

“Newcomers” Class Schedule

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Lesson 1: The Bible

The English word, “Bible” means book. It is derived from the Greek word, *biblion*, also meaning book. Other names for the Bible are “Scripture” or “the Scriptures” (meaning the writings) and “the Word of God.”

Many Bibles have written on their covers, “Holy Bible.” The word, “holy” means sacred, special, or set apart. The Bible is a holy, sacred, special, set apart book because it is the only book that is the Word of God. A song I learned as a child starts with the words: “I have a precious book—it’s the Word of God; it’s the only book that God has given ...”

The Inspiration of the Bible

That the Bible is the Word of God is known as the doctrine (teaching) of **inspiration**. Inspiration is *the supernatural influence* [i.e., it was a miracle] *whereby God the Holy Spirit caused human beings* [the human authors of Scripture] *to compose* [God did not dictate the words; the human authors wrote in accordance with their individual vocabularies, etc.] *and record without error* [see below on the inerrancy of the Bible] *the very words of God’s choosing* [ultimately, the words of the Bible are the words of God] *in the entirety of the original manuscripts of Scripture* [what the human authors wrote, not the copies and translations of what they wrote, though such copies and translations are derivatively inspired and inerrant to the degree that they conform to the original].

How do we know that the Bible is the Word of God/inspired? Because God has told us so in His Word. While I may be rightly charged with circular reasoning/begging the question at this point (assuming to be true—that the Bible is the Word of God—the point I am seeking to prove as true—that the Bible is the Word of God), every appeal to an ultimate source of authority ultimately has to do so. See Hebrews 6:13. Because the Bible is the ultimate source of authority, being God’s Word, there is no other source to which one may ultimately appeal to verify that the Bible is God’s Word. The ultimate reason why believers are convinced that the Bible is the Word of God when It says It is the Word of God is the special work of God the Holy Spirit called illumination.

Three of the places in the Bible where God tells us that It is inspired are:

1 Thessalonians 2:13

For this cause also thank we God without ceasing, because, when ye received the word of God which ye heard of us, ye received it not as the

word of men, but as it is in truth, the word of God, which effectually worketh also in you that believe.

2 Timothy 3:16

All Scripture is given by inspiration of God [literally: God-breathed], and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness.

2 Peter 1:21

Knowing this first, that no prophecy of the scripture is of any private interpretation. For the prophecy came not in old time by the will of man: but holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost.

Furthermore, there are over 3,800 places in Scripture where we read words such as “God said” or “thus says the Lord.”

The Inerrancy of the Bible

Because the Bible is the Word of God (see above on the inspiration of the Bible), and God is true (Psalm 31:5, John 3:33, Romans 3:4, Titus 1:2, Hebrews 6:18; consider also that God the Holy Spirit is called the “Spirit of truth” in John 14:17 and 15:26), the Bible is true. The doctrine that the Bible is without error is called **inerrancy**.

Two of the places in the Bible where God tells us that It is inerrant are:

Psalms 12:6

The words of the LORD are pure words: as silver tried in a furnace of earth, purified seven times.

John 17:17

Sanctify them through thy truth: thy word is truth.

Other places include: 2 Samuel 7:28, Psalm 19:7-9, 119:140, 142, 151, 160, and Proverbs 30:5.

The Infallibility of the Bible

Because the Bible is the Word of God (see above on the inspiration of the Bible), and God is the ultimate authority (see on the sovereignty of God in the next lesson), the Bible is inherently authoritative. The teaching that the authority of the Bible cannot fail or be broken is the doctrine of **infallibility**. Jesus said in John 10:35 that “the scripture cannot be

broken.” Other places in the Bible that teach this doctrine include Matthew 5:18 and 24:35.

The Sufficiency of the Bible

The doctrine of the **sufficiency** of Scripture is the teaching that the Bible, in and of itself, is all that is needed to save and to sanctify sinners.

“There is no doctrine which needs to be believed, or duty which needs to be fulfilled, about which Scripture does not give us adequate information to enable us to believe and obey God” (Robert Sheehan).

“The whole counsel of God, concerning all things necessary for His own glory, man’s salvation, faith, and life, is either expressly set down in Scripture, or by good and necessary consequence may be deduced from Scripture: unto which nothing at any time is to be added, whether by new revelations of the Spirit, or traditions of men” (the Westminster Confession of Faith).

“How firm a foundation, ye saints of the Lord, Is laid for your faith in His excellent Word! What more can He say than to you He hath said ...?” (from the hymn, “How Firm a Foundation” by John Rippon).

Two of the places in the Bible that teach this doctrine include:

2 Peter 1:3-4

According as his divine power hath given unto us all things that pertain unto life and godliness, through the knowledge of him that hath called us to glory and virtue: Whereby are given unto us exceeding great and precious promises: that by these ye might be partakers of the divine nature, having escaped the corruption that is in the world through lust.

2 Timothy 3:15-17

And that from a child thou hast known the holy scriptures, which are able to make thee wise unto salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus. All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness: That the man of God may be perfect, throughly furnished unto all good works.

Groups that deny this doctrine include the cults (with sources of authority in addition to the Bible), Catholicism (with sources of authority in addition to the Bible), Charismaticism (with its belief in continuing revelation), and “Christian” psychology (with its integration of the Bible with secular psychology).

The Canon of Scripture

Once the books of the Bible were written, they were **canonical**, meaning that they were part of the **canon** of Scripture. The word, “canon” comes from the Greek word *kanon*, which means rule or standard. The rule or standard that a book had to meet in order to be included in the canon of Scripture was inspiration. While a biblical book’s inspiration and, therefore, **canonicity** was inherent to it, it took time for Christians to universally recognize it (so, the church did not *determine* the canon; rather, it *discovered* it).

“The Church no more gave us the New Testament canon than Sir Isaac Newton gave us the force of gravity. God gave us gravity, by His work of creation, and similarly he gave us the New Testament canon, by inspiring the individual books that make it up” (J. I. Packer).

“... [A] book is not the Word of God because it is accepted by the people of God. Rather, it was accepted by the people of God because it is the Word of God” (Norman Geisler and William Nix).

Canonization, the process whereby Christians came to recognize which books were inspired and, therefore, part of the canon, resulted in the rejection of the Apocrypha (the 14 or 15 extra books that are included in the Catholic Bible) and the confirmation of a 66-book canon.

The canonicity and confines of the Old Testament were confirmed by Christ (see Luke 11:50-51 and 24:44). The canonicity of the Gospel of Luke was confirmed by Paul (1 Timothy 5:18). The canonicity of Paul’s epistles (letters) was confirmed by Peter (2 Peter 3:16). The three basic criteria Christians used to discern which of the other New Testament-era books were canonical were: 1) the test of apostolic authorship—was the book written by an apostle or under the oversight of an apostle?; 2) the test of doctrinal accuracy—was what the book taught consistent with what books already recognized to be canonical taught?; and 3) the test of universal acceptance—was the book’s canonicity recognized by the church at large (Christ’s sheep hear his voice, John 10:27).

The Translation of the Bible

The Old Testament portion of the Bible was written in Hebrew (with a very small percentage written in Aramaic), while the New Testament portion was written in Greek. It has been translated from these original languages into some of the various languages of the world, including English. According to one count, there are 6,500 languages in the world, with the entire Bible having been translated into 400 of them, the New

Testament into approximately another 1,000, and a portion of the Bible into approximately yet another 1,000.

There have been many English translations of the Bible (over 1,000 throughout history). While no translation is inherently inspired (technically, inspiration applies only to the originals), a translation is derivatively inspired to the degree that it conforms to the original.

Some of the more common English translations of today include:

The King James Version

Named after King James I, the English king who authorized (for this reason, it is sometimes also called the Authorized Version) its translation, the King James Version (KJV) was the work of approximately 50 Church of England/Anglican translators. Completed in 1611 and revised (to various degrees) in 1612, 1613, 1616, 1629, 1638, 1762, and 1769 (the edition available today is essentially the 1769 revision), it is a literal, word-for-word translation. Due to its centuries-old, archaic English, it has a 14th grade readability level.

The New King James Version

An update of the archaic English of the KJV, the New King James Version (NKJV) was the work of over 100 translators. The New Testament was completed in 1979, the Old Testament in 1982. Like the KJV, it also is a literal, word-for-word translation. Its readability level is 9th grade.

The New International Version

The New International Version (NIV) was produced by over 100 evangelical scholars from various English-speaking countries and denominations. The New Testament was published in 1973, the Old Testament in 1978. Due to its dynamic, thought-for-thought theory of translation, its readability level is 8th grade.

The New American Standard Bible

The New American Standard Bible (NASB), an update of the 1901 American Standard Version (ASV), was the work of 32 translators (16 for each Testament). The New Testament was published in 1963, the Old Testament in 1971. It was updated in 1995. It is a literal, word-for-word translation, whose readability level is 11th grade.

The English Standard Version

The English Standard Version (ESV) is a literal, word-for-word translation, produced by a team of over 100 individuals from various nations and denominations. It was published in 2001.

All of the above translations are reliable and recommended for personal Bible reading, study, and memorization.

The Contents of the Bible

The Bible was written by approximately 40 human authors over the space of approximately 1,500 years (from 1,400 B.C. to 100 A.D.). It is divided into two parts, the Old Testament and the New Testament, with the Old Testament comprising approximately 83% of the overall content, the New Testament 17%.

The Old Testament

The Old Testament (OT) was written over the space of approximately 1,000 years (from 1,400 B.C. to 400 B.C.). The following chart gives the order (more of a topical, rather than chronological, arrangement) of its 39 books in a modern, English Bible:

Law	History	Poetry	Prophecy
Genesis	Joshua	Job	<i>Major Prophets</i>
Exodus	Judges	Psalms	Isaiah
Leviticus	Ruth	Proverbs	Jeremiah
Numbers	1 & 2 Samuel	Ecclesiastes	Lamentations
Deuteronomy	1 & 2 Kings	Song of Solomon	Ezekiel
	1 & 2 Chronicles		Daniel
	Ezra		
	Nehemiah		<i>Minor Prophets</i>
	Esther		Hosea-Malachi

The New Testament

The New Testament (NT) was written over the space of approximately 50 years (from 45-95 A.D.). The 400 years between the writing of the last Old Testament book and the first New Testament book are commonly called the “silent years.” The following chart gives the order (more of a topical, rather than chronological, arrangement) of its 27 books in a modern, English Bible:

Gospels	History	Epistles	Prophecy
Matthew	Acts	<i>Pauline</i>	Revelation
Mark		Romans	
Luke		1 & 2 Corinthians	
John		Galatians	
		Ephesians	
		Philippians	
		Colossians	
		1 & 2 Thessalonians	
		1 & 2 Timothy	
		Titus	
		Philemon	
		<i>Non-Pauline</i>	
		Hebrews	
		James	
		1 & 2 Peter	
		1-3 John	
		Jude	

Studying the Bible

Like Ezra (Ezra 7:10), every believer should purpose to study the Bible. It is strongly recommended that every believer have a plan to systematically read through the Bible (consider writing down what you learn as you read), memorize as much of its content as possible, and take advantage of the various study aides (Bible dictionaries, Bible encyclopedias, concordances, commentaries, study Bibles, theology books, etc.) available today (many of which are now available in electronic format). Also be sure to participate in any Bible studies your church offers (Sunday School, Wednesday night, etc.).

Studying the Bible consists of discovering the meaning of the text (as the original readers would have understood it), then applying its meaning to life today. I remember a teacher I had in Bible college once saying: "The goal of Bible study is not an informed intellect, but a transformed personality." Once again, consider the example of Ezra (Ezra 7:10).

When interpreting a text of Scripture, especially take into account the type of literature the text is (historical narrative, proverb, parable, epistle, etc.) and the context in which it is found (the book and Testament in which it is found, as well as what comes immediately before it and what comes immediately after it). Also take time to look up parallel passages (passages elsewhere in Scripture that speak about the same thing).

Lesson 2: God

The Existence of God

“In the beginning God ...” (Genesis 1:1). These are the opening words of the Bible. It is instructive to note that the Bible does not begin by seeking to *prove* God’s existence; rather, It *presumes* it. At no point does the Bible seek to *defend* God’s existence; rather, It *declares* it. God is (Exodus 3:14).

A Definition of God

God is “the infinite and perfect Spirit in whom all things have their source, support, and end” (A. H. Strong).

He is spirit (John 4:24). As such, He is invisible (Colossians 1:15, 1 Timothy 1:17), incapable of being seen (1 Timothy 6:16; cf. John 1:18).

He is infinite, meaning without limit. He is without limit in regards to time/eternal; He is without limit in regards to knowledge/omniscient; He is without limit in regards to space/omnipresent; He is without limit in regards to power/omnipotent; He is without limit in regards to authority/sovereign; He is without limit in regards to His will/free.

He is perfect. As such, He lacks nothing.

The creation (Genesis 1, Acts 14:25, 17:24) and continuation (Job 12:10, 34:14-15, Psalm 104:29, Acts 17:25, 28, 2 Peter 3:7) of the universe (all that is not God) is God’s doing. God is the reason for the universe’s existence, not vice versa. God is the source, support, and end of all (Romans 11:36).

The Triunity of God

God is triune, or three-in-one. The one God exists in three Persons: God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit. The three are “distinguishable as persons, but one and inseparable in their being” (Millard Erickson). The three are commonly called the Trinity.

Places in the Bible that speak of the three Persons of the Godhead together include:

Matthew 3:16-17

And Jesus, when he was baptized, went up straightway [immediately] out of the water: and, lo, the heavens were opened unto him, and he saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove, and lighting [coming to rest] upon him: And lo a voice [the voice of God the Father] from heaven, saying, This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased.

Matthew 28:19

Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost [Spirit].

Other such places include: 1 Corinthians 12:4-6, 2 Corinthians 13:14, Ephesians 4:4-6, 1 Peter 1:2, and Jude 20-21.

In terms of who they are, the members of the Trinity are equal, each being fully divine. In terms of what they do, the Father is first, the Son second, the Spirit third. John 10:30 (where Jesus says: “I and my Father are one”) speaks of the first, while John 14:28 (where Jesus says: “my Father is greater than I”) speaks of the second. The interrelationship of the roles performed by the Persons of the Godhead has been likened (by Rolland McCune) to those performed by an architect (the Father), a builder (the Son), and a construction worker (the Spirit). When God does something, He does so from the Father through the Son (1 Corinthians 8:6) by the Holy Spirit (Ephesians 2:18).

The doctrine of the Trinity, though suprarational (beyond the ability of the finite, human intellect to *fully* comprehend), is not irrational (it can be *truly* comprehended). It has been said (source unknown): “Try to explain [the doctrine of the Trinity] and you’ll lose your mind; But try to deny it, and you’ll lose your soul.”

The Attributes of God

There are many words one may use to describe what God is like. These words are called “attributes.”

God’s attributes are intrinsic to His being; He is what His attributes are; without any one of them, He would cease to be God.

God's attributes are not like the individual pieces of a jigsaw puzzle, which, when put together, make God what He is. Rather, each attribute completely describes what He is like. In other words, He is not part holy, part loving, etc.; rather, He is perfectly holy, perfectly loving, etc.

God's attributes may be classified into two general categories, His attributes of *greatness* and His attributes of *goodness*. Attributes of greatness are attributes that are characteristic of God and God alone. Attributes of goodness are attributes that characterize God to a perfect degree and are to characterize those who are God's children, Christians. Being godly is being morally like God/being characterized by His attributes of goodness.

