

The Gospel (“good news”)

The problem is who I am
and what I've done;
The solution is who Jesus
Christ is and what He's
done.

Long ago a loving but holy God created the first human beings in His image. He created Adam and Eve good, but they sinned against God's love and goodness. Because Adam's sin contaminated the entire human race, now each person is born under God's wrath and condemnation. But to satisfy His undiluted holiness, justice, and love—as well as express His amazing mercy/grace, God offered His Son to rescue people from their rightful judgment. Born the GodMan, Jesus lived, suffered and died as an atoning sacrifice for sinners, was buried but rose from the dead. Now God continues His rescuing work by convicting people of sin and regenerating them, so that they can/will respond to the gospel call by repenting of their sins and trusting Christ to forgive them. When they do His Spirit helps them love and serve Him until He takes them home to blessed glory to be with Him forever.

It's my prayer that everything we learn—or are reminded of in the weeks and months ahead, will point us back to the gospel. We'll study the nature of the Bible—and it is the Bible which *testifies* to the gospel. We'll learn all we can about God the Father; it was He who designed the gospel. And His Son executed it. And God the Holy Spirit lives in Christ's followers to put the gospel to work and empower our *own* witness to the good news. When we study suffering we'll come to see it doesn't make any sense apart from the gospel. The gospel is the proper lens through which to see the jaw-dropping magnificence of God as well as the utter depravity of people. The devil was defeated by the gospel. The church is both the preserver and distributor of the gospel. The centerpiece of the Christian faith is the gospel, the good news of Jesus Christ which is discovered at the cross.

Knowing God

Who is God and how do I find out?

Despite Charles Darwin's theory of evolution, one of the most unsettling things an atheist backpacking through the wilderness must explain, is how all of nature came to be—and came to be the way it *is*: streams, forests, rock formations, a consistent sky (after clouds and storms, it always returns to blue), the relative order in the weather, the wildlife and the food chain each is a part of, but especially his own body and all of its complexity. Romans 1:18-20 claims this natural world stands as a testimony to God's nature and power. It's called “General revelation”.

But is that enough? Or is that all? Has God been silent about Himself except for nature? Is he playing “hide-and-seek” with His creation, leaving them to fabricate any god they wish, or one that “seems” to make sense? No, because we also have God's *clear* and *specific* voice: “Special revelation”.

The Bible

1. The Bible is a **Revelation** (not a reference to the last book in the Bible or end time events, but meaning that God has *revealed* Himself through the Bible). Ephesians 1:17.
 - a. In General revelation God revealed Himself through...
 1. Nature, the created world. *Romans 1:18-20; Psalm 19:1-4*
 2. Conscience. *Romans 1:32, 2:14-15*
 - b. In Special revelation God revealed Himself through...
 1. Jesus Christ. *John 1:18; Hebrews 1:2; 1 Peter 1:20*
 2. The Scriptures. *Exodus 17:14; Galatians 3:22*
 3. The Bible refers to various revelations (2 Samuel 7:27; 1 Corinthians 14:30)—including specific messages given by the Holy Spirit. But except for Jesus Christ, there is no greater—or more objective—self-revelation by God about God, than the Bible.

2. The Bible was written by men using human languages (OT in Hebrew; NT in Greek), but it is **inspired** by the mouth of God. It is the Word of God because it has come *from* Him. *2 Tim.3:16; 2 Pet.1:20-21; Ps.12:6*
 - a. How far does inspiration go?
 1. Verbal: To the very words, not *just* the ideas. *Matt.5:18*
 2. Plenary (full or complete): *All* the Bible is inspired; *fully* inspired, *fully* the Word of God. *John 10:35*
 - b. Not just “Inspiring”.
 1. “Inspired” is much more than just “inspiring”. A politician’s words may be inspiring, or a basketball coach’s, or a book about a great hero. Someone may find certain parts of the Bible inspiring but not others. It’s inspiring to her because she has some sort of “personal encounter” with the material, even if she doesn’t believe the Bible is the Word of God. Conversely, boring or seemingly irrelevant parts are not inspiring to her.
 2. But even if it’s not always inspiring to all people, all of Scripture is inspired by God. *2 Timothy 3:16*

3. **66 books**: How did these come to be included in the Bible? Since other religious books were written both during the OT (Old Testament) and NT (New Testament) eras as well as between them, why were the ones which ended up in the Bible, selected?
 - a. Rejected Books
 1. From OT era.
 1. Book of Jashar. *Joshua 10:13*
 2. Book of the Wars of the LORD. *Numbers 21:14*
 3. A book (oral tradition?) containing a prophesy by Enoch. *Jude 1:14*
 2. From NT era (or later).
 1. Heretical or fanciful books which surfaced among groups during the first 3 centuries A.D. which the larger Church rejected: such as Gospel of Thomas, The History of Joseph the Carpenter, the Acts of Peter, the Apocalypse of Stephen
 2. Other books with some temporary level of local recognition contained beneficial and true material, but were eventually rejected by the wider Church.

- a. Didache, Shepherd of Hermas, The Acts of Paul and Thecla, Epistle of Polycarp to the Philippians, etc.
- b. Is it true that power brokers in the church decided which books to promote for the NT and which ones to kill?
 1. No. The very first time any council officially identified the 27 NT books was in Carthage, North Africa in A.D. 397—long after the books had been written (prior to A.D. 100), and nearly as long since they had been recognized by most of the church as authentic.
 2. No. Christians didn't *decide* which books to include, but *discovered* which books were from God (we call this confirmation "canonicity" [from *kanon*, Greek for the "standard" or the "measurement."]) using these filters:
 1. Is the book authoritative? (*in other words, did it come with God's authority such as "Thus says the Lord"?*)
 2. Is the book prophetic? (*in other words, was it written by a prophet/apostle or a close associate of one?*)
 3. Is the book authentic? (*in other words does it tell the truth about God, man, etc. [comparing it to truth already known from previous revelation]?*) See the Bereans in Acts 17:11
 4. Is the book dynamic? (*in other words does it come with the power of God to change lives? Any message from God certainly carries His might too.*)
 5. Is the book accepted by the people of God? (*in other words, have most followers of God regarded this as His workmanship?*)
- c. Why do some Bibles include the Apocrypha and some don't?
 1. Apocrypha is a collection of Jewish works written 300 B.C. to 70 B.C. Examples: 1 & 2 Esdras, Susanna, Tobit, 1, 2, 3, 4 Maccabees, Bel & the Dragon.
 2. Because the authorship and content of these books were disputed, they were rejected by Jews in their day.
 3. Some quarters in the early church accepted them (most notably, Augustine) but not all.
 4. Although the Apocrypha had not been viewed by most Christians as equal to Scripture, in 1546 at the Council of Trent, the Roman Catholic Church officially made it part of its canon after Protestant reformer Martin Luther condemned certain teachings of the church which were only be found in the Apocrypha, such as the sale of "indulgences" and Purgatory.
4. The Bible is **inerrant**. Means the original letters/books written (the autographs) had no errors of fact, and contained no internal contradictions. If the Bible is from God's mouth, this *must* be the case since otherwise it would fail to reflect His own character.
 - a. God's law is PERFECT. *Ps.19:7*
 - b. God's precepts are RIGHT. *Ps.19:8; 119:144*
 - c. God's ordinances are sure and altogether RIGHTEOUS. *Ps.19:9; 119:137*
 - d. Gods' laws are GOOD. *Ps.119:39*

- e. These statutes are from GOD'S MOUTH. *Ps.119:88*
- f. God's law is TRUE. *Ps.119:142*

If the Bible is God's Word, it must bear His character: perfect and true.

Those who say the Bible is "infallible" are correct. But infallible is a lesser standard than inerrant. A book that's inerrant contains no errors whether the author touches on zoology, botany, history or meteorology (while not expecting 21st century scientific precision). A book that's fallible could contain errors in facts while not failing to teach the essential doctrines it means to teach.

- 5. The Bible is **powerful**: *Hebrews 4:12*
- 6. The **transmission** (no, not what shifts your car's gears!) of the Bible: Was God's Revelation transmitted across time and language accurately?
 - a. Since we don't have the original autographs, how can we be sure we have a reliable Bible since it's been copied and translated so much?
 - OT scribes notorious for their obsessive dedication to accuracy; burned—rather than corrected—any scroll with the smallest error (Matt.5:18). Prior to Qumran discoveries, the oldest copies scholars had to examine were from about 980 AD. Yet the Dead Sea scrolls discovered in southern Israel in 1947 and written about 200 B.C., are 95% identical to our Hebrew text.
 - The NT was so widely copied that today we have 24,000 complete or partial manuscripts which enable scholars can compare to verify the accuracy of the text.
 - There are 150,000 variants found from one copy to another. But 99% hold virtually no significance. Only 50 of the remaining 150 are "significant" but even none of them affect any doctrine or moral teaching.

