

# THE BRIDGE

## Discipleship Training

# BRIDGE “Foundations”

## Session A

Based on:

New Christian’s Handbook:  
Everything New Believers Need To Know  
By Max Anders

Notes Prepared by Jeffrey Pearson

## Part One: What Do We Believe?

### I. Chapter One: Who Is God?

- “A man can no more diminish God’s glory by refusing to worship him than a lunatic can put out the sun by scribbling the word “darkness” on the walls of his cell.”  
- C. S. Lewis

#### A. The chapter at a glance...

1. God is the Creator of the universe and ruler over it
2. God is like us (better stated, we are like Him) in some ways
  - a. *God is holy* – technically “holy” means “set apart” from sin to righteousness
  - b. *God is loving* – He has committed His will to the good of humanity – see 1 John 4:8
  - c. *God is just*
    - 1). Justice is one of God’s characteristics – see Revelation 15:3
    - 2). Justice applies consequences to a person’s actions according to a fixed standard, without regard to favoritism, or any other intervening thing.
      - a). Romans 3:23 says: “...all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God.”
      - b). Romans 6:23 says: “the wages of sin is death”
      - c). **Therefore, God’s justice requires that all die**
  - d. *God is merciful*
    - 1). Mercy is God’s characteristic that causes Him to provide a way of escape when we deserve judgment. – see Titus 3: 5-7
    - 2). **God’s justice and His mercy combine to provide humanity a safe haven from the consequences of our sin.**
  - e. *God is good*
    - 1). God intends to do good for His children.
      - a). See Deut. 8:16
      - b). See Mark 10:18
      - c). See Romans 8:28 – “And we know that God causes all things to work together for good to those who love God, to those who are called according to His purpose.”
    - 2). This does not mean that life will always be easy and pleasurable.

3). **God's goodness means that, in the end, all will be well, even though some things between now and then may be difficult.**

3. God is unlike us (again, we are unlike Him) in some ways

\*\*\* *“God is enough like us to understand our problems and enough above us to be able to solve them.”*

- a. Unlike us, God is eternal, with no beginning and no end. – see Psalm 90:2
- b. Unlike us, God never changes, nor do His plans or purposes. – see Hebrew 13:8 & Malachi 3:6
- c. Unlike us, God is all-knowing (“omniscient”)... there is no hood-winking God! – see Psalm 139:4 & Matthew 11:21
- d. Unlike us, God is all-powerful (“omnipotent”)... God can do anything He chooses! – see Job 42:2

B. The problem today... many if not most people today feel free to decide for himself or herself who God is. The following are just a couple of examples:

- 1. “My opinion of God is that everyone sees God in their own way.”
- 2. “I know Santa Claus is not real, but if he was, God would have the exact personality of him.”

C. The solution... God's Word

- 1. God is who He is, regardless of what we think.
- 2. We cannot invent a definition of God and expect it to be true.
- 3. **Christians get their understanding of who God is from the Bible**

D. God is the Creator of the Universe and Ruler over it

- 1. “God... is the Creator of the universe, the original being, the sovereign ruler of all that is, the sole judge of all that is true and false, right and wrong, good and bad.”
- 2. No one created Him. – see Acts 17: 23-25
- 3. He will continue eternally unchanged. – see Hebrews 13:8

E. Conclusion:

- 1. You may be treated poorly in this life...
- 2. That doesn't mean that God has failed. It only means that (assuming you are a true child of God) you are not home yet.
- 3. You'll get your party when you get home!

F. **Memory Bible verse for chapter one: 1 Timothy 1:17**

- II. *Chapter Two: What Is The Trinity?*
- A. Chapter at a glance...
1. God is one.
  2. God is three.
- B. The word “trinity” never occurs in the Bible but we come to the conclusion of the Trinity simply by endeavoring to be faithful to Scripture.
1. The Bible says BOTH that there is but one God, and at the same time, the Bible calls not only the Father God, but also Jesus and the Holy Spirit God
  2. The doctrine of the Trinity is simply an effort to put these statements together
- \*\*\* We must either hold to the doctrine of the Trinity or start whacking things out of the Bible. The Bible clearly teaches both truths...  
God is three AND God is one.
- C. The “One-ness” of God
1. The Old Testament emphasizes that there is only One true God...
    - a. Exodus 20:3 makes this point in the Ten Commandments
    - b. Deut. 6:4-5 drives the point home as well
  2. The New Testament reinforces the same theme...
    - a. 1 Cor. 8:4
    - b. Eph. 4:6
    - c. James 2:19
- D. God is three...
1. The New Testament recognizes Jesus as God
    - a. John 20:28
    - b. John 8:58
    - c. Titus 2:13
  2. The New Testament also acknowledges the Holy Spirit as God
    - a. Acts 5:3-4
    - b. 1 Cor. 2:10
  3. The Old Testament’s reference to the Holy Spirit’s deity
    - a. Genesis 1:2
    - b. Psalm 139:7
  4. Direct references to the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit
    - a. Matthew 28:19 = linking the Three in the Great Commission
    - b. 2 Cor. 13:14 = linking the Three in a benediction
- E. The doctrine of the Trinity is a foundational truth of Christianity. One cannot be a genuine believer without holding to a Scriptural understanding of the Trinity.
- \*\*\* Special Note!
- a. That is not to say that every genuine believer fully understands how the Trinity works... On the contrary, our mortal, finite minds are unable to grasp such complexities of God. That’s okay. The Bible says that we will not understand everything – if we did, knowledge would

supercede faith. We are called to believe, have faith, and live in obedience. Rest assured, there is a place for “divine mystery” in true Christianity.

- b. Remember, if we knew everything there would be no need for faith...

F. **Memory verse for chapter two: 2 Cor.13:14**

II. Chapter Three: What Has God Done?

- A. Chapter at a glance:
  - 1. God has created everything out of nothing.
  - 2. God is all-powerful and has authority over all creation.
  - 3. God has decided beforehand everything that will happen.
  - 4. God performs miracles when He wants to.
- B. God created everything out of nothing
  - 1. Creation is an astounding event well beyond our ability to comprehend
  - 2. Genesis 1:1 is both simple and profound...”In the beginning God created...” there is no attempt to explain or prove... it is a fact beyond any human’s ability to disprove.
  - 3. Everything means everything! (i.e. time, space, sound, knowledge...)
  - 4. Things we know about God from His creation:
    - a. He is unimaginably powerful
    - b. God is capable of marvelous order and precision
    - c. God is inclined toward wonderful beauty
- C. God is all-powerful & has authority over all creation
  - 1. God sustains His creation
  - 2. “God rules His creation with absolute sovereignty and authority. He governs everything that comes to pass, from the greatest to the least. Nothing ever happens beyond the scope of His sovereign providential government. He makes the rain to fall and the sun to shine. He numbers the hairs on our heads and the days of our lives.” – R. C. Sproul
- D. God has decided beforehand everything that will happen
  - 1. God’s sovereignty over the physical world is well documented in Scripture (see Psalms 47, 93, and 97)
  - 2. God’s sovereignty over every other aspect of creation is also a core theme of the entire Bible. (i.e. Jeremiah known in the womb...)

\*\*\* Special Note: it is only natural at this point to raise concerns about the realities of evil in the world. Hold those thoughts until we reach chapter 28. We will address evil and its challenges then. For now, simply recognize that God is in charge and nothing can or will surprise Him.
- E. God performs miracles when He wants to
  - 1. Many people today disregard miracles as nothing more than myths

2. A sad paradox... anyone who says they believe in *any* god/God is wasting their time if their god is not big enough to do miracles. In fact, the very definition of God is that He is beyond boundaries of any type. Otherwise, he/it is a god (little “g”) in name alone.
3. There are two types of miracles:
  - a. A natural event done in God’s perfect timing which generates a miraculous outcome (i.e. see 1 Kings 17:1)
  - b. A supernatural occurrence that has no other explanation (i.e. Jesus raising Lazarus from the dead)
4. The primary purpose of biblical miracles was to validate a spiritual truth. Ultimately, every miracle recorded in Scripture brought glory to God.

F. Concluding considerations:

1. When we talk about the works of God, what we know exceeds what we understand. The following question is a perfect example of the debates that rage on as a result of this truth.
  - \*\*\* How can God have decreed everything that will happen and yet leave all humans a free will, the ability to choose?
    - \* For those interested in a deeper theological understanding of a “both/and” answer, seek out and study the “Compatibilist Position.”
2. In many of these cases we simply do not know. While it is often over-used (if not abused), there is a place for divine mystery in our walk with the Lord.
  - a. The work of an infinite being (God) transcends the ability of a finite being (you or me) to fully comprehend.
  - b. Remember, believing in God does not require our understanding everything about Him. I don’t understand how electricity works but that doesn’t stop me from hitting the switch and expecting the lights to come on. I don’t have a clue how my car gets-up-and-goes... but I put my foot on that gas peddle and fully expect it is going to move my car.
  - c. Just because we do not understand creation (beyond the Bible’s clear declaration) does not keep us from believing that God created.
3. If you don’t believe in what God has done...
  - a. *You are left to explain creation in terms of evolution, which is scientifically proving more and more unbelievable*
  - b. *Regarding God’s sovereignty, you are left to believe that life deals you random blows and that there is no meaning to life*
  - c. *Regarding God’s decrees (His will), you are left to believe that history is an accident and is heading nowhere*
  - d. *Regarding miracles, you are left to believe that God does not intervene in the affairs of people or history.*

**G. Memory verse for chapter three: Psalm 73:25-26**

**IV. Chapter Four: Who Is Jesus?**

- A. Chapter at a glance...
  - 1. Jesus is the Son of God
  - 2. Jesus is both perfect deity and perfect humanity
  - 3. Jesus emptied Himself
  - 4. Jesus was miraculously conceived and born of a virgin
  - 5. Jesus lived a sinless life
- B. Jesus is the Son of God
  - 1. We need to understand that when we say: “Son of God” we are talking about the second member of the Trinity. Consequently, Jesus is coequal to God the Father, and the Holy Spirit in substance but filling a different role.
  - 2. As a side note, we do not know what Jesus looked like. The Bible does not give us details about His physical appearance.
- C. Jesus is both perfect deity and perfect humanity
  - 1. Jesus was a unique being – the only God-man ever to have existed
  - 2. Throughout history people have been prone to make one of three common mistakes in their assessment of who Jesus was...
    - a. Jesus was a very special man... but not God
    - b. Jesus was God... but never truly human
    - c. Jesus could not have truly had two natures... consequently He had some kind of third “hybrid” nature that resulted in either a deified human or humanized deity.
  - 3. It was not until A.D. 451 at the Council of Chalcedon that the Church finalized its understanding of what we now refer to as the Doctrine of the Trinity (see ch. 2)
- D. Jesus emptied Himself
  - 1. Philippians 2: 5-8 contains the theological proof of this statement
  - 2. Kenosis is the Greek word that is often translated “...but making Himself of no reputation”. It is also translated “emptied Himself” because the root word literally means “emptying”
  - 3. The context of this passage defines the term “emptied Himself” for us...
    - a. He came as a servant – see Mark 10:45
    - b. He became human
    - c. He humbled Himself
  - 4. A better definition of kenosis:
    - a. The kenosis involved the veiling of Christ’s pre-incarnate glory (He never could have lived a normal life which was part of the divine plan had He come in His natural, visible majesty)
    - b. The kenosis involved His voluntary nonuse of some of His divine attributes some of the time – see Matthew 24:36

\* Note: “Nonuse” does not mean subtraction...

- E. Jesus was miraculously conceived and born of a virgin
  - 1. Luke 1:35 records the truth of Jesus’ miraculous conception
  - 2. Any question of this fact forces one to question the validity of the Bible
    - \* Note: as discussed earlier, we cannot pick and choose the parts of the Bible that we accept and reject. Any person who claims to be a Christian but rejects Christ’s miraculous conception is no true Christian... because if you think Jesus was born naturally, either you don’t accept who He said He was, and/or you don’t think He can really be God.
  - 3. The Bible distinctly says that Mary was a virgin AND she gave birth to Jesus – the Messiah. Again, any doubts here are linked to foundational problems and unbelief
  - 4. Think about it...
    - a. If Jesus was not the second member of the Trinity, He cannot be your Savior
    - b. If Jesus was not fully human, He could not die a substitutionary death for your sins
    - c. If you don’t believe the biblical account of Jesus
      - \* You have no real hope
      - \* You cannot be an authentic Christian
- F. Jesus lived a sinless life
  - 1. A natural question one might ask is: “if Jesus was fully human, and all humans inherit the ‘original sin,’ thus making us born-sinners, how is it that Jesus could be without sin?”
    - \* Answer: Jesus took on full humanity but His miraculous conception excluded the stain of original sin from ever being a part of Him
  - 2. We also know that the “wages of sin is death” (see Rom. 6:23) and had Jesus sinned, He too would have suffered eternal, spiritual death. Moreover, had He sinned, His sacrifice on the cross would not have accomplished anything.
- G. Conclusion: Jesus was certainly a remarkable person. He was born in obscurity, lived a simple, almost primitive life. He gained no worldly possessions or credentials. He lived for 3 years as an itinerant preacher, was crucified on false charges, died a pauper, and was buried in a borrowed tomb. Yet 2,000 years later it can safely be said that no person has ever made a fraction of the impact on earth that He did. In fact, no institution or nation has. He is the single most important person, and His life, death, and resurrection are the most important events in history. Although in an unexpected way, He made the kind of impact one would expect God to make if He came to earth!
- H. Memory Verse: Colossians 2:9



- VI. *Chapter Five: What did Jesus teach?*
- A. Chapter at a glance
1. Jesus taught that humanity needs to be saved
  2. Jesus taught that righteousness is internal not external
  3. Jesus taught that love is life's priority
- B. Jesus taught that humanity needs to be saved
1. Humanity is separated from God because of sin and unless one believes in Jesus (which means committing your life to Him – see John 1:1, 12) he or she will be separated from God forever – see Romans 3:23, 6:23.
  2. Jesus came to reconcile us to God – see John 3: 1-21
  3. These are the two most important things Jesus taught in His ministry – see Matthew 16:26
- C. Jesus taught that righteousness is internal not external
1. Jesus directed 8 “woes” to the religious leaders of His day to point out that “traditions” and outward attempts to look Holy don't cut it... - see Matthew 23: 13-36
    - \* Read this passage carefully and look at the harsh words Jesus directs at hypocritical, outward attempts to “look religious” – see Matthew 5:20
  2. The fact that righteousness is an internal vs. external issue is the overarching theme of Jesus' Sermon on the Mount (Matt. 5-7)
  3. Jesus contrasted the “woes” above with 8 blessings (“beatitudes”) offered to those who are inwardly righteous – see the Sermon on the Mount
  4. Think of how absurd it is to try and live one way on the outside and another way on the inside. God sees all!!! There is no fooling God.
- D. Jesus taught that love is life's priority
1. Matthew 22: 37-38 tells us that Jesus said the greatest commandment was to love God... Our job then is to determine what it means to love God.
  2. John 14:21 records Jesus' own answer to our question: “he who has My commandments and keeps them is he who love Me.”
  3. 1 John 5:3 echoes the same message
  4. Willfully, happily, and reverently keeping God's commands shows that we love Him
  5. Love is obedience more than emotion
  6. The promises of God are linked to our obedience
  7. After admonishing us to love God... Jesus said the next priority is to love your neighbor as yourself – see Matt. 22: 39-40
    - \* Luke 10: 25-37 explains what it means to love your neighbor (parable of the Good Samaritan)

- E. Conclusion:
  - What Jesus taught is that we all need to be saved from our sins. He also taught that we cannot accomplish that by ourselves – no amount of good deeds or good intentions, nor religious activities can save us. We are saved by grace through faith in Jesus as our Lord. That is it – like it or not, that is the only way. Loving God and others whole-heartedly is the way to inward righteousness.
- F. Memory Verses: Matthew 22: 37-39

VII. *Chapter Six: What did Jesus do?*

- A. Chapter at a glance
  - 1. Jesus performed miracles
  - 2. Jesus confronted religious leaders
  - 3. Jesus preached to many and disciplined a few
  - 4. Jesus provided an example for our lives
  - 5. Jesus accomplished salvation for all who believe
  - 6. Jesus prays for us today
- \*\*\* “Jesus became what we are that He might make us what He is.”
  - Athanasius
- B. Jesus performed miracles
  - 1. Jesus healed people to show His power over sickness and disease
  - 2. Jesus cast out demons to show His power over darkness and evil
  - 3. Jesus calmed storms to show His power over nature
  - \*\*\* All types of miracles were intended to give people reason to believe Jesus was who He said He was
  - 4. The life of Jesus was marked by incredible words and miraculous acts of love – together Jesus’ words and deeds consistently supported one another
- C. Jesus confronted religious leaders
  - 1. The religious leaders of Jesus’ day had become barriers to the gospel rather than champions of it
  - 2. Pharisees, Scribes, and Sadducees were primarily interested in status and worldly gains rather than being God’s voice
  - 3. Jesus purposely created confrontations that allowed Him to expose the hypocritical, emptiness of these leader’s religion – see Luke 13: 10-17 and Luke 7: 36-39; and Mark 7: 1-13
- D. Jesus preached to many and disciplined a few
  - 1. Jesus took His message far and wide, encouraging people to repent, to believe in Him and accept Him, and to live by faith in obedience to Him.
  - 2. On the other hand, He often withdrew from public ministry and spent time with His disciples alone

3. **Take Note of Jesus' network of relationships...**
  - a. He *preached to thousands* at a time...
  - b. He had *hundreds of outer group of followers*
  - c. There were *seventy involved in His movement* regularly
  - d. Finally, *with Him all the time... the 12 disciples*
  - e. 3 of 12 were especially close to Him: Peter, James, & John

\*\*\* He was preparing the nucleus of a following that would take the message of salvation to the world after He was crucified!
  
- E. Jesus provided an Example for our lives
  - “The Christian life has not been tried and found wanting – it has been found difficult and not tried.” - Anonymous
  1. Read Jesus' Sermon on the Mount (Matt. 5-7) to see the difficult standards for living a committed Christian life
  2. Living in a place where Christians are persecuted (vs. our land of free religious expression) takes these challenges to a whole new level!
  3. Jesus lived a perfect, sinless life
  4. Jesus' life gave us the example we use to flesh out the principles of some of the more difficult passages in Scripture
  5. Even the life of Jesus had fleshly difficulties... don't confuse “ease of living” with the goal or promise of a life lived on mission for Jesus Christ
  6. “He (Jesus) asks us to live as He lived, regardless of where it takes us.” – Max Anders
  7. 1 Peter 2: 18-25 is a great text to reference as an example to follow
  
- F. Jesus accomplished salvation for all who believe
  1. The final thing Jesus did in His life on earth was to accomplish salvation for all who believe
  2. Jesus satisfied all the demands that God the Father had to reconcile humanity to Himself:
    - a. He paid the price for our sin
    - b. He died in our place
    - c. He offered His righteousness for us
  3. Jesus did everything necessary to make our salvation possible:
    - a. He was incarnated (God made flesh)
    - b. He lived a sinless life which made Him a satisfactory sacrifice for us
    - c. He was crucified and died in our place, paying the price for our sins
    - d. His resurrection is the lynchpin of Christianity. Christ's resurrection is the proof-statement of Christianity.
    - e. He ascended into heaven, “sitting at the right hand” of God the Father... interceding on our behalf
      - \* Note the active, present tense of the action!