God's attributes of greatness include:

- **Sovereignty: God rules over all**
“... [T]hine is the kingdom, O LORD, and thou art exalted as head above all. Both riches and honour come of thee, and thou reignest over all ...” (1 Chronicles 29:11-12). God is supreme.
- **Omnipotence: God is all-powerful and has all power**
“I know that thou canst do every thing ...” (Job 42:2). God can do anything consistent with His character and will. God has all power. “God hath spoken once; twice have I heard this; that power belongeth unto God” (Psalm 62:11). Practical value: “If God were stunted in might and had a limit to His strength we might well despair. But seeing that He is clothed with omnipotence, no prayer is too hard for Him to answer, no need too great for Him to supply, no passion too strong for Him to subdue; no temptation too powerful for Him to deliver from, no misery too deep for Him to relieve” (Arthur Pink).
- **Omniscience: God is all-knowing**
God “knoweth all things” (1 John 3:20); “his understanding is infinite” (Psalm 147:5); He is “perfect in knowledge” (Job 37:16). God “knows all that can be known. And this He knows instantly and with a fullness of perfection that includes every possible item of knowledge concerning everything that exists or could have existed anywhere in the universe at any time in the past or that may exist in the centuries or ages yet unborn” (A. W. Tozer). Practical value: ^ATo us who have fled for refuge to lay hold upon the hope that is set before us in the gospel, how unutterably sweet is the knowledge that our Heavenly Father knows us completely. No talebearer can inform on us, no enemy can make an accusation stick; no forgotten skeleton can come tumbling out of some hidden closet to abash us and expose our past; no unsuspected weakness in our characters can come to light to turn God away from us, since He knew us utterly before we knew Him and called us to Himself in the full knowledge of everything that was against us” (A. W. Tozer).

- **Omnipresence: God is everywhere**
The entirety of God=s presence fills the entirety of the universe at every moment. “... Do not I fill heaven and earth? saith the LORD” (Jeremiah 23:24; cf. Psalm 139:7-12). Though God fills the universe, He, being infinite, is not limited by the spatial dimensions of the universe. “... [T]he heaven and heaven of heavens cannot contain thee ...” (1 Kings 8:27). God does not have size. “We should try to avoid thinking of God in terms of size or spatial dimensions. God is a being who exists *without* size or dimensions in space. In fact, before God created the universe, there was no ‘where’ or space. But God still was! This fact makes us realize that God relates to space in a far different way than we do or than any created thing does. He exists as a kind of being that is far different and far greater than we can imagine” (Wayne Grudem). Practical value: “Think not thou canst sigh a sigh And thy Maker is not by; Think not thou canst weep a tear And thy Maker is not near” (William Blake).
- **Holiness: God is in a class by Himself**
“... [T]hou thoughtest that I was altogether such an one as thyself@ (Psalm 50:21). God is so great that He defies comparison. “To whom then will ye liken me, or shall I be equal? saith the Holy One” (Isaiah 40:25).
- **Infinitude: God is unlimited and unlimitable**
God is not limited by time (He is eternal). God is not limited by space (He is omnipresent). God is unlimited in knowledge (He is omniscient). God is unlimited in power (He is omnipotent). God is unlimited in authority (He is sovereign). Only God is infinite; everything else is finite (limited). There is an infinite gap between God and everything else (the “Creator-creature distinction”). “The difference between God=s being and ours is more than the difference between the sun and a candle, more than the difference between the ocean and a raindrop, more than the difference between the arctic ice cap and a snowflake, more than the difference between the universe and the room we are sitting in: God=s being is *qualitatively different*” (Wayne Grudem).
- **Incomprehensibility: God cannot be completely comprehended**
“Canst thou by searching find out God? canst thou find out the Almighty unto perfection?” (Job 11:7). “For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways, saith the LORD. For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways, and my thoughts than your thoughts” (Isaiah 55:8-9). “O the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! how unsearchable are his judgments, and his ways past finding out!” (Romans 11:33). Though God cannot be *fully* known,

He can be *truly* known. “God is a subject of study that we will never master” (Wayne Grudem).

- **Immutability: God is unchanging and unchangeable**
“For I am the LORD, I change not ...” (Malachi 3:6). “[God] cannot change for the better, for He is already perfect; and being perfect, He cannot change for the worse” (Arthur Pink). God will always be what He has always been. God is “the Rock” (Deuteronomy 32:4).
- **Eternality: God has no beginning or end**
“Before the mountains were brought forth, or ever thou hadst formed the earth and the world, even from everlasting to everlasting, thou art God” (Psalm 90:2). “The eternal God is thy refuge, and underneath are the everlasting arms ...” (Deuteronomy 33:27). God was never born (one thing we have that God does not is a birthday) and He will never die. There was never a time when He was not. He eternally is (Exodus 3:14). God neither has age, nor does He age. “Time writes no wrinkle on the brow of the Eternal” (source unknown). “The question, How old is God? is simply inappropriate. He is no older now than a year ago, for infinity plus one is no more than infinity. He simply is not restricted by the dimensions of time” (Millard Erickson).
- **Freedom: God is independent of everyone and everything else**
“God that made the world and all things therein, seeing that he is Lord of heaven and earth, dwelleth not in temples made with hands; Neither is worshipped with men=s hands, as though he needed any thing, seeing he giveth to all life, and breath, and all things” (Acts 17:24-25). God is the only one who can do what He wants, when He wants, where He wants, how He wants, to whom He wants, for whom He wants, for how long He wants, and for whatever reason(s) He wants. “... [A]nd he doeth according to his will in the army of heaven, and among the inhabitants of the earth: and none can stay his hand, or say unto him, What doest thou?” (Daniel 4:35). “Can we imagine the Lord God of Hosts having to request permission of anyone or to apply for anything to a higher body? To whom would God go for permission? Who is higher than the Highest? Who is mightier than the Almighty? Whose position antedates that of the Eternal? At whose throne would God kneel? Where is the greater one to whom He must appeal?” (A. W. Tozer). God is the only One who is both self-existent (John 5:26) and self-sufficient (Psalm 50:12).

God’s attributes of goodness include:

- **Holiness: God is perfectly pure**
God never does anything wrong (absence of vice); He always does everything right (presence of virtue). "... God is light, and in him is no darkness at all" (1 John 1:5).
- **Love: God does what is best for us**
"This is true love to any one,' said Tillotson, 'to do the best for him we can.' This is what God does for those he loves—the best he can" (J. I. Packer). God is "for us" (Romans 8:31; cf. Psalm 118:6). His love for the believer is infallible: "Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword? ... For I am persuaded, that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, Nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord" (Romans 8:35, 38-39).
- **Mercifulness: God doesn't always give us what we deserve**
"... [O]ur God hath punished us less than our iniquities deserve ..." (Ezra 9:13). "He hath not dealt with us after our sins; nor rewarded us according to our iniquities" (Psalm 103:10). God in His mercy allows sinners to live physically: "It is of the LORD's mercies that we are not consumed ..." (Lamentations 3:22). God in His mercy allows sinners to live spiritually: "Not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to his mercy he saved us ..." (Titus 3:5). The question isn't: Why do bad things happen to good people? There aren't any good people (Mark 10:18, Romans 3:10-12). The question is: Why does anything good ever happen to bad people, i.e., anyone? The answer: Because God is merciful. "When . . . we children of the shadows reach at last our home in the light, we shall have a thousand strings to our harps, but the sweetest may well be the one tuned to sound forth most perfectly the mercy of God" (A. W. Tozer).
- **Graciousness: God sometimes gives us what we don't deserve**
God's grace is His unearned and undeserved favor shown toward sinners. "...[W]hat hast thou that thou didst not receive?" (1 Corinthians 4:7). "But by the grace of God I am what I am ..." (1 Corinthians 15:10). "If I ever reach heaven I expect to find three wonders there: First, to meet some I had not thought to see there. Second, to miss some I had thought to meet there. And third, the greatest wonder of all, to find myself there!" (John Newton, author of the hymn, "Amazing Grace").

- **Wisdom: God makes no mistakes**
God has “the ability to devise perfect ends and to achieve those ends by the most perfect means” (A. W. Tozer). Everything God does is perfect. Nothing God does can be improved upon. Nothing can be added to or taken away from what God does in order to make it better. “I know that, whatsoever God doeth, it shall be forever: nothing can be put to it, nor anything taken from it ...” (Ecclesiastes 3:14). “To God only wise, be glory through Jesus Christ for ever. Amen” (Romans 16:27).
- **Justice: God is a righteous judge**
“... [F]or the LORD our God is righteous in all his works which he doeth” (Daniel 9:14). God conforms to the standard of right, Himself. “Everything in the universe is good to the degree it conforms to the nature of God and evil as it fails to do so” (A. W. Tozer). God doesn’t do things because they are right; they are right because He does them. God executes His justice by both punishing disobedience and by rewarding obedience. “For God shall bring every work into judgment, with every secret thing, whether it be good, or whether it be evil” (Ecclesiastes 12:14). All wrongs will eventually be righted, for God has all eternity to execute His justice.

The Names of God

There are three primary names for God in the Old Testament:

- **Elohim**
Used over 2,000 times in the Old Testament and translated “God,” Elohim is the divine name that emphasizes God’s strength/power/might. “In the beginning God [Elohim] created the heaven and the earth” (Genesis 1:1). Elohim is used in a generic sense for any so-called deity (small “g”), but in a proper sense only for the one and only true and living God of the Bible (capital “G”). The -im ending of Elohim indicates that it is a plural. This is most likely what is called a plural of intensity or plural of majesty, a description of a single person in plural terms in order to emphasize the greatness of the person.
- **Adonai**
Translated “Lord,” Adonai is the divine name that emphasizes God’s authority and ownership. “In the year that king Uzziah died I saw also the Lord [Adonai] sitting upon a throne, high, and lifted up, and his train [the train of His robe] filled the temple” (Isaiah 6:1). It is

used generically to describe anyone in a position of authority (small “l”; for example, Sarah calls her husband, Abraham, “adon” in Genesis 18:12), but properly to describe God (capital “L”). The -ai ending of Adonai, like the -im ending of Elohim, is a plural, most likely another plural of intensity or majesty.

- Yahweh
Used over 5,000 times in the Old Testament and translated “LORD” or, sometimes, “GOD” (if used in conjunction with Adonai; see, for example, Genesis 15:2), Yahweh is the divine name that emphasizes God’s self-existence, eternity, and immutability. “And God said unto Moses, I AM THAT I AM’: and he said, Thus shalt thou say unto the children of Israel, I AM [Yahweh] hath sent me unto you” (Exodus 3:14). Yahweh is, as it were, God’s personal name: “I am the LORD [Yahweh]: that is my name...” (Isaiah 42:8). Unlike Elohim and Adonai, Yahweh has no generic use; it is used of God and God alone.

There are three primary names for God in the New Testament:

- Theos
Used over 1,000 times in the New Testament and translated “God”, Theos corresponds to Elohim in the Old Testament. Theos is the Greek word from which we get our English word, “theology.” It is used generically for any so-called deity (small “g”), but properly only for God (capital “G”).
- Kurios
Translated “Lord,” Kurios corresponds to Adonai in the Old Testament. It is used generically for human “lords” (1 Peter 3:6), but personally only for the “Lord of lords” (1 Timothy 6:15). Roughly synonymous with Kurios is Despotes, from which we get our English word, “despot.” Despotes is used generically of humans (1 Peter 2:18) and properly only of God (2 Timothy 2:21).
- Pater
Translated “Father,” Pater is the Greek word from which we get our English words, “paternal” and “paternity.” God is the Father of all men by virtue of creation (Acts 17:29), of believers by virtue of salvation (Galatians 3:26), and of God the Son by virtue of what is called “eternal generation” (Matthew 3:17). Roughly synonymous to the Greek name for God, Pater is the Aramaic name for God, Abba (Romans 8:15).

The Works of God

God's works include the following five:

- **His work of creation**
God's work of creation has been defined as "*that free act* [God didn't have to create—Revelation 4:11] *of the triune God* [Father, Genesis 1:1; Son, John 1:3, 10, Colossians 1:16, Hebrews 1:2; Spirit, Genesis 1:2] *by which in the beginning* [Genesis 1:1, John 1:1-3] *for his own glory* [Isaiah 43:7; cf. Colossians 1:16's "all things were created ... for him"] *he made, without preexisting materials* [Romans 4:17, Hebrews 11:3], *the whole visible and invisible universe* [Colossians 1:16]" (A. H. Strong). God created the universe instantaneously by divine command (Genesis 1:3, 9, 11, 14-15, 24, Psalm 33:9), contrary to any evolutionary theory, in six literal, twenty-four days (Exodus 20:8-11 and 31:14-17).
- **His work of preservation**
Whereas God's work of creation ceased with day six of the creation week (Genesis 2:2), His work of preservation, maintaining what He has made, continues (John 5:17). God is the "glue" that holds the universe together (Job 12:10, 34:14-15, Psalm 104:29, Acts 17:25, 28, Colossians 1:17, Hebrews 1:3, 2 Peter 3:7). In the end, God will "disconnect" His sustaining power, and the current universe will literally come unglued (2 Peter 3:10, 12).
- **His work of revelation**
God has revealed general information about Himself to all men in general (this is commonly called "general revelation") through creation (Psalm 19:1-6, Romans 1:20) and human conscience (Romans 2:14-15). General revelation communicates that God exists and that man is accountable to God. However, it is universally rejected due to sin (Romans 1:18), leaving all men without excuse (Romans 1:20). As C. Samuel Storms states: "Though the evidence is open to man, fallen man is not open to the evidence." God has also revealed specific information about Himself to specific individuals. In times past, this information was communicated through dreams (Genesis 20:3-7), visions (Isaiah 1:1), angels (Luke 2:8-14) and direct address (Exodus 3). Today, it is communicated only through the pages of Scripture (1 Corinthians 13:8-10). Special revelation is needed to accurately interpret general revelation.
- **His work of providence**
Providence is God putting the right people or things in the right place at the right point in time for the right purpose(s)—"for such a time as this" (Esther 4:14) in such a place as this for such a purpose

as this. God in His providence mysteriously moves upon the will of man so that who He wants freely does what He wants, where He wants, when He wants, and for the reason(s) He wants (see, for example Ezra 1:1, Proverbs 21:1, and Revelation 17:17). Wayne Grudem points us in the right direction: “Exactly how God combines his providential control with our willing and significant choices, Scripture does not explain to us. But rather than deny one aspect or the other (simply because we cannot explain how both can be true), we should accept both in an attempt to be faithful to the teaching of all of Scripture.”

- His work of salvation

All three Persons of the Godhead are active in the work of saving men from sin: the Father planned it (Acts 2:23 and 4:28), the Son accomplished it (1 Corinthians 15:3), and the Spirit applies it (Titus 3:5).

Lesson 3: Theology

The word, “theology” comes from the Greek word for God, *theos* and the Greek word, *logos*, meaning word. Theology is the study of the doctrines found in God’s Word, or of what God’s Word teaches.

Systematic Theology

When we speak of theology, we are usually speaking of what is called “systematic theology.” Systematic theology has been defined as “any study that answers the question, ‘What does the whole Bible teach us today?’ about any given topic The adjective *systematic* in systematic theology should be understood to mean something like ‘carefully organized by topics,’ with the understanding that the topics studied will be seen to fit together in a consistent way, and will include all the major doctrinal topics of the Bible. Thus ‘systematic’ should be thought of as the opposite of ‘randomly arranged’ or ‘disorganized.’ In systematic theology topics are treated in an orderly or ‘systematic’ way” (Wayne Grudem). In like manner, Millard Erickson says: “Theology is systematic. That is, it draws upon the whole of the Bible. Rather than utilizing individual texts in isolation from one another, it attempts to relate the various portions to one another, to coalesce the varied teachings into some type of harmonious or coherent whole.”