7. **How to drink from the Bible**

- a. Learn (gain information)
 - i. Pray for understanding; tell God you'll submit to Him whatever you discover.
 - 1. Read & reread text
 - a. Read it in various versions (one of most basic investments for Bible study: get 5-7 other versions)
 - i. Essentially literal translations (mainly word-for-word)
 - 1. New American Standard Bible (NASB)
 - 2. King James Version (KJV), New King James Version (NKJV)
 - 3. Revised Standard Version (RSV), New Revised Std. Version (NRSV)
 - 4. English Standard Version (ESV)
 - ii. Dynamic Equivalent translations (mainly thought-for-thought)

1. NLT (New Living Translation)
 2. NCV (New Century Version)
 3. CEV (Contemporary English Version)
 - iii. Paraphrase (even freer than thought-for-thought)
 1. The Message
 2. Living Bible (LB)
 3. NT in Modern English (Phillips)
 - iv. Mixed Versions
 1. New International Version (NIV)
 2. Amplified Bible
 - v. Versions which either downplay or eliminate gender distinctions, as well as dilute references to "the Jews" with things like "Jewish leaders").
 1. NLT
 2. CEV
 3. NCV
 4. NIV (see Jas.1:12: "man," changed to "those.")
 5. NRSV
- b. Study
- i. Read what's before and after: the context
 - ii. Learn to observe, notice things. Ask, OK, what did I miss the last time I read it?
 - iii. What if anything does it tell me to do, not do, say, not say, think, believe, act...?
 - iv. Basic Bible study tools for your library: concordance, Bible Dictionary, Topical Bible, as many different versions of the Bible you can find at a book sale, used bookstore, etc. These should only *augment* your study of the actual Scriptures.
- b. Understand (**Illumination**): the reason an unschooled peasant can grasp the Bible as readily as a scholar, is supernatural. *1 Cor.1:18; 2: 4-14*
1. You don't have to be "smart" to understand this book. It's not intelligence that makes it understandable; it's the initiative of God's power, and our humble response.
 2. Doesn't mean Bible or its teachings are *unreasonable*, just that human wisdom is not the fountain of discovery.
 3. But..., The Bible is not primarily a library of information to acquire, but a well from which to drink; a place to satisfy our thirst for Him. Deut.8:3-11
 4. The central purpose of the Bible was to reveal God's plan to save a people for Himself (Eph.1:9-10).
- c. Live. READ Luke 6:46-49; James 1:21-25
1. God's many objectives for Christians in the Bible

1. Love God with all you've got, and love others like you love yourself. *Matt.22:37-40*
2. Transformed into the image of Christ. *Rom.12:2; 2 Cor.3:18*
3. Filled with the Spirit. *Eph.5:18*
4. Contentment. *Phil.4:12-13*
5. Putting God's grace on public display. *Eph.2:6-7*
6. Imitate God. *Eph.5:1*
7. Know Christ & His power. *Philippians 3:10*
8. Christ's witness & good advertisement. *Acts 1:8; Phil.1:27; Eph.2:7*
9. Faithful spouse, parent, son or daughter. *Eph.5:25-33; 6:4; 1 Tim.5:8*
10. Suffer faithfully for the gospel. *1 Peter 4:12-19*
11. Faithful worker. *Eph.6:5-8*
12. Confident that you have eternal life. *1 John 5:13*

Types (genres) of Bible literature

Historical narratives: These are books of *stories* which recount the history of God's work in the world, especially among His people. Historical narratives make up almost half of the Bible. Narratives don't teach doctrine but certainly illustrate sound doctrine. (OT : Genesis, most of Exodus & Numbers, Joshua, Judges, Ruth, 1 & 2 Samuel, 1 & 2 Kings, 1 & 2 Chronicles, Ezra & Nehemiah. [Many prophetic books also contain sections.] NT: Matthew, Mark, Luke, John & Acts)

The Law: God gave the nation of Israel the Old Testament law to rule their civil and religious life. God gave it not as a means of salvation, but as a *picture* of salvation, pointing to Jesus (Gal.3:24). The Law illustrates our own sinfulness and how impossible it is for us to live up to God's standard. (Exodus, Numbers, Leviticus & Deuteronomy.)

Poetry: Poetry puts an author's deep feelings on display (like Psalms) and so can be very risky to draw "doctrine" from. But we can always see ourselves in poetry kinds of writings. (Psalms, Lamentations, & portions of the Old Testament prophets)

Wisdom: Wisdom literature is a unique form of Bible literature with unique characteristics. For example, the book Proverbs contains 31 chapters of proverbs. Proverbs are, well, proverbial. That is to say, not promises but generalized statements about common-sense issues in life; observations about what is true in life. (Job, Proverbs, Ecclesiastes & Song of Solomon.)

Prophecy: Prophecy is a message from God given through a person. In the OT God sent prophets to Israel again and again to remind them of their covenant with Him. Sometimes their messages revealed the future. (Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, Daniel, Hosea, Joel, Amos, Obadiah, Jonah, Micah, Nahum, Habakkuk, Zephaniah, Haggai, Zechariah & Malachi.)

Epistles: Epistles are letters written to specific people in specific situations about specific concerns and issues. (Romans, 1 & 2 Corinthians, Galatians, Ephesians, Philippians, Colossians, 1 & 2 Thessalonians, 1 & 2 Timothy, Titus, Philemon, Hebrews, James, 1 & 2 Peter, 1, 2 & 3 John, and Jude).

Apocalyptic: Futuristic prophecies full of difficult symbols. (Revelation & Zechariah)

God the Father

What comes to your mind when you think about God is the most important thing about you.

A.W. Tozer

God's attributes are "...anchors to hold the soul from drifting in season of peril." Charles H.

Spurgeon

Our hope must be in God; He is equal to all emergencies. J. Hudson Taylor

What's true of God that's unique?

1. He is **Spirit**: *John 4:24; (possibly also Acts 17:24)*
 - a. God is not hampered by a body, but He can and does at times take on one.
Genesis 18:1-2, 16-23
 - b. God the Son (Jesus) took on a body when He came to earth, and even today He lives in that body—though it is now a glorified one. (This mattered a great deal to a culture accustomed to worshiping gods through physical representations like statues. *Isaiah 46:5-9 [Isaiah 44:12-20]*)
2. He is **Invisible**. *John 1:18; 1 Timothy 1:17; 1 Timothy 6:16; Colossians 1:15*
3. He is **Sovereign**. *Daniel 4:32; Isaiah 46:10; Acts 17:26*
4. He is **Eternal**. *Isaiah 26:4; Romans 16:26; 1 Timothy 1:17*
5. He is **Unchanging**. *James 1:17; Malachi 3:6*
 - a. If this is so, is the God of the OT different from the God of the NT? Does He evolve? Improve? No! God OT is identical to God NT. However, the fulfillment of God OT's plan by the coming of the Messiah, does change a lot of *things*. (Like, no more animals to sacrifice!)
6. He **Knows everything**. *1 John 3:20; Hebrews 4:13; Psalm 139:1-2*
 - a. What is going on that He is ignorant of? Is He aware of how unjustly you are being treated? Of the awful crimes being perpetrated against innocent children?
 - b. What secret do you think you've been able to hide from Him? What façade doesn't He see through? Isn't it startling that God knows every major and minor detail about you..., every good and horrible thing about you..., and still loves you with an everlasting love!
7. He **Is everywhere**. *Psalm 39:7-10*
 - a. Can't run from Him; can't hide from Him (although Adam tried).
8. He has **unlimited power**. *Jeremiah 32:17; Matthew 19:26; 2 Corinthians 6:18 [anywhere in the Bible God is called "Almighty", it refers to His limitless power.] (also Job 42:2).*
 - a. There is nothing He can't do—INCLUDING raising the dead.
9. In His being He is a **Unity**: *Deuteronomy 6:4; 1 Timothy 2:5 (also 1 Corinthians 8:6)*
10. He is **Free**. *Romans 11:34-36; Psalm 115:3; Acts 17:25; Daniel 4:35*

What's true of God that people in some small way can mirror?