4. The only remaining element is that we accept the gift that is offered to us.
  5. When we accept Jesus as Lord of our lives, we are made complete (while not yet perfect) before God.
- G. Jesus prays for us today
1. Sitting at the right hand of God the Father, Jesus now intercedes for us in prayer – see Hebrews 7: 24-25.
  2. Luke 22: 31-32 shares Jesus’ words just prior to His arrest and subsequent crucifixion... this passage explains why Jesus is praying for us:
    - \* Jesus said to Peter: “Simon, Simon! Indeed, Satan has asked for you, that he may sift you as wheat. But I have prayed for you, that your faith should not fail.”
- H. Conclusion:
- \* Three keys to Jesus’ earthly ministry (His last 3 yrs on earth)
    - a. He preformed miracles to verify that He was the Messiah and to validate the message of salvation He was preaching
    - b. He confronted religious leaders to expose the false nature and the futility of any religious activity that is void of inward transformation, and a genuine relationship with the living God.
    - c. Jesus prepared for His departure:
      - 1). He spread the salvation message to the multitudes
      - 2). He trained a team of disciples who were prepared to carry the message of salvation to the world after He was crucified
- I. Memory Verse: 1 Peter 2:21

I. *Chapter Seven: Who Is The Holy Spirit?*

- A. Chapter at a glance
1. The Holy Spirit is a real person
  2. The Holy Spirit is God
  3. The Holy Spirit is the third person of the Trinity
- “The Holy Spirit is not religious fervor or a righteous attitude. He is God. He usually stays in the background of our spiritual life, holding things together.”
  - “The only way we conclude that there is a Holy Spirit is through the teachings of Scripture, and through our experience.”
- B. Original language...
1. The original biblical language uses a masculine word for God the Father and a masculine word for God the Son
  2. However, the word used for God the Holy Spirit is Neuter (neither masculine nor feminine)

3. Consequently, back in 1611 when the King James Version was translated, the Holy Spirit was incorrectly referred to as an “It” vs. “He”
    - \*\*\* Note: most newer translations correctly use “He”
  4. There are a number of reasons to acknowledge the Holy Spirit as a person... The Bible says He has:
    - a. Intellect – see 1 Cor. 2: 10-11
    - b. Emotion – see Eph. 4:30
    - c. Will – see 1 Cor. 12:11
  5. He also does things only a person would do:
    - a. Teaches us – 1 Cor. 2:13
    - b. Prays for us – Rom. 8:26
    - c. Performs miracles – Acts 8:39
    - d. Helps us – John 14:26
    - e. Guides us – John 16:13
  6. Jesus repeatedly used the masculine pronoun “He” when referring to the Holy Spirit.
- C. The Holy Spirit is God
1. See Acts 5: 3-4...Peter equates the Holy Spirit with God
  2. The Holy Spirit has attributes that only God could have:
    - a. He is eternal – Heb. 9:14
    - b. All-knowing – 1 Cor. 2: 10-11
    - c. Everywhere simultaneously – Psalm 139:7
  3. The Holy Spirit does things that only God can do:
    - a. Helped created the world – Gen. 1:2
    - b. Miraculously conceived Jesus – Luke 1:35
    - c. Imparts spiritual life – John 3:8
    - d. Gives life to our resurrected bodies – Rom. 8:11
  4. The New Testament treats the Holy Spirit on equal footing with God the Father and God the Son
    - a. See Matthew 28:19
    - b. See 2 Cor. 13:14
- D. The Holy Spirit is the third person of the Trinity
1. Everything in Scripture testifies to this fact...
  2. “These three persons are the one God to whom Christians commit themselves.” – James Packer
- E. **Memory Verse: John 14:16**

## II. Chapter Eight: What Does The Holy Spirit Do?

- A. Chapter at a glance:
1. The Holy Spirit was active in the Old Testament
  2. The Holy Spirit was active in the New Testament
  3. The Holy Spirit applies salvation to the believer
  4. The Holy Spirit is our helper
  5. The Holy Spirit fills us
  6. The Holy Spirit gives us spiritual gifts

- “Wind turns the windmill. Not the other way around. So it is with the Holy Spirit. He does the work of God, not us. But, He will turn us if we let Him.”
- B. References that show the Holy Spirit was active in the O.T.
1. Gen. 1:2; 41:38
  2. 2 Tim. 3: 16-17
  3. 2 Samuel 23:2
  4. Num. 27:18
  5. Dan. 5:11
- C. The Holy Spirit is referenced as active throughout the N.T.
- D. The Holy Spirit applies salvation to the believer
- \* Note: do not confuse the fact that Jesus accomplished salvation for us via His incarnation, sinless life, death, resurrection, and ascension.
1. The Holy Spirit *applies* salvation (whereas Jesus *accomplished* salvation) to believers
  2. The Holy Spirit applies salvation to believers through 5 key ministries:
    - a. **Conviction** – causing us to see our sin and to desire righteousness, leading us to receive Christ as our Savior – see John 16:8.
    - b. **Regeneration** – causing our old dead spirit to be born again, so that we are now spiritually alive – see Titus 3:5
    - c. **Indwelling** – coming to live inside us to help us live out our new life – see 1 Cor. 6: 19-20
    - d. **Baptism** – placing us spiritually in the body of Christ – see 1 Cor. 12:13
    - e. **Sealing** – marking us as God’s own possession and guaranteeing our eternal salvation (Eph. 1: 13-14)
- \*\*\* Remember the acrostic CRIBS...
- E. The Holy Spirit is our helper
1. John 14:16 makes this clear...
  2. The Holy Spirit helps us in the following ways:
    - a. Helps us have inner assurance of salvation – see Rom. 8:16
    - b. Helps us understand the Bible – see 1 Cor. 2:9-10, 13
    - c. Helps us understand God’s ways – see Eph. 1: 17-18
    - d. Helps us in our prayers – see Rom. 8: 26-27
    - e. Helps our strength in faith and obedience – Eph. 3:16-19
    - f. Helps guide us – see Rom. 8:14
    - g. Helps us in many other ways... some of which we probably aren’t aware of and don’t understand!

- F. The Holy Spirit fills us
1. In Eph. 5:18 we are commanded to be “filled with the Holy Spirit”
    - \* There have been many interpretations of what that means...
      - *Pentecostal/Charismatic interpretation*: many believe “Spirit-inspired speech” (speaking in Tongues or Prophecy) is implied - see Acts 2:4; 4:31; 19:6)
      - *“Victorious Christian Life” interpretation*: assumes the filling with Holy Spirit empowers a person for improved Christian living and greater ministry.
      - *“Word of Christ” interpretation*: believes the filling is essentially the same as letting the word of Christ to dwell in you... as prescribed in Col. 3:16
- G. The Holy Spirit gives us Spiritual gifts
1. A “spiritual gift” is a God-given ability for ministry to others
  2. 1 Peter 4:10 says: “As each one has received a gift, minister it to one another”
  3. Each of us has received at least one spiritual gift, maybe more
  4. There are three broad categories of gifts:
    - a. “Office” gifts – serving the church at large in specific roles
      - Apostle
      - Prophet
      - Evangelist
      - Pastor/Teacher
      - \* See Eph. 4: 11-12
      - \* Some believe the offices of apostle and prophet have disappeared now that the foundation of the church has been laid – see Eph. 2: 21-22
      - \* Others, including Pentecostals believe all 4 gifts will remain until Christ’s return (even though the office of apostle and prophet are no more)
    - b. “Service” gifts – the non-miraculous gifts that correspond to ministries that all of us should do, but some are gifted for greater impact in those areas. Most all Christians agree these gifts are alive and well today.
    - c. “Special” gifts – miraculous or supernatural gifts that appear to be given for the purpose not only of meeting a need of the moment but also for validating the message of Christianity to those who have not previously received the message. These gifts primarily shared in 1 Cor. 12: 4-11
      - \*\*\* 1 Cor. 14: 4-5, 22 speaks of these gifts being used to build up Christians
      - \*\*\* HOWEVER... Hebrews 2:4 says these gifts have been for the purpose of validating the new message of salvation by grace through faith in Jesus

\*\*\* Recognize that Christianity continues to debate the validity of “special gifts.”

H. **Memory Verse: Titus 3:5**

III. Chapter Nine: How Did We Get The Bible?

A. Chapter at a glance:

1. The Bible is revealed by God
2. The Bible is inspired by God
3. The Bible is recognized by the church

B. The Bible is revealed by God

1. The Bible was written...
  - a. Over a period of 1,500 years
  - b. By over 40 different human authors (from farmers to kings)
  - c. In primarily two different languages (Hebrew & Greek)
  - d. In many different countries, on 3 continents
  - e. Touching on hundreds of subjects
  - f. ...giving us one united message from God!
2. God oversaw the process of giving us the Bible (vs. dropping it out of the sky for us) so that we can have confidence that the Bible is the Word of God.
3. God revealed His truth which is now in the Bible via 2 routes... “general revelation” (nature) and “special revelation” (Christ incarnate and the Bible)
4. General revelation comes from 3 primary sources:
  - a. Nature – see Rom. 1: 18-20
  - b. Providence – God’s interventions in this world... see Rom. 8:28
  - c. Conscience – God has written his rules on the human heart, this explains our inner sense of right and wrong... see Rom. 2:15 & Eccl. 3:15
    - \* However, our conscience needs to be informed by Scripture if it is to have its full benefit in our lives!
5. Special revelation – *communication that has come to us directly from God...* there are two “main” sources:
  - a. Bible – through the Scriptures we can be led into an understanding of who God is and how to develop a relationship with Him.
  - b. Jesus
    - The Bible calls Jesus the Word of God – see John 1:1 and Rev. 19:13
    - Jesus brought the truth of the Bible to life – literally

\*\*\* General revelation tells us that there is a God, but only special revelation is sufficient to save us – see Acts 4:12



- C. The Bible is inspired by God
- \* When God revealed His word to humans for the Bible, he supernaturally oversaw the writing down of the Scriptures so that without the loss of the writer's own personalities, they composed and recorded without error God's revelation in the original manuscripts and letters.
    1. The word "inspired," when used in reference to the Bible, is a technical term meaning: "God-breathed" – see 2 Tim. 3:16
    2. The writers of Scripture were being supernaturally guided to write what God wanted written, though God did not dictate it.
    3. Each man's own personality, background, writing style, and temperament come through
    4. "The Bible is verbally and totally inspired and without error in the original manuscripts."
      - a. The individual words (not just the ideas) are inspired and without error
      - b. All the words are inspired
      - c. Only the original manuscripts are without error
      - d. We can have complete confidence in the accuracy of all the Bible
- D. Signs of Scripture being inspired by God, church used numerous criteria:
1. It had to be written by an apostle or someone close to an apostle
  2. Its content had to be consistent with other recognized Scripture
  3. It had to be recognized and accepted by the early church
  4. It had to confirm to the high standards set by other Scripture
  5. People's lives had to be changed by it
- E. The Bible is recognized by the Church
1. God sovereignly oversaw a process of men recognizing the books and letters God had inspired and collecting them into on book, the Bible. The collection of books in the Bible is called the "canon."
  2. Jesus gave His stamp of approval on the 39 Old Testament books in Luke 24:44
  3. Council of Carthage in A.D. 397 marked the final collection of the books and letters that make up the protestant New Testament
    - \* Note: this council did not declare a book or letter to be inspired... they just recognized the inspiration that was already there!
- F. While it is interesting and helpful to know about the formation of the canon of scriptural books, we must trust in the sovereignty of God for their authenticity. If God is going to hold us accountable to truth, He must see to it that we have the truth. God, in His providence, oversaw the process of forming the canon. The witness of the Spirit in the lives of believers who read the Bible, and the change that the Holy Spirit brings about in their lives, is a final telling testimony to the fact that we have the Word of God as He intended us to have it.
- G. **Memory Verse: 2 Timothy 3: 16-17**

IV. Chapter Ten: What Is The Story Of The Bible?

A. Chapter at a glance:

1. The Old Testament tells the story of God and Israel
2. God provided a temporary solution for sin: sacrifices
3. The New Testament tells the story of Jesus and the Church
4. God provided a permanent solution for sin: Jesus

\*\*\* “Once we get an overall understanding of the story and message of the Bible, it becomes much less intimidating.”

B. The Old Testament tells the story of God and Israel

1. **Creation** – God created an innocent Adam and Eve who sinned and were consequently driven out of the Garden of Eden. Their offspring grew and so did sin’s grip over them. As a result God destroyed the world with a universal flood. Only Noah and his immediate family were spared to repopulate the earth. They did but sin continued to plague humanity.
2. **Patriarchs** – Years later God revealed Himself to Abraham and promised him a nation, many descendants and a blessing that would extend to everyone on earth. By his faith, Abraham became the father of the Hebrews, later known as the Jews. God’s promises were passed down through Abraham’s lineage (Abraham to Isaac to Jacob to the 12 sons of Jacob, later known as the 12 tribes of Israel).
3. **Exodus** – Due to a famine in the land, the Hebrew people moved to Egypt where they were eventually enslaved (because they multiplied so rapidly that the Egyptians thought them to be a threat). After about 400 years God answered their prayers for relief by raising up Moses who led them back to the promise land of their forefathers.
4. **Kingdom** – The Hebrew people lived the next 400 years with a loose governmental system. The following 400 years they lived under monarchies – the first 120 years were marked by 3 consecutive 40 year reigns by famous kings: Saul, David, and Solomon (son of David). The nation ended up splitting and taking on 2 names. The northern kingdom (2 of the 12 tribes) became known as Israel. The southern kingdom (10 of the original 12 tribes) took on the name of its largest tribe – Judah.
5. **Exile** – Shortly thereafter Assyria came and conquered Israel, the northern kingdom and either enslaved or scattered her people. About 100 years later, Babylonia conquered Judah, the southern kingdom. The Babylonians destroyed Jerusalem and led thousands of people into captivity in Babylonia.
6. **Return** – About 70 years later, Persia defeated Babylonia and took over that entire region of the world. The king of Persia allowed the Israelites to return to their land under the leadership of 3 key men: Zerubbabel, Ezra, and Nehemiah. They rebuilt the city, rebuilt the temple, and returned public worship of God. They lived that way

for the next 400 years. Later Persia fell to Greece, and Greece later fell to Rome. Rome was ruling that part of the world when Jesus was born and the New Testament began.

- C. God provided a temporary solution for sin: Sacrifice
1. “We all long for abundant life on earth and eternal life in heaven. The only thing that separates humanity from God and this desire is sin.”
  2. Separation from God because of sin is called “death” (Rom. 6:23)
  3. God used different sacrificial systems to illustrate the death that sin represents. However, God also required true repentance for sin. Consequently, when a person genuinely repented in their heart, and demonstrated it through a sacrificial offering, God granted temporary forgiveness.
  4. The Bible is clear... God wanted the repentance and changed heart more than the sacrifice (see 1 Sam. 15:22; Psalm 51:16-17; Matt. 23:27)
- D. The New Testament Tells The Story Of Jesus And The Church
1. Jesus’ early life – the Bible gives little detail about the particulars of Jesus’ early life. The Bible tells us: He was born in Bethlehem (near Jerusalem), spent a short time in Egypt, and later moved back to Nazareth (home town of Mary and Joseph). At the age of 30 He left Nazareth for Jerusalem to begin His ministry. Thirty is the age that all Jewish teachers traditionally began their ministry.
  2. Jesus’ ministry – Jesus moved to Capernaum, on the northern coast of the Sea of Galilee. He based His ministry there, although He traveled throughout the area. The religious leaders began to hate Him and plot to kill Him because of their jealousy.
  3. Crucifixion and Resurrection – Their hatred was so intense that they eventually crucified Jesus. Three days later He rose from the dead. He appeared to his disciples and at least hundreds of others over the next 40 days. Then, at the Mount of Olives, he physically ascended into heaven, which is reported to us in the Bible via first hand, visible witnesses.
  4. Early Church – Jesus commissioned His disciples to take the new message of salvation through faith in Jesus to all the world – the “Great Commission” (Acts 1:8). The New Testament focuses largely on the works of the Apostle Paul and his efforts to fulfill this command. Even after Paul died, enough disciples were spreading the “good news” (technical definition of the word “gospel”) that Christianity became a major world religion.
- E. God Provided A Permanent Solution For Sin: Jesus
1. The New Testament is the fulfillment of the Old Testament story.
  2. Whereas the O.T. called for “symbolic” sacrifices, Jesus became the “once for all” sacrifice, so that all sins could be forgiven
  3. However, Jesus’ sacrificial death only affects those who accept His offer of forgiveness, repent of their sins, and follow Him!