When one attempts to correlate the teaching of the Bible on a particular topic into a systematic whole, he is “doing theology.” We see Jesus doing theology in Luke 24:27. We see Paul doing it in Acts 17:2-3 and in Acts 28:23. We see Apollos doing it in Acts 18:28.

Systematic theology has traditionally been divided into ten major doctrines:

- **Bibliology** (the doctrine of the Bible)
- **Theology Proper** (the doctrine of God; from the Greek word for God, *theos*)
- **Christology** (the doctrine of Christ)
- **Pneumatology** (the doctrine of the Holy Spirit; from the Greek word for spirit, *pneuma*)
- **Angelology** (the doctrine of angels)
- **Anthropology** (the doctrine of man; from the Greek word for man, *anthropos*)

- **Hamartiology** (the doctrine of sin; from the Greek word for sin, *hamartia*)
- **Soteriology** (the doctrine of salvation; from the Greek word for salvation, *soteria*)
- **Ecclesiology** (the doctrine of the church; from the Greek word for church, *ekklesia*)
- **Eschatology** (the doctrine of last things; from the Greek word for last, *eschatos*)

Practical Theology

When we apply the doctrinal teachings of the Bible to life, we are doing practical theology. Practical theology reminds us that we are to live what we learn; that doctrine must lead to duty; that belief must give birth to behavior; that a confession of faith must create faithful conduct. See 1 Timothy 6:3's "the doctrine which is according to godliness" and Titus 1:1's "the truth which is after godliness."

To give one example, a proper understanding of the doctrine of theology proper has great practical value (see the practical values mentioned with several of God's attributes in the lesson on God). Accordingly, A. W. Tozer once said: "Were we able to extract from any man a complete answer to the question, 'What comes into your mind when you think about God?' we might predict with certainty the spiritual future of that man." In like manner, Christian counselor, Jim Binney has testified: "In over thirty years of counseling, I have yet to find a single problem (spiritual, emotional, or behavioral) which does not have a root of origin, in part or in whole, in an unbiblical image of God."

The following comic strip, from the pen of Charles Schultz, reminds us of the practical value of sound theology:



Lesson 4: The Church

The word, “church” comes from the Greek word, *kuriakos*, an adjective meaning belonging to the Lord, from the Greek noun *kurios*, meaning lord. The Greek word translated “church” means assembly or congregation. Contrary to what is often thought when the word, “church” is heard, it describes not the place where God’s people assemble, but the people who assemble. The majority of times this word is used in the New Testament it is used in reference to a local church.

The Body of Christ Versus the Local Church

When the Bible speaks of the church, it speaks of it both as an invisible, universal entity (the so-called invisible church, universal church, or body of Christ, all those saved during the church age, whether currently on earth or in heaven) and as a local, visible entity, with the second being a specific manifestation of the first in a particular location at a particular point in time. Wayne Grudem makes the following distinction: “The invisible church is the church as God sees it ... The visible church is the church as Christians on earth see it.”

While there may be some who are part of the body of Christ but not part of a local church (i.e., those who are saved but not members of a local church), or some who are part of a local church but not part of the body of Christ (i.e., unsaved local church members), ideally the two groups ought to be the same. As Millard Erickson has said: “... [W]e should do whatever we can to make the two identical. Just as no true believer should be outside the fellowship, so also there should be diligence to assure that only true believers are within.”

The Time of the Church

The church began with the beginning of the “church age” on the Day of Pentecost (Acts 2, especially verses 41-47). The church age will end when the church is removed from the world when Jesus returns at the Rapture (1 Thessalonians 4:13-17). Those saved prior to the church age (such as Old Testament believers) and subsequent to the church age (those saved during the Tribulation and the Millennium) are not part of the church.

The Marks of a Local Church

What makes a local church a local church, distinguishing it from other entities? According to Rolland McCune, the local church of the New Testament is composed of those who are: 1) true believers in the Lord Jesus Christ (Acts 2:41, 47); 2) baptized (immersed) in water as a public testimony (Matthew 28:19, Acts 2:41); 3) organized with the biblical officers of pastor and deacons (Philippians 1:1, 1 Timothy 3:1-13); 4) sharing a common faith or body of biblical truth (Acts 2:42, Jude 3); 5) observing the ordinances of baptism and communion (Matthew 26:26-30, 28:19, Acts 2:41-42); 6) carrying out the great commission (Matthew 28:18-20); and 7) meeting at regular and stated times (John 20:19, 26, Acts 20:7, 1 Corinthians 16:2, Hebrews 10:25).

The Importance of the Local Church

The importance of the local church is seen in such New Testament texts as:

1 Corinthians 3:16-17

Know ye not that ye [the local church at Corinth, to whom these words were written] are the temple [the Greek noun translated “temple” is the particular word for the inner sanctum, or holy of holies of the Jewish temple] of God, and that the Spirit of God dwelleth in you? If any man defile the temple of God, him shall God destroy; for the temple of God is holy, which temple ye are.

1 Timothy 3:15

But if I tarry long, that thou mayest know how thou oughtest to behave thyself in the house of God, which is the church of the living God, the pillar and ground of the truth.

Hebrews 10:23-25

Let us hold fast the profession of our faith without wavering; (for he is faithful that promised;) And let us consider one another to provoke unto love and to good works: Not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as the manner of some is; but exhorting one another: and so much the more, as ye see the day approaching.

“... [T]he church is the primary means through which God accomplishes His plan in the world. It is His ordained instrument for calling the lost to Himself and the context in which He sanctifies those who are born into His family. Therefore God expects (and even demands) a commitment to the church from everyone who claims to know Him” (Wayne Mack & David Swavely, emphasis theirs).

The Offices of the Local Church

There are two offices in the local church, pastor and deacon (Philippians 1:1, 1 Timothy 3:1-13).

Pastor

The word, “pastor” means shepherd. A pastor, an under-shepherd to the Chief Shepherd, Jesus Christ (1 Peter 5:4), shepherds a local church, his flock (Acts 20:28-29, 1 Peter 5:2-3). Other titles for a pastor include bishop (overseer or superintendent of a local church) and elder (president of a local church). More will be said about the office of pastor in the final lesson of this study.

Deacon

The word, “deacon” means servant. The origin of the office appears to be found in Acts 6:1-6. The qualifications for the office are found in 1 Timothy 3:8-13 (cf. Acts 6:3 and 5). “The deacon is helper to the pastor and the church, in both spiritual and temporal things” (A. H. Strong). A deacon is not inferior to a pastor—he just has a different role and responsibility (just as a wife is not inferior to her husband, though she has a different role and responsibility). Like husbands and wives, pastors and deacons are equal in worth, though different in work. They are equal in terms of person, but different in terms of position.

The Ordinances of the Local Church

There are two ordinances (these are called “ordinances” because they have been ordained or ordered by the Lord) in the local church, baptism (Matthew 28:19, Acts 2:41) and the Lord’s Supper (1 Corinthians 11:23-30). “A Christian ordinance is a ceremony that the Lord Jesus Christ has

commanded to be permanently practiced by the church” (Donald Whitney).

Baptism

Baptism is for believers only (Matthew 28:19, Acts 2:41, et. al.); it is not for infants. Its mode is immersion (the word itself means this), not sprinkling or pouring. It does not save; rather, it symbolizes what happened to the believer at salvation, death to the power of sin and resurrection to righteous living (Romans 6:4), as well as the washing away, or forgiveness, of sin (Acts 22:16). Though baptism does not save, it is significant: “The idea of an unbaptized Christian is simply not entertained in the NT” (F. F. Bruce).

The Lord’s Supper

The “Lord’s Supper” (1 Corinthians 11:20) is also known as “communion” (1 Corinthians 10:16), “the Lord’s table” (1 Corinthians 10:21), and the “breaking of bread” (Acts 2:42; cf. 1 Corinthians 10:16). It was initiated by Christ (in Matthew 26:26-29, Mark 14:22-25, and Luke 22:14-20; cf. 1 Corinthians 11:23-30) the night before He went to the Cross. It consists of two elements, “bread” and the “fruit of the vine” or “cup.” The bread (most churches use unleavened crackers) represents the body of the Lord Jesus (Matthew 26:26, Mark 14:22, Luke 22:19, 1 Corinthians 11:24, 27, and 29), while the “fruit of the vine”/“cup” (most churches use grape juice) represents His blood (Matthew 26:28, Mark 14:24, Luke 22:20, 1 Corinthians 11:25, and 27). Those who may participate in the Lord’s Supper are those who have been saved, baptized, and are members of a church (Acts 2:41-42), as well as those not living in sin (1 Corinthians 11:27-32). The Lord’s Supper does not save, but it does symbolize the death of Christ (1 Corinthians 11:26), which is the basis of salvation. It is not a re-presentation of the death of Christ (as Catholicism wrongly teaches); rather, it is a representation of His death.

The Governance of the Local Church

A local church is autonomous, or self-governing (a congregational form of church government). Evidence of this is seen by the fact that the local church is the ultimate judicatory in matters of church discipline (Matthew 18:15-17, 1 Corinthians 5:12-13, and 2 Corinthians 2:6). It is also seen by the fact that local churches made their own decisions, rather than having such decisions made for them by an outside individual or group of individuals (Acts 6:3, 5, 11:22, 15:3, 22, 1 Corinthians 16:3, and 2 Corinthians 8:19).

Membership in a Local Church

From the very beginning of the church's existence, those who were saved were added to its membership (Acts 2:41 and 47). "In the early church, when a person responded to the gospel of Jesus Christ, he was added to the church. There was no question whether he ought to join the local assembly; this was taken for granted" (Henry Thiessen). Initial requirements for membership include salvation (Acts 2:41 and 47) and baptism (Acts 2:41). The ongoing requirement is a righteous lifestyle, as those who continue in unrepentant sin are to be removed from the membership (Matthew 18:15-17 and 1 Corinthians 5). Responsibilities of members include attending (Hebrews 10:25), giving (1 Corinthians 16:2), and serving (1 Peter 4:10).

Lesson 5: Church History

Before presenting a general overview of church history, it is helpful to consider history itself, what it is.

What is History?

History may be defined as the outworking of God's plan within time. Verses in the Bible that speak of God working out His plan include Isaiah 46:9-11, Daniel 4:35, and Ephesians 1:11.

The outworking of God's plan began with Creation (Genesis 1 and 2). *Universal history* began with the creation of the universe (Genesis 1:1f). *Human history* began with the creation of Adam & Eve (Genesis 1:26f; cf. Genesis 2). The history of the present universe will end with God's destruction of it following the 1,000-year Millennial Kingdom (2 Peter 3:10-12). Human history, at least in the sense of earthbound human history, will also end at that time.

The outworking of God's plan, begun at Creation, continues with His preservation of creation and with His providence (for an explanation of these works of God, see the lesson on God).

Well has it been said that history is His story.

What is Church History?

Church history is the history of the church, the church being comprised of those saved during the church age (from the Day of Pentecost to the Rapture). Thus, church history covers the period of time from the Day of Pentecost (approximately 30 A.D.) to the Rapture, the unknown-to-us, future time when Jesus Christ removes all church-age believers from the earth (see 1 Thessalonians 4:13-18). Since the Rapture has yet to take place, church history covers the period of time from the Day of Pentecost to the present.

The focus of church history is narrower than the focus of either universal or human history, both in terms of time and in terms of scope. In terms of scope, human history includes all human beings, whereas church history includes only some of them. To sum: church history is the outworking of God's plan from the Day of Pentecost to the present involving the church (the visible church).

Eras of Church History

Most church historians have divided church history into 3 eras:

- **Ancient Church History** (30-590 A.D., from the Day of Pentecost to the first pope)
- **Medieval Church History** (590-1517 A.D., from the first pope to the start of the Protestant Reformation)
- **Modern Church History** (1517 A.D., the start of the Protestant Reformation to the present)

Benefits of Studying Church History

There are many benefits of studying church history, including:

- An **educational benefit** (Romans 15:4a, 1 Corinthians 10:6, and 11). The secular historian, Santayana once said that those who do not learn from history are bound to repeat it. Christians who know church history are better equipped to detect modern doctrinal errors by recognizing them as the same errors that plagued the church in the past. Rather than having to learn all of their lessons from the proverbial "school of hard knocks," historically-astute believers are able to learn from and avoid the mistakes of those who have preceded them.
- An **inspirational benefit** (Romans 15:4b and Hebrews 11:1-12:1). Renowned church historian, Philip Schaff once wrote: "The Epistle to the Hebrews describes, in stirring eloquence, the cloud of

witnesses from the Old dispensation for the encouragement of Christians. Why should not the greater cloud of apostles, evangelists, martyrs, confessors, fathers, reformers, and saints of every age and tongue, since the coming of Christ, be held up for the same purpose? They were the heroes of Christian faith and love, the living epistles of Christ, the salt of the earth, the benefactors and glory of our race; and it is impossible rightly to study their thoughts and deeds, their lives and deaths, without being elevated, edified, comforted, and encouraged to follow their holy example, that we at last, by the grace of God, be received into their fellowship, to spend with them a blessed eternity in the praise and enjoyment of the same God and Saviour.” Other believers have run the race we run today. God gave them the strength to finish their course (Acts 13:25 and 2 Timothy 4:7). By His grace He will do the same for us today.

- **A perspective benefit.** There is a tendency in all of us to become myopic/nearsighted and provincial/sectarian. Studying church history broadens our perspective, preventing us from falling prey to either.
- **A devotional benefit** (Psalm 78:4). The greatest benefit of studying church history is seeing and savoring the One whose story church history is. “History is a memorial of the mercies of God, so that posterity know them, remember them, and hymn His praises” (Perry Miller and Thomas Johnson).

Lesson 6: World Religions

The question may be asked, Is Christianity a “religion”? The answer is both a yes and a no. Yes, Christianity is a religion in that, like any religion, it is characterized by a definitive set of beliefs and behaviors that distinguish it from others. Yet, it is not a religion in that, while religion is man’s attempt to reach up to God, Christianity is God reaching down to man. Following is a brief overview of 4 major world religions, culminating with a summation of what distinguishes Christianity from them.

Islam

Islam originated with a man named Mohammed (570-632 A.D.), born in the city of Mecca, located in modern Saudi Arabia. The god of Islam is Allah, at one time the moon god of Arabia (the reason why the symbol of Islam is a crescent moon). Over a 23-year period (from 610-632 A.D.), Mohammed allegedly received revelations from Allah through an angel, which became the basis for the Muslim scriptures, the Koran. Approximately one-fifth of the world's population is Muslim (well over one billion worldwide with nine million in the United States); thus, Islam is second only to “Christianity” in number of worldwide adherents. There are two major groups within Islam, the largest (approximately 90% of all Muslims) being the Sunnites. The smaller, and stricter, group is the Shi’ites. The Muslim holy day is Friday. On Fridays at noon, Muslims gather at their places of worship, mosques. The leader of a mosque is called an imam.