1. He is **Holy**. *1 Peter 1:16; Exodus 15:11; Psalm 29:2 (also Joshua 24:19); Revelation 4:8*. It is not so much an attribute as the very foundation of His being. It is the backdrop for all else that is true about Him; it is the controlling essence of all His other characteristics.
 - a. What are the qualities of being holy? READ *Habakkuk 1:13*
 - i. "Other," set apart, separate. Hosea 11:9: *I am God and not man, the Holy One among you*. Leviticus 10:8-10 (learning to distinguish between the holy and the common); Leviticus 20:26.
 - ii. Sinless perfection (purity); fire often represents this such as the burning bush Moses saw, Mt. Sinai on fire as God visited, fire of punishment on Israel's camp [Numbers 11], chariot of fire..., works tested by fire [1 Corinthians 3:12-15], final plague (scorched with fire [Revelation 16])
 - iii. Awe-inspiring because being holy is unique.
 - b. READ Isaiah 6:1-7
 - c. READ Luke 5:1-11
 - d. READ Revelation 1:9-18
 - e. *The natural response to God's holiness is reverent awe, wonder, even dread. Psalm 96:9*
2. He is **Just**. *2 Thess.1:6-10a. Ps.9:16*
 - a. Conforming to a standard of correctness. Acting or being in conformity to what is morally upright or good. (**Justice**: Deciding guilt or innocence with complete impartiality, with absolute fairness.)
 - b. *2 Chronicles 12:1-8*. If God is just when he orders judgment, is He unjust to then relent when people humble themselves?
 - c. Romans 9:14-18 (Because God is just, no one will ever be judged with a judgment he/she does **not** deserve. But because He is merciful many will escape the judgment they **do** deserve.)

Only Christians who grasp enough of God's justice to shudder, will grasp their justification enough to leap and shout with joy.

3. He is **Merciful**. *James 5:11; Ephesians.2:4; Titus 3:5; Nehemiah 9:31*
 - a. When God shows mercy He withholds the punishment that we rightly deserve.
4. He is **Loving**. *1 John 4:8; John 3:16; Romans 5:8; Galatians 2:20 (also Psalm 25:10; 1 John 3:1; Psalm 62:12)*
 - a. How wonderful! How have you seen the love of God in your life? God didn't need to love us, He chose to.
5. He is **Gracious**. *Exodus 34:6; Ephesians 1:7-8; 2:8; 2 Chronicles 30:9; Titus 2:11; 2 Corinthians 9:14*
 - a. Grace is everything good that God gives us which we do not deserve.
6. He is **Kind**. *Romans 2:4; Isaiah 54:8; Titus 3:4*
7. He is **Good**. *Mark 10:18; Psalm 107:1; Psalm 145:9; Romans 8:28*
 - a. This is why His sovereignty is so not terrifying, but reassuring.
8. He is **True**. *Numbers 23:19; Titus 1:2; 1 John 5:20; 1 Thessalonians 1:9*
9. He is **Glorious**. *Ephesians 1:17*
10. He is **Wise**. *Romans 11:33; Colossians 2:3*

- a. Anything He recommends you do, become, say, avoid or devote yourself to, is pure wisdom.
11. He is **Patient**. *Exodus 34:6; 2 Peter 3:9 (& 3:15)*
 - a. Without God's patience, each of us would feel the weight of God's wrath at the first breath we took as sinners (which would be our very first breath!). If He were not patient, we would know no mercy, no grace, only wrath.
 12. He is **Wrathful**. *Ephesians 5:6; Romans 12:19; Psalm 7:11; Jeremiah 21:5; Revelation 19:15; Romans 2:5*
 - a. That God expresses wrath does not in any way checkmate God's love, mercy or grace. After all, His wrath it is not constant. Nor is it haphazardly applied. But when its fullness is one day experienced by the world (Revelation 6-19), all people will know just how violently God objects to being ignored, despised, unloved and unworshiped. Hell is the fitting fulfillment to his Righteous Wrath.
 13. He is **Zealous**. *Ezekiel 39:25; Isaiah 9:7*
 14. He is **Jealous**. *Exodus 20:5; 34:14; Joshua 24:19; Nahum 1:2*
 15. He is **Righteous**. *Daniel 9:14; Romans 3:4; 1 John 2:11; Jeremiah 12:1*
 16. He is **Faithful**. *1 John 1:9; 2 Thessalonians 3:3; Deuteronomy 7:9; Psalm 25:10*
 17. He is **Orderly**. *1 Corinthians 14:33*
 18. He is **Peaceful**. *Isaiah 9:6 (also poss. John 14:27 & Micah 5:5)*

The Sovereignty of God

(The scope of God's Rule)

Disclaimer & Attribution

1. *What follows are the convictions of Keystone Church's sr. pastor Keith Rohrer. Other Christians at Keystone Church hold different convictions—as do others in the EFCA denomination.*
2. *In addition to Scripture, I am especially indebted to the teachings of 3 Bible teachers [occasionally I even use some of their wording since it could not be improved upon]: Dr. John Piper, teaching pastor at Bethlehem Baptist Church in Minneapolis, Dr. Wayne Grudem, my former TEDS professor and now Research & Bible Professor at Phoenix Seminary, and the late Pastor Charles H. Spurgeon, formerly of London's Metropolitan Tabernacle.)*

I believe...

Behind every sunrise or snowstorm, behind every leopard eating a wildebeest or baby finch that tumbles from its nest and dies, behind every marriage that's happy—as well as behind every miserable one, behind each roll of the dice in Atlantic City, behind every financial windfall or bankruptcy, behind every automobile accident, behind every job hire or firing, behind every cancer in a six year old body, or middle-aged stroke, or incurable disease, behind every country turning into a Muslim state..., God has determined it, but [usually] secondary forces implement what He has ordained.

Bishop J.C. Ryle: *Of all the doctrines of the Bible, none is so offensive to human nature as the doctrine of God's sovereignty.*

Westminster Confession of Faith: *God, from all eternity, did, by the most wise and holy counsel of his own will, freely, and unchangeably ordain whatsoever comes to pass; yet so, as thereby neither is God the author of sin, nor is violence offered to the will of his creatures, nor is the liberty or contingency of second causes taken away, but rather established" (3:1).*

"Although, in relation to the foreknowledge and decree of God, the first cause, all things come to pass immutably; yet, by the same providence, he ordereth them to fall out, according to the nature of second causes, either necessarily, freely, or contingently" (5:2).

*In him we were also chosen, having been predestined **according to the plan of him who works out everything in conformity with the purpose of his will...** Ephesians 1:11*

What is God like?

While not *exactly* alike, we can be *similar* to God in many ways: He loves, we love; He is patient, we can be patient. He is wise, we can be wise.

1. Glorious: Eph.1:17
2. Wise: Rom.11:33; Col.2:3
3. Patient: Ex. 34:6; 2 Pet.3:9
4. Loving: 1 Jn.4:8; Jn.3:16; Rom.5:8; Gal.2:20
5. Holy: 1 Pet.1:16; Ex.15:11; Ps.29:2
6. Zealous: Ez.39:25; Is.9:7
7. Jealous: Ex.20:5; Ex.34:14; Nah.1:2
8. Wrathful: Rev.19:15; Rom.12:19; Rom.2:5
9. Just: 2 Chron.12:6; 2 Thess.1:6; Ps.9:16
10. Merciful: Jas.5:11; Neh.9:31
11. Gracious: Ex.34:6; 2 Chron.30:9; Eph.2:8; Tit.2:11; 2 Cor.9:14
12. Kind: Rom.2:4; Is.54:8; Tit.3:4;
13. Good: Mk.10:18; Ps.107:1; Ps.145:9
14. Righteous: Dan.9:14; Jer.12:1; Rom.3:4
15. Faithful: Deut.7:9; Ps.25:10; 1 Jn.1:9; 2 Thess.3:3
16. Orderly: 1 Cor.14:33
17. True: Tit.1:2; Jn.17:17; 1 Jn.5:20; 1 Thess.1:9
18. Peaceful: Is.9:6

But there are some things that are true of God alone. They aren't even a *little* true of us; *can't* be.

19. Spirit: Jn.4:24; possibly Acts 17:24
20. Invisible: Jn.1:18; Col.1:15; 1 Tim.1:17; 1 Tim.6:16
21. **Sovereign**: Dan.4:32; Is.46:10; Acts 17:26
22. Eternal: Is.26:4; Rom.16:26; 1 Tim.1:17
23. Unchanging: Jas.1:17; Mal.3:6
24. Knows everything: 1 Jn.3:20; Heb.4:13; Ps.139:1-2;
25. Is everywhere: Ps.139:7-10
26. Has unlimited power: 2 Cor.6:18; Jer.32:17; Matt.19:26
27. Unity: Deut.6:4; 1 Tim.2:5 (also 1 Cor.8:6)
28. **Free**: Rom.11:34-36; Dan.4:35; Ps.115:3; Acts 17:25

How is God Sovereign?