4. Now humanity need only rely on the great sacrifice of Jesus on Calvary.
- F. Memory Verse: Matthew 28: 19-20

*Chapter Eleven: What Are The Recurring Themes In The Bible?*

- I. Chapter At A Glance:
  - A. We must view the present with eternity in mind
  - B. God disciplines us when we do wrong
  - C. Good relationships make life rewarding
  - D. God fights our spiritual battles for us
  - E. God sustains us through suffering
  - F. If God has our hearts, He will also have our money
  - “Like a mirror, the Bible tells the truth every time. It accurately shows you if your attitude is out of place, if your values are a mess, or if your thoughts are dirty.” (James 1:22-25)
  - Those themes that repeat throughout the Bible do so because they are very important... this chapter looks at 6 such themes.
- II. We Must View The Present With Eternity In Mind
  - A. This world is not our home... we are just passing through.
  - B. Living not for this world, but the next – that is living with eternity in mind
  - C. The difficulty comes from the fact that this world is seen, the next is not...
  - D. God promises to meet our “true” needs in this world and reward us for our service in the next...
  - E. Key verses to consider, noting how little this world (good and bad) matters in the big scheme of things... Col. 3:1-3; 2 Cor. 4: 16-18; 2 Cor. 11:25-28
  - F. C.S. Lewis put it this way: “If you shoot for the next world, you get this one thrown in. If you shoot for this world, you get neither.”
- III. God Disciplines Us When We Do Wrong
  - A. God uses discipline to turn us from sin
  - B. Heb. 12:5-6 tells us that God disciplines those He loves
  - C. God loves His children too much to allow our self-destructive behavior...
- IV. Good Relationships Make Life Rewarding
  - A. Unity is one of the great themes of the Bible, and joys in life
  - B. In living in unity, God’s children become like Him
  - C. Key verses: John 17:21; Eph. 4:3; Col. 3:14)
  - D. When God’s children live in unity it serves to show the world an aspect of God’s glory
- V. God Fights Our Spiritual Battles For Us

- A. “There are times when life is a battlefield, not a dance floor... a war, not a waltz.”
  - B. Only God can win the battle we are in because it is spiritual warfare for all Christians (Prv. 21:31; Rom. 7:23; 1 Peter 5:8; 1 John 5:19; 2 Cor. 10:3-4)
  - C. Sometimes God allows us to get to point where there appears to be no hope. Then He delivers us to prove to us and a watching world that He is faithful and mighty to save.
  - D. God wants us to realize that we cannot win spiritual warfare on our own
  - E. God wants us to rely on Him!
- VI. God Sustains Us Through Suffering
- A. Suffering is one of the great themes of the Bible – from beginning to end.
  - B. Anybody that says you do not have to suffer in this life is not taking the Bible at face value and in full context (i.e. the life of Paul)
  - C. We do not know all the answers to our questions regarding suffering in this life... some answers are given in Scripture but others will simply have to wait until we get on the other side of eternity.
  - D. God promises His children sufficient grace to deal with life’s suffering
  - E. God also promises that in the end, all will be well
  - F. The way to deal with our suffering is to run to the arms of God.
- VII. If God Has Our Hearts He Will Also Have Our Money
- A. From God’s perspective, money is a test
  - B. “Open heart, open wallet... closed heart, closed wallet”
  - C. God want to see if we will devote our resources to eternal matters
  - D. There is nothing in money that will satisfy a person, for every one thing it brings, it creates 2 more desires...
  - E. See Matt. 6:19-21 to read Jesus’ view in His Sermon on the Mount
- VIII. Conclusion
- These 6 themes are found throughout the Bible because they are found throughout life...
- IX. Memory Verse: Col. 3: 1-2

*Chapter Twelve: How Can We Understand The Bible?*

- “Disregard the study of God and you sentence yourself to stumble and blunder throughout life, blindfolded, as it were, with no sense of direction and no understanding of what surrounds you.” - J.I. Packer
- “If we want the Bible to come alive to us, we must dedicate ourselves to pursuing God and obeying His commands and instructions as well as reaching out to and helping other people for Christ.” – Max Anders

I. Chapter At A Glance

- A. The Holy Spirit enables us to understand Scripture
  - B. We must carefully observe what the Bible says
  - C. We must use responsible principles of interpretation
  - D. We must apply Scripture to our lives
- II. The Holy Spirit Enables Us To Understand Scripture
- A. If a person is not a Christian, he cannot grasp the spiritual truths of Scripture... “like an FM radio trying to pick up TV signals, he has no capacity to receive anything.”
  - B. 1 Cor. 2:14 says: “the natural man [the non-Christian] does not receive the things of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness to him; nor can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned.”
  - C. Once born-again, we have the illuminating ministry of the Holy Spirit in us (see 1 Cor. 2:9-10)
  - D. God reveals things to Christians through the Holy Spirit that they would not know otherwise
  - E. That does not mean it is always easy to discern God’s will... “Pearls of deeper truth are not often revealed to the careless or ambivalent.”
  - F. But the Holy Spirit will open the mind of the Christian to the truth of Scripture as that Christian tackles the Scripture seriously

III. We Must Carefully Observe What The Bible Says

- “We observe the Bible by developing a strategy that forces us to look closely at the text”

- A. Basic Questions:
  1. **Who?** – Who is the author? To whom is he writing? Who is he writing about?
  2. **What?** – What happened and in what order? What ideas are present?
  3. **Where?** – Where did this take place? Study with a map and every time a place is mentioned, look it up on the map.
  4. **When?** – When was the letter written and when did the events in the text take place? Look it up in a Bible dictionary. When do certain things in the letter happen in relationship to other events in the letter?
  5. **Why?** – Why does a particular person do or say something? Why is a particular teaching presented?
  6. **How?** – How are things accomplished? How well and by what method are they accomplished?

\*\*\* “I keep six honest serving men  
 (They taught me all I knew);  
 Their names are What and Why and When  
 And How and Where and Who.  
 - Rudyard Kipling

B. Key Words:

1. Look for key words, those words that seem most important for understanding the passage.
  2. Repetition is a good clue as to what the author wants to relate
  3. “Connectives” and comparisons show how things are alike
  4. Contrasts show how “important things” are different
  5. “Volume” (quantity) indicates the importance of something by the amount of space devoted to a matter
- \*\*\* The key is to read closely and remember: the Bible will never contradict itself!

IV. We Must Use Responsible Principles Of Interpretation

- “Not everything in the Bible can be known with 100% certainty. However, we can have confidence that something seems 100% certain, 75% certain, or 50% certain if we are careful to interpret Scripture well.” – Max Anders
- Following are principles of interpretation that must be in place at all times:
  1. Consider the context:
    - a. The meaning of any passage will be consistent with what comes before and after the passage  
\*\*\* Too many people take Scripture out of context!
    - b. Correct interpretations requires us to look at:
      - 1). Immediate Context
      - 2). Book Context
      - 3). Author’s Full Context (including other writings)
      - 4). Testament Context (Old or New)
      - 5). Entire Bible Context  
\*\*\* Remember – the Bible will never contradict itself
  2. Consider the historical-cultural background
    - a. Recognize that everything written in the Bible had a broad historical-cultural context
    - b. Bible dictionaries and commentaries are a key help here...
  3. Consider word meanings
    - a. Recognize that many words have a range of meanings (i.e. the word “trunk” in English could mean different things)
    - b. Be sensitive to the fact that some words change meaning over time (i.e. King James Bibles, written in 1611 differ from some modern translations)  
\*\*\* Comparing Bible translations is an easy way to check this  
\*\*\* Bible commentaries are also a great help here

V. We Must Apply Scripture To Our Lives

- A We apply the Bible by studying it diligently, taking its teachings seriously, and committing to do all that we understand of what God wants of us.
- B. We must read the Bible continuously asking the question: “So what? What should I do? How should I change?”

- VI. Conclusion:
- A. Make no mistake... there is a lot more to learn about studying the Bible, but these are the basics - all you need to “get it.”
  - B. Whenever you can come under the ministry of good Bible teacher, consider it a blessing...
  - C. Good teachers can turn Bible study, which is a significant challenge, into a rewarding lifetime pursuit.
- \*\*\* “Studying the Bible is not just a good thing or even an important thing; it is an essential thing if we hope to achieve our potential in Christ and live in obedience to Him.” – Max Anders

VII. Memory Verse: 1 Cor. 2:14

*Chapter Thirteen: Is Humanity Really Lost?*

I. Chapter At A Glance

- A. Humanity was created in the image of God
- B. God’s image was corrupted by sin
- C. Evidence demonstrates that humanity is lost
- D. The Bible declares that humanity is lost

\*\*\* “We are not sinners because we sin. We sin because we are sinners.”  
- Anonymous

II. Humanity Was Created In The Image Of God

- \* The image of God in humanity includes:
  1. Spiritual likeness (see John 19:30; Acts 7:59; John 4:24)
  2. Moral likeness (see Eccl. 3:11; Romans 15:49)
  3. Intellectual likeness – we have the God given ability to reason, think logically, and learn... which sets us apart from all other created things

III. God’s Image Was Corrupted By Sin

- A. Humanity was created in the image of God, without sin... in perfect fellowship and harmony with God
- B. Adam and Eve rebelled against God in the Garden of Eden
- C. Rebellion contaminated their spirits
- D. Their inner nature henceforth “tended toward sin” (see Rom. 7:14-25)
- E. This flawed nature is now passed down to all their descendents (Rom. 5:12-25)
- F. **This condition is described as “Total Depravity”**
- G. Total Depravity does not mean humans are totally bad...
- H. Rather, it means the corruption of humanity is total. In other words, we are corrupted in all facets of life, sin is everywhere



- I. **Key Summary:** "...original sin of Adam and Eve produced universal guilt... this might seem unfair until we observe that God has countered that by extending the righteousness of Jesus to all who will accept Him."
  
- IV. Evidence Demonstrates That Humanity Is Lost
  - A. Lostness of the human race:
    - 1. Three lines of evidence from outside the Bible demonstrate that humanity is lost:
      - a. Evidence from history – human history is little more than an endless succession of civilizations that rise on good principles and then fall due to corruption.
      - b. Evidence from our conscience – do you ever do things even though you know they are wrong? Do you ever fail to do things even though you know they are right? Where to do you suppose the “knowing” comes from? Better yet, where do you think the “original standards” came from?
      - c. Evidence from our experience – Most people look to this world for a sense of purpose and meaning in life (i.e. careers, relationships, toys...). They think these things will make them feel happy and fulfilled. Nonetheless, an emptiness seeps up from somewhere deep within... and a muffled alarm sounds that will not go away. The depressing phrase: “Is this really all there is?” haunts them their entire lives. Such a relentless reminder of the futility of life (if spent without a personal relationship with Jesus Christ) reminds people that they need an answer from outside themselves.
    - 2. The death of Christ suggests that we are lost:
      - a. John 10:18 quotes Jesus: “No one takes my life from Me, but I lay it down.”
      - b. Why would Jesus endure the cross if humanity were basically good and not in need of salvation?
      - c. The crucifixion is only rational if humanity is lost!  
\*\*\* Jesus decided to die in our place so we could live in His!
  
- V. The Bible Declares Humanity Is Lost
  - A. Romans 3:23 says: “All have sinned and fall short of the glory of God.”
  - B. Romans 6:23 says: “The wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.”
  - C. Other passages reinforce this truth: Acts 4:12; Rom. 5:8-10; Eph. 2:8-10  
\*\*\* The Bible leaves no room for debate. Humanity is lost and needs to be saved!
  
- VI. Memory Verse: Romans 3:23 and Romans 6:23

## *Chapter Fourteen: How Can We Be Saved?*

### I. Chapter At A Glance:

- A. We are predestined to salvation
- B. God's grace is the basis of salvation
- C. We are saved through faith
- D. We repent of sin for salvation
- E. We can be assured of our salvation
- F. We are eternally secure
- G. Jesus is the only way of salvation

- There are two extremes regarding salvation... One thinks everyone has to earn their salvation and the other position assumes everyone will be saved, regardless.
- Both extremes are untrue.
- The Bible makes it clear that you cannot get to heaven by your own good works (see Titus 3:5)
- The Bible makes it clear that not everyone is going to heaven (see Matt. 7:13-14; Rev. 20:15)

### II. We Are Predestined To Salvation

- A. "Predestination" is the teaching that God has chosen, before the creation of the world, who will be saved and who will not (see John 13:18; Eph. 1:3-14; 2 Thess. 2:13-15)
- B. "Free Will" is the opposite teaching... espousing salvation as a result of a person's free will to choose Christ as their personal Savior.
- C. The Bible seems to teach that people have a free will (Matt. 23:37; John 7:17; Rom. 7:18) AND that God's predestination is based on God's foreknowledge (Rom. 8:29-30; 1 Peter 1:2)
- D. Some people argue through this gray area of Scripture while others recognize both aspects of the biblical truth as being accurate and true, but beyond their ability to comprehend, thus waiting for the coming of Christ when all things will be revealed and fully understood.
- E. I personally ascribe to the Compatibilist position... in a nutshell, God predestined, and therefore knew, but never interfered with anybody's free will to choose. His "knowing" what someone would freely choose does not inherently negate the person's ability to choose freely. This is the only "both/and" position that fully affirms all of Scripture, while staying engaged in the debate.

- III. God's Grace Is The Basis Of Salvation
- A. "Grace" is defined: "unmerited favor" or "undeserved favor"
  - B. Eph. 2:8-9 tells us: "By grace you have been saved through faith, and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God."
  - C. Titus 3:5 says: "Not by works of righteousness which we have don, but according to His mercy He saved us."
  - D. Good works cannot save you!!!
  - E. Only God's grace can!
- IV. We Are Saved Through Faith
- A. We are saved "by grace through faith"
  - B. We must believe what God says about how to be saved and accept His commands
  - C. Faith does not mean merely to believe information
  - D. Faith means to place one's trust in that information
    - \* One can believe in parachutes. But one has faith in "A parachute" when he pulls its cord and trusts it to open, thereby saving his life!
- V. We Repent of Sin For Salvation
- A. "Repentance" means "changing one's mind/direction"
  - B. Repentance is the other side of the Faith coin... they are connected
  - C. One cannot have true faith without repenting and likewise, one cannot repent without true faith.
- \*\*\* "Fallen man is not simply an imperfect creature who needs improvement; he is a rebel who must lay down his arms..." - C.S. Lewis
- VI. We Can Be Assured Of Our Salvation
- A. "Assurance" is the confidence that Christians are in fact saved
  - B. Scripture gives us assurance:
    1. Psalm 130:4 – "There is forgiveness with You, that You may be feared." Hence, it is possible to be forgiven
    2. John 6:37 – "The one who comes to me I will by no means cast out"
    3. 1 John 5:12 – "He who has the Son has life, he who does not have the Son of God does not have life."
- VII. We Are Eternally Secure
- A. "Eternal Security" is the belief that once Christians are saved they will always be saved (John 10:27-30; Rom. 8:1, 8:29, 8:35-39, 11:29; Phil. 1:6; 2 Tim. 1:2; Eph. 1:13-14; 1 Peter 1:5)
  - B. Some passages seem to suggest the contrary (Mark 13:14; 1 Cor. 6:27, 15:2; Gal. 5:4; Heb. 6:4-6, 10:28-29)
  - C. The bottom line is that this is another gray area of Scripture and earnest Christians sometimes disagree

- VIII. Jesus Is The Only Way Of Salvation
- A. This is the message of the Bible!!!
  - B. **Scripture teaches:**
    1. **Not everyone will be saved. (Matt. 25:41-42)**
    2. **Some who committed awful sins will be saved, and some who did not commit awful sins will be end up in hell (Matt. 26:74-75; Titus 3:5)**
    3. **It does matter what you believe, regardless of how sincere you are (Acts 17:22-31)**
    4. **No one can go to heaven except through Jesus (John 14:6; Acts 4:12)**
- IX. Conclusion
- A. The “Doctrine of Salvation” contains some of the most difficult and controversial teachings in the church...
  - B. Yet, those who hold a high view of Scripture have always agreed on one central truth:
 

**God will save whoever comes to Him in faith!**
- X. Memory Verse: Ephesians 2:8-9

*Chapter 15: What Happens When I Am Saved?*

\*\*\* “I’m not what I want to be,  
 I’m not what I’m going to be,  
 But thank God, I’m not what I was.”  
 - Anonymous

\*\*\* The problems of the world, at the core, are problems of the heart.

\*\*\* Until the human heart is corrected, the troubles of civilization cannot be corrected. The need is not for rehabilitation or reeducation but for regeneration. Good news... that is exactly what happens when someone accepts Jesus as their Lord and Savior... a the core, hearts change.

- I. Chapter At A Glance:
  - A. I am regenerated
  - B. I am redeemed
  - C. I am justified
  - D. I am adopted
  - E. I am united Christ
- II. I Am Regenerated
  - A. Regeneration is the distinction between Christians and non-Christians
  - B. Jesus described regeneration as “being born again” (see John 3:1-21)

- C. Paul also explains regeneration in Eph. 2:1-5... “You were dead in trespasses and sins... But God... loved us, even when we were dead in trespasses, and made us alive together in Christ”
  - D. That is what it means to be “born again” or “regenerated”
  - E. When we are regenerated we are “made alive” spiritually!
- III. I Am Redeemed
- A. A composite picture of redemption shows that with Christ’s death on the cross, all believers have been:
    1. Purchased
    2. Removed from the market place of sin
    3. Set free to live a new life
  - B. Spiritually speaking, redemption means simply to pay the price that our sin demanded (see Rev. 5:9)
  - C. In the case of a believer, not only did Christ pay the price for their sin, but He also removed them from the “marketplace” of sin
  - D. Lastly, in an eternal way, being redeemed means that Christ paid the ransom so that the “held one” (the old sinner) can be freed (to be born again)
- IV. I Am Justified
- A. Justification is, simply put, being declared righteous by God
  - B. The Bible tells us that we are justified the way all people of all times have been justified... through faith.
  - C. J.I. Packer quote:
 

“We are justified justly, on the basis of justice done (Rom. 3:25-26) and Christ’s righteousness reckoned to our account (Rom. 5:18-19).”
- V. I Am Adopted
- A. Adoption is being taken into and made a legal member of another family, with all the rights and privileges of that family.
  - B. God, through Jesus, adopted all authentic believers
  - C. That adoption wipes out the past and makes us new!
  - D. God chose us (believers) before the foundation of the world (Eph. 1:5) to be His children
  - E. Knowing full well, ahead of time, every sin we would ever commit, He adopted us anyway...
  - F. These things are true whether the world believes them or not, and they are not dependent upon how someone “feels”
- VI. I Am United With Christ
- A. To become with Christ is to become one with Him spiritually
  - B. We become one with Him...

- C. The Bible says: we become “in Christ”
  - D. The Bible describes elements of our union with Christ: We’re...
    - 1. Crucified with Him (Gal. 2:20)
    - 2. Died with Him (Colossians 2:20)
    - 3. Buried with Him (Rom. 6:4)
    - 4. Made alive with Him (Eph. 2:5)
    - 5. Raised with Him (Col. 3:1)
    - 6. Suffer with Him (Rom. 8:17)
    - 7. Glorified with Him (Rom. 8:17)
    - 8. Joint heirs with Him (Rom. 8:17)
  - E. This is a judicial union with Christ in which God the Father sees us in Christ.
  - F. The benefits of Christ’s death are credited to us.
- VII. Memory Verse: Romans 5:1

*Chapter 16: What Is The Spiritual War?*

- I. Chapter At A Glance
  - A. Angels are God’s servants
  - B. Demons are Satan’s servants
  - C. The world opposes God
  - D. The flesh opposes God
  - E. The devil opposes God

\*\*\* The Bible tells us that angels, demons, and Satan are real, and that every Christian is in a spiritual battle we will win if we take on God’s protection, and which we will lose if we don’t.
- II. Angels Are God’s Servants
  - A. Angels are spirits who live for the most part in another realm than humanity and do the bidding of God.
  - B. Here are some biblical observations on angels:
    - 1. Angels are created by God (Ps. 103:20-21; Col. 1:16)
    - 2. Angels are spirit beings that sometimes take on human form (Gen. 19:1; Heb. 1:14 and 13:2)
    - 3. Countless numbers were all created at the same time; there is a fixed number of them; they are without gender and they live forever (Matt. 22:30; Luke 20:36)

4. They are created higher than humans for now, but when we get to heaven, humans will be higher than angels (Ps. 8:5; 1 Cor. 6:3)
5. They have great intelligence and power, though their intelligence and power are limited (Isa. 37:36; Mark 13:32; 1 Peter 1:12)
6. They care about what happens to humans, and rejoice when one becomes a Christian (Luke 15:10)
7. Christians may have guardian angels (Matt. 18:10; Heb. 1:14)
8. Angels punish those who rebel against God (1 Chron. 21:15; Acts 12:23)
9. Sometimes they defend and protect God's people (1 Kings 19:5; Dan. 6:22; Acts 5:19 and 12:8-11)
10. They may guide Christians to witness to certain unbelievers (Acts 8:26)
11. They will come with Christ when He returns (Matt. 25:31)
12. They appear to be organized in a hierarchy of power (Dan. 10:13 and 21; Matt. 26:53; Col. 1:16)
13. Angels are interested in and connected to the church today (1 Tim. 5:21; 1 Peter 1:12)