The errors of Islam include:

- Belief in an ultimate authority (the Koran) other than the Bible. Muslims believe the Bible is corrupt.
- Worship of a false god (Allah). Allah does not exist. Islam is idolatrous.
- Denial of the Trinity. Muslims believe that God is one in essence and in person. Muslims commonly misunderstand the Christian Trinity to be God the Father; God the Mother, Mary; and God the Son Jesus, born of physical relations between God the Father and God the Mother.
- Denial of the deity of Christ. Muslims believe that Jesus was merely a prophet, inferior to Mohammed.
- Belief that Jesus did not die (and, therefore, that Jesus did not rise from the dead)
- Belief in “salvation” by works. In order to be “saved,” the Muslim must fulfill the "Five Pillars" of Islam: 1) Daily recitation of the “Shahadah,” the Islamic confession/creed: "There is no god but Allah, and Muhammed is the prophet of Allah"; 2) Five daily times (dawn, noon, mid-afternoon, sunset, and evening) of prescribed prayers in Arabic in the direction of Mecca; 3) Giving of alms (2.5% of one’s income); 4) Fasting during the entire month of Ramadan, the 9th month of the year in the Islamic calendar (no eating, drinking, etc. allowed from sunrise to sunset); and 5) a pilgrimage to Mecca during one’s lifetime (with some exceptions allowed).
- Belief in jihad, or holy war (what some Muslims consider to be the 6th pillar of Islam). Salvation is promised to those who die in jihad. The 9-11 hijackers were motivated by this false belief.

Hinduism

The roots of Hinduism may be traced to the second millennium B.C. when the Aryans conquered the Indus Valley. In time, the Aryans recorded their religious beliefs in what came to be called the Vedas, the earliest of the Hindu scriptures. Some of the more well-known Hindus include Indian leader, Mohandas K. Gandhi and the Hare Krishnas. The Beatles were also influenced by Hindu beliefs (George Harrison’s song, “My Sweet Lord” was about the Hindu god, Krishna). Hinduism has spawned several other world religions, such as Buddhism, Jainism, and Sikhism. Hindu leaders are called swamis or gurus. There are approximately one billion Hindus worldwide, with the majority living in India (India is 80% Hindu).

The errors of Hinduism include:

- Worship of a false god. While Hinduism believes in millions of gods, its ultimate god is an impersonal ultimate reality known as Brahman. Brahman does not exist. Hinduism is idolatrous.
- Belief in an ultimate authority other than the Bible. Hinduism has several scriptures, with the Vedas being the most revered.
- Belief in “salvation” by works. Hinduism believes “salvation” comes by accumulating more good karma than bad karma, leading to being reincarnated multiple times, ultimately leading to enlightenment, or nirvana, which unites one to Brahman.
- Belief that Jesus was an incarnation of the Hindu god, Vishnu
- Belief in reincarnation. Reincarnation is the belief that one undergoes a continuous birth-death-rebirth cycle, a cycle interrupted only when one reaches the point of nirvana/enlightenment. One moves in this direction by accruing more good karma than bad karma, enabling one to be reborn into higher life forms.
- The practice of yoga. Yoga is “the attempt to control one’s consciousness through bodily posture, breath control and concentration, to the extent that one comes to understand experientially that one’s true self, one’s underlying soul (atman), is identical with Brahma” (Fritz Ridenour).

C.S. Lewis observed that at the end of all religious quests one must choose between Hinduism and Christianity, for Hinduism absorbs all others, while Christianity excludes all others.

Buddhism

Buddhism began in the 6th century B.C. with the birth of a man named Siddhartha Gautama (563-483 B.C.) in what is modern Nepal. During his early adult years, Gautama made his way to the city of Bodh Gaya (in modern India), where he allegedly experienced enlightenment/nirvana while meditating under a fig tree, thus becoming Buddha (meaning “the enlightened one”). Perhaps the most well-known Buddhist today is the Dalai Lama, Tibet’s exiled spiritual and political leader. There are approximately 350 million Buddhists worldwide.

The errors of Buddhism include:

- Worship of a false god. Like Hinduism, Buddhism is essentially monistic, believing that there is one impersonal ultimate reality, of which everything is a part. Such a reality, however, is unreal/nonexistent. Buddhism is idolatrous.
- Belief in an ultimate authority other than the Bible. The “Bible” of one form of Buddhism (Theravada Buddhism) is called the “Tripitaka.” Another form of Buddhism (Mahayana Buddhism) believes in an open canon, a canon whose volumes presently number in the thousands.
- Belief in “salvation” by works. “Salvation” in Buddhism comes by following the “Eight-fold Path” (right understanding, thought, speech, action, livelihood, effort, awareness, and meditation), leading to the “salvific experience” of enlightenment, or nirvana.
- Belief in reincarnation. In Buddhist thought, desire perpetuates the continuous birth-suffering-death-rebirth cycle, a cycle interrupted only when one conquers desire at the point of nirvana. One moves in this direction by accruing more good karma than bad karma, enabling rebirth into higher life forms.
- Belief in mysticism. Typical of Eastern religions, Buddhism is marked by mysticism, seeking a direct, personal religious experience, bypassing the mind.

Judaism

The roots of Judaism may be traced to God’s call (in Genesis 12) of a pagan man named Abram (later renamed Abraham) in the early part of the third millennium B.C. to leave his native Ur (located in modern Iraq) and move to the Promised Land of Canaan (located in modern Israel). From the descendants of Abraham and his wife, Sarai (later renamed Sarah) God established the nation of Israel (Exodus 19f) in the fifteenth century B.C. It was from the state religion established at that time that modern Judaism would eventually develop. Judaists (adherents of Judaism) congregate in synagogues on Saturdays, led by rabbis. There are three major branches of Judaism today: 1) Orthodox Judaism (the conservatives), all of Judaism until the 18th century A.D.; 2) Reform Judaism (the liberals), started in the 18th century A.D.; and 3) Conservative Judaism (the moderates), started in the 19th century A.D. While there are many similarities between Christianity and Judaism (they have been called “sisters,” both having roots in the Old Testament), more

than there are between Christianity and any other group, there are also many major differences.

The errors of Judaism include:

- Denial of the Trinity. Like Islam, Judaism believes that God is one in essence and in person.
- Belief in an Old Testament-only Bible.
- Belief in “salvation” by works. Judaists believe that “salvation” comes by keeping the Old Testament Law/the Mosaic Law.
- Denial that Jesus is the Messiah. Judaism is still looking for the Messiah, one who is more of a political savior, rather than a savior from sin.

The Core Differences Between Christianity and World Religions

There are 4 core differences between Christianity and world religions, revolving around 4 key questions:

1. Is Jesus Christ God? According to Christianity, Jesus Christ is God. According to these other religions, He is not. Biblical support for this teaching, called the deity of Christ, may be found in:

John 1:1

In the beginning was the Word [the Word is Jesus Christ, John 1:14], and the Word was with God, and the Word was God

John 10:30

I [Jesus] and my Father are one (cf. vs. 31-33)

John 14:9

Jesus saith unto him [Philip], Have I been so long time with you, and yet hast thou not known me, Philip? he that hath seen me hath seen the Father; and how sayest thou then, Shew us the Father?

Colossians 2:9

For in Him [Christ] dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead bodily

Hebrews 1:3

Who [God the Son] being the brightness of his [God the Father's] glory, and the express image of his [God the Father's] person, and upholding all things by the word of his power, when he had by

himself purged our sins, sat down on the right hand of the Majesty on high

Hebrews 1:8

But unto the Son he [God the Father] saith, Thy throne, O GOD, is for ever and ever: a scepter of righteousness is the scepter of thy kingdom

2. Is God triune? According to Christianity, God is one in essence, three in person (Father, Son, and Holy Spirit). According to these other religions, God is either impersonal or, if personal, one in person. Biblical support for the teaching that God is triune may be found in:

Matthew 3:16-17

And Jesus, when he was baptized, went up straightway out of the water: and, lo, the heavens were opened unto him, and he saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove, and lighting upon him: And lo a voice [the voice of God the Father] from heaven, saying, This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased

Matthew 28:19

Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost

2 Corinthians 13:14

The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God [the Father], and the communion of the Holy Ghost, be with you all. Amen

God the Son is God (see #1 above). God the Holy Spirit is God (see Acts 5:3-4).

3. What is the ultimate source of authority? For Christians, the ultimate source of authority is the Bible. For these other religions, it is something else. Biblical support for the teaching that the Bible is the Word of God/inspired (and, therefore, inherently authoritative) and that It is sufficient (and, therefore, the only authority) may be found in:

1 Thessalonians 2:13

For this cause also thank we God without ceasing, because, when ye received the word of God which ye heard of us, ye received it not as the word of men, but as it is in truth, the word of God, which effectually worketh also in you that believe

2 Timothy 3:16-17

All Scripture is given by inspiration of God [literally God-breathed], and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness: That the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works

2 Peter 1:3-4a

According as his divine power hath given unto us all things that pertain unto life and godliness, through the knowledge of him that hath called us to glory and virtue: Whereby are given unto us exceeding great and precious promises ...

2 Peter 1:21

For the prophecy came not in old time by the will of man: but holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost

The only way that one will be ultimately convinced that the Bible and the Bible alone is God's Word is through the supernatural, Holy Spirit-wrought work of illumination, enlightening the mind of the believer to the truth and significance of Scripture.

4. How is a person saved? According to Christianity, salvation is by grace alone through faith alone in Jesus Christ alone. According to these other religions, salvation is by merit through works. Biblical support for the teaching that salvation is by grace alone through faith alone in Jesus Christ alone may be found in:

Romans 3:20

Therefore by the deeds of the law there shall no flesh be justified in his sight: for by the law is the knowledge of sin

Galatians 2:16

Knowing that a man is not justified by the works of the law but by the faith of Jesus Christ, even we have believed in Jesus Christ, that we might be justified by the faith of Christ, and not by the works of the law: for by the works of the law shall no flesh be justified

Ephesians 2:8-9

For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God: Not of works, lest any man should boast

Titus 3:5

Not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to his mercy he saved us, by the washing of regeneration, and renewing of the Holy Ghost

Salvation cannot possibly be by works, because there are no works a sinner can do to merit God's favor. All of a sinner's "good" works

are tainted by sin (Isaiah 64:6), because they are never done for the right motive, to glorify God (Romans 3:23). Salvation is not based upon what a sinner can do (there is nothing he can), but upon exclusive, repentant faith in what Christ has already done, living (positively providing the perfect righteousness God requires) and dying (negatively nullifying sin's penalty, separation from God) in the sinner's place (Romans 5:19b and 2 Corinthians 5:21).

Lesson 7: Denominational Differences

Why are there so many denominations? And what are the differences between them? As this study will show, a combination of both doctrinal and historical factors is the answer to both questions. Among "Christians" (in the very broadest sense of the term), there are three major branches: Catholicism, Orthodoxy, and Protestantism. Orthodoxy split from Catholicism in the middle of the eleventh century A.D. Protestantism split from Catholicism in the early sixteenth century A.D. Following is a survey of the major denominations, including both their history and some of their erroneous teachings.

Catholicism

The Catholic Church, though it traces its own roots back to the time of the apostles (believing Peter to have been the first pope), originated in the fourth century A.D. In 313 A.D. the Roman emperor, Constantine issued the Edict of Milan, making Christianity the official religion of the Roman Empire. This, along with subsequent edicts by Constantine, made the church universal (the word, "Catholic" means universal) a visible, political entity. The Catholic version of the Bible in English for Americans is the NAB (New American Bible). Besides the Catholic Bible, a second significant source of authority in modern Catholicism is the new *Catechism of the Catholic Church* (published in English in 1994). The Catholic form of church government is monarchical (rule by one), with the pope (the bishop of Rome) as the head of the church. The current pope is Pope Benedict XVI, who came to office in 2005. Each Catholic church is part of a parish, with each parish being part of a diocese and each diocese part of an archdiocese. The seat of the church is in Rome. There are approximately

one billion Catholics worldwide, making it by far the largest “Christian” group in the world (it is also the largest in the U.S.).

The errors of Catholicism include:

- **Belief that the Apocrypha is part of the Bible.** The Apocrypha is a collection of over a dozen religious books written by Jews between 250-200 B.C. and 100 A. D. A Catholic Bible (73 books, plus more content in some books) is larger than a Protestant Bible (66 books) because it includes most of these Apocryphal books. Such erroneous Catholic doctrines as purgatory (2 Maccabees 12:39-45), prayer for the dead (2 Maccabees 12:45-46), and salvation by works (Tobit 12:9) come from the Apocrypha. James McCarthy (*The Gospel According to Rome*, pp. 338-339) gives five reasons why the Apocrypha is not part of Scripture:
 1. The Apocrypha itself does not claim to be inspired (God’s Word).
 2. The Jews never accepted the Apocrypha as part of the Bible.
 3. There is not a single quotation from the Apocrypha in the New Testament.
 4. The early church did not accept the Apocrypha as inspired.
 5. The Catholic Church itself did not officially declare the Apocrypha to be inspired until the Council of Trent (sixteenth century A.D.), which was a reaction to the Protestant Reformation's rejection of the Apocrypha.
- **Belief in sources of authority other than the Bible.** Catholicism believes in three sources of authority: 1) the Bible; 2) Catholic Church tradition; and 3) the magisterium, the official teaching arm of the Catholic Church (the collective decisions of the bishops and the pronouncements of the pope). Ultimately, authority for Catholicism resides in the third.
- **Belief in salvation by works.** Key to Catholic salvation is observance of the sacraments (especially baptism, the Eucharist, and penance). Historically, Catholicism has taught that salvation is impossible outside the Catholic Church.
- **Idolatry.** Catholic veneration of Mary (called "hyperdulia") and of other "saints" (called "dulia"), as well as for various religious objects, is idolatrous. In regards to Mary, Catholicism erroneously

teaches her perpetual virginity (officially adopted in 553), her immaculate conception and subsequent sinlessness (officially adopted in 1854), and her assumption—thus teaching that Mary did not die (officially adopted in 1950). In fact, Catholicism goes so far as to consider Mary to be a co-mediator and co-redeemer with Christ.

- **Belief regarding the Eucharist.** According to Catholicism, during the part of the “Mass” called the “Eucharist,” when the priest consecrates the elements, they change substance (called “transubstantiation”), becoming the actual body and blood of Christ. Thus, Christ is not represented by the elements, but re-presented each time the Mass is observed (over 100,000 times a day worldwide). The problems with this are many:
 1. It misinterprets Christ’s words, “This is My body” (Matthew 26:26) and “This is my blood” (Matthew 26:28) in an overly-literal way, rather than in the metaphorical way they were intended to be understood (cf. “I am the door of the sheep” in John 10:7 and “I am the true vine” in John 15:1).
 2. Christ’s body (and the blood circulating within it), being a human body, could only be in one place at one time. Therefore, it could not be both before the disciples and in Christ’s hands at the same time. Neither can it presently be both in heaven and in every place the Catholic Mass is celebrated.
 3. Contrary to all other miracles performed by Christ and others in the New Testament, which were visible, the “miracle” of transubstantiation is invisible.
 4. Partaking of blood was forbidden by God and abhorrent to Jews (see Genesis 9:4, Leviticus 3:17, 7:26-27, 17:10-14, Deuteronomy 12:23, and Acts 15:29).
 5. According to Catholicism, the Eucharist is a re-presentation (rather than a representation) of the body and blood of Christ/a re-enactment (rather than a remembrance) of the death of Christ, a teaching that flies in the face of such Scriptures as John 19:30 (“It is finished!”), Romans 6:10, Hebrews 1:3, 9:25-26, and 10:10-14.

Orthodoxy

The Orthodox Church (the word, “orthodox” means right teaching) calls itself such because it believes it is the only Church that has stayed true to the teaching of the early church. Like the Catholic Church, it traces its roots to the beginning of the church in the first century A.D., though its origins as a distinct entity began in the eleventh century A.D., when it severed ties with the Church in the West (the Catholic Church). For the first millennia of church history, the church in the East and the church in the West, though not without their differences, remained unified (thus, the many similarities between the Catholic Church and the Orthodox Church). Due to several issues and events over the years, culminating with the “Great Schism” of 1054 A.D. (at which time the bishop of Rome and the patriarch of Constantinople excommunicated each other), the differences became insurmountable, though in recent years some attempts at reconciliation have been made. The Orthodox Church, more than any other “denomination,” is organized according to nationalities. Thus, there is the Greek Orthodox Church, the Russian Orthodox Church, etc. The highest office in the Orthodox Church is that of patriarch. Each patriarch is the head of a region of churches. There are fifteen such regions throughout the world, with the church of Constantinople (and, thus, the patriarch of Constantinople) having the primacy of place. The Orthodox Church has 140 million members worldwide, with half being in Russia and the Ukraine.