What do we mean when we say that God is sovereign? We're saying He rules and administers the universe He created. When someone says things happen for a *reason*, that person is flirting with the idea of God's sovereignty—that things happen *at the direction* of someone. We are saying that the most unexpected event—even the most *unwanted* event, has some purpose. Even most irreligious people credit *some* force with making the world go 'round, with bringing things to pass. We're simply saying it's

our good and holy God with unlimited power and perfect thought, who has woven together a world—complete with all its events, and who does exactly as He pleases.

Most Christians agree that God *is* sovereign. To say otherwise you'd have to dispense with the Bible since it says so 300 times. The Bible's first and last books make the claim and so do 21 other books in between. He rules His universe. He's in control. But, not all Christians agree *how* God is sovereign, *how* God rules. What is the scope of His rule? Some Christians are especially troubled to think that God would ordain anything that is evil or tragic.

For example, on September 11, 2001, a United Airlines 757 careening along at 580 mph plowed into the ground near Shanksville, PA. The impact was so violent that they found the black box 47' below the surface of the ground. 5500 gallons of jet fuel incinerated everything within reach—including the plane and those on board. Did God ordain and control those events, or simply permit them?

1. Words to understand

- God is **Sovereign**: This means He rules over the universe that He created.
- God exercises His **Providence**: Though the term's not found in the Bible, we use it to explain *how* God carries out the particulars of his ancient plan, His "decrees."
- God's **Preservation**: God's efforts by which he keeps created beings alive and continuing to possess their respective properties. Take a raccoon: *As long as a raccoon lives, God keeps it alive, and makes sure it continues to have fur, black circles around its eyes, whiskers, and to wash its food carefully. In other words, God preserves the existence of all things He created and maintains the properties He originally gave them (rocks stay hard, water generally stays liquid). This orderliness is why science works. What a scientist observes in numerous roses, she can infer is true of most or all roses. Because a consistent and orderly God rules creation, predictability about His creation is not only possible, but likely. He sustains all that He made and does so in basically predictable ways.*

Examples of God's preserving power:

- Isaiah 46:4: God made you and sustains you
- Hebrews 1:3: Christ upholds the universe by His power
- Colossians 1:17: In Christ, all things hold together
- Acts 17:28: In Him we live and move and have our being.
- 2 Peter 3:7: God will preserve the current heavens and earth for judgment. (In other words, it won't end until He says so.)

- God's use of **Concurrent** forces: These are secondary forces which cooperate with God to carry out what originated in His mind/will; to do what He "ordained." It may be weather, animals or birds, human beings, angels, even the devil. For example, when it rains, God doesn't just hurl water from his hands, but uses concurrent forces. To create a shower in May He instructs warm air over Lake Erie to turn lake water into water vapor. The vapor rises which forms clouds containing small drops of water. As the clouds rise higher and higher, the air becomes colder and colder. Once the water vapor in the cloud gets too heavy, it spills onto the earth as rain. Ultimately, God ordained the shower but it was through many other secondary (concurrent) forces that it rained just the right amount at just the right place at just the right time.

So, is God responsible for *everything* that happens in His universe?

NonChristian beliefs:

- **Deism:** After embedding operating principles in the world that He created, God left it to run on its own. He doesn't interfere with what happens.
- **Weak God:** Bad things happen because God is powerless to stop them from happening. (So says Rabbi Harold Kushner [*Why Bad Things Happen to Good People*] as well as some professing Christians who promote the recent heresy "Open Theism". Open theists insist God can't know all of the future).
- **Pantheism:** Creation is simply part of God, not having a real and distinct existence itself. A tree is God, a person is God, a cow is God. This thinking leaves no room for events to be guided by some cosmic plan. By its good or its evil, humanity guides its own destiny.
- **Chance:** events occur randomly
- **Fate:** events occur by some impersonal force

Christian options:

When something happens...

- God causes some things and permits others.
- God ordains all things (some things He causes and carries out, other things He causes and other forces carry out)

Bible Study

What does God rule?

1. The elements & natural world
 - a. Sun's movement. Joshua.10:12-14
 - b. Sun's light. Exodus 10:23; Isaiah 50:3
 - c. Controls rise, fall, activities in rivers and seas. Isaiah 50:2; 51:15; Psalm 135:6
 - d. Rain clouds. Zechariah 10:1; Psalm 148:8; Job.37:15
 - i. In fact, God precisely regulates where it rains and how much. Amos 4:7-8
 - ii. Lightening. Job 36:32; 37:15
 - e. Winds. Psalm 135:7
 - f. Snow, ice. Job 37:6,10; Psalm 148:8
 - g. Hail. Josh.10:11; Psalm 148:8
 - h. Controls agricultural disease and pests. Amos 4:9; Malachi 3:11
 - i. Controls when crops ripen. Malachi 3:11
2. Birds, fish, animals
 - a. Feeds birds & animals. Job 38:39-41; Matthew 6:26; Isaiah 43:20
 - b. Sparrows die on his cue. Matthew 10:29
 - c. Controls even the sounds of animals. Numbers 22:28
 - d. Initiates the decisions of beasts and birds. Isaiah 46:11; 1 Kings 17:2-4; Jonah1:17

I believe that every particle of dust that dances in the sunbeam does not move an atom more or less than God wishes – that every particle of spray that dashes against the steamboat has its orbit, as well as the sun in the heavens – that the chaff from the hand of the winnower is as steered as the stars in their courses. The creeping of an aphid over the rosebud is as much fixed as the march of the devastating pestilence – the fall of . . . leaves from a poplar is as fully ordained as the tumbling of an avalanche. C.H. Spurgeon

3. Controls the affairs of nations
 - a. God rules over nations. Psalm 22:28
 - b. God gives nations to anybody he chooses. Daniel 4:32b
 - c. He appoints rulers, and dethrones others. Daniel 2:21; Romans 13:1-2
 - d. God made every nation; determined where and when people would live. Acts 17:26
 - e. God decides what nations/people groups will and will not do. Psalm 33:10
 - f. God creates armies. Isaiah 54:16
 - g. God defeats nations, redistributes lands, and enslaves peoples. Psalm 135:10; Jeremiah 21:3-7

4. Controls every aspect of everyone's life
 - a. Supplies you with every crust of bread, every can of beans, every pound of hamburger (Philippians 4:19)—even in famine. Psalm 33:18-19
 - b. All your abilities & talents. 1 Corinthians 4:7
 - c. Rebukes and disciplines us for sin. Psalm 39:11
 - d. Appoints for certain destinies. Jeremiah 1:5; Galatians 1:15
 - e. Instills desires, longings and attitudes. Psalm 33:14-15; Psalm 105:24-25; Philippians 2:13
 - f. Places thoughts in our minds. Ezra 7:27
 - g. Initiates every human decision. Proverbs 16:9
 - h. Determines what cards you get when you play Old Maid, Rook, Bridge, or Poker ["Chance" and "luck" do not exist in His world]. Proverbs 16:33

5. Controls disease, disability, death, calamities
 - a. Blindness, deaf mute. Exodus 4:11
 - b. Infertility. Genesis 20:17-18; 30:2; 1 Samuel 1:5-6
 - c. Birth defects. John 9:1-4
 - d. Determines everyone's time of death. Psalm 139:16
 - e. Death, injury. Deuteronomy 32:39; 1 Samuel 2:6
 - f. Cities destroyed. Amos 3:6

6. Even controls evil words, deeds, and events
 - a. Job 2:10: *Shall we accept good from God and not trouble?* ["trouble" is the common Hebrew word for evil: ra]
 - b. Isaiah 45:7: *I form the light and create darkness; I bring prosperity and create disaster.* ["disaster" is common Hebrew word for evil: ra]
 - c. Lamentations 3:37-38: *Is it not from the mouth of the Most High that both calamities and good things come?*
 - d. Isaiah 63:17: *Why, O Lord, do you make us wander from your ways and harden our hearts so we do not revere you?*
 - e. Exodus 4:21; 7:3; 8:32; 9:12; 10:1, 20, 27; 11:10). *I will harden* (pharaoh's) *heart*. True, sometimes it says pharaoh hardened his own heart (8:15, 32, 9:34), but in the vast majority of cases, it's that God hardened pharaoh's heart, or that it "became hard" or "was hard" which could again make God the agency.
 - f. Psalm 105:24-25: *The LORD made his people very fruitful; he made them too numerous for their foes, whose hearts he turned to hate his people, to conspire against his servants.*
 - g. 1 Samuel 16:14: *...and an evil spirit from the Lord tormented him.*
 - h. Judges 9:23: *God sent an evil spirit between Abimelech and the citizens of Shechem, who acted treacherously against Abimelech.* (for purpose, see v.24)

- i. 1 Kings 22:23: *So now the Lord has put a lying spirit in the mouths of all these prophets of yours. The Lord has decreed disaster for you.*

(Caution: the Scriptures never accuse God of doing evil, being happy over evil, nor do they ever excuse or justify man for his evil. James 1:13 says God does not tempt to do evil, nor can He be tempted to do evil.)