### III. Demons Are Satan's Servants

- A. Demons are good angels who sinned, following Satan in his rebellion against God
- B. Demons oppose the will of God and do the will of Satan
- C. Biblical observations about the character and work of demons:
  1. Read Jude 6 to see how demons followed Satan...
  2. Demons appear to be organized into an army-like hierarchy
  3. Some may have authority over geographic locations, while others focus on individuals (Isa. 14:12-15; Ezek. 28:13-19; Dan. 10:13; Eph. 6:12)
  4. They have their own doctrine that they promote among humans to deceive and destroy... (1 Tim. 4:1-3)
  5. Demons can...
    - a. Possess individuals
    - b. Inflict physical problems
    - c. Cause insanity or derangement
    - d. Give a person extraordinary strength
    - e. Have seemingly supernatural abilities
    - f. Take over a person's life and destiny... if allowed

\*\*\* Look to these verses for evidence of the above: Matt. 9:32-33; Matt. 10:8 and 17:15-18; Mark 6:13; Luke 8:26-31; Acts 16:16-24; Rom. 1:18-25

\*\*\* Both angels and demons appear to have a role in the spiritual war in which all Christians find themselves (Eph. 6:12)

#### IV. The World Opposes God

- A. By “world” we mean the realm of humanity that is under the control of Satan (Eph. 6:12)
- B. Christians are delivered from the world, transferred from the power of darkness into the kingdom of the Son and His love (Col. 1:13)
- C. The heart’s true loyalties should lie in discovering the will of God and doing it from the heart.
- D. Whenever the heart chooses values, attitudes, or behaviors over obedience to God, it is worldly... regardless of whether the value, attitude, or behavior is inherently good or bad (Rom. 6:13)

#### V. The Flesh Opposes God

- A. By “flesh” we mean the sinful attitude of the mind that rejects God
- B. Nothing good dwells in the flesh, it opposes the will of God; it wars against the mind of God and makes us captive to sin (Rom. 7:14-25)
- C. The flesh has illicit passions and desires (Gal. 5:24) and is characterized by lust (Gal. 5:16; 1 Peter 4:2; 1 John 2:16)
- D. Works of the flesh include: adultery, sexual immorality, hatred, outbursts of wrath, selfish ambition, envy, murder, etc. (Gal. 5:19-21)
- E. When we become a Christian (“regenerated”), we are no longer “after the flesh” (2 Cor. 10:3; Gal. 2:20)
- F. BUT... we must be watchful because the flesh can lure us back into its influence (Rom. 6:19)

#### VI. The Devil Opposes God

- A. The Bible tells us about the Satan:
  - 1. The name “Satan” means “adversary” or “enemy” (1 Peter 5:8)
  - 2. Satan was an angel that rebelled against God and fell into sin, becoming the ultimate evil being in the universe (Isa. 14:13-15; 1 Tim. 3:6)
  - 3. Satan’s sin was pride! He wanted to be equal to God (Isa. 14:13-15; 1 Tim. 3:6)
- B. Some believe a third of the good angels followed him into rebellion and became demons (Rev. 12:4)
- C. Satan has authority over all the demons, and his goal is to set up his own kingdom and rule in place of God (Ezek. 28:13-19)
- D. Satan deceives people in order to destroy them (John 8:44; Rev. 9:11, 12:9, and 20:10) – Jesus called Satan a murderer, a liar, and the father of all lies
- E. Satan blinds the minds of unbelievers so that they might not believe the gospel. He employs demons to try to defeat believers and tempt us to sin (1 Cor. 7:5; 2 Cor. 4:4; Eph. 6:12ff)
- F. Satan’s extremely powerful and the god of this age (2 Cor. 4:4; Eph. 2:2)



- G. BUT... Satan is not all-knowing and not able to be in more than one place at a time... His power is limited! (Job 1:9-12, and 2:4-6; Mark 5:12; 1 John 3:8)
  - H. Satan (and presumably his demons) disguise himself as an angel of light to deceive people into thinking that he and/or his demons are good spirits, when in fact they are evil (2 Cor. 11:14)
  - I. Satan has already been defeated... the war was won with the resurrection of Jesus... Revelation 20:10 tells us that Satan will be eternally judged for his unspeakable evil.
- VII. Conclusion
- A. The Bible is open and unembarrassed in talking about angels, demons, and Satan
  - B. Angels are awesome, powerful beings who usually deliver Gods messages
  - C. Angels are messengers of God, who come to represent God to us
  - D. Both angels and demons are for real!
  - E. Angels may have come in and out of your life without your ever knowing.
  - F. Also, demonic forces are to be taken seriously
  - G. Demonic forces can be resisted
  - H. **“He who is in you is greater than he who is in the world” – 1 John 4:4**

VIII. Memory Verse: 1 John 2:15-16  
 Chapter 17: How Can We Win The Spiritual War?

\*\*\* “The world fall into two equal and opposite errors concerning the devil. Either they take him altogether too seriously or they do not take him seriously at all.” - C.S. Lewis

- I. Chapter At A Glance:
  - A. The belt of truth anchors us
  - B. The breastplate of righteousness protects us
  - C. The shoes of peace give us stability
  - D. The shield of faith wards off blows
  - E. The helmet of salvation guards our head
  - F. The sword of the Spirit defends and attacks

\*\*\* We must submit to God in all things and resist the devil (James 4:7). Specifically, we must put on all the spiritual armor he has provided for us (Eph. 6:10-18)
- II. The Belt Of Truth Anchors Us
  - A. **Belt of Truth** = *commitment to God’s truth*
  - B. Christians must prepare for spiritual battle by making a total commitment to the truth of Scripture

- C. Christians must be determined to make their minds to follow that truth
- III. The Breastplate of Righteousness Protects Us
- A. **Breastplate of Righteousness** = *a lifestyle of trusting obedience to God*
  - B. The spiritual breastplate of righteousness does the following:
    1. Protects us from the consequences of sin, from the harm and damage and violent ravages of sin.
    2. Protects us from the hardening and choking of the spiritual arteries that slowly kill the spiritual life
    3. Protects us by giving us discernment
  - C. One reason God demands that we live righteous lives is to protect us from Satan
- IV. The Shoes Of Peace Give Us Stability
- A. **Shoes of Peace** = *a trusting confidence on the promises of God, and the sense of peace that such trust brings*
  - B. In the spiritual battle, we must keep our footing, no matter how treacherous the ground
  - C. Peace comes when we believe the promises of God and act accordingly
  - D. Note Jesus' own words: "Peace I leave with you, My peace I give to you; not as the world gives do I give to you. Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid." - John 14:27
  - E. When we trust Him, then we have the personal, inner peace that enables us to keep our footing in the daily spiritual battles.
- V. The Shield Of Faith Wards Off Blows
- A. **Shield of Faith** = *a life of protection based on our faith in God's character, word, and deeds*
  - B. In spiritual warfare the enemy of our soul launches his deadly arrows at us, and it is faith that protects us
  - C. Faith is our shield!
- VI. The Helmet Of Salvation Guards Our Head

- A. **Helmet of Salvation** = *a lifestyle of hope that comes from focusing on our ultimate salvation*
  
- B. Salvation has three dimensions:
  - 1. Past Salvation – delivers us from the “penalty” of sin
    - \* Upon committing our lives to Christ, we were forgiven and cleansed of our sins, spiritually reborn, and made ready for heaven.
  - 2. Present Salvation – delivers us from the “power” of sin
    - a. “You shall know the truth, and the truth shall set you free” – John 8:32
    - b. As we live in faithful obedience to God, He frees us from the power and bondage of sin
  - 3. Future Salvation – delivers us from the “presence” of sin
    - a. When Christ returns, all sin will be destroyed and we will live forever in the presence of God, unaffected and untouched by sin
    - b. Paul said, keep your mind fixed on your final and ultimate salvation
      - \*\*\* “Put your heart in the next world while keeping your hands in this one.” - Max Anders
  
- VII. The Sword Of The Spirit Defends And Attacks
  - A. **Sword of the Spirit** = *an offensive and defensive use of the Bible in spiritual warfare*
  
  - B. When we take up the sword of the Spirit we use specific verses (rhema) to fend off attacks of the enemy and put him to flight
  - C. Example: if we are tempted to get angry, we recite in our minds the verses we have already memorized, “Be swift to hear, slow to speak, slow to wrath; for the wrath of man does not produce the righteousness of God.” – James 1:19-20
  - D. This is how to use the sword of the Spirit
  
- VIII. Conclusion
  - A. Think about it...
    - 1. If you don’t believe that a righteous life is necessary to pleasing God and being safe in the spiritual war, you will not be willing to make the difficult decisions necessary for victory
    - 2. If you don’t believe and rest in the promises of God, your life is liable to be a constant stream of anxiety and distress
  - B. God commands us to put on the spiritual armor because He wants to equip us for victory in the spiritual war
  - C. Unfortunately, many today pick and choose what commands of God they will take seriously and what they will ignore...

- D. If we don't want to be a casualty in this war, we had better quit playing around with the Christian disciplines and commands of Christ...
  - E. Stop saying: "What can I get away with?" and start saying: "What would Jesus do in this situation?"
  - F. Stop complaining about "legalism" and start focusing on "righteousness."
  - G. Do you know the Bible well enough to use specific verses to help you ward off specific temptations?
  - H. **In spiritual warfare, we need the protection of the whole armor of God!**
- IX. Memory Verse: Ephesians 6:11

*Chapter Eighteen: What Is The Church?*

I. Chapter At A Glance

- A. The church is like a body
- B. The church is like a building
- C. The church is like a bride
- D. The church is universal
- E. The church is local

\*\*\* Biblically speaking, the church is not a building. The church is people. We don't go to church. We are the church. The Bible gives several pictures of the church that help us to understand what it is...

II. The Church Is Like A Body

- A. Paul's favorite word picture to describe the church was the body
- B. Some take the analogy to the point of saying that it symbolizes the fact that we Christians are to be the hands, feet, and tongue of Christ.
- C. Jesus is the Head of the body and Christians make up different parts of the body depending on their gifts
- D. We each have different functions, abilities, different callings, and different locations.
- E. Read Romans 12:4-5... "Just as each of us has one body with many members, and these members do not all have the same function, so in Christ we who are many form one body, and each member belongs to all the others" (NIV).
- F. Key Point:
  - 1. We do not become the body when we agree to work together
  - 2. We Christians are the body whether we work together or not
  - 3. The only question is: "will we be a healthy body?"
  - 4. Once we are saved, we are part of the body.
  - 5. When we work together for the purposes of God, we're a healthy body.

III. The Church Is Like A Building

- A. A second picture of the church is that of a spiritual building
- B. See Eph. 2:19-22: “You are... of the household of God, having been built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ Himself being the chief cornerstone, in whom the whole building, being fitted together, grows into a holy temple in the Lord, in whom you also are being built together for a dwelling place of God in the Spirit.”
- C. Imagine each figurative stone in that building have a name on it...

#### IV. The Church Is Like A Bride

- Rev. 19:6,7,9: “Halleluajah! For the Lord our God, the Almighty, reigns. Let us rejoice and be glad and give the glory to Him, for the marriage of the Lamb has come and His bride (the Church) has made herself ready... Blessed are those who are invited to the marriage supper of the Lamb.”

#### V. The Church Is Universal

- A. The New Testament Greek word for “church” is “Ekklesia”
- B. Ekklesia technically means “*called-out ones*”
  - 1. “Ek” means “out from”
  - 2. “kaleo” means “to call”
  - \*\*\* Together the two words mean “called out”
  - \*\*\* It implies an assembled group.
- C. The same word would be used whether or not the meeting was religious
- D. The word later became associated with Christians because of their “called out” convictions to spiritually follow Jesus
- E. Special Note:
  - 1. The Bible never associates “the church” with a building where people meet or come together
  - 2. Rather, the Bible uses the word “church” to reference the PEOPLE
- F. All people who have been regenerated (the true Christians) represent God’s universal Church
- G. Notice... membership in a local congregation is no guarantee of being a part of God’s spiritual universal Church
  - \*\*\* “Going into a church building doesn’t make you a Christian any more than going into a garage makes you a car, or going into a barn makes you a cow.” - Max Anders

#### VI. The Church Is Local

- A. **The “local church” is a group of believers who agree together to pursue the ideals of the universal church.** – Max Anders’ definition
- B. Key attributes:
  - 1. The local church meets regularly – see Hebrews 10:24-25
  - 2. The local church has qualified leaders

- a. Eph. 4:11-12
- b. 1 Timothy 3:1-13
- c. Acts 6:1-6

VII. Conclusion... we all belong to the church if we belong to Jesus!

VIII. Memory Verse: Hebrews 10:24-25

*Chapter Nineteen: What Is The Church Supposed To Do?*

I. Chapter At A Glance:

- A. The church must instruct
- B. The church must fellowship
- C. The church must minister
- D. The church must worship
- E. The church must baptize
- F. The church must observe the Lord's Supper
- G. The church must exercise discipline

II. The Church Must Instruct

- A. Knowledge is hard to gain... and hard to keep.
- B. Truth is foundational to Christianity
  - \* Jesus said: "You shall know the truth and the truth shall set you free" (John 8:32).
- C. A mindless, contentless faith is not sufficient.
- D. Everything we do must be rooted in truth.
- E. Without biblical instruction, Christians will not mature spiritually.
- F. Consequently, the church MUST instruct its people in the truth!

III. The Church Must Fellowship

- A. Acts 2 tells us that the first Christians: "continued...in fellowship"
- B. They took care of each other whenever anyone had need
- C. They lived as part of each other's lives
  - \* Our culture, by contrast, tends to cut us off from each other.
- D. Christians were never intended to function alone spiritually
- E. Therefore, the church must encourage, promote, and champion fellowship

IV. The Church Must Minister

- A. The first Christians were intentional in their efforts to reach out to those who had not heard the good news of the gospel
- B. The Bible tells us that "the Lord added to their numbers daily those who were being saved."

- C. Gal. 6:10 tells us: “As we have opportunity, let us do good to all, especially to those who are of the household of faith.”
- V. The Church Must Worship
- A. In describing church worship, Luke tells us that “everyone kept feeling a sense of awe” and they were “praising God.”
  - B. The first Christians (by definition... the earliest church) had been deeply impressed with the presence of God and His work in their midst.
  - C. “Gladness” characterized their activities
  - D. They favorably impressed the “seekers” who saw them
- VI. The Church Must Baptize
- A. “Baptism is a symbolic act in which Christians proclaim their belief in Jesus’ death and resurrection, and enter into a full relationship of obedience to God.” - Max Anders
  - B. Acts 22:16 tells us that God intended baptism to be a sign of inward cleansing of sin; thus, baptism is symbolic of our union with Christ
  - C. Titus 3:5 tells us that baptism also signifies the receiving of spiritual life
  - D. See Romans 6:3-7 and Col. 2:11-12 for more information on baptism
  - E. Baptism is a fundamental responsibility of the church
    1. In the New Testament we see “the church” baptizing people almost immediately after they have professed their faith in Jesus Christ
    2. All New Testament baptisms are done by immersion
- VII. The Church Must Observe The Lord’s Supper
- A. The Lord’s Supper is a ceremonial meal of bread and “fruit of the vine” commemorating the death of Jesus for our sins and celebrating His new covenant with us.
  - B. 1 Cor. 11: 23-26 reveals:
    1. Jesus instituted the Lord’s Supper
    2. It is to be observed in the church until He returns to earth
    3. It is a perpetual remembrance of His sacrifice
    4. It symbolizes the new covenant He established with us, to grant us forgiveness of sin and eternal salvation by grace through faith.
  - C. Controversy: three views on the elements (bread and wine)...
    1. Representation position - the bread and wine are symbols of Christ’s body and blood
    2. Transubstantiation position - it literally becomes the flesh and blood of Christ after a clergyman consecrates it
    3. Consubstantiation position - Christ’s literal body and blood are “in, with, and under the substance of the bread and wine
  - D. Most Protestants believe that at the Lord’s Supper we are giving thanks to Christ for His finished and accepted work of atonement (fully paying the price for our sins), rather than mystically repeating His crucifixion.

VIII. The Church Must Exercise Discipline

- A. The Scripture teaches that churches are not to ignore the flagrant sins of its people but are to take biblical steps to deal with them.
- B. See these passages... 1Cor. 5:1-13; 2 Cor. 2:5-11; 2 Thess. 3:6, 14-15; Titus 1:10-14; Titus 3:9-11
- C. Discipline should occur in an overall ministry of nurture & accountability
- D. Discipline can range from private admonishment to public excommunication from the church
- E. The purpose of all discipline is to encourage repentance, when the church then restores the offender to fellowship again

IX. Memory Verse: Acts 2:42

*Chapter Twenty: Who Can Lead The Church?*

\*\*\* “The church is looking for better methods; God is looking for better men.”  
- E.M. Bounds

I. Chapter At A Glance

- A. The church must be governed
- B. The church must have pastor-teachers
- C. The church must have elders and deacons
- D. The leaders of the church must be spiritually mature

II. The Church Must Be Governed

- A. There are different views on how the church should be governed
- B. The three basic views are:
  - 1. Episcopalian – a hierarchical system in which denominational leaders are the primary authority
  - 2. Presbyterian – a representative system of government in which boards of elders are the primary authority
  - 3. Congregational – a democratic system in which the congregation as a whole is the primary authority (typically through voting)
- C. The Bible can be used to validate each of these seemingly opposed systems of church government... the key is to seek the entire message of Scripture vs. pits and pieces to advance a particular position.

III. The Church Must Have Pastor-Teachers

- A. The word “pastor” means “shepherd”
- B. Pastors have a crucial role in the church
- C. The Bible says the calling of a pastor brings with it the responsibility to teach the Word of God (which means “making disciples”) and Shepherd (an analogy with a world of meaning) God’s people.
- D. People in the church are spiritually dependent on the pastor’s ministry
- E. To be a pastor a man needs to meet two criteria:
  - 1. Possess the spiritual gift of pastor-teacher
  - 2. Meet the spiritual qualifications of an elder as prescribed in:



\* 1 Timothy 3:1-7 and Titus 1:5-9

- F. Some argue as to whether or not the Greek word we translate as “pastor-teacher” should actually represent two different offices (pastor and/or teacher). But a close look at the grammar (no definite article) in Eph. 4:11 shows that there is a unique conjunction used between pastor “and” teacher (“de” vs. “kai”) compared to the other conjunctions in the passage (which lists church officers – the rest use “kai”).
  - G. The bottom line is that the Bible describes the position as a hyphenated “pastor-teacher” – NOT two different callings. Hence, every pastor is to be a teacher in his role (amongst other things as well).
  - \*\*\* “Church leadership is essentially spiritual leadership by one who is divinely gifted for the task.” - Max Anders
- IV. The Church Must Have Elders & Deacons
- A. The word for “elder” means to shepherd the congregation (1 Peter 5:2); to oversee its affairs, to preach and teach (1 Tim. 5:17); and to guard the moral purity of the congregation (Titus 1:9).
  - B. An elder must also meet the spiritual maturity qualifications established in 1 Tim. 3:1-7 and Titus 1:5-9
  - C. The word for “deacon” means “to serve”
  - D. Acts 6:1-6 introduces the office of deacon and its responsibilities
  - E. Deacons are to meet the same qualifications of spiritual maturity as elders
- V. Leaders Of The Church Must Be Spiritually Mature
- A. The wording “above reproach” found in 1 Tim. 3:1-7 suggests the standards of spiritual maturity represent goals for all believers.
  - B. All three positions of biblical church leadership must meet the qualifications of an elder
  - C. **Spiritual Qualifications for Church Leaders via 1 Tim. 3 & Titus 1:**
    - 1. “Above reproach” – a summary qualification... a good reputation because he has no major character faults
    - 2. “Husband of one wife” – debates exist over “one at a time” or “a man who has not divorced”
    - 3. “Temperate” – to be self-controlled and moderate in expressions
    - 4. “Prudent” – skilled in handling practical matters
    - 5. “Respectable” – to be proper in behavior
    - 6. “Hospitable” – kind to strangers
    - 7. “Able to teach” – to be qualified by life, knowledge, and ability...
    - 8. “Not addicted to wine” – no habitual or compulsive drinking
    - 9. “Not self-willed” – not demanding of getting one’s way
    - 10. “Not quick tempered” – control one’s anger
    - 11. “Not...pugnacious” – not to be a fighter (verbally or physically)
    - 12. “Gentle” – to treat others with care, to soothe and not hurt others
    - 13. “Uncontentious” – not quarrelsome or argumentative
    - 14. “Free from the love of money” – put God above money... period.
    - 15. “One who manages his household well”

16. “*Not a new convert*”
17. “*Love what is good*” – chooses good over evil
18. “*Just*” – gives equal weight to all people and actions
19. “*Devout*” – earnestly pursues a life of faith
20. “*Self-controlled*” – personally disciplined in all things

## VI. Conclusion

- A. A congregation will rise no higher, as a whole, than its leadership!
- B. Therefore, spiritual leaders in the church must be spiritually mature
- C. God gave us a description of what a spiritual leader must be like...