The errors of Orthodoxy include:

- Belief that the Apocrypha is part of the Bible. Besides including the Apocryphal books found in the Catholic Bible, the Orthodox Bible includes even a few more.
- Belief in a source of authority other than the Bible. Like Catholicism, Orthodoxy believes that church tradition is equal in authority to the Bible. For the Orthodox, such tradition particularly includes the writings of the early church Fathers and the pronouncements of the seven Ecumenical Councils (from the 325 A.D. Council of Nicea to the 787 A.D. Council of Nicea).
- Belief in salvation by works. While not doing so as explicitly as does Catholicism, Orthodoxy ultimately teaches salvation by works, viewing salvation as a life-long process, starting with baptism. Interestingly, they practice the proper mode of baptism (immersion), though they baptize infants.
- Idolatry. Orthodoxy’s practice of venerating icons (pictures of revered events and/or persons) as an aid to worshipping God violates the Second Commandment (“thou shalt not make unto thee any graven image,” Exodus 20:4f). While not doing so to the degree

Catholicism does, Orthodoxy venerates Mary. Like Catholicism, Orthodoxy holds to the perpetual virginity of Mary and to the assumption of Mary. Similar to Catholicism's teaching on the immaculate conception of Mary, Orthodoxy believes that Mary was permanently cleansed of all her sin when the angel Gabriel appeared to her in Luke 1.

Anglicanism/Episcopalianism

The Anglican Church was one of the many churches that were birthed by the Protestant Reformation in Europe in the sixteenth century A.D. This Reformation gave birth to the Lutheran Church in Germany, the Reformed Church in Switzerland, the Presbyterian Church in Scotland, and the Anglican Church in England. Unlike the others, however, the Anglican Church was not created out of religious conviction, but out of political convenience. King Henry VIII's obsession to have a son to inherit his throne and the inability of his wife (Katherine of Aragon) to produce one, coupled with Henry's interest in a younger woman named Anne Boleyn, drove him to pressure the Catholic church in England to grant him a divorce to Katherine so he could marry Anne. When the pope refused to grant the divorce, Henry named Thomas Cranmer the Archbishop of Canterbury. Cranmer in turn granted Henry the annulment he sought, paving the way for Henry and Anne to marry in 1533. Consequently, the pope excommunicated Henry. Henry responded by breaking ties with the Catholic Church by starting his own, the Church of England (also known as the Anglican Church) by means of his 1534 "Act of Supremacy." In time Anglicanism spread to the American colonies, eventually becoming the Protestant Episcopal Church (PEC) in 1783. In 1967 the name of the PEC was changed to The Episcopal Church in the United States of America (ECUSA), which remains the main episcopalian body in the U.S. According to one count (2005 figures), there are 77 million Anglicans worldwide, with 2.5 million in the U.S. The head of the Anglican Church is the archbishop of Canterbury. The head of the Episcopal Church (more or less the American wing of the Anglican Church, one of thirty-eight such wings worldwide) is called the presiding bishop. Though viewed by most as Protestants, Anglicanism/Episcopalianism views itself as a medium between Catholicism and Protestantism.

The errors of Anglicanism/Episcopalianism include:

- Belief in sources of authority other than the Bible. Like Catholicism, Anglicanism/Episcopalianism views the Bible as one of several sources of authority, the others being church tradition and human reason. Other authoritative writings in Anglicanism/Episcopalianism include *The Book of Common Prayer*

(first produced by Thomas Cranmer in 1549) and the Thirty-Nine Articles (first adopted in 1571).

- Belief in the episcopalian form of church government. Like Catholicism and Orthodoxy, so Anglicanism/Episcopalianism believes in and practices an episcopalian form of church government (thus, the name, Episcopal, which is a transliteration of the Greek word for bishop). This form of church government first developed in the early second century A.D. (nearly a century after the birth of the church and decades after the completion of the New Testament) with the formation of the office of monarchical bishop, i.e., a bishop over several churches.

Lutheranism

Of all the churches that came out of the 16th century Protestant Reformation, the most notable one was the Lutheran Church in Germany, due to the man after whom this denomination is named, Martin Luther. Luther, professor of biblical theology at the University of Wittenberg in Wittenberg, Germany was converted in 1515 after coming to a correct understanding of Romans 1:17. Two years later, on October 31, 1517, Luther, still a Catholic, posted a list of “95 Theses” on the door of the Wittenberg Castle Church, requesting that the Catholic Church debate its practice of selling indulgences (basically licenses to sin) to raise money for the building of St. Peter’s basilica in Rome. Though this debate never took place, what Luther did that day is viewed by many as the official start of the Protestant Reformation. When Luther was excommunicated by the Catholic Church in 1521 and refused to renounce his beliefs later that same year, he had no choice but to start a new church. Today, there are three primary American Lutheran denominations. The largest is the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (the ELCA). The ELCA can be described as moderate to liberal. The second largest American Lutheran denomination is the Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod (the LCMS). The LCMS can best be described as conservative. The third largest American Lutheran denomination is the Wisconsin Evangelical Lutheran Synod (the WELS). Like the LCMS, the WELS can best be described as conservative. Together, these three denominations comprise 95% of all Lutherans in the U.S. There are approximately 60 million Lutherans worldwide.

The errors of Lutheranism include:

- Belief in sources of authority other than the Bible. While Martin Luther was a champion of the Reformation principle of *sola Scriptura* (the Scriptures alone as the church’s authority), over the years Lutherans have become more “confessional,” viewing their various confessions of faith as being on par with Scripture. Such

confessions may be found in their Book of Concord (first published in 1580), which includes Luther's Catechisms, both Large and Small (1529), the Augsburg Confession (1530), and the Smalcald Articles (1537). In actuality, Lutherans tend to view their confessions of faith as inherently or directly authoritative (like Scripture), rather than derivatively authoritative (deriving their authority from Scripture).

- **Baptismal errors.** Lutherans "baptize" infants (this is called "paedobaptism") and "baptize" by sprinkling, rather than by immersion. A case may be made that the average Lutheran also believes in "baptismal regeneration," that one is saved by being baptized.
- **Lord's Supper errors.** Lutheranism believes that the literal body and blood of Jesus are present "in, with, and under" the elements of the Lord's Supper (this is known as "consubstantiation," which literally means "with the substance"). While Catholicism teaches that the elements become the body and blood of Jesus ("transubstantiation," or change of substance), Lutherans teach that the elements contain His body and blood. A case may be made that the average Lutheran also believes that partaking of communion is a means of saving grace, contrary to the doctrines of *sola gratia* (salvation by grace alone), *sola fides* (salvation through faith alone), and *solus Christus* (salvation in Christ alone) that Luther championed.

Presbyterianism

The sixteenth century Protestant Reformation also gave birth to the Presbyterian Church in Scotland. Its founder was a man by the name of John Knox. The Presbyterian Church is so named because it is marked by a presbyterian form of church government (the name, Presbyterian comes from *presbyter*, a transliteration of the Greek word for elder). There are many branches of Presbyterianism in the United States. The largest branch is the Presbyterian Church (USA) or the PCUSA (approximately 2 million members). The second largest branch is the Presbyterian Church in America or the PCA. Of the two, the PCUSA is the more liberal, the PCA the more conservative. Two-thirds of the PCA is located in the Southeastern U.S. Presbyterians place a lot of stock in the 17th century Westminster Confession of Faith.

The errors of Presbyterianism include:

- **Baptismal errors.** Presbyterians baptize infants, not because they believe that baptism is a means of salvation, but because they believe that as (male) children in the Old Testament were circumcised, so children in the New Testament-era/church age are to be baptized. They also believe that modes of baptism other than immersion (sprinkling and pouring) are valid.
- **Lord's Supper error.** While not believing that Christ is *physically* present in the elements of the Lord's Supper, Presbyterians believe that He is *spiritually* present.
- **Belief in a presbyterian form of church government.** Each local Presbyterian church is governed by a "session," a body of elders consisting of teaching elders (clergy) and ruling elders (laity). Several sessions in a geographical area comprise a "presbytery." Several presbyteries comprise a "synod." All the synods comprise the "General Assembly."

Methodism

Methodism got its start as a reform movement within the Anglican Church in eighteenth century England. Its beginnings can be traced to 1729, when a group of Oxford University students formed a religious club on campus. Members of the club were soon nicknamed "Methodists" because they were so methodical in their activities, which included stated times of prayer and Bible reading. The leader of the club was John Wesley. Other members included John's younger brother, Charles (renowned hymn writer) and George Whitefield. In spite of their outward piety, all three were unsaved until God saved each of them over the next decade. After being snubbed by the Anglican Church, the three traveled across the countryside, preaching the Word. God mightily used them to spark a great revival, not only in their native England, but also in America, a revival known as the First Great Awakening. During his lifetime, John Wesley encouraged the formation of Methodist "societies" within the Church of England. Shortly after his death in 1791, however, the Methodists broke away from the Anglican Church to form their own church. Methodism eventually came to the shores of America, where its spread was widespread due to many circuit-riding Methodist ministers. Methodism gave birth to many other groups, including the Wesleyan Church (which split from the Methodist Church in the middle of the nineteenth century over slavery); the Church of the Nazarene (which split from the Methodist Church in the early part of the twentieth century); and the Salvation Army (started by Methodist minister, William Booth in England at the end of the nineteenth century). As with the other major denominations, so Methodism has many denominations within its

denomination. The mainline denomination is the United Methodist Church (the UMC), which was formed in 1968 as the result of a merger between two Methodist groups. It has a membership of approximately 11 million, with nearly 8 million in the U.S. Another major branch is the African Methodist Episcopal Church (the AME), which split from the main line in 1816 over alleged racism within the Methodist Episcopal Church. A conservative branch is the Free Methodist Church.

The errors of Methodism include:

- Baptismal errors. Methodists “baptize” infants and baptize by sprinkling. A case may be made that some Methodists believe that one is saved by being baptized.
- Belief in a second work of grace. Methodism, like many other such “holiness” groups, teaches that the believer should seek a post-conversion sanctification experience. John Wesley taught that this second work of grace brought the believer into a state of “perfection,” though his definition of perfection was unclear.
- Belief in an episcopalian form of church government. This is one of the things that Methodism retained from its Anglican heritage, having bishops over several churches.

Pentecostalism

The Pentecostal movement (named after the initial outpouring of the Holy Spirit manifested through speaking in tongues on the Day of Pentecost in Acts 2), also known as the charismatic movement (from the Greek word for spiritual gifts, *charismata*), permeates many segments of Christendom. It is second only to Catholicism in number of worldwide adherents. Pentecostalism began around 1900, emerging from Methodism, while the charismatic movement (sometimes called "neo-pentecostalism") began around 1960. The most well-known Pentecostal group is the Assemblies of God denomination. Other Pentecostal groups include the Church of God (Cleveland, TN), the International Church of the Foursquare Gospel, Calvary Chapel churches, Vineyard churches, and the International Convention of Faith Churches and Ministers (which includes the likes of Kenneth Copeland, the late Kenneth Hagin, and Fred Price and emphasizes health and wealth for every believer through the “force of faith” or “name it and claim it,” “blab it and grab it,” “ask, believe, and receive,” etc.). One noteworthy Pentecostal of recent years is Pat Robertson. The leading Pentecostal media outlet is TBN (the Trinity Broadcasting Network).

The errors of Pentecostalism include:

- **Belief in extrabiblical revelation.** Pentecostals believe that God is still giving revelation today through such revelatory spiritual gifts as prophecy and speaking in tongues. Rightly has it been said that the Bible of a Pentecostal has no back cover.
- **Belief in the continuation of miraculous spiritual gifts, such as healing.** While God does heal (usually through such providential, secondary means as medicine), He is no longer doing so through the spiritual gift of healing by means of so-called “faith healers.”
- **Erroneous understanding of Spirit baptism.** Pentecostals believe that Spirit baptism is experienced by the believer at a point in time subsequent to salvation, with the visible manifestation of it being speaking in tongues. Like the Methodists, to whom they trace their roots, Pentecostals believe in a second work of grace essential to sanctification, with Spirit baptism being the second work.
- **Belief in experientialism.** The average Pentecostal is of the persuasion that a personal experience is more authoritative than the teaching of Scripture, though such personal experience can be easily misinterpreted (see, for example, John 12:28-29).
- **Belief in mysticism.** Pentecostals tend to be mystics. Mysticism is the “belief” that God works through gut feelings, intuitions, hunches, etc., independent of the human intellect. Mystics seek for a direct, personal religious experience apart from the mind.
- **Belief in women preachers.** While groups other than Pentecostals allow for women preachers, Pentecostals have always allowed for them.

Lesson 8: Faithway Baptist Church

In the previous lesson (on denominational differences), we considered how other groups that are considered to be Christian differ from us, who are Baptists. This lesson will explore who we are, as Baptists in general and as Faithway Baptist Church in particular. Who are we?

We are a Church

For what it means to be a local church, see the previous lesson on the Church.

We are a Baptist Church

While Baptist beliefs go back as far as the birth of the church and the writing of the New Testament in the first century A.D., churches that were called Baptist began during the Reformation era. Around 1606 A.D., a man named John Smyth led a group of English Separatists (those who separated from the Anglican Church/Church of England) to start a church. Due to Anglican opposition, however, the congregation soon fled to Holland (around 1608 A.D.). In time, a group from this church returned to England and started the first Baptist church on English soil in 1611 or 1612. Another group of Baptists formed in England in the 1630s A.D., sprouting from the roots of English Puritanism (the Puritans sought to purify the Church of England from within). The first Baptist church on American soil, started by a man named Roger Williams in Providence, Rhode Island in 1638, came from this group. In 1814, Baptists in America united to form the Triennial Convention for inter-church evangelistic and missionary endeavors. Like nearly all American religious groups, so the Baptists split over the issue of slavery in the middle of the nineteenth century. When the Triennial Convention refused to ordain slave owners as missionaries, Baptists in the South withdrew in 1845 to form the Southern Baptist Convention (note: the Southern Baptist Convention recently

elected its first black president). In 1907, the Triennial Convention was renamed the Northern Baptist Convention. The NBC was renamed the American Baptist Convention in 1950. In 1972, the name was changed to the American Baptist Churches in the U.S.A. Over the years, the SBC has been the more conservative of the two groups. Faithway Baptist Church does not belong to any such convention, but is a completely independent entity, though we do occasionally fellowship with other churches of like faith and practice in our area.

As a Baptist church, we hold to what have come to be called the “Baptist distinctives,” those beliefs that, collectively, distinguish Baptists from other groups. Following are these distinctives:

B—Bible as our only authority for belief and behavior. The Bible is the Word of God (2 Timothy 3:16) and is sufficient (2 Timothy 3:17). For more on this, see the previous lesson on the Bible.

A—Autonomy of the local church. Each church is autonomous, or self-governing. For more on this, see the previous lesson on the Church.

P—Priesthood of the believer. Every believer has direct access to God (Hebrews 4:16). No human mediator, such as a priest, is needed for the confession of sin, interpretation of Scripture, etc.

T—Two ordinances: water baptism and the Lord’s Supper. Baptism is for believer’s only and is by immersion only. The Lord’s Supper is a memorial of the death of Christ. For more on this, see the previous lesson on the Church.