- 7. When God and the devil seem to be in league...
 - a. **Job's Plight.** Job 1:7-2:7.
 - i. Satan was the evildoer (but God did more than give permission)
 - ii. Job believed God's hand had brought trouble (Job 2:10; later, Job 42:1-2)
 - iii. The *writer* (whether Job or another) believed God's hand brought trouble (Job 42:11)
 - iv. God seems to suggest He was behind the trouble (Job 40:8, 41:10b-11)
 - b. **The census.** The choice was human, divine, and demonic all at once.
 - i. 2 Samuel 24:1—God prompted him to do it
 - ii. 1 Chronicles 21:1—Satan prompted him do it
 - iii. 1 Chronicles 27:24—God punished him for doing it.
 - c. **Paul's Thorn.** 2 Corinthians 12:7
 - i. Some sort of physical ailment was a messenger from Satan
 - ii. Yet clearly this was ultimately from the hand of God ("...given me") for the purpose of keeping Paul from being conceited (not the sort of thing Satan would try to stop)
 - d. **Jesus' crucifixion.**
 - i. God planned Jesus' execution long ago (Acts 2:23)
 - ii. God predicted Jesus' execution long ago (Acts 3:18)
 - iii. God planned that Judas would betray Christ and be lost (John 17:12).
 - iv. Satan entered Judas so he'd betray Christ like GOD PLANNED (Luke 22:3-5)
 - v. God held Judas responsible for his deed (John 19:11)
 - vi. Evil men executed Jesus (Acts 4:28)
- 8. Let's assume that God *does* ordain (plan, decide) every event and decision, even evil ones (although usually using secondary causes). Why would he do that?
 - **Joseph's brothers.** Evil included jealousy, slave-trafficking (Gen.45:5; 50:20). *God's greater purpose was to prepare food and a place of safety for the expansion of the people of God.* When Joseph reassured his brothers after their father's death, he said, "You intended to "harm me" (ra, feminine singular), but God intended it (the pronoun is feminine singular—declaring that its antecedent is ra) for good.

- **Pharaoh.** Evil was that Pharaoh's heart was hard (and that God made it so). Even before the showdown, God had planned to do the hardening Himself (Exodus 4:21; 7:3). And he did (Exodus 8:32; 9:12; 10:1, 20, 27; 11:10). True, sometimes it says pharaoh hardened his own heart (Exodus 8:15, 32, 9:34). But in the vast majority of cases, it's that God hardened pharaoh's heart, or that it "became hard" or "was hard" which could again make God the agency. Why'd God harden him? Exodus 9:16 (see also Romans 9:17-18): *God's greater purpose was to display His power and gain great glory.* (same objective as in Jn.9:1-3)
- **Samson.** Evil was that he wanted to marry an ungodly woman (Judges 14:3-4) *God's greater purpose was to confront, put an end to the Philistines' power over Israel.*
- **Job.** Evil was that his children and their spouses were all killed, and his possessions, health, and respect were all taken from him (Job 1-2). God's greater purposes were to prove Job's faithfulness to Satan, and likely to deepen his faith too. James 5:11 indicates that *whatever* the purpose was, it was compassionate and merciful (i.e., good). *You have heard of the steadfastness of Job, and you have seen the purpose of the Lord, how the Lord is compassionate and merciful.* (Translation is English Standard Version; NIV does not present it adequately)
- **David.** Evil was that David's son slept with his father's wives in public. (2 Samuel 12:11-12 cf. 16:22) *God's greater purpose was to punish David for his sin with Bathsheba and her husband.*
- **Israel.** Evil was that pagan Assyria brutally conquered Israel (Isaiah 10:5-7). *God's greater purpose was to judge pagan Assyria.* (True, sent by God to judge Israel, but in the end also judged)
- **Jesus.** Evil was that Jesus was betrayed by a follower, and tortured terribly. (Colossians 1:19-20) *God's greater purpose was to deliver the human race from its doom.*

Conclusion: God ordains *all* things (Ephesians 1:11) and does so for His glory (Romans 11:36; Isaiah 6:3; 43:7; 48:9-11; 59:19; Ezekiel 39:21) as well as for the good of His people (Romans 8:28). When Satan (or evil men) are in the thick of what God ordains, the difference is that God's intent is a good one, while Satan's is an evil one; God seeks to build up, Satan seeks to tear down; God means to construct, Satan means to destroy (John 10:10).

The Big Questions

1. If God has ordained that evil exist, and is ultimately behind everything that happens including morally evil events like murder, rape, abuse, isn't He evil?

If by 'the author of sin,' be meant the sinner, the agent, or the actor of sin, or the doer of a wicked thing..., it would be a reproach and blasphemy, to suppose God to be the author of sin. In this sense, I utterly deny God to be the author of sin. Jonathan Edwards

If God is evil, then the Bible doesn't tell the truth about Him.

- Psalm 34:8: *Taste and see that the LORD is good;*
- Psalm 100:5: *For the LORD is good and his love endures forever;*
- James 1:13: *God cannot be tempted by evil, nor does he tempt anyone.*
- Psalm 111:7: *The works of his hands are faithful and just.*
- 1 Peter 3:12: *...but the face of the LORD is against those who do evil.*

Someone has tried to explain the quandary this way: God looks through both a wide-angled and a telescopic lens. Though the telescopic he sees evil actions for what they are and abhors them. But looking at evil through His wide-angled lens, he sees all the events leading to it and flowing from it. He sees how it all contributes to his vast, wise, comprehensive (and good) purposes and in relation to this, decrees it.

God is NOT the author of evil, cannot be tempted to do evil, and doesn't tempt people to do evil. Nevertheless, in laying out the vast landscape of His creation, He ordained that evil exist. While Satan uses evil for **evil purposes**, God uses evil—mostly through secondary means and causes—for **good purposes** such as His own glory, the good of the saints, and the judgment of the wicked.

2. If God already has everything ordained, why pray? Nothing will change anyway.

First, God says we should pray; secondly, He promises that He will answer. In the Bible we can see many, many instances when He did.

1. 2 Chron.7:14. God promised Israel that if she repented of her sins and prayed, he would heal their land.
2. Genesis 8:20-33. In response to Abraham's prayers, God said, "Yes, I will set aside my plans and spare Sodom if you find at least 10 righteous people there."
3. Ex.32:9-14; Amos 7:1-9. In Exodus, Moses persuaded God to "change" His mind. In the Amos passage, the prophet did.
4. 2 Kings 20:1-6. After learning God said he was about to die, Hezekiah prayed for more time. God said, "I've heard your prayers and will give you 15 more years.
5. Daniel 9:23 After Daniel prayed, an angel arrived saying he was dispatched with an answer as soon as Daniel prayed.
6. Acts 12:5-11. The prayers of the church were answered.

These truths seem to collide with and oppose each other: On the one hand, God ordained all things long ago, yet on the other, God still answers prayers we pray today. But wouldn't that impossibility seem like something an infinitely powerful God could do?

Zaire missionary, the late Dr. Helen Roseveare told this story about an expectant mother at the mission station. "After she died giving birth to a premature baby, we tried to improvise an incubator to keep the infant alive. But the only hot water bottle we had was beyond repair. So we asked the children to pray for the baby and for her sister. One of the girls responded. 'Dear God, please send a hot water bottle today. Tomorrow will be too late because by then the baby will be dead. And dear Lord, send a doll for the sister so she won't feel so lonely.'

That afternoon a large package arrived from England. The children watched eagerly as we opened it. Much to their surprise, under some clothing was a hot water bottle! Immediately the girl who had prayed so earnestly started to dig deeper, exclaiming, 'If God sent that, I'm sure He also sent a doll!' Sure enough, He had! The heavenly Father knew in advance of a child's sincere requests, and 5 months earlier He had led a ladies' group to include both of those specific articles."