## VII. Memory Verse: Ephesians 4:11-12

### Chapter 21: What Does The Future Hold?

#### I. Chapter At A Glance

- A. There are nine key terms in Bible prophecy
- B. There are differences in understanding Bible prophecy
- C. There are different perspectives on the Rapture
- D. There are different perspectives on the Millennium

\*\*\* “The only way to wait for the Second Coming is to watch that you do what you should do, so that when he comes it is a matter of indifference.”  
- Oswald Chambers

\*\*\* When we know the end from the beginning, it takes away the fear, the anxiety, the tension. That is the value of Bible prophecy.

#### II. Nine Key Terms In Bible Prophecy

- It is helpful to get familiar with the important terms of Bible prophecy.
- A. The Second Coming: the return of Christ to the earth at an unknown time in the future... see John 14:3
  - B. The Rapture: is the sudden departure of all Christians to meet Christ in the air... see 1 Thess. 4: 16-17
  - C. The Millennium: refers to a period of time in which Christ reigns on earth in righteousness... see Rev. 20: 1-10
  - D. The Great Tribulation: a period of intense, unprecedented suffering... see Mark 13:19
  - E. The Antichrist: embodies evil and is the key agent of Satan’s resistance to the plan of God in the last days...see 1 John 2:18-22
  - F. The Judgment Seat of Christ: the place where all Christians will receive their reward for the quality of their life on earth... see 2 Cor. 5:10

- G. The Great White Throne Judgment: the place where all who have rejected God receive the punishment for their unbelief and their life on earth... see Rev. 20: 11-15
- H. Heaven: the ultimate destination of all people who truly believed in God and committed their lives to Him... see Acts 1:9
- I. Hell: the ultimate destination of all people who did not truly believe in God and commit their lives to Him... see Matthew 10:28
- III. There Are Differences In Understanding Bible Prophecy
- A. Understanding Bible prophecy can be very difficult because some prophecies are intended to be understood literally, while others are simply symbolic.
- B. Some prophecies are a combination of literal and symbolic...
- C. Another challenge stems from the fact that certain prophecies are meant for immediate fulfillment, while others are intended for the future
- D. *Key to remember...* read prophecy in its historical, grammatical, and literary context, relying on the whole context of the Bible for its meaning.
- IV. Different Perspectives On The Rapture
- 1 Thess. 4: 16-17 says that at some time in the future the Lord will appear suddenly and call to heaven all Christians on earth.
  - The Bible also says the earth will undergo a Great Tribulation, a time of unprecedented suffering on earth, lasting seven years, after which Jesus will return to earth.
  - Jesus will also establish a 1,000 year reign of righteousness on earth, after which history will come to an end... and eternity will begin
  - There are 4 major perspectives on the Rapture: (see diagrams on p.168-9)
    1. *Figurative Position* – the Great Tribulation is considered to be a symbolic reference to the suffering that is taking place on earth now. This view believes the Rapture will happen at the same time as Christ’s second return.
    2. *Pre-tribulation Position* – the Rapture will happen at some time in the future – without warning. Immediately after the Rapture occurs, a seven year Great Tribulation will ensue, followed by the Second Coming of Christ, which is then followed by the Millennium.
    3. *Mid-tribulation Position* – the Great Tribulation begins at some unknown time in the future, which alerts Christians to the onset of end-times. After 3.5 years (half way thru a 7 year event), the Rapture occurs, followed by the remaining 3.5 years of the Great Tribulation, followed by the Millennium.
    4. *Post-tribulation* – the Great Tribulation happens at some unknown time in the future, followed by the Rapture and Second Coming (assumed to happen simultaneously), followed by the millennium.

## V. Different Perspectives On The Millennium

- See diagrams on p. 170-1
- A. *Pre-Millennialism* – the Second Coming of Christ will be followed immediately by a literal period of 1,000 years during which Christ will rule over the world as its political leader.
- B. *Post-Millennialism* – the Gospel will spread throughout the earth, creating a better and better world, after which Jesus will return to bring this age to a close and usher in eternity.
- C. *A-Millennialism* – the 1,000 year reign of Christ is merely symbolic of the ultimate triumph of God’s righteousness and goodness in the world. There is no literal 1,000 year reign of Christ on earth. Instead, it is thought that Christ is now ruling and expanding His rule on earth.

## VI. Core Essentials All Evangelicals Can Agree Upon

- “All Evangelicals” needs to be qualified... meaning all those who believe that the whole Bible is the inspired, inerrant Word of God
- A. Jesus is coming again, and when He does, God will set all things right.
- B. In the end, all will be well for God’s people
- C. Jesus is the ultimate focal point of all prophecy
  1. The Old Testament looked forward to His coming
  2. The New Testament looked back at His coming
  3. All prophecy that is yet “unfulfilled” looks forward to His coming again
- D. The Bible was not given by God merely to satisfy our curiosity... rather, the Bible was given to tell us how to live
- E. We must be personally committed to the Great Commission...
- F. God is sovereign (in control of everything), guiding history to a meaningful conclusion, just as He said He would

## VII. Conclusion

- A. God is often misunderstood...
- B. The world is a mess, and people don’t understand why He doesn’t fix it
- C. Even Christians sometimes wonder why they are not spared the hard-times
- D. During the hardest times, Bible prophecy matters the most... It tells us that God will make everything alright
  1. In God’s time
  2. On an eternal timeline
- E. Justice may seem deferred... but it will not be denied
- F. Through the Resurrection of Jesus Christ, death has already been defeated for all believers...
- G. The paralyzing power of fear should be disarmed and disabled in the hearts of believers because they have received the life of God in the here and now

- H. If you don't believe what God has revealed about the future...
  1. You may get fearful or depressed at evil in the world
  2. You may be tempted to live a sinful lifestyle, not believing that you will ever be held accountable for your actions
  3. If you don't have heaven to look forward to, you lose a major reason for hanging in there when the going gets tough

\*\*\* Bible prophecy helps us glimpse the certainties of God's future so that we may live wisely, righteously, passionately, and boldly today!

VIII. Memory Verse: John 14:3

*Chapter Twenty-Two: What Is Hell?*

\*\*\* "The safest road to hell is the gradual one – the gentle slope, soft underfoot, without sudden turnings, without mile-stones, without signposts." - C.S. Lewis

\*\*\* Editor's Note: I personally disagree with much of what the author presents in this chapter. It is my opinion that he embraces, and presents with a bias, positions that are less than deeply rooted in conservative biblical interpretation. Therefore, I will only include what I can endorse.

I. Chapter At A Glance

- A. Some believe hell is a literal place
- B. Some believe hell is a metaphor for suffering
- C. Some believe hell is temporary

II. Issues Regarding Hell

- A. Many people draw back from the reality of hell...
- B. Hell is the single most disagreeable doctrine of Christianity...

- 1. Amongst unbelievers
- 2. Also amongst those who claim to be believers

\*\*\* I use the word "claim" because it is often the case that people who say they are Christians are not biblical Christians – which ultimately means they are not Christians at all. For someone to say that they believe in the Christianity of their 'opinions' vs. the Christianity of the Bible – the WHOLE Bible (which has a lot to say about hell), such people are divorcing themselves of the one and only genuine Christianity.

- C. The Bible always describes hell in ominous and foreboding terms, as a place of torment to be avoided at all costs
- D. People do not hear much of hell anymore... from anyone.

- E. There are a number of Bible passages that speak of hell as a literal place of torment for unbelievers who have died:
1. Matt. 13:42 & 50
  2. Matt. 25: 14-30
  3. Luke 12: 47-48
  4. **Rev. 14: 9-11** says: “If anyone worships the beast... he shall be tormented with fire and brimstone... & the smoke of their torment ascends forever and ever; and they have no rest day or night.”
  5. **Rev. 20:10** tells us the devil himself will be “cast into the lake of fire and brimstone where the beast and the false prophet are. And they will be tormented day and night forever and ever.”
- \*\*\* **This has been the majority position of the Christian church for 2,000 years**

III. Memory Verse: Mark 8:36  
*Chapter Twenty-Three: What Is Heaven?*

\*\*\* Much of this chapter is decorative language. I will only include the key points.

I. Chapter At A Glance

- A. Heaven is a real place
- B. Heaven is beautiful
- C. We will worship God in heaven
- D. We will fellowship with God in heaven
- E. We will fellowship with other believers in heaven
- F. We will reign with Jesus in heaven

II. Biblical Insights On Heaven

- A. The Bible tells us that there is a real heaven
- B. When Jesus revealed Himself after His resurrection, He appeared in a real body, capable of talking, walking, eating... see John 21:1-23
- C. Paul taught that our bodies will be like Jesus' body... see Phil. 3:21
- D. The indication is that we will live physical lives
- E. This conclusion is strengthened by the understanding:
  1. God created heaven... see Gen. 1:1
  2. Jesus went to heaven after He was resurrected... see John 14: 1-3
  3. Acts 1:9 tells us that Jesus ascended into heaven... a real place
  4. Acts 7 tells the story of Stephen, the Church's first martyr, in a similar fashion... leading the reader to believe heaven is a "place"
  5. Paul references visiting heaven\* in 2 Cor. 12: 1-10

III. The Bible Tells Us Heaven Is Beautiful – see Rev. 21:11

IV. We Will Worship God In Heaven

V. We Will Fellowship With God In Heaven – see 1 John 3:2

- VI. We Will Fellowship With Other Believers In Heaven
- A. Fellowship down here is often imperfect. But in heaven it will be perfect.
  - B. In heaven we will experience unity and fellowship with all the other members of the body of Christ

- VII. We Will Reign With Jesus
- A. Phil. 3:2 tells us “Christ will transform our lowly bodies so that they will be like his glorious body.”
  - B. Romans 8: 16-17 says: “The Spirit Himself bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God, and if children, then heirs – heirs of God and joint heirs with Christ”
  - C. 2 Tim. 2:12 goes on to say: “we shall also reign with Him.”

VIII. Memory Verse: 2 Peter 3:13

*Chapter Twenty-Four: Why Believe In Truth?*

\* “Truth is incontrovertible. Panic may resent it; ignorance may deride it; malice may distort it; but there it is.” - Winston Churchill

\* “Men occasionally stumble over the truth... but most of them pick themselves up and hurry off as though nothing had happened.”  
– Winston Churchill

I. Chapter At A Glance

- A. Many people don’t believe in truth
- B. The Bible declares that it is true
- C. We can know truth
- D. People may deny truth because they don’t want to know it

\*\*\* Fewer and fewer people believe that truth exists, or if it does, that it can be known.

\*\*\* We often see what we want to see and miss what we don’t want to see

II. Many People Don’t Believe In Truth

- A. Confusion over truth is the fundamental crisis of our age
- B. With truth we can fashion answers to the perplexing problems of modern life
- C. Without truth we are doomed to stumble along in blindness
- D. The dominant opinion today is that universal truth does not exist or cannot be known
- E. This view is called “post-modernism”
- F. Post-modernism leads to everyone is doing what is right in his own eyes

\* Example: Some American college students refuse to condemn Hitler for the Holocaust... they say, from the Nazi point of view, Hitler believed he was doing the right thing...

G. Result of post-modernism... our Western culture is falling apart

H. Tolerance is the most important virtue to post-modern society...

I. Intolerance is the most serious vice in a post-modern society

\* If one dares to question the truth or moral value of someone's views or actions, that is considered intolerable

### III. The Bible Declares That It Is True

A. The Bible teaches that truth exists and CAN be known

B. Truth is preserved for us in inspired Scripture

C. Jesus said: "I am...*the* truth" (John 14:6)

\* Note: He did not say: "I am... *a* truth"

\* See John 16:13

D. Paul was equally convincing... see Eph. 4:21 & 1 Tim. 2:3-4

E. Francis Schaffer said: "we must be careful to say all that Scripture says, and we must be equally careful not to say more than Scripture says."

F. 1 Cor. 13: 9-13 teaches, it is not until we stand before Jesus that we will know and understand truth perfectly

G. Nevertheless, we do not determine our own truth (as post-moderns claim)

H. We accept and practice the truth as it is revealed in Jesus, who is the truth

I. In areas outside God's special revelation through Jesus & the Scriptures, we reject as false any claims to truth that are not in harmony with what we understand of revealed truth.

### IV. We Can Know Truth

A. *Reason* – many Christians are influenced by fact-based knowledge and careful reasoning based on that knowledge. Christian apologetics can use reason, but it should not be limited only to what the human mind can understand.

B. *Faith* – we find truth by first trusting in God and then following His revelation as the accurate map of all reality.

1. "I believe in Christianity as I believe in the sun – not only because I see it, but because *by it I see everything else*" – C.S. Lewis

2. Human reason is fallible and gives no ultimate certainty...

3. Faith rests in the God who alone is the anchor of truth

4. One's presuppositions determine everything...

5. Van Til believed: "that unless one presupposes that God has given truth, there is no way for humans to be certain of anything. Only the assumption that God is sovereign and has revealed the truth in the Bible will save humanity from the otherwise confusing voices of human reason."

C. *Experience* – some Christians emphasize experience in defending their faith. They might refer to their conversion experience or an answer to prayer... They may rely on a deep sense of intuition



- D. *Balance* – value and balance each of the 3 categories noted above...
  - E. We must present biblical truth in appropriate ways, while living out biblical lifestyles.
    - 1. Openness to a religious position depends on truth claims being wedded with an attractive lifestyle.
    - 2. People are more turned off by a person they can't handle than a doctrine they can't swallow.
- V. People May Deny Truth Because They Don't Want To Know It
- A. There are none so blind as those who will not see...
  - B. In order to discover truth about God, one has to be willing to go where the truth takes him
  - C. Truth demands a response
  - D. If one is not willing to go where the evidence leads, he is liable never to find God
  - E. If you don't believe in absolute truth...
    - 1. You are cast adrift on a sea of uncertainty
    - 2. You have no hope for life beyond the grave
- VI. Conclusion
- A. Christian confidence about truth will not automatically lead people to Christ
  - B. Jesus said: "No one can come to Me unless the Father who sent me draws Him" (John 6:44)
  - C. Whether or not people acknowledge and respond to truth is a matter between them and God
  - D. However, we are commanded in Scripture to defend our faith and to present the truth as the Bible sees it.
  - E. Let me ask you...
    - 1. What would you tell someone who wanted to know if truth existed, or if it were possible to know truth?
    - 2. How well do you think you balance truth with an authentic Christian lifestyle?
- VII. Memory Verse: John 8:32

*Chapter Twenty-Five: Why Believe In God?*

- "I can see how it might be possible for a man to look down upon the earth and be an atheist, but I cannot conceive how he could look up into the heavens and say there is no God." - Abraham Lincoln

- I. Chapter At A Glance
- A. There are four good reasons to believe in God
  - B. We cannot prove God's existence

\*\*\* Key definitions:

1. Atheist: someone who says there is no God.
2. Agnostic: someone who says he does not know if there is a God.
3. Pantheist: someone who says that everything is God and God is in everything

\*\*\* Why would *anyone* believe in God? When you see something that seems to have design and purpose to it, it is reasonable to suspect there is intelligence behind it. The universe reflects design and intelligence.

## II. There Are Four Good Reasons To Believe In God

### A. REASON #1:

1. Every effect must have an adequate cause
2. God is the only “cause” great enough to account for the universe  
\* See Hebrews 3:4
3. The universe is here and it seems to have design and purpose
4. Theory of Evolution gives an explanation for life on earth that doesn’t require a God, but it can’t explain where the universe came from
5. We have two choices:
  - a. God created the universe
  - b. The universe came into existence by itself\*\*\* Which seems to require more “faith?”

### B. REASON #2:

1. The order and purpose in the universe suggest an intelligent creator behind it (see Romans 1:20)
2. The universe has order, design, and apparent purpose behind it.
  - a. It is the difference between all the parts of a watch lying in a jumbled heap on a table, and having the watch all put together, running, and keeping good time
  - b. The universe shouts of a God

### C. REASON #3:

1. Humanity is higher than the animals
2. Being created in the image of God explains why  
\* See Rom. 2:15
3. People long to know...
  - a. Who they are
  - b. Where they came from
  - c. Where they are going
  - d. The meaning and purpose of life
4. People have a moral code whereas animals do not
5. People have a sense of a spiritual domain  
\* All civilizations in all of history have had a religion

### D. REASON #4:

1. The Bible accurately reflects nature and humanity (see Psalm 19:1)

2. The Bible is not a science textbook but Scripture provided the basis for modern science
3. Only those who believe that the universe makes sense, that it is governed by predictable laws, would expend the effort to investigate it
4. Psalm 19:1 says, God intended for the intricacy and design of the universe to point to Him
5. Romans 1: 18-20 tells us that God has made Himself known to us through nature and an inner, intuitive recognition of God
6. Because the Bible is accurate when it speaks about physical things, it suggests that we can trust it when it speaks of spiritual things
7. The Bible declares that there is a God!

### III. We Cannot Prove God's Existence

- A. "Without faith it is impossible to please Him, for he who comes to God must believe that He is, and that He is a rewarder of those who diligently seek Him." (Heb. 11:6)
- B. You do not find God in the laboratory, where you look for *proof* in test tubes or computer models
- C. Rather, you find Him in the courtroom, where you look for *evidence* to persuade beyond a reasonable doubt
- D. There is enough evidence for His existence to convince the willing mind beyond reasonable doubt
- E. If one does not want to believe, he can find reasons not to...
- F. Unbelief never has enough evidence!
- G. It boils down to faith...
- H. If one wants to find God, he can.
- I. Note: evolution is not sufficient to explain the complexity of the universe

### IV. Conclusion

- A. Whatever you believe... you believe by faith
- B. The question is not "will I have faith or not?" but rather, "where will I place my faith – in God or evolution?"
- C. Why believe in God?
  - \* Because He is the most likely explanation for the existence of the universe – its complexity, purpose, and design – and for the uniqueness of humanity.
- D. Telling Example:

\*\*\* Scientist: "I Believe The Impossible" \*\*\*

George Wahl, former Harvard professor and Nobel Prize winner in biology...