I—Individual soul liberty. Belief and behavior is the prerogative of the individual (see, for example, Romans 14:5 and 12) and, therefore, cannot be coerced by the state.

S—Saved church membership. The visible church is to be comprised only of those who have personally professed faith in Christ (see Acts 2:41 and 47).

T—Two offices: pastor and deacon (Philippians 1:1 and 1 Timothy 3:1-13). For more on this, see the lesson on the Church.

S—Separation of church and state. No state church. The church and state (Romans 13:1-7) have separate realms of God-given responsibility (see Matthew 22:21//Mark 12:17//Luke 20:25).

We are a “Fundamental” Baptist Church

While the designation, “fundamental” is often misunderstood and, therefore, must be carefully qualified when used to describe us, it is a word with a noble heritage. It first began to be used in relation to churches in the 1920s when theological liberalism began to overtake the mainline denominations in America. Bible-believing Christians who resisted this influence were called “fundamentalists” because they held to the fundamentals of the faith (such as the inspiration and inerrancy of the Bible, the deity of Christ, etc.) and were willing to separate over them (first by attempting to separate the liberals from them, then by separating themselves from the liberals, forming their own churches, educational institutions, etc.). Our church is part of this historic tradition and could, thus, be described as an historic fundamental church. As fundamentalists, we are unwilling to join in common ecclesiastical cause with those who deny the fundamentals of the faith (called primary ecclesiastical separation, separation from unbelieving ecclesiastical organizations). We are also unwilling to join in common ecclesiastical cause with those who, in disobedience to the Scriptures, join in common ecclesiastical cause with those who deny the fundamentals of the faith (called secondary ecclesiastical separation, separation from believing, disobedient ecclesiastical organizations).

We are Faithway Baptist Church

The following historical sketch of our church is taken from our church website:

In the early 1940s, a small rural church was established on Snow Road in the community of Rawsonville, Michigan. It was in 1964 that God called Dr. James O. Phillips to become the Senior Pastor of the church. It was under the ministry of Dr. Phillips that the church grew and expanded. In addition to the growth of the church, Dr. Phillips had a burden for the next generation, which produced a vision for Christian education and resulted in the establishment of Faithway Baptist Schools (1971) and a Bible College (1974). The Lord used both of these ministries to impact lives, as many of the graduates of the school and college went into vocational ministry, while others have faithfully served as lay members in Bible-believing churches. In 1984, the Lord took Dr. Phillips home to heaven. In the spring of 1985, God clearly directed our church in calling Dr. Eugene Graham to become the Senior Pastor. He continued the vision of his predecessor for Christian education. His wise stewardship and determination brought financial stability to the ministries of the church. It was under his ministry that the church began a faith promise missionary giving program and, to date, we support many missionaries, making

worldwide missions a vital ministry of our church. In 2000, the Lord took Dr. Graham home to be with Him. Prior to his death, Dr. Graham had the foresight to bring on staff William Phillips (son of Dr. James Phillips), making for a very smooth transition for the church when Pastor Phillips was asked to become the Senior Pastor in 2000. While Pastor Phillips carried the same vision and heart's desire for the ministries of the school and college, he loved the church ministry more. He was used of God to lead the church through some very difficult but necessary decisions when the members of the church voted to close the college (in 2003) and Christian day school (in 2005). After serving as Senior Pastor for more than seven years, he was led of the Lord to seek a new ministry in Wisconsin in August of 2007. Through the nearly year-long search for a new pastor, God led Pastor Scott Estell to become the current Senior Pastor of Faithway Baptist Church in July of 2008.

Following is a brief summation of our philosophy of ministry. A more extensive description is available upon request:

Our philosophy of ministry is expressed in our church mission statement: *to spread God's fame for the sake of His name by making and maturing disciples through the ministry of His Word.* Our logo is a visual representation of this statement:



Our ultimate purpose is to glorify God (Ephesians 3:21). We pursue this purpose by seeking to exalt God (worship), evangelize the unsaved (evangelism), and edify the saved (instruction and fellowship). We seek to accomplish these fixed pursuits by flexible, biblically-informed means.

Lesson 9: The Gospel

The word, “gospel” means good news (cf. the verbal form of the word, found in Luke 2:10). It is derived from the old English word, “godspel,” meaning good spell, or tale. It is the message that one can be saved/rescued from sin and its consequence, eternal death (Romans 6:23a).

This message is called the “gospel of God” (Romans 1:1, 15:16, 2 Corinthians 11:7, 1 Thessalonians 2:2, 8, 9, and 1 Peter 4:17) because it comes from God and is about what God has done to save man from sin. It is called the “gospel of Jesus Christ” (Mark 1:1)/the “gospel of [God’s] Son” (Romans 1:9)/the “gospel of Christ” (Romans 15:19, 1 Corinthians 9:12, 2 Corinthians 2:12, 9:13, 10:14, Galatians 1:7, Philippians 1:27, and 1 Thessalonians 3:2)/the “gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ” (2 Thessalonians 1:8) because it was proclaimed by Jesus Christ and is about what He has done to save man from sin. It is called the “gospel of the glory of the blessed God” (1 Timothy 1:11, ESV)/the “gospel of the glory of Christ” (2 Corinthians 4:4, NASB) because it tells how those who have been created for God’s glory (Isaiah 43:7) and who lack it because of sin (Romans 3:23) can have the capacity to glorify God restored by belief in the gospel. It is also called the “gospel of the grace of God” (Acts 20:24) because it is only by God’s grace that one is saved (Ephesians 2:8-9).

The Content of the Gospel

Preceding the good news that is the gospel (and what makes the gospel such good news) is the bad news that all are sinners (1 Kings 8:46, Ecclesiastes 7:20, Romans 3:10, and 23) under condemnation (Romans 6:23a). The good news is that God has made a way of escape. God the Son (the second member of the Trinity) left heaven, came to earth (John 1:14) by means of the virgin conception and birth (Galatians 4:4; cf. Matthew 1:23 and Luke 1:34-35), and lived a human life and died a human death. Being man, He could die a human death (Hebrews 2:14-15). Being

God, His death had the infinite value needed (1 Peter 1:18-19) to pay the infinite debt of sin (Romans 6:23a). Being man, He could live a human life. Being God, His life was sinless (2 Corinthians 5:21, Hebrews 4:15, and 1 Peter 2:22) and, thus, able to earn the righteousness we need to be rightly related to God (Romans 8:3). It is by placing one's faith alone in what Jesus Christ has done that one is saved from sin (John 14:6 and Acts 4:12) and passes from death to life (John 5:24).

Gospel Presentations

This presentation is adapted from the gospel tract entitled "God's Bridge to Eternal Life":

God's Purpose is that we fulfill the purpose for which He made us, to glorify Him by perfectly reflecting His character (Isaiah 43:7, Matthew 5:48).

Our Problem is that we have sinned and are, thus, unable to fulfill this purpose (Romans 3:23).

Our Penalty or punishment for our sin is eternal death (Romans 6:23a), separation from God forever in Hell (2 Thessalonians 1:9).

Christ's Payment for our sin is His death (Romans 5:8, 1 Corinthians 15:3, and 1 Peter 3:18).

Our Pardon from sin comes by turning from our sin and placing our trust in Jesus Christ. This turning from sin is called repentance. This turning to and trusting in Christ is called saving faith. Both are mentioned in Mark 1:15 and Acts 20:21. This act may be summarized with an A-B-C: **A**dmit that you are a sinner in need of a Savior; **B**elieve that Jesus is your Savior from sin; and **C**all upon Him to save you from your sin.

God's Promise is that whoever so turns from sin and trusts in Jesus Christ to save from sin will have eternal life (John 3:16, 5:24, Acts 16:31, Romans 10:9, and 13) and, rather than being separated from Him forever in hell, will be with Him forever in heaven (John 14:3, Philippians 1:23, and 1 Thessalonians 4:17).

Another gospel presentation is called "the Gospel Hand":

Pinky—I am a sinner (Romans 3:23a)

Ring finger—God loves me (John 3:16's "For God so loved the

world” and Romans 5:8’s “God [demonstrates] his love toward us”)

Middle finger—Christ died for me (John 3:16’s “that he gave his only begotten Son” and Romans 5:8’s “Christ died for us”)

Index finger—I believe in Him (John 3:16’s “that whosoever believeth in him”, John 5:24’s “believeth on him that sent me,” Acts 16:31’s “believe on the Lord Jesus Christ,” and Romans 10:9’s “and believe in thine heart that God hath raised him from the dead”)

Thumb—I have everlasting life (John 3:16’s “but have everlasting life” and John 5:24’s “hath everlasting life”)

The most traditional gospel presentation is commonly known as the “Romans Road”:

Romans 3:10 and 23—all are sinners

Romans 6:23a—sin’s penalty is death

Romans 5:8—Christ died in the place of sinners

Romans 6:23b—God offers salvation as a gift because of what Christ did

Romans 10:9 and 13—the gift of salvation has to be received

Some Pointers When Giving the Gospel

1. *God does the saving.* Our responsibility is to give the gospel as clearly and completely as possible. We should take this responsibility seriously, but not get “psyched out” by placing too much responsibility on ourselves. We should not take the credit if someone believes, nor the blame if they do not. See 1 Corinthians 3:6-7.
2. *Use your Bible if you have it available.* Have the person you are sharing the gospel with read the Scriptures for themselves. Consider memorizing key salvation texts for the times you do not have your Bible with you.
3. *Find out where your listener is.* Quiz him. Start from the very beginning (Creation), if need be. The chronological approach works well.

4. ***Stay on course.*** Don't get sidetracked by other issues. Bring the conversation back to the basic facts of the gospel (sin, Christ, response).
5. ***Be ethical.*** Don't coerce a profession of faith if the individual you are sharing the gospel with is not ready to be saved. Plead earnestly, but gently.
6. ***Be personable.*** Share your own salvation experience. Make it clear that you are genuinely concerned about the person you are sharing the gospel with, not just about getting the person to make a profession of faith. When possible, seek to establish a “redemptive relationship” with the person out of which to share the gospel with him.
7. ***Do seek to ask for a decision.*** Seek to share the entire gospel message and, having done so, to ask if the person you are speaking with would like to be saved.
8. ***Follow through.*** If the person you are sharing the gospel with does not make a profession of faith, leave gospel literature with him and seek to schedule a time to speak with him further about salvation. If the person makes a profession of faith, schedule times to speak with him about the need to be baptized and join a local church, as well as about the basics of the Christian life.

Lesson 10: Spiritual Growth

2 Peter 3:18 commands the Christian to “grow in grace and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.” Such spiritual growth can be called by various names, such as sanctification, spiritual maturation, perseverance, and discipleship. Once a person is saved, God wants him to be sanctified (progressively set apart from the power of sin and unto righteousness). Once he is made a disciple of Christ, he is to mature in Christ-likeness. Once he puts his faith in Christ, he is to persevere in the faith (belief) and in faithfulness (behavior).

Spiritual growth may be described as the Holy Spirit of God using the Word of God to make the child of God like the Son of God, Jesus Christ (see 2 Corinthians 3:18). The Word of God is the primary means of spiritual growth. Just as physical growth occurs by means of physical food, so spiritual growth occurs by means of the milk (1 Peter 2:2), bread (Matthew 4:4), and meat (Hebrews 5:14) that is the Word of God. Other Scriptures that identify God’s Word as the means of spiritual growth include Psalm 1:2-3, 119:9, 11, John 17:17, Ephesians 5:26, and 2 Timothy 3:16-17. Spiritual growth by means of saturating one’s mind with Scripture will not occur without a corresponding separation from sin (see Psalm 1:1-3, Romans 12:2, Ephesians 4:22-24, James 1:21, and 1 Peter 2:1-2).

Besides the Word of God, other means of spiritual growth include prayer (Matthew 6:13, Philippians 1:9-11, Colossians 1:9-10, 1 Thessalonians 5:23, and Hebrews 13:21) and the local church (Hebrews 10:24-25), including church discipline (see Hebrews 12:10-11).

Spiritual growth, while the work of God (Philippians 2:13), is not without the believer’s necessary, active, and responsible participation (Philippians 2:12; cf. 1 Corinthians 15:10, Colossians 1:29, Hebrews 13:21, and 2 Peter 1:3). See also Isaiah 1:16’s “wash yourselves, make yourselves clean” (NASB), 2 Corinthians 7:1’s “let us cleanse ourselves,” 1 Timothy 6:11’s and 2 Timothy 2:22’s “pursue righteousness ...” (NASB), Hebrews 12:14’s “pursue ... sanctification” (NASB), 1 Peter 1:15’s “be ye

holy,” 2 Peter 1:5’s “giving all diligence, add to your faith ...,” and 1 John 3:3’s “purifieth himself.” “Without God we cannot; without us God will not” (Augustine).

Spiritual growth may be described as the Christianizing of the Christian. See Luke 6:40, Romans 8:29, Galatians 4:19, and Ephesians 4:13 and 15. Spiritual growth may also be described as the “relentless pursuit of perfection.” See Philippians 3:12-14 (cf. 2 Corinthians 7:1).

Lesson 11: Prayer

In Luke 11:1, one of Jesus’ disciples asked Him, “Teach us to pray.” Prayer is something that must be learned. So, let us learn what the Bible has to teach us about prayer.

What is Prayer?

Simply-speaking, prayer is talking to God. A more thorough definition is given by John Bunyan: “Prayer is a sincere, sensible, affectionate pouring out of the heart or soul to God, through Christ, in the strength and assistance of the Holy Spirit, for such things as God has promised, or according to the Word of God, for the good of the church, with submission in faith to the will of God.”

The Purpose of Prayer

As Bunyan’s definition of prayer prominently points out, the purpose of prayer is about getting God’s will done on earth, not about getting our will done in heaven. In the Model Prayer of Matthew 6:9-13, Jesus taught His disciples to pray: “Thy will be done in earth, as it is in heaven” (Matthew 6:10b). Jesus prayed this way in the Garden of Gethsemane, when He prayed: “My Father, if it is possible, let this cup pass from Me; yet not as I will, but as You will” (Matthew 26:39, NASB). “I passionately disagree with the notion that prayer is a way to get from God what we want. Christian prayer, as explained in Scripture, seems something else entirely: Prayer is a means God uses to give us what he wants” (W. Bingham Hunter).

We should not pray selfishly, like the girl who decided to start praying for others, such as her mother, praying that God would give her mother a handsome son-in-law. James 4:3 (NASB) says: “You ask and do not receive, because you ask with wrong motives, so that you may spend it on your pleasures.”

The key to effective prayer is praying according to God's will (1 John 5:14-15) as revealed in His Word (John 15:7). This is what ultimately made the praying of Elijah so effective (James 5:16b-18; cf. 1 Kings 17:1, 18:1, 41-45). This is the way Jacob prayed in Genesis 32:9-12. This is the way David prayed in 2 Samuel 7:25-29. This is the way Solomon prayed in 1 Kings 8:22-26. This is the way Daniel prayed in Daniel 9. "... [E]ffectiveness in prayer will always be coupled with regular reading, memorizing of and meditating on Scripture. I see almost no potential to become a so-called prayer warrior where systematic Bible reading and study are absent. The Bible is the only divinely inspired guidebook to the will and thought of God. And learning to pray effectively boils down largely to learning to think like God and understanding his will. Read the Book" (W. Bingham Hunter).

Things For Which to Pray

If the key to effective prayer is praying according to God's will as revealed in His Word, then for what does the Bible say we ought to be praying?