3. If God ordains everything, aren't we just robots? We do—or experience exactly what God wills—no more, no less. It seems we have no choices to make, no say in anything.

Not so. Hundreds and hundreds of commands in the Bible presume we have the ability to choose: I'll obey, I'll disobey. Over and over the Scriptures indicate that people can decide "yes," can decide "no;" or, decide not to decide at all. Individuals can choose from multiple options.

- 1 Peter 4:3. Pagans choose to do the evil things they do
- Acts 6:33. Church members were asked to select godly men to serve as deacons
- Hosea 8:4. Israel set up king without God's consent, set up princes without His approval.
- Proverbs 3:31. A person can decide to mimic, or reject the ways of a violent man.
- 1 Chronicles 1:9-12. God gave David a choice between 3 options.

Again, we are stuck with two seemingly contradictory truths: God decides, and so do we. But wouldn't such a reality seem like something an infinitely powerful God could design; *would* design? On the one hand, God has determined all things beforehand, on the other, we have an authentic, a genuine will with which we can make *bona fide* choices. It's just that our wills are not utterly "free," the adjective we prefer. Only God is utterly free, unfettered by any other. The wills of animals, humans, angels (good or bad), Satan—of all creatures, are ultimately subject to God.

What is fate? Fate is this: Whatever is, must be. But there is a difference between that and Providence. Providence says, Whatever God ordains, must be; but the wisdom of God never ordains anything without a purpose. Everything in this world is working for some

great end. Fate does not say that. . . . There is all the difference between fate and Providence that there is between a man with good eyes and a blind man. C.H. Spurgeon

4. If God ordains everything that happens, how can He hold a human being responsible for his/her actions?

Again, the testimony of Scripture is that God does/will hold everyone accountable.

- *Matthew 12:36-37: But I tell you that men will have to give account on the day of judgment for every careless word they have spoken. For by your words you will be acquitted, and by your words you will be condemned."*
- *Romans 14:10, 12: For we will all stand before God's judgment seat. ...So then, each one will give an account of himself to God.*
- *2 Corinthians 5:10: For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, that each one may receive what is due him for the things done while in the body, whether good or bad.*
- *John 19:11: Jesus answered, "You would have no power over me if it were not given to you from above. Therefore the one who handed me over to you is guilty of a greater sin." God gave Pilate power to condemn Jesus, He ordained that Judas would betray Jesus (John 17:12), but he held Pilate and Judas, completely responsible for their sins. *The Son of Man will go as it has been decreed, but woe to that man who betrays him.* (Luke 22:22)*

Probably the greatest danger of an incomplete view of God's sovereignty, is a kind of fatalism that says, "What's going to be, will be; since I cannot change my destiny or make choices, I'm not to blame." This one-sided conclusion ignores the biblical testimony of human responsibility *and* the biblical testimony that God provides us with grace to be co-creators with Him in the great drama of life.

5. If God determines all things, is He fair?

No. Nor would we want him to be. If He was fair, He would be required to give each one of us the one and only thing that we so richly deserve: hell (Romans 5:12, 16). Mercy and grace are not tools administered in fairness, but in compassion.

- *Romans 9:18-21: Therefore God has mercy on whom he wants to have mercy, and he hardens whom he wants to harden. One of you will say to me: "Then why does God still blame us? For who resists his will?" But who are you, O man, to talk back to God? "Shall what is formed say to him who formed it, 'Why did you make me like this?' " Does not the potter have the right to make out of the same lump of clay some pottery for noble purposes and some for common use?*

6. Of what value is it to the average Christian to know that his/her God has ordained all that comes to pass?

- i. It energizes/enhances worship as God grows in our sight; we stand flabbergasted at the enormity of God's hands-on involvement with us and His created world.
- ii. It shatters any pride we might have about our accomplishments.
- iii. It weans us off of self-reliance.
- iv. It reduces fear & anxiety about the future.
- v. Since there are no such things as accidents, it eliminates the need to do "what if" thinking in the wake of tragedies.
- vi. It reassures us that there is a purpose to all the waters we pass through, whether deep and wild ones, or those shallow and pleasant.
- vii. It assures us that whatever is God's plan for us, He will supply supernatural power to carry it through.
- viii. It eliminates the worry that we could—or did—screw things up.
- ix. It gives us more hope that when we share the gospel, people might respond!
- x. It makes us more confident we are saved.

On October 4, 1980, a young nursing student was murdered in the Chicago suburb of Oak Park. After the police began investigating, Steve Linscott, a student at Emmaus Bible College, went to police with details about the crime which he'd seen in a dream the night of the murder. Police eventually arrested him believing his description was actually that of the murderer's. Found guilty by a jury, he was sentenced to 40 years in prison. He served 12 years before being proven innocent and released. In the book *Maximum Security* [Crossway books, 1994], he wrote this:

I have come to realize that we cannot judge God's purposes, nor where He places us, nor why He chooses one path for our lives as opposed to another. The Bible itself is replete with accounts of divine action (or inaction) that does not seem fair, that does not make sense except when viewed in light of God's perfect plan. Thousands of Egyptian children were massacred while a baby named Moses was spared. Jacob was a liar and a thief, and yet it was he, not his faithful brother Esau, who received the blessing of their father Isaac and of God. On one level it makes no sense that God would allow His Son to die for the sins of Humankind. But God has a plan—a perfect plan.

Who am I? (the nature of human beings)

PETA president Ingrid Newkirk, 1999: *There is no rational basis for saying that a human being has special rights. A rat is a pig is a dog is a boy. They're all mammals.*

Dr. Peter Singer, Ira W. DeCamp professor of Bioethics at Princeton University, 1990 (*Animal Liberation: A New Ethic for Our Treatment of Animals*): *Surely there will be some nonhuman animals whose lives, by any standards, are more valuable than the lives of some humans.*

When a mortician cuts open a body, what does she find that is distinctively human?

1. Human beings are created by God. *Genesis 1:27, 31; 5:2; 6:7; Deuteronomy 4:32; Romans 1:25; Isaiah 45:12, 57:16*
 - a. Man, from dust on the ground. *Genesis 2:7-8*
 - b. Woman, from Adam's rib. *Genesis 2:18-23*
 - c. Darwinism and the Bible are irreconcilable. *Psalm 139:13; Revelation 4:11*
2. Human beings are created for God. *Isaiah 43:7 [cf. Ephesians 1:11-12, 1 Corinthians 10:31] Romans 11:36*
3. Human beings are created in God's image. That is, humans stand out uniquely from all the rest of creation (sun, moon, fish, sea, birds, animals, flowers, etc.) *Genesis 1:27, 31; 5:1, 3; 9:6; 1 Corinthians 11:7; Ephesians 4:24; Colossians 3:10; James 3:9*

Some similarities between God and human beings...

 - a. Like God, people govern. *Genesis 1:27-28*
 - b. Like God is a Spirit, people are "spirits". *Genesis 2:7 (cf. John 4:24)*
 - c. Like God has a moral compass (discern good from evil), so do people; conscience. *Genesis 2:15-17; Romans 2:15; Psalm 106:3*
 - d. Like God has the ability to think, so do people (language is a part of this). *Isaiah 41:20*
 - e. Like God responds emotionally, so do people. *Psalm 55:5*
 - f. While only God has no beginning, like him people have no end. *Matthew 25:46*
4. The Bible says people are composed of 2 parts
 - a. Body & non-body stuff (soul, spirit, heart, mind, liver, kidneys...)
 - b. Only at death can these be separated. A human being is fully integrated.
5. Consequences of the Human Calamity: "The Fall"
 - a. Although created good, the first 2 human beings sinned. *Genesis 2:17, 3:6-7*
 - b. The image of God somewhat marred, but still there. _____
 - c. Sin erected a wall between them and God. *Genesis 3:8-19*
 - d. Sin resulted in a future death for them. *Gen.3:22-23.*
 - e. Sin contaminated every one of their offspring. *Romans 5:12*
 - i. Everyone now sins (is unholy). *Romans 3:10*
 - ii. Everyone is now totally depraved (is now unholy). We're not as awful as we *could* be, but total depravity means every **part** of us has been contaminated. *Romans 7:18*
 1. Intellect *Tit.1:15*
 2. Emotions *Genesis 4:7; Psalm 42:5*
 3. Desires *James 4:1-2*
 4. Heart *Jeremiah 17:9*

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| 5. Tendencies | <i>Genesis 6:5</i> |
| 6. Motives | <i>James 4:3</i> |
| 7. Good deeds | <i>Isaiah 64:6</i> |
| 8. Body | <i>Romans 8:23</i> |
- iii. Condemned to die physically. *Romans 5:12*
 - iv. Condemned to die spiritually (eternal judgment). *Romans 5:16*
 - i. A person is sinful at birth. *Ps.51:5; 58:3 [2 Sam.12:23]*
 - ii. Enemies of God. *Romans 5:10; Colossians 1:21.*
 - iii. Spiritually blind. *2 Corinthians 4:4*
 - iv. Despite inheriting a sin nature, every person is 100% responsible for his/her sin. *2 Corinthians 5:10; Revelation 2:23; Romans 3:19*
 - b. If this was the end of the story, DOOMED & DAMNED would be the storyline for every one of the nearly 7 billion people in the world. Because a holy God cannot fraternize with unholy people. By rights, he could and should condemn every one of us to hell. That—and that alone, is what He owes us.