"There are only two possibilities as to how life arose: One is spontaneous generation – rising evolution. The other is a supernatural act of God. There is no third possibility.

Spontaneous generation was scientifically disproved 120 years ago by Pasteur and others. This leaves us with only one logical conclusion – that life arose as a supernatural act. I will not accept that, philosophically, because I do not want to believe in God. Therefore, I choose to believe that which I know is scientifically impossible.”

V. Memory Verse: Psalm 19:1 and Hebrews 11:6

*Chapter Twenty-Six: Why Believe Jesus Is God?*

“Alexander, Caesar, Charlemagne, and I myself have founded great empires... But Jesus alone founded His empire upon love, and to this very day, millions would die for Him. Jesus Christ was more than a man.”  
- Napoleon Bonaparte

I. Chapter At A Glance

- A. Jesus was a great moral teacher... and more...
- B. Jesus fulfilled all prophecies as the Messiah
- C. Jesus’ words were the words of God
- D. Jesus’ actions were the actions of God
- E. If the Resurrection is true, Jesus is God
- F. If you don’t believe Jesus is God...

II. Jesus Was A Great Moral Teacher

- A. Few people doubt that Jesus of Nazareth lived. The evidence is simply too overwhelming.
- B. Many people believe He was a great moral teacher
- C. Indeed, Jesus was a great moral teacher
- D. However, we cannot say that He was *only* a great moral teacher
  - 1. He said too many other things to allow us to stop there
    - a. He also said He was God
    - b. He claimed to be able to forgive sins
    - c. He said no one could get to heaven except through Him
    - d. He said he was coming again to judge evil in the world and to reign forever in heaven
    - e. He said His Father would judge you and send you to hell unless you accepted Him
  - 2. If these teachings were not true, including His being God, then the one thing that is certain about Him is that He is *not* a great moral teacher!

\*\*\*\*\* Reasons To Believe Jesus Is Also God \*\*\*\*\*

III. Jesus Fulfilled All Prophecies As The Messiah

- A. Prophecy is a prediction of the future

- B. Jesus' birth, His life, and His death all conform to hundreds and sometimes thousands of years before He was born
- C. Examples:
1. **Prophecy:** The Messiah would be born of a virgin (Isa. 7:14)  
Fulfillment: Jesus was born of the virgin Mary (Matt. 1:17-25)
  2. **Prophecy:** Messiah to be an ancestor of King David (Jer. 23:5)  
Fulfillment: Jesus is in the lineage of David (Luke 3:23, 31)
  3. **Prophecy:** Messiah would be born in Bethlehem (Mic. 5:2)  
Fulfillment: Jesus was born in Bethlehem (Luke 2:11)
  4. **Prophecy:** Messiah would be betrayed by a friend (Ps. 41:9)  
Fulfillment: Jesus was betrayed by Judas Iscariot, one of His twelve disciples (Matt. 10:4)
  5. **Prophecy:** Messiah would be tortured and crucified (Isa. 53:5)  
Fulfillment: Jesus was beaten and then crucified (Matt. 27:26)
  6. **Prophecy:** Messiah would rise from the dead (Ps. 16:10)  
Fulfillment: Jesus rose from the dead (Matt. 28:5-6)
- D. Consider this: If we were to cover the entire state of Texas two feet deep in silver dollars, paint one red, blindfold a person and tell him to pick up one silver dollar, his chances of getting the marked silver dollar are approximately the same as a person fulfilling EIGHT major prophecies of the Messiah by accident.
- E. Insights from Ander's book: 30 Days To Understanding The Bible (ch. 23)
1. In the Old Testament, the test of a prophet was to stone to death anyone who claimed to be a prophet but was not 100% accurate
  2. The New Testament appeals to 2 main lines of evidence to prove that Jesus is the Messiah:
    - a. Jesus' resurrection
    - b. Christ's fulfillment of hundreds of prophecies contained in the Old Testament regarding the Messiah
  3. The Importance Of Messianic Prophecy:
    - a. God's true divinity is demonstrated by His ability to reveal events in advance of their occurrence
    - b. God placed more than 300 references to the Messiah in the Old Testament... ALL fulfilled by Jesus Christ
    - c. Christ's disciples and contemporaries did not immediately understand how He fulfilled all of the prophecies
    - d. Once the disciples thoroughly understood... Christ's fulfillment of the Old Testament messianic prophecies became central to their presentation of the gospel
  4. Key Messianic Prophecies Fulfilled By Jesus:
    - a. Note: 61 major prophecies in the Old Testament were fulfilled by Jesus
    - b. Some of the key prophecies include:
    - c. Descendant of Abraham
    - d. From the tribe of Judah
    - e. Heir to the Throne of David

- f. Born in Bethlehem
  - g. Triumphal Entry
  - h. Betrayed by Close Friend
  - i. Betrayed for 30 Pieces of Silver
  - j. Forsaken by God
  - k. Summary: 61 major prophecies in the Old Testament “fulfilled” by Christ
- 5. Objections: the fulfilled prophecies suggest overwhelmingly (1 in 100,000,000,000,000,000 probability according to science) that Jesus is the Messiah
  - 6. The Purpose of Prophecy:
    - a. Prophecy is always given to get us to live properly
    - b. The purpose in telling about things in the future was to purify lives in the present
    - c. Summary: the purpose of prophecy is not to satisfy our curiosity but to “purify” our lives
- IV. Jesus’ Words Were The Words Of God
- A. Jesus claimed to be God (see Matt. 26: 63-66)
    - \* Both Jesus and the religious leaders understood that Jesus was claiming to be God
  - B. Jesus claimed things that only God can do
    - 1. Jesus claimed to forgive sin and give salvation
      - a. Matt. 9: 2-3
      - b. Luke 7: 48-50
    - 2. Only God can forgive sin
    - 3. Only God can give salvation
  - C. Jesus promised things that only God can promise
    - 1. Jesus promised that He would give eternal life to those who followed Him (John 3:36)
    - 2. Jesus promised that they would never perish and that nobody would be able to pluck them from His hand (John 10: 27-29)
    - 3. Jesus promised that He would come again to close out history and judge the world for sin and righteousness (Matt. 25: 31-33)
- V. Jesus’ Actions Were The Actions Of God
- A. The two most obvious deeds of Jesus that point toward His being God:
    - 1. His miracles
      - \* Each of which was a claim to His divinity
    - 2. His acceptance of the worship of men and women
  - B. In the Jewish culture, to recognize any other god was blasphemy
  - C. No serious Jew would give a thought to worshipping anyone except the one they believed to be God
  - D. Jesus was God!
- VI. If The Resurrection Is True, Jesus Is God

- A. The Bible makes it clear that Jesus died
  - B. The Bible is equally clear that the tomb was empty after three days
  - C. The question is: “what happened to the body?”
  - D. The Resurrection is the only credible explanation...
- E. There are three other mainstream “anti-resurrection” theories:
1. The Theft Theory
    - a. The earliest attempt to explain away Christ’s resurrection was that His body was stolen
    - b. Jewish leaders bribed the Roman guards to report that Jesus’ body had been stolen while the soldiers slept (Matt. 28: 11-15)
    - c. This is not a credible theory...
      - 1). Enemies of Jesus had no motive for removing the body
      - 2). It would have been to the advantage of the Jews and Romans for the body to remain in the tomb
      - 3). Had the body stayed in the tomb the religious leaders could always prove that Jesus was dead
      - 4). Friends of Jesus could not have stolen the body...
        - It was guarded by Roman soldiers
        - Soldiers would be killed if they let the body be stolen
  2. The Swoon Theory
    - a. Assumes Jesus never really died on the cross...
    - b. Assumes Jesus just “swooned” (appeared dead) from exhaustion, pain, and loss of blood
    - c. Assumes Jesus revived when laid in the cool tomb
    - d. Assumes that after leaving the tomb, He appeared to His disciples, who mistakenly concluded He had risen from the dead
    - e. Discrediting questions to ask...
      - 1). How would Jesus have endured another 36 hours in a cold, damp tomb without food, water, or medical attention?
      - 2). How would Jesus have survived after being wound in 70 pounds of spice-laden “grave clothes?”
      - 3). Would Jesus have had the strength to:
        - Free Himself from the grave-clothes
        - Roll away the heavy stone sealing the tomb
        - Overpower the Roman guards
        - Then walk on feet that had been mutilated with nails

- f. It is impossible that one half dead, in need of medical attention, could have convinced the disciples that He was the Messiah, nor inspired them to lay down their lives for Him.
- 3. The Hallucination Theory
  - a. Assumes the disciples *imagined* that they saw Jesus and heard Him speak to them because they wanted that reality so much
  - b. Consider the following discrediting information:
    - 1). The statistical plausibility of so many people sharing the same “hallucination” is not credible
    - 2). This theory is a “late” one that is not widely held
- F. Only those who do not *want* to believe the Resurrection Theory come to another conclusion and must twist the arm of historical research

VII. If You Don't Believe Jesus Is God...

- A. You must admit that the Bible is full of lies
- B. Jesus is not who He said He is, and He can offer you no hope for this life or the next
- C. There is no such thing as right or wrong. You can do whatever society will let you get away with. And so can everyone else!

VIII. Memory Verse: John 1:1

*Chapter Twenty-Seven: Why Believe The Bible?*

“Defend the Bible? I would just as soon defend a lion. Just turn the Bible loose. It will defend itself.” - Charles Haddon Spurgeon

I. Chapter At A Glance

- A. The search for truth
- B. The Bible, as originally written, was without error
- C. Today's Bible is essentially the same as the original
- D. Archaeology supports the credibility of the Bible
- E. Fulfilled prophecies support the credibility of the Bible
- F. Changed lives support the credibility of the Bible

II. The Search For Truth

- A. Many people do not believe in absolute truth
- B. On the other hand, they are hungering for truth as never before
- C. The search for truth takes people in various directions:
  - 1. The Bible
  - 2. Crystals
  - 3. Reincarnation
  - 4. Their horoscope
- D. The world is becoming more polarized...



1. On one hand, the world is plummeting to new cultural, social, and spiritual depths
  2. On the other hand, many are turning to Christ and the Bible in record numbers
- E. The Bible has weathered criticism and neglect and stands stronger than ever
1. Billions of Bibles have been distributed
  2. Millions more Bibles are being distributed every year
- III. The Bible, As Originally Written, Was Without Error
- A. If there were mistakes in the Bible...
  - B. And, if the Bible were the Word of God...
  - C. Then, God would be the author of mistakes.
  - D. If God were the author of mistakes...
  - E. Then, God would not be what the Bible claims He is...
  - F. Therefore, God would be unreliable.
  - G. We must have confidence that there are no mistakes in the Bible!
- \*\*\* “Nothing in the Bible has ever been proved wrong.”
- H. Knowing that the Bible has proven to be utterly reliable on “earthly matters,” it is reasonable to trust it on heavenly matters.
- I. While some say there are errors or contradictions in the Bible, everything that is questioned can be explained credibly.
- \* Example: The four Gospels differ in their account as to what was written on a sign that was nailed to the cross above Jesus’ head when He was crucified. Matthew says, “This is Jesus, the king of the Jews.” Mark says, “The king of the Jews.” Luke says, “This is the king of the Jews.” John says, “Jesus of Nazareth, the king of the Jews.” True, all of these are different. However, none of these accounts say that this was all that was written on the sign. The whole thing can be reconciled by realizing that the sign contained everything that was written: “This is Jesus of Nazareth the king of the Jews.” From this full statement, each author, for reasons of his own will, articulated only part of the statement, but there is no error.
- J. Whether in matters of science, history, geography, or internal consistency, the Bible has never been demonstrated to be wrong.
- K. Bruce Metzger (New Testament scholar at Princeton) has said:
- \* “Out of the twenty thousand lines in the New Testament, only forty lines are up for debate today. Everything else is a given, and none of the variances affect the Christian faith.” (noted in McDowell’s book *Evidence That Demands A Verdict*)
- IV. Today’s Bible Is Essentially The Same As The Original Bible
- A. While the original Bible may have contained no errors, the Bible has gone through centuries of copying

- B. There are some discrepancies in the various ancient manuscripts...
- C. BUT, those discrepancies are insignificant and have no bearing on any doctrine (the message of the text)
- D. There are variations in spelling and some inconsistencies in numbers, but they are few, minor, and have no affect on doctrine
  
- E. Two other key matters when establishing the reliability of the ancient manuscripts from which we get our English Bible:
  - 1. There are MANY ancient manuscripts
    - a. **We have over 5,000 ancient New Testament manuscripts!**
      - \* By comparison, there are only 10 copies of Caesar's *Gallic Wars*
    - b. **We have over 10,000 ancient Old Testament manuscripts or parts of manuscripts!**
      - \*\*\* The sheer volume of manuscripts makes it easier to verify the truth and accuracy of the manuscripts.
      - \*\*\* All these manuscripts have been proven to say exactly the same thing (with insignificant exceptions)
      - \*\*\* **The Bibles we have today are reliable!**
  - 2. We have VERY OLD manuscripts
    - a. The New Testament was completed no later than A.D. 100
    - b. The earliest known manuscript that contains most of the New Testament is dated at about A.D. 200
    - c. There is only a span of approximately 100 years between the originals and our oldest copies (a.k.a. "ancient manuscripts")
      - \* By comparison, Caesar's *Gallic Wars* was written about 60 B.C., yet the earliest manuscript is dated A.D. 900, nearly 1,000 years after the original. This is typical with literature. Furthermore, there is no where near the volume of copies available, yet no one questions the validity of the copies in comparison to the original.
  
- V. Archaeology Supports The Credibility Of The Bible
  - A. In a number of cases, people or places that skeptics had written off as fanciful mistakes in the Bible were now confirmed.
  - B. Many things that have been questioned by scholars have now been verified as factual

- C. More than a century of biblical excavations at over twenty-five thousand sites have repeatedly confirmed the accuracy of the Bible
- VI. Fulfilled Prophecies Support The Credibility Of The Bible
- A. The Bible is the only book in the world that has specific prophecies made hundreds of years earlier that have been clearly fulfilled.
  - B. The Bible itself makes it clear that fulfilled prophecy is one of the evidences of the supernatural origin of the word of its prophets (Jer. 28:9)
  - C. Keep in mind:
    1. If a prophet ever spoke a word that did not come true, he was considered a “false-prophet”
    2. All false-prophets were stoned to death (Deut. 18: 21-22)
    3. The Bible has hundreds of fulfilled prophecies!
    4. The Bible’s fulfilled prophecies create a set of odds so remarkable that they validate that the Bible is the Word of God
- VII. Changed Lives Support The Credibility Of The Bible
- A. Most of the 12 disciples died terrible deaths because of their faith
  - B. They would not have been willing to die such dreadful deaths for something they knew to be a lie
  - C. They said, in essence: “Go ahead and kill me if you want to, but I know it is true.”
  - D. The same can be said of *literally* countless numbers of people over the last 2,000 years...
    - \* The stories send a chill into the bones of anyone who reads them. People being sawed in half, fed to wild animals, forced to stand unprotected in the cold until they froze to death, and all they had to do to escape all of this was deny Jesus. This they would not do!
  - E. Millions of lives over the centuries have been dramatically changed as a result of becoming a Christian and following the Bible
- VIII. Conclusion
- A. Unless you believe the Bible is true... You are alone. You have no meaning in life and on explanation for the world around you.
  - B. The theory of evolution, the establishment of Marxism, and the rise of scientific knowledge were supposed to drive the final nails in the coffin of Christianity. Just the opposite is true. Evolution is a theory in chaos, Marxism collapsed under its own weight, and science is only confirming Christian truths.
  - C. The Bible stands taller than it ever has!
  - D. The Bible has never been so demonstrably true, nor so universally accepted.
- IX. Memory Verse: Hebrews 4:12

*Chapter Twenty-Eight: How Can I Believe In Spite Of The Pain?*

- I. Chapter At A Glance
  - A. Why do bad things happen to good people?
  - B. God did not create evil
  - C. God cannot remove evil without destroying humanity
  - D. We must reconcile our pain with God's character
  - E. In the end... all will be well
  - F. God can use suffering for good
  
- II. Why Do Bad Things Happen To Good People?
  - A. Human suffering is the single greatest problem people have with God
  - B. Many ask: "How can God be good and still allow His children to suffer?"
  - C. The temptation is to assume that either God is not all good, or else He is not all powerful...
  - D. In that way, we don't understand why His will and our will don't coincide more often
  - E. This issue is fleshed out through questions like:
    - 1. Why won't God bless us?
    - 2. Why can't I be happy?
    - 3. Why won't God relieve the pain?
    - 4. Why does God allow suffering?
  - F. It is important to recognize that we are not the only ones to suffer... Suffering is universal.
    - 1. Between Hitler (6M), Stalin (40M), and Mao (70M)... 116 Million people have been killed at the hands of dedicated atheists!
    - 2. The amount of evil and suffering in the world is profound and mind-numbing.
  - G. The challenge of evil and suffering has become a significant problem for Christianity in the eyes of many...
  - H. Many believe suffering in the world is incompatible with an all-good, all-powerful God.  
\*\*\* They are wrong!
  
- III. God Did Not Create Evil
  - A. Evil originated with Satan and entered the world with Adam and Eve
    - 1. Genesis 3
    - 2. Ezek. 28:15
  - B. The Bible avoids attributing the responsibility of sin and evil to God
  - C. Satan is clearly held accountable for his choices
  - D. Adam and Eve are also held accountable for their choices
  - E. We might wrestle with why God created a system in which evil is possible, but **sin is the consequence of free will.**
  - F. "Without free will no creation would be meaningful." - Max Anders
  - G. The bottom line is that we have to believe by faith that God is not morally responsible for the presence of sin in the world.

- IV. God Cannot Remove Evil Without Destroying Humanity
- A. At the foundation of this point is the realization that we are all sinners from the moment we are born
  - B. Consequently, God cannot destroy all evil without destroying all of us in the process
    - \* “When we wish that God would destroy evil in the world, we are making a death wish.” - Max Anders
  - C. When we ask: “**Why do the innocent suffer?**” the answer is: “**There are no innocent.**”
  - D. Romans tells us that “all have sinned and fall short of the Glory of God.”
    1. We want Hitler to suffer but we think Mother Teresa worthy of grace... But if we think of Hitler as black and Mother Teresa as white, as you move from one to the other, you never cross a line between black and white... you just move through infinite gradations of gray. At some point, you would have to draw a line between one person who did “X” number of sins who goes to heaven and another person who did “X + 1” sins that goes to hell.
    2. Is that fair?
    3. **God must either allow evil to exist or destroy all of humanity.**

- IV. We Must Reconcile Our Pain With God’s Character
- A. Five key truths that help us reconcile our pain with God’s character:
    1. *We lack information* – we simply do not see all that God sees... nor do we know what His plans are... When we get to heaven we will have complete information
    2. *We lack understanding*... just because I don’t understand electricity, that doesn’t put into question its validity or purpose
    3. *We must see things from God’s point of view*
      - a. God is in the process of making us more like Him
      - b. He is creating in us a capacity to know and enjoy Him more
      - \*\*\* God allows and uses pain (at times) to accomplish those purposes
    4. *We must recognize that God enters our pain*
      - a. Scripture says: “God was in Christ reconciling the world to Himself.” (2 Cor. 5:19)
      - b. Where is God when it hurts? He is on the cross! He is on the cross, taking to Himself in Christ the pain, agony, and terror of all the suffering of all the world for all time.
      - c. We are united with Christ!
      - d. When we suffer, God the Father suffers.
      - e. When we are in pain, God feels and hears and cares.
    5. *We must believe that suffering matters*
      - a. The Bible hints that the suffering we go through is perhaps a cosmic drama in which we are not alone.