- God to be glorified (Matthew 6:9 and John 17:1)
- The return of Christ (Revelation 22:20) and the subsequent inauguration of His Kingdom (Matthew 6:10a)
- Necessities (Matthew 6:11)
- Forgiveness (Matthew 6:12)
- Deliverance from temptation and sin (Matthew 6:13 and John 17:15)
- The salvation of those who are unsaved (Romans 10:1)
- The sanctification/spiritual growth of those who are saved (Luke 22:31-32, Colossians 4:12, and 1 Thessalonians 4:3; cf. references listed under prayer as a means of spiritual growth in previous lesson on spiritual growth)
- The safety of God's messengers (Romans 15:31 and 2 Thessalonians 3:2) and the success of their message (Colossians 4:3 and 2 Thessalonians 3:1)
- The clear communication of God's Word (Colossians 4:4)
- The courageous communication of God's Word (Acts 4:29 and Ephesians 6:19-20)
- Laborers for the harvest (Matthew 9:36-38)
- Governmental leaders (1 Timothy 2:1-2)
- Enemies (Matthew 5:44)
- Things for which people in the Bible pray. See, for example, the chart on the prayers of Paul, included with this lesson.

What about when we do not know what God's will is regarding a particular matter for which we are praying? We pray, "If it be Thy will" and be willing

to not get what we want (because it is not God's will) and to want what we get (because it is God's will). "When we learn to want what God wants, we have made progress in our prayer life" (Rolland McCune). We must allow the Spirit of God through the Word of God to make us want what God wants and thereby pray according to His revealed will and accept His secret will when we don't know beforehand what His will is.

Persistence and Passion in Prayer

There ought to be a quantity and a quality, a breadth and a depth to our praying. We are to pray with persistence (Matthew 7:7-8, Luke 18:1, Ephesians 6:18, Colossians 4:2, and 1 Thessalonians 5:17; cf. Luke 11:5-10 and 18:1-7). We are to pray with passion (Luke 22:44, Romans 15:30, Colossians 4:12, Hebrews 5:7, and James 5:17). We are to pray frequently (Psalm 55:17) and fervently.

Some Prayer Pointers

1. A time

Pray any time of day and several times a day (Psalm 55:17). Times when you are most alert and when you have the least interruptions are best.

2. A place

A quiet place, such as a "prayer closet" (Matthew 6:6), is best.

3. A posture

Prayer postures found in Scripture include standing (Mark 11:25), sitting (2 Samuel 7:18), kneeling (1 Kings 8:54), and prostrate (Matthew 26:39).

4. A list

"All of us would be wiser if we would resolve never to put people down, except on our prayer lists" (D. A. Carson).

One way of organizing a prayer list is around the acrostic A-C-T-S:

A—Adore God for who He is

C—Confess your sin to God

T—Thank God for what He has done for you

S—Supplication (ask God for things for others and for yourself)

5. A plan

“It is a common observation that those who have no regular habits of prayer very seldom do much praying. It is well for God's people purposefully and deliberately to set aside and faithfully adhere to a definite prayer schedule (D. Edmond Hiebert).

Requests in Paul’s Prayers

REFERENCE	REQUESTS
Romans 15:30-32	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pray that Christian leaders might be rescued from the opposition of outsiders who try to destroy their ministry (v. 31a) • Pray that Christian leaders might find that their Christian service is acceptable to those to whom they minister (v. 31b)
Ephesians 1:15-23	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Thank God for His sanctifying work in your life and in the lives of fellow believers (vs. 15-16) • Ask God for the Spirit’s illuminating work to know God better (v. 17), to know how great our inheritance is (v. 18), and to know how great God’s sanctifying power is (vs. 19f)
Ephesians 3:14-21	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ask God to make us spiritually strong (v. 16) so that Christ may increasingly be at home in our hearts (v. 17a) • Ask God to enable us to appreciate the depth of Christ’s love for us (vs. 17b-19a) so that we may be more spiritually mature (v. 19b) • Pray for God to be glorified (vs. 20-21)
Philippians 1:9-11	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pray for our fellow believers to abound in love through the Spirit’s illuminating work (v. 9) • Pray for our fellow believers to have discernment (v. 10a) • Pray for our fellow believers to be pure and blameless (v. 10b) • Pray for our fellow believers to be righteous (v. 11)
Colossians 1:9-14	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pray for our fellow believers to be filled with the knowledge of God’s will (v. 9) • Pray for our fellow believers to live worthy of the Lord and pleasing to Him (v. 10) • Pray for our fellow believers to bear the fruit of good works (v. 10) • Pray for our fellow believers to grow in their knowledge of God (v. 10) • Pray for our fellow believers to be strengthened by God to persevere (v. 11) • Pray for our fellow believers to be joyfully thankful (vs. 11-12)

<p>1 Thessalonians 3:9-13</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Thank God for the joy other believers bring to you (v. 9) • Pray for opportunities to edify others (v. 10) • Pray for the increase of our love for one another (v. 12) • Pray for the inner strengthening of one another for end time approval (v. 13)
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Lesson 12: The Home

In his letter to the church in Colossae, the apostle Paul develops the theme that Christ is the king of everything (Colossians 1:18), pointing out later in the book that Christ is, therefore, to be the ruler of our relationships, including the husband-wife relationship (3:18-19) and the parent-child relationship (3:20-21). Simply put, He must be at the heart of our homes. What follows is designed to help us put Him first in our families.

Foundational Issues

When building a house, one must start with the part that is the least visible, yet the most vital, the foundation. The foundation of a family includes the following five concepts:

1. ***Purpose.*** Why does the family exist? Its reason for existence is the same as the reason for the existence of everything, the exaltation of God (1 Corinthians 10:31, 2 Corinthians 5:15, and Colossians 1:16). It is only as this purpose is fulfilled that we find fulfillment as a family. Christ is to be at the center of the family circle.
2. ***Depravity.*** Jay Adams has said that “the first and most important fact to remember about a truly Christian home is that sinners live there.” All family members are fallen, including children (Psalm 51:5, 58:3, and Proverbs 22:15). While our child’s depravity is to be expected, it should not be excused by denying it, downplaying it, defending it (including blaming someone or something else for it, such as environment, circumstances, etc.), or disregarding it. We should not be surprised when (not if) our spouse sins against us, nor are we to become embittered against our spouse when he or she does (Colossians 3:19).
3. ***Stewardship.*** God owns everything because He is the creator of everything (Psalm 24:1-2). This includes “our” family members. Our

families have been graciously loaned to us by God (see Genesis 33:5, 48:9, and Psalm 127:3) to be managed the way He wants them to be managed. The goals I have for my family must be the goals He has for my family. I will be held accountable for my stewardship of my family (Luke 12:42-48, 16:1-2, and 1 Corinthians 4:2).

4. **Goals.** Paul Tripp has said that “many parents are more organized, more intentional, better researched, and more goal-oriented when planning their vacations than they are in raising their children.” Every parent has goals for his or her children. Most have not articulated them. Creating a “family mission statement” (Our family exists to glorify God by . . .) is a good place to start. Be a proactive, not a passive, parent. Act, don’t react. Stay focused on the finish line (like Paul in Philippians 3:12-14). Here are some suggested goals for one’s children, including some suggested strategies (in parentheses) for accomplishing them:
 - **Salvation** (prayer, giving the gospel, training to obey)
 - **Sanctification** (prayer, walk and talk, local church)
 - **Service** (prayer, parental example, personal involvement)
 - **Separation** (parentally-controlled exposure to any source that would turn a child’s heart away from God by communicating the message that life without God is normal)
 - **“Sold Out”** (parental example, exposure to individuals who are)

5. **Faith.** Faith simply means taking God at His Word, trusting that He knows best. Using the Bible as the handbook for your home will not cause the culture to commend you. Be counter-cultural. Do not conform to (Romans 12:2), cater to, cave-in to, or capitulate to the culture. J. C. Ryle says it so superbly: “A true Christian must be no slave to fashion, if he would train his child for heaven. He must not be content to do things merely because they are the custom of the world; to teach them and instruct them in certain ways, merely because it is usual; to allow them to read books of a questionable sort, merely because everybody else reads them; to let them form habits of a doubtful tendency, merely because they are the habits of the day. He must train with an eye to his children’s souls. He must not be ashamed to hear his training called singular and strange. What if it is? The time is short, —the fashion of this world passeth away. He that has trained his children for heaven, rather than for earth, —for God, rather than for man, —he is the parent that will be called wise at last.” By faith, persevere in spite of peer pressure, for what ultimately matters is pleasing God (2 Corinthians 5:9). After all, this is the most foundational of the foundational issues regarding the home.

The Role of the Husband

Though family members are equal in *worth* (Galatians 3:28 and 1 Peter 3:7), each has been given different *work*. Husbands, wives, parents, and children have functions to fulfill within the family. The role of the husband is to love, lead, protect, provide for, and befriend his wife.

1. ***Love his wife.*** The primary passage in Scripture concerning the role of the husband is Ephesians 5:25-33. Three times in this passage (in verses 25, 28, and 33) a husband is commanded to love his wife (cf. Colossians 3:19). This is an unconditional command, meaning that a husband is to love his wife regardless of how he feels and regardless of his wife's merit. He is to love his wife as Christ loved the church (verse 25), and Christ loved the church in spite of her demerit (see Romans 5:6, 8, and 10). This Christ-like love is a self-sacrificial love (see John 15:13, Galatians 2:20, and Ephesians 5:2), willing not only to die for one's wife, but also to live for her (by dying daily to self). See 1 Corinthians 13:4-7 for a description of love.
2. ***Lead his wife.*** Not only does Ephesians 5 teach that a husband is to be his wife's lover, but also her leader. Verse 23 says that "the husband is the head of the wife, even as Christ is the head of the church" (cf. 1 Corinthians 11:3). As with love, a husband's leadership of his wife is to rise to the level of Christ's leadership of the church. Christ was a "servant-leader" (see especially Luke 22:24-27 and John 13:1-17). Leadership means taking the lead. This includes being conscious of and in control of what is going on in the home. "Many times a husband is a mere spectator in his marriage; he watches and reacts to what happens, but he doesn't control what is happening" (Walter Fremont). A good leader is both "tough" and "tender"—he has a "tough hide" and a "tender heart."
3. ***Protect his wife.*** In 1 Peter 3:7, Peter says that wives are "weaker" ("weaker," a relative term, not "weak," an absolute term) than their husbands. Being physically stronger than his wife, a husband must physically protect her. Physical (as well as verbal) abuse in the home is unconscionable. Positionally (and the point of 1 Peter 3:7 in its context), a wife is weaker than her husband by virtue of her vulnerable position under the headship of her husband. The husband must not abuse this authority.
4. ***Provide for his wife.*** Failure to provide one's family with the necessities of life (food, shelter, clothing, etc.) is condemned in the

strongest of terms in 1 Timothy 5:8. Though this text specifically speaks of material needs, the principle of provision also includes providing for the emotional and spiritual needs of one's wife.

5. ***Befriend his wife.*** According to such passages as Proverbs 2:17 and Malachi 2:14, marriage may be defined as a “covenant of companionship” (Jay Adams). See also Genesis 2:18. According to one survey of wives, companionship was their number one concern in marriage. Companionship implies communication. It also implies being together (more than just being physically in one another's presence). Men who make their wives virtual widows by extended and excessive absences (due to work, hunting, fishing, golfing, watching football, etc.) are missing the mark. The husband-wife relationship takes precedence over every other human relationship (including the parent-child relationship—see Genesis 2:24). A husband's best friend must be his wife.

“The woman was made of a rib out of the side of Adam; not made out of his head to top him, nor out of his feet to be trampled upon by him, but out of his side to be equal with him, under his arm to be protected, and near his heart to be loved” (Matthew Henry).

The Role of the Wife

In relation to her husband, a wife is given four primary responsibilities in Scripture: love him, submit to him, respect him, and support him.

1. ***Love her husband.*** Just as husbands are commanded to love their wives (Ephesians 5:25, 28, 33, and Colossians 3:19), so also are wives commanded to love their husbands (Titus 2:4). As with a husband's love for his wife, so a wife's love for her husband is not to be based on feelings (though love includes feelings), nor is it to be based on the husband's merit. Christ's love for us, our pattern (Ephesians 5:1-2 and 1 John 4:11) was in spite of our demerit (Romans 5:6, 8, and 10). Love is a choice, an act of the will, a commitment; it is something you “jump” into rather than “fall” into. A wife's aim should be to make her hubby happy, to “do him good and not evil all the days of her life” (Proverbs 31:12).
2. ***Submit to her husband.*** Contrary to our culture and the woman's post-Fall inclination (Genesis 3:16), God commands wives to submit to their husbands (Ephesians 5:22-24, Colossians 3:18, Titus 2:5, 1 Peter 3:1, and 5-6). God takes such submission seriously (see Ephesians 5:22 and Titus 2:5). The secret to submission is being Spirit-filled, i.e., controlled by the Holy Spirit of God through the

Word of God (compare Ephesians 5:18-24 with Colossians 3:16-18). The Greek verb translated “submit” in the New Testament means to willingly put or place oneself under the authority of another. Submission \neq inferiority. Inequality of *work* does not imply inequality of *worth* (see especially 1 Corinthians 11:3, as well as Galatians 3:28 and 1 Peter 3:7’s “heirs together”). Though God the Son is equal in essence with God the Father (John 10:30), He humbly submitted to the Father (Philippians 2:6-8; cf. John 14:28). While the role of the husband may be summarized with the words “loving leadership,” the role of the wife may be summarized with the words “sweet submission.” Though the Bible does teach that wives must submit to their husbands, It does not teach “doormat theology” (Martha Peace). As a general rule, wives are to submit to their husbands “in every thing” (Ephesians 5:24). However, if a husband commands his wife to violate Scripture, whether commanding her to do something God prohibits or forbidding her to do something God prescribes, a wife must respectfully go against her husband’s wishes (see Acts 5:29). Though the wife is in a vulnerable position, she is not without recourse. In chapter 14 of her book, *The Excellent Wife*, Martha Peace gives 8 resources for the wife’s protection: communicate biblically, overcome evil with good, make a biblical appeal, give a biblical reproof, biblically respond to foolish demands, seek godly counsel, biblically follow the steps of church discipline, and biblically involve the governing authorities.

3. *Respect her husband.* Ephesians 5:33 (cf. 1 Peter 3:2) commands wives to respect their husbands. This is an unconditional command, without caveat. Thus, a wife is to honor her husband’s *position*, regardless of what he is as a *person*. Martha Peace asks wives this penetrating question: “Do you treat your husband in private as respectfully as you do your pastor, your neighbor, or your friends in public?”
4. *Support her husband.* From the very beginning, it was God’s intention that a wife be her husband’s “help meet” (Genesis 2:18 and 20; cf. 1 Corinthians 11:9), or a helper (a word used to describe God many times in the Old Testament) suitable for him. One of the qualities for which the virtuous woman of Proverbs 31 is commended is the fact that “her husband is known in the gates, when he sitteth among the elders of the land” (verse 23). The implication of this statement is that she is the reason he is so (behind every great man is a great woman). The wife is to *complete*, not *compete with* her husband (Wayne Mack). A wife is to be the wind beneath her husband’s wings.

The Role of the Parent

The Bible encourages married couples to have children (Psalm 127:3-5). In relation to their children, parents are given six primary responsibilities in Scripture: love them, lead them, teach them, restrain and train them, protect them, and provide for them.

