is God's view and ultimate purpose?

God wants to take as many people as possible to be with Him in heaven. He wants everyone to be saved.

- ▶ Why would God allow such horrible leaders like Nero to be in authority?

Many people grow best during hard times. The hard times force them to lean on God and pray more leading to growth in Christ. God wants us to grow closer to Him and bring the world to Him. If everything in life was peaceful and perfect then would we be able to grow as close to Him and stand out in the world?

Example: 100 years after Nero Constantine came to control. He made the law that everyone in the Roman Empire had to be Christian. He had watched the martyrs and how Christians stood firm even under attack.

As you can see, God was able to use the cruelty of Nero to bring another generation closer to Himself. This is why God allows leaders that we don't always agree with to be in places of authority.

Read Romans 13:3

▶ Do we fear the authorities when we do wrong or fear them all the time?

If you are driving down the road and policeman pulls up behind you, and you know that you are driving the speed limit does your heart rate go up? Does it go up just as much if you know you are speeding? We don't need to fear the authority if we are not doing anything wrong. On the other hand, we should be in fear of authority if we are doing wrong.

Read Romans 13:4-5

▶ What does this passage say is one of the purposes of government?

One of the purposes of God is to carry the sword or enforce the law. At this time in history, the people in leadership would actually carry a sword. If anyone disobeyed the law or certain sets of laws then the person in authority had the right to kill you. Therefore, this passage also seems to indicate that capital punishment is needed. Some actions are so wrong that we need capital punishment to deter people from doing it.

Today's world is trying to do away with capital punishment; therefore we need to stand up for it, because it is biblical. It is important though that it is used properly. We must ensure that we do not execute someone who is innocent, but must go through the due process.

This passage also indicates that it is the government's job to protect us. The government is responsible for forming an armed force to protect us and in society, people are scared of us because of the military we have and the fact that we stand up for ourselves.

The other side to this is that people should fear the government when they do wrong. Do you think criminals fear our legal system? In general, no they don't. According to the DA's Office there are approximately 4000 felonies a year in Brazos County. Only about 40 of those or 1% actually go to trial. Sadly, this does not create fear in the public and deter them from doing wrong.

▶ What is our responsibility in government?

We need to pray for leaders that we will take a strong stand. Also, we must use the opportunities we are given to become involved in the legal system, mainly jury duty. As Christians, we have the responsibility to serve there and help our government.

Read Romans 13:6-7

- ▶ What does this passage say about our responsibility to government?

As Christians, we are to pay taxes. We only have to pay what we legally owe. Loopholes exist and as long as they are legal, then you can take advantage of them. It is important though that we do not cheat on our taxes. Through paying our taxes, we honor God, and in return He will honor us.

DISOBEYING THE GOVERNMENT

Read Acts 4:8-22

- ▶ Is it every okay to not obey the government?

We can disobey government when they tell us to deny God or not do what God has called us to do.

Example: The government has outlawed praying over the PA system in school. You can still pray silently or even pray in a small group with other believers. You do not disobey by praying over the PA system, but you continue to pray because that is what God has told you to do.

Killing children if living in China. Euthanasia. Laws forcing women to have abortions

It is important to be vocal about important issues as they arise in the government. If the law passes and it doesn't directly tell us to do something against God's will, then we must step in line and obey that law.

CONCLUSION

1. As Christians, we have to be vocal and exercise our right to vote.
2. We need to pray for Supreme Court justices who enforce the law and not make the law.
3. We need to demand that criminals are punished and not allowed to continue in their behavior.