- b. The book of Job serves as a great biblical study on pain and suffering
- c. Job shows us that “at that point which we feel most removed from reality and purpose in this world, we are the most involved in reality and purpose in the next world.”  
- Max Anders
- d. There is more to life than we see...
- e. There is more going on than we understand...
- f. When you suffer, take heart. Your life matters.
- g. God knows and loves you!
- h. When you hurt, He cares.
- i. When you are confused and fearful, He cares.
- j. He is living within your heart.
- k. God promises to set all things straight one day.

V. In The End All Will Be Well

- A. Eventually God will destroy all evil
- B. Eventually God will end the suffering of His children
- C. God has provided a way for humanity to be saved from sin.
- D. Jesus paid the price for our sins.
- E. There is sufficient evidence to uphold the goodness of God!
- F. Had He stayed in heaven, leaving us to grovel in our own pain and find our own way to heaven, we might feel we had a stronger case against God
- G. But... 2 Cor. 5:21 explains that He came and entered our condition – He became sin for us, that we might become the righteousness of God...
- H. God’s goodness is vindicated to all but the most skeptical  
\*\*\* “If God claims He is not the author of evil, and if He sent His Son to die for us to give us a way to escape the eternal consequences of evil, is that not sufficient evidence to vindicate the character of God?” - Max Anders

VI. God Can Use Suffering For Good

- A. While pain and suffering are not “good” in and of themselves...
- B. Pain and suffering can be “used” for good
- C. In a fallen world, **pain can be a gift to turn us from an action so that we do not experience even greater pain.**
- D. Three examples:
  - 1. *Giving Spiritual Enlightenment*
    - a. Pain can be used for spiritual purposes
    - b. 2 Cor. 1: 1-11 reveals three things we can gain from suffering:
      - Ability to comfort others
      - Wisdom to trust God (vs. ourselves), who can see us through our difficulties
      - Opportunities to give thanks in all things because of God’s mercy and grace

2. *Creating Spiritual Growth*
  - a. God disciplines His spiritual children for their good
  - b. Hebrews 12: 10-11 offers two such benefits from pain:
    - Discipline is encouraging because it assures us that we are in fact children of God
    - Suffering can move us toward greater holiness which in turn brings us closer to the reward of righteousness
3. *Conveying Eternal Glory*
  - a. God can give us eternal rewards for our earthly suffering
  - b. Paul told us that the glories of heaven will make our earthly suffering seem easy by comparison (2 Cor. 4: 17-18)

VII. Conclusion

- A. Ultimately, the reason for suffering is mystery.
- B. We must acknowledge that God is in charge, God has a plan, and God has a purpose...
- C. There is no way for us to grasp all that this side of eternity
- D. We are not qualified to be God, nor are we qualified to question God
- E. There are times when we must simply bow to Him and let Him be God
- F. Consider the alternative... If you do not believe what Scripture says about suffering:
  1. You may not have the internal strength to cope with suffering
  2. You may get angry with God for not delivering you from it
  3. You may not be able to help others who are suffering

VIII. Memory Verse: Hebrews 12:11

## PART THREE: HOW SHOULD WE LIVE

### *Chapter Twenty-Nine: How Do I Make The “Great Wager?”*

\*\*\* **“Granted that faith cannot be proved, what harm will come to you if you gamble on its truth and it proves false?... If you gain, you gain all; if you lose, you lose nothing.”**

- Blaise Pascal

- I. Chapter At A Glance
  - A. Life is a gamble
  - B. Some people do not want to believe in God
  - C. Some people do want to believe in God
  - D. We ALL wager our lives on whether or not God exists
  - E. The “Great Wager” is made by faith
  
- II. Life Is A Gamble
  - A. Life is uncertain
  - B. Sometimes you can’t win for losing...
  - C. Sometimes the odds are working in your favor, other times they are working against you...
  - D. Remember... almost everything is a calculated risk
    - 1. We gamble when we leave our house in the morning
    - 2. We gamble when we take prescription medicine
    - 3. We gamble when we get on an airplane
  - E. **Not only do we gamble *in* life, we gamble *with* life!**
    - \* We are all betting on whether or not there is a God.
  - F. I am betting on God!
  - G. I am betting on the truths of the Bible!
  - H. If we want to believe in God there is sufficient evidence to do so!
  - I. On the other hand, if someone doesn’t want to believe in the God of the Bible, there is enough ambiguity in creation to satisfy their desire not to believe
  - J. In both cases, the person in question is making the “Great Wager”
  
- III. Some People Do Not Want To Believe In God
  - \* Reasons why people do not want to believe:
    - 1. *Intellectual Opposition* (assumptions listed below)
      - a. Christianity is not relevant to modern living... it is “merely a hangover from the intellectual dark ages”
      - b. Christianity is based on “wishes” vs. facts
      - c. Suffering disproves the theory of a loving God
      - d. ALL religions lead to the same god...
      - e. Christianities foundations are myths which cannot be proved
    - 2. *The “Failures” of Christians and/or Christianity*



- a. When individuals who publicly claim to represent the church fall... it tarnishes people's views of the whole body of believers
  - b. Institutional failings of the church for the last 2,000 years has left a stain on the church that many people focus on:
    - The Crusades
    - The Inquisition
    - Modern Tel-Evangelists
  - c. Many people point to the hypocrites of the church as their reason for not believing
3. *Pride or Inferiority*
- a. Many people are simply too proud to believe in God
  - b. Many people do not want to admit that they need God
    - \* They say things like: "There's nothing wrong with me" or "I don't need to be saved from anything..."
  - c. Others take the opposite perspective and think that God would never have anything to do with someone as "bad" as them...
4. *Carnality*
- a. Some people just refuse to give up their sinning
  - b. Reason to hold on to one's sinning:
    - Assume God doesn't exist
    - Assume God doesn't condemn sin
    - Assume there is no such thing as objective sin

#### IV. Some People Do Want To Believe In God

- Reasons to believe in God:
  1. *To Escape Hell*
    - a. Escaping hell is the most highly held reason most people profess to believing in God
    - b. Note: do not confuse people's "good reason" for believing with an assumed "good orthodoxy" on what is biblically accurate to believe
  2. *Hope of Heaven*
    - a. Most people want to assume they will spend eternity with God
    - b. Most look forward to a time without pain and suffering
  3. *Intuitive Belief*
    - \* Many people simply say: "there must be a God..."
  4. *Purpose & Meaning*
    - \* Most people recognize that there is no purpose or meaning in life unless there is a God
  5. *The Credibility of the Bible*
    - a. The Bible is a remarkable book
    - b. The Bible records:
      - Prophecies

- A plausible explanation for the world
  - A keen understanding of the nature of humanity
  - c. When we obey the Bible we benefit
  - d. When we violate the Bible we suffer
  - e. The Bible offers a compelling reason to believe in God
6. *The Life of Jesus*
- \* Many people believe in God because of the witness of Jesus' life, death, and resurrection.

V. We All Wager Our Lives On Whether Or Not God Exists

- A. Blaise Pascal wrote that either God is or He is not but that you cannot prove God or disprove Him...
- B. Pascal encouraged people to “wager” with their lives... to bet that God exists.
- C. The “Great Wager” has 4 key components:
1. **Created:** God created us for fellowship with Him. He wants us to have a rich meaningful life on earth and eternal life in heaven
    - a. See John 3:16
    - b. See John 10:10
  2. **Separated:** We are all separated from God by sin. As a result, we are hampered in this life and are destined to an eternity separated from Him
    - a. See Romans 3:23
    - b. See Romans 6:23
  3. **Called:** Jesus is the only way we can be reconciled to God, restored to more meaningful life on earth, and given eternal life in heaven. He died for our sins and rose from the dead to give us new life. He appeals to us to believe in and receive Him.
    - a. See Romans 5:8
    - b. See 1 Cor. 15: 3-6
    - c. See John 1:1, 12
  4. **Restored:** When we believe in Jesus (which includes repenting from our sins), receive Him into our lives, and commit our lives to living for Him, we are forgiven of our sins and given eternal life
    - a. See John 1:1, 12
    - b. See Eph. 2: 8-9
- D. The “Great Wager” explained:
1. “Wagering” is not an option... everybody is wagering, either by choice or by default. Every soul has its eternity in the balance.
  2. If you wager that God exists and you are right, you win everything:
    - a. A meaningful life on earth
    - b. A purposeful life on earth
    - c. Eternal happiness in heaven
  3. If you wager that God exists and you are wrong, you have lost very little... you may have changed your life style and set different priorities but in reality the cost is next to nothing

- 4. If you wager that god does not exist and you are right, you have gained little... The life of an unbeliever is no richer than the life of a believer on earth, often it is much worse.
  - 5. HOWEVER, if you wager that God does not exist and you are wrong, then you face eternal destruction and damnation in hell!
  - E. The safest wager is to believe in God and follow Him in faith!
  - F. There is everything to gain and nothing to lose by believing in God.
- VI. The “Great Wager” Is Made By Faith
- A. Pascal suggests what a person should do if they decide they want to believe but don’t at the present time...
  - B. He writes: “if your head (intellect) tells you to believe but your heart (faith) is unwilling to go along, it is because of your desires...”
  - C. Pascal continued: “...rather than amassing additional intellectual reasons to believe, diminish your desires. Learn from those who have faith. Begin acting as if you did believe. Begin living a good life and attending worship services... faith will grow on you.”
  - D. Pascal said: “act your way into believing”
  - E. Another (better) suggestion is to ask God for faith (see Mark 9: 20-24)
  - F. John 6:37 tells us that Jesus said: “The one who comes to Me I will by no means cast out.”
- VII. Conclusion
- A. “If you believe that Jesus is the Son of God, that He died for your sins, rose from the dead as victor over death... if you believe you are a sinner, separated from God, and that you cannot save yourself, that you must be forgiven of your sins to be reconciled to God and given eternal life... if you are willing to turn from your old life of sin to follow Jesus... then you can simply tell God all of that, ask Him to forgive your sin, give you eternal life, and help you to become the person He wants you to be.”  
- Max Anders
  - B. Make the “Great Wager.” Bet your life on God!
- VIII. Memory Verse: Hebrews 11:6

*Chapter Thirty: How Do I Maintain Spiritual Health?*

\*\*\* “Salvation is free, but discipleship costs us everything we have.”  
- Billy Graham

- I. Chapter At A Glance
  - A. There are things I must not do
  - B. There are things I must do
- II. There Are Things I Must Not Do

- A. We must watch out that we do not slip into legalism when we talk about those things “we must not do” to maintain spiritual health.
  - B. Legalism occurs when man places demands that are not God’s demands
  - C. However, it is not legalism to tell someone they need to stop spiritually destructive behavior
  - D. If we want to be spiritually healthy, we must eliminate spiritually destructive things from our lives.
    - 1. Media – recognize the rampant dangers of modern media
    - 2. Relationships – “bad company corrupts good character” 1 Cor. 15:33
    - 3. Activities & Recreation – anything that hinders a healthy Christian lifestyle must be altered or eliminated
    - 4. Attitudes & Values – any anti-biblical attitudes or values (i.e. racism, a complaining spirit, loose tongue, etc) must be corrected
- III. There Are Things I Must Do
- A. Worship
    - 1. We must worship God individually
    - 2. We must worship God daily
    - 3. **Worshipping God includes:**
      - a. **Prayer**
      - b. **Reading Scripture**
      - c. **Meditating on God’s Word**
      - d. **Singing and lifting up praises to the Lord**
    - 4. We must also worship God with other believers
      - a. We need to find a good Bible believing, Bible teaching, soul-winning church... and commit ourselves to it.
      - b. Together, we are to exercise the corporate spiritual gifts
    - 5. We must exercise individual spiritual disciplines (see ch. 36)
  - B. Grow Spiritually
    - \* Three things a person must *do for healthy spiritual growth* to occur:
      - a. Gain a **mature knowledge of the Bible**
      - b. Develop relationships with those more spiritually mature
        - \* “The Christian life is more easily caught than taught”
        - \* “Life on life influence is essential for spiritual growth”
      - c. Discover your spiritual gift(s) and learn how to use it
  - C. Make an impact...
    - 1. We have all been commanded to share the gospel with those who need to hear the “good news” of Jesus Christ.
    - 2. The world should be a better place for every Christian that has lived
    - 3. We must do all we can to help establish Kingdom principles in the world.

- IV. Conclusion
- A. We are living in an undisciplined, self-centered, “feel-good” age.
  - B. The result is an anemic, half-hearted form of Christian experience by many
  - C. We must be more committed to Christian living than typical, run-of-the-mill “Christians”
  - D. Jesus’ followers are called “disciples” – that is, “disciplined ones.”
  - E. The Bible tells us that disciples are called to “take up your cross and follow Jesus”
  - F. Jesus calls His disciples to give up everything and put Him first in their lives
  - G. The paradox of spiritual reality... when we give up our life we find it!
  - H. “We must make a ruthless and fearless inventory of our lives, do away with the harmful and pursue with single-mindedness the helpful.”  
- Max Anders
- V. Memory Verse: Romans 12:1-2

*Chapter Thirty-One: What Is the Role of Faith in My Life?*

- I. Chapter At A Glance:
- A. Faith is everything!
  - B. Faith demands total commitment
  - C. Faith gives the Christian motivation to be obedient
  - D. Faith gives the strength to persevere
  - E. Conclusion
- II. Faith Is Everything!
- \* “If God tells us to let go or to hang on, we obey if we trust Him. If we doubt, we do whatever *we* think will be best for us. We always act on what we believe! Therefore, faith is everything in the Christian life.”  
- Max Anders
- III. Faith Demands Total Commitment
- A. Each person can have only ONE primary loyalty. It will be either Jesus or something else.
  - B. Remember: “Jesus” is not some type of charm that will ensure that your life will go smoothly...
  - C. Read Romans 12:1-2 to get the proper perspective on a life of faith
  - D. “We can be living demonstrations of the goodness of the will of God only if we have first offered ourselves as a living sacrifice.” – Max Anders
- IV. Faith Gives The Christian The Motivation To Be Obedient
- A. Faith has a profound affect on the Christian’s life in three areas:

1. Obedience
  2. Peace
  3. Hope
- B. Everything God asks of us, He does so to give some good thing to us or to keep some harm from us
- C. Selfish people are never as happy in the long run as generous and compassionate people. It shrivels the soul to live only for oneself... *We were not made for that.*
- D. We ALWAYS obey our beliefs.
- E. The massive disobedience in the church today is rooted in massive unbelief
- F. We tend to go for the “quick fix”
- G. **Righteousness is harder in the short run but easier in the long run!**
- V. Faith Gives The Strength To Persevere
- A. We often are tempted to ask: “Why me?” or “Where is God now?”
  - B. There are times when many feel like giving up on God...
  - C. But, that’s where faith steps in and quiets the riot of questions
  - D. There are not always ready-made answers to our questions
  - E. But, **faith tells us several key things:**
    1. God is all-good and all-powerful
    2. God can be trusted at all times - in spite of the pain
    3. God can use bad things for good results (Romans 8:28)
    4. Faith tells us that trials can make us strong
      - a. Christians will not excel without being taken beyond their spiritual comfort zone
      - b. When pain tempts us to quit, faith tells us that God is in charge
    5. Faith tells us that our suffering will be rewarded in heaven – many times over!
- VI. Conclusion:
- A. Jesus is our example!
  - B. We must all go through suffering – period.
  - C. But we must trust God when we do.
  - D. God will use the trials to make us mature and complete (James 1:2-4)
  - E. If you don’t understand faith:
    1. You might think that you can play around with halfhearted obedience to God and still experience the depth of spiritual life that God wants you to have and that you want to have.
    2. You will often not have the strength to do the hard things you ought to do, nor the strength to keep going in the face of tough times.
    3. Your Christian life is going to be pretty discouraging.
- VII. Memory Verse: Romans 12: 1-2

*Chapter Thirty-Two: What Are Some Spiritual Snares?*

\* Look Out For The Trap...

What are you tempted to go outside the will of God to get? More money? More fun? More respect? Satan is a deceiver and destroyer. He wants to defeat us in our Christian walk and he will use whatever means he can.

I. Chapter At A Glance: **5** Common Spiritual Snares

- A. Intellectual intimidation is a snare
- B. Materialism is a snare
- C. Spiritual discouragement is a snare
- D. Toying with sin is a snare
- E. Spiritual exhaustion is a snare

II. Intellectualism Is A Snare

- A. Some Christians silently worry about whether or not Christianity is true.
- B. Have no fear... truth need not fear examination
- C. After 2,000 years, no one is going to ask a question that is going to bring Christianity crashing down to its knees
- D. Three predictable and most common questions:
  - 1. Q: "How can you believe in creation in the face of all the contrary evidence?"  
A: "There is no scientific information that disproves creation, and evolution is a theory in chaos! The more we learn, the less credible the theory of evolution is becoming"
  - 2. Q: "How can you believe in the Bible when there are so many contradictions in it?"  
A. "They're not any contradictions in the Bible. Some "variations" have been mistakenly called "contradictions"
  - 3. Q: "How can you believe in miracles?"  
A. "If you believe in God, why would miracles be impossible? What good is a god that cannot do miracles."

E. **The "Secularist" has questions to answer as well:**

- 1. He has NO ANSWER for the fundamental questions of life...
  - a. Origin
  - b. Purpose
  - c. Post-life
- 2. He must explain life with the following formula:  
\* **Nothing + *the* Impersonal + Time + Chance =  
Everything We See Today**
- 3. How can "something" come from "nothing?"
- 4. It is simply impossible for evolution to account for the present complexity of the universe.

5. *We* (Christians) need not be intellectually intimidated in the debate... *We* are on solid ground!

### III. Materialism Is A Snare

- “Americans spend money they don’t have for things they don’t need to impress people they don’t like. Such is the bondage of materialism.”
  - A. Folks that fall into this snare tend to focus on the things they do not have rather than see all that they do have to be grateful for.
  - B. Regardless of the appeal of money and material, we will never be satisfied with what the world has to offer
  - C. “There is a God shaped hole in the heart of every man.” - Augustine

### IV. Spiritual Discouragement Is A Snare

- A. Typical causes of spiritual discouragement:
  1. Biblical confusion – when we don’t fully understand God’s Word
  2. Unanswered prayer – when we are ready to give up on God...
  3. Suffering – when we ask God: “Why?!?!”
- B. No easy responses but some good things to remember...
  1. We must assume there is still some information we don’t have.
  2. Our ability to comprehend is limited
  3. We must see things from God’s point of view
  4. We must believe that our suffering matters
  5. In the end, ALL will be will.
- C. There is more to life than we see.
- D. There is more at stake than merely our personal comfort!
- E. What we see is NOT all there is!