Who is Jesus?

1. Names
 - a. Jesus ("Yeshua" which is Greek for Hebrew "Joshua") = "Yahweh is salvation"
 - b. Messiah (Hebrew) or Christ (Greek) = Anointed One
 - c. Lord (Greek *kyrios*) = Master or owner, one who has power or authority over another. (Mostly refers to Jesus in NT, but not *exclusively*; sometimes it is simply a term of respect toward a superior—like "sir". *Matthew 13:27; John 4:11*)
 - d. Word = In John 1 used of Jesus (Greek is "logos"). John's readers would have recognized this equating Jesus with the OT Creator God, *and* as the Organizing Principle of the Universe—"holding it together and allowing it to make sense..."
 - e. Son of Man = To indicate His man-ness, that is, he was born of a human woman as prophesied in Genesis 3:16
 - f. Son of God = When applied to Jesus, a synonym for Messiah, and a label which emphasizes that He is divine, that He *is* God, that He was *born* of God, and that He is the *Heir* of God .
2. The GodMan: Jesus Christ was always completely God, but since this Spirit clothed himself with flesh (incarnation), He has also been—and is, completely man; 2 natures in one person.
 - a. Jesus is God. *John 1:14*
 - i. Created everything. *1 Corinthians 8:6; John 1:3; Colossians 1:16; Hebrews 1:2*
 - ii. Holy. *Mark 1:24*
 - iii. Forgave sins. *Mark 2:5-7; Luke 7:48-49*
 - iv. Did not sin. *2 Corinthians 5:21; Hebrews 4:15; 1 Peter 1:19; 2:22*
 1. Qualified Him to be our Mediator with God. *1 Timothy 2:5-6*
 2. Would it have been *possible* for Jesus to sin?
 - a. God cannot be tempted to do evil. *James 1:13*
 - b. But Jesus was also fully man who, "...was tempted in every way—just as we are..." (Hebrews 4:15). If tempted like us, then He felt the force of those temptations in a way that were He immune to them, would not have felt.
 - v. Retained His "Godness" while on earth but voluntarily shielded some attributes such as omnipresence, omnipotence. *Philippians 2:5-8*
 - b. Jesus is human.
 - i. Eternal Son of God became a human being.
 1. Virgin Birth. *Matthew 1:18, 20, 24-25;*
 - a. More than a "WOW!" miracle. Since the sin nature & moral guilt is passed from Adam through males, Jesus could not have a human father. *Romans 5:12; 1 Corinthians 15:22*

- b. While it's true that Jesus' mother Mary was a sinner with her own moral guilt, by His role the Holy Spirit apparently protected Jesus from her stain. *Luke 1:35*
 - 2. Had a human body like ours
 - a. Grew tired. *John 4:6*
 - b. Got hungry. *Matthew 4:2*
 - c. Got thirsty. *John 19:28*
 - 3. Had a human mind like ours. *Luke 2:52*
 - a. Like ours, but *beyond* ours because He had divine knowledge. *Luke 6:8, 11:17*
 - 4. Had human emotions like we do (but without any hint of sin). *John 12:27; Matthew 21:12-13; 26:38;*
 - 5. Like other boys, grew physically & mentally. *Luke 2:40, 52*
 - 6. Felt the sorrows, pain and temptations common to humanity. *Isaiah 53:3; Hebrews 4:15*
 - 7. By succeeding where we failed (sin), as a man Jesus was able to stand in our place and bear God's wrath for our sins. *Galatians 4:4-5*
 - 8. Prayed much. *Luke 6:12; Mark 1:35; John 1; Luke 22:44; Hebrews 5:7*
- ii. Human forever.
 - 1. Physically raised body. *John 20:25-27; Luke 24:39;*
 - 2. Returning in physical body. *Acts 1:11*
- 3. Suffered & died. *Mark 8:31; Luke 23:46;*
 - 4. Came back to life, returned to heaven. *John 20:9-17; Acts 1:9; 2:24;*
 - 5. Intercedes for Saints. *Romans 8:34; Hebrews 7:25*
 - 6. "What would Jesus do?" Is Jesus our model for conduct?
 - a. Yes. *1 John 2:6; Romans 8:29; 1 Peter 2:21*
 - b. but...
 - i. Living like Jesus is not the gospel. At least...
 - 1. ...if by that you mean no more than being nice; some unbelievers are nice too.
 - 2. ...if by that you mean holding a generally hostile attitude toward religious leaders; that's par for the course for many unbelievers.
 - 3. ...if by that you mean not carrying a weapon; some unbelievers are pacifists too.
 - 4. ...if by that you mean not having a job; (seriously, this is an example of how nutty some people can be when highlight this or that which was true about Jesus and make *it* the gospel.

Assignment #8: Knowledge of the Holy (read pages 82-117)

Memorize ...Ephesians 1:4-5

What is Salvation?

1. The act by which God rescues the believing sinner He formerly condemned for sin.
 - a. From sins, specifically from the **power** and **penalty** of sin. *Romans 6:22; 8:9; John 3:16*
 - b. For His glory. *Romans 11:36; Ephesians 2:7*
 - c. For our good. *Romans 8:2, 28*
 - d. For the evangelization of the world. *2 Corinthians 5:18*

2. **Shock & Awe.** The following are vivid Bible words that put the grandeur of salvation on full panoramic display. True, some of these actions at least partially overlap with each other but hopefully the descriptions will expand your appreciation of the great lengths God went to, to save you; and the boundless, inexplicable (don't miss *that*) love He has for you.
 - a. Elect/predestine: Before the world was created, God independently chose to save some people. *Romans 9:11-14*
 - b. Regenerate (also "born again" or "new birth"): By the Holy Spirit, God brings a person's dead spirit to life so he/she has the ability to respond to the gospel. *Titus 3:5; Ephesians 2:1-6*
 - c. Justify: Although every human being is condemned before God because of his/her sin, by applying Christ's cross work to the believing sinner, God declares him/her "JUST!" or "innocent".
 - d. Redeem: By Jesus' bloody death, God Himself pays the necessary price to buy someone back from the marketplace of sin. (Note: the word does not focus on a "seller" to whom God pays the price, but on the sacrificial nature of the payment). *1 Peter 1:18-19*
 - e. Reconcile ("former enemies become friends"): Through Christ's death, God makes peace between Himself and the believing sinner. *2 Corinthians 5:18*
 - f. Propitiate: Through Christ's punitive death, God fully satisfies His own wrath against the believing sinner. *Romans 3:25;*
 - g. Atonement (substitutionary atonement): Assigning Him to die a bloody death, God had His Son substitute for the believing sinner as the target for God's wrath; and substituted Jesus' righteousness for the wickedness of the believing sinner. *Romans 3:25; Leviticus 16:15-22*
 - h. Adopt: Because of Christ's sacrifice, God makes the believing sinner a member of His family; a son or daughter. *Ephesians 1:5*
 - i. Persevere: *Romans 14:4; Philippians 1:6; John 10:27-29; 2 Corinthians 1:21*
 - j. Glorify: The believing sinner dies and receives his heavenly reward. *Romans 8:30*

3. The logical order of salvation. While a person is not passive in this process, it is God who begins salvation, sustains it, and He brings it to fulfillment; He is the Initiator, we are always responders.
 - a. Election/predestination
 - i. [Unconditional] **Election**: Before creation (Ephesians 1:4), by His own sovereign choice God elected/appointed for salvation all those who will ever come to faith. He did so strictly according to His own counsel and

will quite apart from His knowledge of the elect's future step of faith. God's election determines a person's faith, not the other way around.