1. *Love their children.* Mothers are commanded to love their children in Titus 2:4 (though fathers are not directly commanded to do so in Scripture, it is safe to assume that they, too, are obligated to love their children). Love means doing what is best for another. What is best for our children is not necessarily what they want, nor necessarily what we want, but what God wants (children do not belong to themselves, nor to their parents, but to God—see comments on stewardship above). Rather than giving our children what we or they *want*, we must give them what God says they *need*. For example, we may not want to spank our children, nor may our children want to receive a spanking, but God (whose perspective is, unlike ours, neither finite nor fallen) says that this is what they need, and refusal to spank a child means that a parent does not truly love his child (Proverbs 13:24; cf. Proverbs 3:11-12, Hebrews 12:6, and Revelation 3:19). The sentiment, “I love my child too much to spank him” is simply not true. As another example, a child may not want to go to church, but God says that a child needs to go to church (Hebrews 10:25); therefore, a parent must bring (not send) his child to church (children may not want to go to school, the doctor, or the dentist either, but no parent in his right mind would let his child have a choice in the matter). The key question is: Is this what’s best for my child, as God defines it?
2. *Lead their children.* The responsibility to lead children in the home falls primarily on the father’s shoulders (Genesis 18:19, Joshua 24:15, Ephesians 6:4//Colossians 3:21, 1 Timothy 3:4-5, and 12). Leading is primarily done through example. “Do as I do, as well as do as I say.”
3. *Teach their children.* “The education of children for God is the most important business done on earth. ... [E]very parent especially ought to feel, every hour of the day, that next to making his own calling and election sure, this is the end for which he is kept alive by God—this is his task on earth” (Robert Dabney). Parental instruction of children is explicitly taught in Deuteronomy 6:1-9 and implicitly so in Proverbs 1:8 and 6:20. Such instruction should take place both formally (for example, “family devotions”) and informally (see Deuteronomy 6:7). In other words, it should be both structured

and spontaneous (Wayne Mack). Parents teach with their lips, but more so with their lives. Learning and living the Truth are prerequisites to teaching It to your children (see Deuteronomy 6:6-7, as well as Ezra 7:10). The key question is: What am I teaching my child by doing (or not doing) this? Everything a parent says (including how it is said) and does (including the spirit in which it is done) in the presence of a child communicates a message.

4. *Restrain and train their children.* Because children are sinners, their sin natures (and the sinful actions that proceed from such natures) must be restrained by their parents. Both Eli (1 Samuel 3:11-13) and David (1 Kings 1:6) failed to do so, with tragic results. Such restraint is to be done both verbally (reproof/rebuke) and physically (the rod), speaking and spanking. See Proverbs 29:15. Both concepts are also found in Ephesians 6:4 (“nurture and admonition”). Restraining makes training possible. The focus of the early years of child rearing should primarily be on restraining, while the focus of the latter years should primarily be on training (someone has identified the ages of newborn-12 as the *control* phase; ages 13-19 as the *coach* phase; and age 20 and beyond as the *companion* phase). Second Timothy 3:16 gives a pattern: “doctrine” (what is right) ⇨ “reproof” (what isn’t right) ⇨ “correction” (how to get right) ⇨ “instruction in righteousness” (how to stay right). Training is not so much a matter of *telling* a child what to do, as it is *showing* a child what to do.
5. *Protect their children.* While a parent must certainly protect his child from physical threats, he must also protect his child from spiritual threats. Proverbs 4:23 commands us to diligently guard our hearts, because the influences we allow to invade our hearts will impact us. To the degree that a child does not have the mental, emotional, or spiritual capacity to guard his heart, his parents must do so for him. “Remember, children are born with a decided bias towards evil, and therefore if you let them choose for themselves, they are certain to choose wrong ... If, then, you would deal wisely with your child, you must not leave him to the guidance of his own will. Think for him, judge for him, act for him, just as you would for one weak and blind; but for pity’s sake, give him not up to his own wayward tastes and inclinations. It must not be *his* likings and wishes that are consulted. He knows not yet what is good for his mind and soul, any more than what is good for his body” (J. C. Ryle). Parents must be ever vigilant about the influences that invade the minds of their children through the ear and eye gates. The overwhelming majority of the messages communicated by modern media outlets (TV, magazines, movies, music, Internet, etc.) teach the phony philosophy that life without God is normal.

6. ***Provide for their children.*** According to 1 Timothy 5:8, parents are obligated to provide their children with the necessities of life (food, shelter, clothing, medical care, etc.). Parents must also provide for the immaterial (emotional, spiritual, etc.) needs of their children. Perhaps the most important thing a parent can give a child is time, both quality time and quantity time.

The Role of the Child

In relation to their parents, children are given two primary responsibilities in Scripture: obey them and honor them (Ephesians 6:1-3; cf. 1 Timothy 3:4). Parents must teach and train their children to do so, primarily through example. If parents want their children to obey and honor them, their response to those in authority over them (the boss at work, the pastor at church, government officials, etc.) must not be characterized by disobedience and disrespect.

1. ***Obey his parents.*** Both Ephesians 6:1 and its parallel passage, Colossians 3:20 command children to obey their parents. Such obedience is right (Ephesians 6:1), Christ-like (Luke 2:51), pleasing to God (Colossians 3:20), part of a child's overall obedience to the Lord (Ephesians 6:1), and, as a general rule, holds until the child marries and/or moves out. God takes this responsibility very seriously (see Deuteronomy 21:18-21, Romans 1:30, and 2 Timothy 3:2). The Greek verb translated "obey" in Ephesians 6:1 and Colossians 3:20 literally means "to listen under." A child is responsible to listen to and place himself under parental directives. In order to be truly obedient to a parental directive, a child must obey . . .
 - ***Quickly.*** Children are to "obey without delay"; a "slow obey is no obey." A child must not be allowed to protest/challenge/question a parental directive until after he has obeyed it (unless he respectfully makes an appeal) and only then with parental permission and a submissive, respectful spirit. Unfortunately, many parents train their children to obey them the second, third, etc. time they're told (through increase in voice volume or pitch, use of child's full name, threat of spanking, counting to 3, etc.). "The most subtle form of passive rebellion is to wait to obey until just before getting into trouble. A child considers that it is a victory of his own will over the will of his parents when he does not obey until he himself decides to do so" (J. Richard Fugate).

- **Completely.** “Often children will assert their own will when carrying out instructions by doing it their own way. They only partially follow the instructions and then improvise by adding something or doing it however they want” (J. Richard Fugate). Parents need to be clear and thorough in their instructions so that there is no misunderstanding on their child’s part. With smaller children, this often requires getting down on their level, looking them in the eye, making them look you in the eye, and making them repeat your instructions back to you.
- **Cheerfully.** Children must not only do obedient *actions*, but also have submissive *attitudes* while doing such actions. You may have heard about the little boy who, when made to sit down, muttered under his breath, “I’m still standing on the inside.” Our focus as parents must not ultimately be on changing our children’s behavior, but on changing their hearts. A child’s rebellious will must be broken.

As a general rule, children are to obey their parents “in all things” (Colossians 3:20). However, if a parent commands a child to violate Scripture, whether commanding the child to do something God prohibits or forbidding the child to do something God prescribes, the child must respectfully go against his parent’s wishes (see Acts 5:29).

Parents, training our children to obey us is crucial to both their physical and spiritual well-being. If we don’t train them to obey us, what makes us think they will obey other authorities in their lives, including God? Will a child trained to rebel against parental authority be likely to obey God’s command to repent and be saved (Acts 6:7, 17:30, Romans 1:5, 2:8, 16:26, 2 Thessalonians 1:8, 1 Peter 4:17, and 1 John 3:23)? “Teach them to obey while young, or else they will be fretting against God all their lives long, and wear themselves out with the vain idea of being independent of His control” and “You must not wonder that men refuse to obey their Father which is in heaven, if you allow them, when children, to disobey their father who is upon earth” (J. C. Ryle).

Parents, train your children to obey you. “You inevitably train your children in obedience. You may train them to obey only after you’ve yelled, pleaded or threatened. You may train them to obey only when they wish to. You may not train them to obey at all. Even that is a type of training in obedience. When your directives are met by a discourse about why what you have asked is not fair, your children are not obeying. When you are met with excuses or explanations they are not obeying. When they refuse to respond at once, they are not obeying. Submission to authority means that they obey without delay, excuse or challenge. It is easy to think unclearly about obedience. When you say to your child,

‘Dear, I want you to go to bed now,’ there is only one appropriate response. It is not, ‘I’ll go after I finish coloring this page.’ It is not, ‘Why do I always have to go to bed early?’ It is not to ignore you entirely. There is only one obedient response. It is to go to bed without delay. If you accept any other response, you are training your children to disobey” (Tedd Tripp).

2. *Honor his parents.* God commands children to honor their parents (Exodus 20:12//Deuteronomy 5:16, Ephesians 6:2; cf. Mark 7:9-13), taking this responsibility very seriously (see Exodus 21:15, 17, and Proverbs 30:17). To honor one’s parents not only involves the passive absence of cursing, but also the active presence of blessing (Proverbs 30:11). Honoring one’s parents brings with it God’s special blessing, both quality of life and quantity of life (Exodus 20:12//Deuteronomy 5:16 and Ephesians 6:2-3; cf. Proverbs 4:10). While the responsibility to obey one’s parents ends when a child marries and/or moves out of the home, the responsibility to honor one’s parents never does. This honor includes taking care of one’s parents, especially in their old age (1 Timothy 5:4 and 8). “If a child is going to honor his parents, it will be the result of two things. 1) The parent must train him to do so. 2) The parent must be honorable in his conduct and demeanor” (Tedd Tripp). Parents should never allow their children to treat them disrespectfully (through words, body language, etc.).

Lesson 13: The Pastor

In a previous lesson in this series (the lesson on The Church), we briefly discussed one of the two offices in the local church, the office of pastor. A pastor (meaning shepherd) is the shepherd of a flock, a local church (see Acts 20:28-29 and 1 Peter 5:2-3).

The Titles for the Office of Pastor

There are three main titles for the office of pastor:

1. *Pastor*. This is the most familiar title for this particular office to us, who are Baptists. The word, “pastor” comes from the Latin word for shepherd. The Greek noun translated “pastor” is found once in the New Testament (in Ephesians 4:11). Its verbal form is found in such passages as Acts 20:28 and 1 Peter 5:2.

As a shepherd, a pastor leads/guides (Psalm 23:3b and Revelation 7:17), feeds, tends/cares for (Luke 17:7 and John 21:15), guards/protects (Psalm 23:4, John 10:11-15, and Acts 20:28-29), and provides for (Psalm 23:1-4) his sheep/flock (Acts 20:28-29 and 1 Peter 5:2-3), the local church of which he is the “under shepherd” (under the “Chief Shepherd,” the Lord Jesus Christ, 1 Peter 5:4; cf. John 10:11-16, 21:15-17, Hebrews 13:20, and 1 Peter 2:25).

2. *Bishop*. The word, “bishop” (so KJV) comes from the Greek word that means overseer. Scriptures that speak of the office of pastor in terms of bishop/overseer include Acts 20:28, Philippians 1:1, 1 Timothy 3:1-2, Titus 1:7, and 1 Peter 5:2; cf. Hebrews 13:17 and 1 Peter 2:25.

As a bishop/overseer, a pastor is the superintendent of the local church he has been given the responsibility to oversee.

3. *Elder*. Scriptures that speak of the office of pastor in terms of elder include Acts 14:23, 20:17, 1 Timothy 5:17, 19, Titus 1:5, James 5:14,

and 1 Peter 5:1.

As an elder, a pastor is the president of the local church over which he has been given the responsibility to preside.

Whereas “bishop” or “overseer” is more descriptive of the duty of the pastoral office, “elder” is more descriptive of the dignity of the office (Paul Jackson). Whereas “bishop” or “overseer” is more Greco-Roman in origin, “elder” is more Jewish in origin.

To the above three titles for the office of the pastor, we may add the following two: preacher and teacher (1 Timothy 3:2, 5:17, 2 Timothy 2:24, and Titus 1:9). As a preacher and teacher, a pastor is to communicate the Word of God correctly (2 Timothy 2:15), completely (Acts 20:27), courageously (Acts 4:29, 31, and Ephesians 6:19-20), clearly (Colossians 4:4), and convincingly (Titus 1:9). According to Titus 1:9, he is to have the ability to, negatively, recognize and refute error and, positively, teach truth.

The Qualifications for the Office of Pastor

The qualifications for the office of pastor are given primarily in 1 Timothy 3:1-7 and in Titus 1:5-9 (cf. 2 Timothy 2:24). These qualifications may be summarized with the following 3-fold division: 1) *compulsion* (1 Timothy 3:1); 2) *character* (most of the qualifications in 1 Timothy 3, 2 Timothy 2:24, and Titus 1, which include being blameless, a one-woman man, temperate, prudent, respectable, hospitable, gentle, peaceable, free from the love of money, having a good reputation with those outside the church, a lover of what is good, just, devout, self-controlled, as well as not being addicted to wine, pugnacious, a new convert, self-willed, or quick-tempered); and 3) *competence* (1 Timothy 3:2’s and 2 Timothy 2:24’s ability to teach and 1 Timothy 3:4-5’s and Titus 1:6’s ability to effectively shepherd his home and, therefore, the church).

The Call to the Office of Pastor

How does one know he is called to the office of pastor? First, he must want to be a pastor, *compulsion* (1 Corinthians 9:16, 1 Timothy 3:1, and 1 Peter 5:2). This is “an intense, all-absorbing desire for the work” (Charles Spurgeon); it is “an unquenchable, irrevocable inner compulsion to preach” (David Auckland); it is being content only with being a pastor. Second, he must be qualified, which includes meeting the *character* and *competency* qualifications mentioned above (for most pastors, such competency is developed through Bible college and/or seminary training).

And, third, he should be *confirmed* by the local church (usually through the process of ordination; see Acts 6:6, 13:3, 14:23, 1 Timothy 4:14, and 2 Timothy 1:6).

So, What Does a Pastor Do?

Based on what has been mentioned above, a pastor does many things.

As the pastor/shepherd of a local church, he ministers to the spiritual needs of its members, including praying for and with them, counseling them, whether with words of instruction, encouragement, or admonishment, visiting them when ill or infirm (in the hospital, nursing home, etc.), and being available for them 24/7.

As the bishop/overseer/superintendent and elder/president of a local church, he leads the church, setting its direction, doing long-term planning, seeking its internal and external growth, regularly making many minor decisions, leading the church in making major decisions, presiding at worship services, business meetings, weddings, and funerals, and making sure that, at the end of the day, things in the church that need to get done do indeed get done, that all the bases are covered (the proverbial buck stops with him).

And as the primary teacher and preacher of a local church, he privately prepares for (through extensive and intensive reading, thinking, and writing) and publicly presents several lessons and sermons each week.

A Profile of the Perfect Pastor ☺

Someone once (facetiously) wrote: The perfect pastor preaches exactly 10 minutes. He condemns sin roundly, but never hurts anyone's feelings. He makes \$40 a week, wears good clothes, drives a good car, buys good books, and donates \$30 a week to the church. He is 29 years old and has been in the ministry for 40 years. He is tall, short, thin, heavysset, and of course handsome, with one brown eye and one blue. His hair is parted in the middle. The left side is blonde and straight; the right side is dark and curly. The perfect pastor always smiles and tells you what you want to hear. He also goes out to eat after church with each individual family, spreading his time evenly between all, and he also pays for all their meals. The perfect pastor has a burning desire to work with teenagers, and spends most of his time with the senior citizens. He smiles all the time with a straight face because he

has a sense of humor that keeps him seriously dedicated to his church. And the perfect pastor is always in the next church over! If your pastor does not measure up, simply send this to six other churches that are tired of their pastor, too. Then bundle up your pastor and send him to the church at the top of the list. If everyone cooperates, in one week you will receive 1,643 pastors. One of them should be perfect. Have faith in this letter. One church broke the chain and got its old pastor back in less than three months.