### V. Toying With Sin Is A Snare

- A. Too many people think they can play with fire and not get burned.
- B. The danger is that things can get out of hand (i.e. drinking alcohol)
- C. “It is easier to deny the first temptation than it is to satisfy all those that follow it.” – Max Anders
- D. **Take steps to stop toying with sin:**
  1. Admit that you are toying with sin
  2. Dedicate yourself to the Lord to stop
  3. Get involved with activities that will support your decision
  4. Cleanse your environment and relationships
  5. Decide ahead of time how you will respond once tempted
  6. Contact a close Christian relationship/friend who can help you
  7. **Understand that God deals sympathetically with weakness but harshly with rebellion. Take sin seriously. Do not fool around with it. Take extreme steps if necessary to break the bondage.**

### VI. Spiritual Bondage Is A Snare



- A. We each have an inner reservoir of spiritual and emotional energy
- B. If that reservoir is depleted, we will eventually collapse
- C. Symptoms of “Spiritual Exhaustion:”
  - 1. All you want to do is rest or escape... responsibilities wane
  - 2. You stop caring about things you ought to care about...
  - 3. You may develop a very short fuse.
- D. Things we *can/must* do to gain control:
  - 1. Cut back on your schedule, get more physical rest (earlier bedtime)
  - 2. Get organized
  - 3. If an activity “replenished you... do it!
  - 4. Get help from others who can encourage and strengthen you
  - 5. Draw near to God
    - a. Pray
    - b. Read your Bible
    - c. Get around other committed Christians
    - d. Go to church

VII. Memory Verse: 1 Peter 5:8

*Chapter Thirty-Three: How Do I Pray?*

- I. Chapter At A Glance
  - A. We are invited to pray
  - B. We are shown how to pray
  - C. We are guided into enlightened prayer
  
- II. We Are Invited To Pray
  - A. There are 4 things we need to understand about prayer:
    - 1. God wants us to pray (1 Thess. 5:17)
    - 2. God will answer prayers
      - a. He will not answer all prayers
      - b. He will answer some prayers
      - c. His invitation to us to pray is not without qualifications
        - \* See Matthew 7: 7-11
    - 3. Some things will interfere with our prayers... hindrances include:
      - a. Willingly harboring personal sin (Psalm 66:18)
      - b. Wrong motives (James 4:3)
      - c. Treating one’s wife badly (1 Peter 3:7)
      - d. Lack of trust in God (James 1: 6-7)
      - e. Rejection of God’s Word (Prov. 28:9)
    - 4. We are to pray according to Jesus’ instructions (read Matt. 6: 5-7)
      - \* It is important to note that the “Lord’s Prayer” is not “what” we are to pray; but rather, Jesus offered that prayer as an example of “how” to pray.

- III. We Are Shown “How” To Pray
- A. Matthew 6: 9-13 is the “Lord’s Prayer” – an example of “how” (not “what”) to pray
  - B. Pattern your prayers after the “pattern” of the Lord’s Prayer:
    1. **Worship** – “Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name” reminds us that we are children of God.
    2. **Yield** - “Your kingdom come, your will be done...” means we make God the boss of our life.
    3. **Request** – “Give us this day our daily bread...” recognize our dependence on God for our provisions. Also, note that we are not to get too far ahead of ourselves... the request is for a “daily” portion.
    4. **Confess** – “Forgive us our debts...” We confess our sins, accept restoration to His fellowship, and live in a forgiving attitude toward others.
    5. **Flee** – “Do not lead us into temptation, but deliver us from the evil one...” We are to flee from temptation and flee to God.
    6. **Acknowledge** – “For Yours is the kingdom and the power and the glory forever...” Acknowledge that God is supreme in ALL things...
  - C. Remember: the Lord’s Prayer is not to be repeated mindlessly. Rather, we are to use it as a model for our prayers.
- IV. We Are Guided Into Enlightened Prayer
- A. “God is not a Cosmic Vending Machine that will dispense according to your will if you just learn how to ask properly.” - Max Anders
  - B. Sometimes God delays His answers to our prayers:
    1. Timing may not be right to respond
    2. God may delay so as to allow us to clarify our request
    3. God might delay to create a sense of expectation and to call attention to the fact that it was He who answered
    4. He might delay to give us a chance to repent of sin
    5. To draw us into a deeper relationship with Him
    6. Sometimes God has already answered but because we did not like the answer (“no” or “wait”) we did not acknowledge it
  - C. When things come easily, they are taken lightly.
  - D. God does not want prayer to be taken lightly!
- V. Conclusion:
- \* If we can envision God as one who loves us and wants the best for us, and as one who answers or doesn’t answer based on what His superior will is... then we can avoid a sense of failure when our prayers are not answered.
- VI. Memory Verse: John 15: 7

Chapter Thirty-Four: How Can I Know God's Will?

- I. Chapter At A Glance:
  - A. God's will is primarily moral
  - B. God's will includes making decisions
  - C. Pursuing God's will ends with trusting Him
  
- II. God's Will Is Primarily Moral
  - A. It is God's will for us that we give thanks to Him in the midst of all circumstances.
  - B. We must place our hopes and dreams in the world to come, not in this world!
  - C. If we follow God's moral will, there is little danger of our missing His circumstantial will. God has promised repeatedly throughout the Bible to guide His sincere children and to give them wisdom.
  - D. We do not have to try and "find" God's circumstantial will for us because it is not "lost." It will come to us as we remain in His moral will.
  - E. God's primary concern for us is that we walk in His moral will, laboring to be the kind of person He wants us to be.
  
- III. God's Will Includes Making Decisions
  - A. *How do I make decisions with confidence that they are the decisions God wants me to make?*
  - B. If you are walking with the Lord, you do not have to worry about missing God's will (if you are not walking with Him... you *should* worry).
  - C. If you are in God's moral will and you are making decisions the best you know how, you can trust that God will guide you.
  - D. There are **Five Principles to Guide in Decision-Making:**
    - 1. **Know the Scriptures**
      - a. The Bible is God's "owner's manual" for daily living
      - b. The Bible does not speak directly to every circumstance in life. However, the better we know Scripture, the more apt we will be to apply the guiding principles of God's Word to appropriate situations.  
\*\*\* At the "principle level," there is no circumstance in life that the Bible does not offer insight and direction on
      - c. Any decision that violates the principles of Scripture is wrong!
    - 2. **Pray**
      - a. An attitude of submission and dependence is crucial when looking for guidance from the Lord.
      - b. "His leading is only for those who are already committed to do as He may lead." - Alan Redpath

- c. The Bible tells us that we can pray for wisdom...
  - 3. **Seek Good Counsel** – read Proverbs 11:14
  - 4. **Develop Wisdom**
    - a. God has given us the capacity for wisdom and He expects us to develop it and use it.
    - b. With wisdom, we combine what has been learned through Scripture, prayer, and counsel from others.
  - 5. **Exercise Freedom**
    - a. When the decision has no major consequences that you can foresee, you are free to do what you want (i.e. which pair of socks to wear today).
    - b. We should not strain trying to relate all decisions to spiritual significance.
- IV. Pursuing God’s Will Ends With Trusting Him
- A. Martin Luther said: “Love God and do as you please.”
  - B. He meant: if you love God, you will do His commandments/will
  - C. Read John 14:15 & 15:10
  - D. If Scripture, prayer, wisdom, and counsel do not give you an answer, you can love God, and do as you please, understanding that God has overseen the process and will accept the decision.
    - \* Be careful not to fool yourself here... Only you and God will know if you truly did your part in thoroughly checking each category before you take hold and run with your decision.
- V. Conclusion:
- \* God does have a circumstantial will for us, but there will be times when we will not know what it is. In those times, we do not have to agonize over God’s failure to make His way clear to us. We may feel free to use our best judgment, following the principles of Scripture, prayer, counsel, and wisdom.
- VI. Memory Verse: Proverbs 3: 5-6

*Chapter Thirty-Five: How Do I “Give Away” My Faith?*

- \* “Evangelism is not a professional job for a few trained men, but is instead the unrelenting responsibility of every person who belongs, even in the most modest way, to the company of Jesus.” - Elton Trueblood
- I. Chapter At A Glance:
- A. We need to “tell stories” to accommodate people
  - B. We should tell “our story” of how we accepted God’s story
  - C. We must validate our story with personal integrity
  - D. Evangelism must be a part of our lifestyle

- II. We Need To Tell Stories To Accommodate People
  - A. One reason to tell stories is people's shorter than ever attention span
  - B. Many people no longer believe in "absolute truth." Therefore, these people do not tend to respond to the presentation of the gospel as "objective truth."
  - C. Rather than be dogmatic... when we share "our story" of how we came to be a follower of Jesus, it is much less argumentative
    - \*\*\* Key reason: people are not forced to agree with us... all they have to do is listen
  - D. When these people listen to your story they cannot deny that those are the reasons you chose to follow Christ.
  - E. The information is much more palatable in the personal example form...
  
- III. We Should Tell Our Story Of How We Accepted God's Story
  - A. *Here is God's story in its most basic form:*
    1. *God created humanity to live in perfect fellowship and harmony with God forever in paradise. (Gen. 1-2)*
    2. *Humanity rebelled against God in the Garden of Eden (Gen. 3)*
    3. *Sin entered the world at that time, and humanity was separated from God, spiritually dead, lost and without hope. (Eph. 2: 1-13)*
    4. *God loved us and sent His Son, Jesus, to die for our sins so that if we repent of our sin and believe in Him, God is willing to forgive our sins and credit Jesus' righteousness to us. (Rom. 5: 1-21; 2 Cor. 5:21)*
    5. *When this happens, we are forgiven, spiritually born again, and destined for heaven when we die. (John 3:16)*
    6. *Those who accept Jesus as their Lord and Savior (Rom. 10:9) will live in heaven with God in perfect righteousness and fellowship forever. (Rom. 6:23)*
  - B. When we talk to others we should be sure to focus on:
    1. God loves us and that's why Jesus died for our sins
    2. So that... we can be forgiven and made new
    3. We can have purpose and meaning in this life
    4. We can have hope for eternal life in heaven
  - C. We also need to communicate:
    1. How God's life and our life intersected
    2. We tell how we came to realize that we were sinners, separated from God and without hope...
    3. We tell how we came to realize that Jesus is the Son of God
    4. How we repented of our sins...
    5. And how we gave our life to Jesus
    6. We tell of the hope we have for eternal life with God when we die
    7. We just tell them our story of salvation
    - \*\*\* Give them hope that it can become their story too.

IV. We Must Validate Our Story With Personal Integrity

- \* “Christians ought to be the best advertisement for Christianity.”
- A. People are supposed to be drawn to Jesus because of what they see of Him in us.
- B. Read John 13: 34-35 & John 17: 20-21
- C. Self-sacrificing love is the model Jesus gave us
- D. Jesus said that when the world sees that kind of love in us, the world will conclude that we are authentic disciples of Christ.
- E. That kind of love produces unity, and Christian unity begets credibility
- F. When we fail to love each other, the world calls us hypocrites and then minimizes our reflection of Christ
- G. Our credibility makes or breaks our story when we share with others.

V. Evangelism Must Be A Part Of Our Lifestyle

- A. Evangelism that flows naturally out of our lifestyle is very effective
- B. **Four principles of evangelizing with our lifestyle:**
  1. Sowing and Reaping – focus on sowing... the reaping is controlled by God. If we get to reap that is an extra blessing. In that way, we are successful every time we sow...
  2. Preparation – We must know and understand the gospel, and learn how to share it with others.
  3. Life Impact – As we live out our spiritual convictions, people will see the difference in our lives, and it will create opportunities to share our faith. There are people out there who want to become a Christian but don't know how. You will be offering water to a thirsty soul!
  4. Reliance – We all must learn to trust God for the results. Relax in God's sovereignty. He doesn't demand bottom-line results. He only asks for faithfulness to a lifestyle of evangelism.

VI. Conclusion:

- A. New generations must often be reached in new ways...
- B. Many people today do not accept the premise that absolute truth exists
- C. The new generation appreciates plain and simple language
- D. “Remember brothers, it is sheep we are feeding – not giraffes.” – Charles Spurgeon
- E. Telling truth with stories, as Jesus did, can be a helpful way to reach people for Christ.

VII. Memory Verse: 1 Peter 3:15

## Chapter Thirty-Six: What Are The Spiritual Disciplines?

- \* Without an inner life, we use TV, music, computers, and cell phones to fill the dead space. It leaves us shallow and unsatisfied. We must discipline our inner life and simplify our outer life... to escape quiet desperation.
- \* “We live lives of quiet desperation... Read not *The Times*, read the Eternities.” - Thoreau
- \* “No life grows great until it is focused, dedicated, and disciplined.” - Harry Emerson Fosdick

### I. Chapter At A Glance:

- A. Discipline is necessary for freedom
- B. Meditation renews and illumines our mind
- C. Prayer links us with God
- D. Fasting heightens our spiritual sensitivity
- E. Simplicity frees us from worldly bondages
- F. Solitude frees us from the distraction of the world.

### II. Discipline Is Necessary For Freedom

- A. The Christian life must be lived with great discipline if it is to be effective
- B. To turn from righteousness is to choose a life of heavy burdens, darkened understanding, and shallow relationships

### III. Meditation Renews & Illumines Our Mind

- A. To break free of “quiet desperation,” we must know the Bible so well that we think of its truths as we go throughout our days, and apply them to life’s situations.
- B. We must:
  - 1. Constantly review the Bible in our minds
  - 2. Practice one of the key spiritual disciplines: Meditation
- C. “Meditation” is thinking deeply on the words and truths in Scripture for the purposes of understanding, application, and prayer. (see Joshua 1:8)
- D. “If you don’t agree with the need for meditation, you condemn yourself to a mediocre walk with God.” - Max Anders

### IV. Prayer Links Us With God

- A. *Prayer is conversation with God!*
- B. Prayer builds our relationship with God.
- C. Prayer links us to God in a unique and unparalleled way
- D. There are **several reasons why we should pray:**
  - 1. **The Bible tells us we should pray**
    - \* (Matt. 6:5-15; Luke 11:25-26; Col. 4:2; 1 Thess. 5:17)
  - 2. **God wants us to pray**
    - \* (Luke 18:1-8)

- 3. **To deepen our walk with God**  
\* (Psalm 63:1-5)
    - 4. **Because God answers prayer**  
\* (Matt. 7:7-11)
  - E. We know from the Bible that Jesus prayed (if Jesus prayed...)
  - F. If we want to be Christ-like, we MUST pray.
  
- V. Fasting Heightens Our Spiritual Sensitivity
  - A. Fasting demonstrates a desire and commitment that God honors
  - B. Going without food is hard... by fasting, we can demonstrate to God the intensity of our spiritual longing.
  - C. When we bring on the ourselves the “suffering” of the fast, we conquer ourselves and increase our ability to allow Christ to conquer us too.
  
- VI. Simplicity Frees Us From Worldly Bondages
  - A. Simplicity is a virtue!
  - B. Simplicity is a blessing!
  - C. Simplicity orients us toward a *right perspective on “stuff”*
  - D. Simplicity helps to put Jesus at the center of our life
  - E. Simplicity helps to put everything else in proper perspective and proportion to Jesus
  - F. **Unless we have adopted the discipline of simplicity, we risk falling pray to either materialism or legalism.**
  - G. We should simplify both our possessions and our activities
    - 1. That is NOT SAYING possessions and activities are bad
    - 2. But we should ask ourselves if the ones in question are important to God
      - a. Do we move purposely through life
      - b. Do we focus on biblical priorities
      - c. Or do we get caught up in running helplessly in the pursuit of things that are not biblical priorities?
    - 3. **Any possession or activity that furthers His purposes in and through our lives is fine... no matter how elaborate.**  
\*\*\* *To include investments in our times of refreshing*
    - 4. Any possession or activity that does not further His purposes in and through our lives – regardless of how simple, is suspect.
  
- VII. Solitude Frees Us From The Distraction Of The World
  - A. If we are going to live lives of purpose, meaning, and satisfaction, we must learn to be quiet.
  - B. We must learn to be alone
  - C. We must learn to draw inner strength from being alone and being quiet
  - D. Regularly thinking and listening to see if God wants to plant a seed in our heart or mind is very important.
  - E. Such times are often missed due to our hurried and hectic lives



- F. Make a point to get alone with God... get quiet with God and listen for Him...
  - G. In our quiet times God speaks to us (i.e. thoughts, ideas, values, desires...)
  - H. "If you don't agree with the need for simplicity, solitude, and silence, you may get eaten alive by a frazzled lifestyle." - Max Anders
- VIII. Submission Generates Trust In The Sovereignty Of God
- A. The Christian is free... but uses his/her freedom to serve others!
  - B. Almost all quarrels occur because people do not have the freedom to give up their rights to others.
  - C. Most people are *in bondage* to selfish interests!
  - D. Only when we have learned the discipline of submission are we able to break the chains of selfishness
  - E. **Only a spirit of submission can free us to distinguish between genuine issues and stubborn self-will.**
- IX. Repentance & Confession Restore Moral Integrity
- A. Confession is the admission that something one has done, said, or thought is wrong.
  - B. It is very difficult for some people to admit they were wrong
  - C. First step in the process is one of *private confession* to God (1 John 1:8-9)
  - D. Sometimes we need to confess our sins to others
  - E. A good rule of thumb is to confess the sin to whoever was involved.
- X. Worship Deepens Our Relationship With God
- A. The Bible tells us we are to worship God
  - B. The most important aspect of our worship is our *heart*
  - C. Live a life centered inward... focused on the indwelling of God, so that He is the source of our words, thoughts, and actions
  - D. If we live our lives from a "self driven perspective," our worship will tend to come from the same "self-centered" place – which is counterproductive to genuine worship
- XI. Generosity Detaches Us From This World
- A. **"If God has our hearts, He will also have our money."** - Max Anders
  - B. **"If He doesn't have our money, it is because He does not yet have our hearts completely"** - Max Anders
  - C. Jesus said our hearts will be where our treasures are... (Luke 12:34)
  - D. Six reasons we ought to exercise the spiritual discipline of generosity:
    1. The Bible commands it (2 Cor. 9:7)
    2. We are citizens not of this world but of the next (Matt. 6:19-21)
    3. Giving is an act of worship to God (Phil. 4:18)
    4. Giving reflects our trust in God (Mark 12:41-44)
    5. Giving demonstrates to God that we can be trusted (Luke 16:10-13)
    6. Giving makes us eligible for God's blessing (2 Cor. 9:6-8)

- XII. Conclusion
- A. **The whole point of the spiritual disciplines is FREEDOM**
  - B. The disciplines are not intended to limit, restrict, or hamper us
  - C. The disciplines are intended to give us strength and insight to do the things we want to do
  - D. The Christian's spiritual practices are intended to give him/her freedom to excel in his/her walk with God.

XIII. Memory Verse: 1 Corinthians 9: 24-27