1. Forms of Elect actually used: Matthew 24:22, 24, 31; Mark 13:20, 22, 27, Romans 9:11, 11:7, 28; 1 Timothy 5:21, 2 Timothy 2:10, Titus 1:1, 1 Peter 1:1, 2 Peter 1:10
- ii. **Predestination**: Unlike election which only refers to God saving, predestination is God's work before creation through which He assigned the destiny of *all* people: the saved *and* the lost. Not all Christians who believe that the Bible teaches election agree that it also teaches predestination. Some believe that since everyone is already under condemnation as sinners, that those not saved are lost by their own natural choice; God simply does not offer them grace and mercy.
 1. Forms of Predestine actually used: Romans 8:29, 30; Ephesians 1:5, 11.

[The idea that God has decided not only who will be saved, but who will be lost, is often called "double predestination" by critics. But most who believe it object to the phrase since it fails to distinguish between the different way in which God deals with the elect compared to the doomed. Most prefer simply "predestination."]

- iii. **Foreknowledge**: When Romans 8:29 says that For those God foreknew he also predestined to be conformed to the likeness of his Son, that he might be the firstborn among many brothers, some Christians conclude that this means that before Sally was born, God looked down through the tunnel of time, and chose her, elected/predestined her after seeing that someday Sally would repent and put her faith in Jesus Christ.

However, the Bible doesn't say that God knew *something about Sally*. It says rather that He *foreknew her*. It's a term of endearment, affection. In Amos 3:2 God says of Israel: *You only have I chosen* [known]. In *this way, to know is to choose*. Jeremiah 1:5: *Before I formed you in the womb I knew you* (NIV footnote to "knew," "or chose.").

2 Timothy 1:9 says nothing we did in the past—or would do in the *future*—got us into the kingdom: *...not because of anything we have done, but because of his own purpose and grace*. Furthermore, God is said to "foreknow" before He created the world that his Son would be the sin sacrifice: *He was chosen before the creation of the world, but was revealed in these last times for your sake*. (1 Peter 1:20). What's translated "chosen" in Peter's passage in the NIV and other translations, is actually "foreknown," as NASB and others. Young's Literal Translation reads: *...foreknown, indeed, before the foundation of the world...* In NT salvation, foreknowing = choosing, ordaining or deciding that someone will be saved. It is a personal *relationship* that results in a *saving* relationship (Galatians 4:9; 1 Corinthians 8:3).

- iv. Other words (same concept)
 1. Luke 18:7: *And will not God bring about justice for his **chosen** ones, who cry out to him day and night?*

2. Acts 2:38-39: *Peter replied, "Repent and be baptized, every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins. And you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. The promise is for you and your children and for all who are far off—for all whom the Lord our God will call."*
3. Acts 13:48: *When the Gentiles heard this, they were glad and honored the word of the Lord; and all who were appointed for eternal life believed.*
4. Acts 22:14: *"Then he said: 'The God of our fathers has chosen you to know his will and to see the Righteous One and to hear words from his mouth.*
5. Romans 8:33: *Who will bring any charge against those whom God has chosen?*
6. Romans 9:11-23: This is the central passage that displays God's independent selection of people. It also anticipates the charge that God is unfair; and answers it.
7. Romans 16:13: *Greet Rufus, chosen in the Lord, and his mother, who has been a mother to me, too.*
8. Ephesians 1:4: *For he chose us in him before the creation of the world to be holy and blameless in his sight.*
9. 1 Thessalonians 1:4-5: *For we know, brothers loved by God, that he has chosen you,⁵ because our gospel came to you not simply with words, but also with power, with the Holy Spirit and with deep conviction.*
(intriguing passage: Here it says the proof that you've been chosen, is transformation.)
10. 2 Thessalonians 2:13: *But we ought always to thank God for you, brothers loved by the Lord, because from the beginning God chose you to be saved through the sanctifying work of the Spirit and through belief in the truth.*
11. 2 John 1:1, 13: *The elder, To the chosen lady and her children, whom I love in the truth... (13) The children of your chosen sister send their greetings.*
12. Revelation 17:14: *"These will wage war against the Lamb, and the Lamb will overcome them, because He is Lord of lords and King of kings, and those who are with Him are the called and chosen and faithful."*
- v. Election is an inescapable teaching of the Bible. The NT mentions it 14 times. Since Paul wrote the most controversial passages, he is sometimes blamed for concocting the teaching. But the apostle Peter wrote about it twice; and Jesus mentioned it 3 times in the wide-ranging sermon he delivered on the Mount of Olives shortly before His death. In fact, it was Jesus who insisted that coming to faith without the Father's initial effort, was impossible. John 6:44, 65.
- vi. God chooses *not* to save some. Proverbs 16:4; John 17:12; Romans 9:22; 1 Peter 2:8; Jude 4

There is only one thing God owes everyone: Hell (Romans 5:12, 16). Consequently, no one can accuse God of being unfair for not condemning some people while giving others what they so richly deserve. Since all people are under the King's wrath from the start, He is not obligated to treat everyone the same, nor prohibited from extending mercy and grace to some.

The Big Questions about Election

1. **If God elects, is the gospel genuinely offered to all people?**
 - a. YES! Romans 10:13; Acts 2:21; 1 John 2:2; Revelation 22:17
2. **Is election fair of God?** [This is usually the biggie.]: No. Nor would we want God to be fair. Extending grace and mercy are not fair. So, for God to be fair would demand that He destroy *all* of us for our sin. Paul answers this pointedly in Romans 9:19-23
3. **Does God only want some people to be saved?** The Scripture says He wants *all* to be saved. *2 Peter 3:9; 1 Timothy 2:4* But there is a difference between his revealed will (these passages), and his secret or *decreed* will (details of His plan that He *keeps* from us).
4. **Aren't people really little more than puppets?** As we concluded in the study of God's providence, people have the ability to make real and genuine choices, however it's not a type of free will like some Christians imagine which operates independently of God's secret will, of His control.
5. **Doesn't this excuse people from any responsibility to turn to Christ?**
 - a. No. The Bible pointedly holds each of us responsible for our sin. *Isaiah 48:18; 50:1b; John 3:17-18; 5:40; Jude 1:15*
 - b. Every Bible command to turn from sin assumes people's responsibility. *Ezekiel 18:32*
 - c. Every plea for people to respond to the gospel, assumes they have the *ability*, and *responsibility* to do so. *We implore you on Christ's behalf: be reconciled to God. 2 Corinthians 5:20*
6. **Doesn't this diminish the call to obedience? If someone's elect, can she live in disobedience and still go to heaven?**
 - a. No, because faithful living is the *only way we can have confidence* we are elect. The Bible says obedience is *the mark* of the elect. Professing Christians can only gain confidence of their election (*Philippians 2:12*) if they are better at obedience than disobedience. *Titus 1:16; Hebrews 10:26*
 - b. Peter told professing believers that in obeying God they may silence a conscience that may be questioning their regeneration. *Therefore, my brothers, be all the more eager to make your calling and election sure. For if you do these things, you will never fall, and you will receive a rich welcome into the eternal kingdom of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. 2 Peter 2:10-11* [see verses 8 & 9 too].
 - c. 1 John contains 8 tests for authentic salvation and except for one *belief* test, the remaining are matters of love and obedience.
7. **Doesn't this make evangelism and missions unnecessary?**
 - a. **NO!** See Jesus' command in Matthew 28:18-20, Acts 1:8, etc.
 - b. Since I don't know who is elect, I am to offer the gospel to all. You and I are the *means* by which God summons the elect to repentance and faith. Romans 10:14, 17.
 - c. No one was more convinced than the apostle Paul that God sovereignly has elected only some. Yet he and other apostles spent their lives feverishly begging people to come to Christ (Acts 5:20; 22:14-16; 2 Corinthians 5:20), their urgency testifying that they were convinced they should preach the gospel to *everyone*.

- d. Actually, that God elects some to be His children should incite us to evangelize since it guarantees that evangelism and missions *will be* effective. If it depended on *us* to persuade, we'd have no assurance. But if *God's* behind our telling, look out!

8. Even if God did elect people first—long before they responded in faith, does it really matter?

- a. Truth always matters. It's what sets us free. *John 8:32*
- b. It widens our worship. That gasp that slips from our lips as we see God getting bigger and bigger turns into praise. Who is this God who chose me before I had a single thing to offer him, and who made my hard heart soft and responsive to Him?
- c. It gives assurance our salvation will endure. If our lives give evidence of genuine salvation, then we can have confidence that the One who chose us will finish what he started (Romans 8:29-30 provides a daisy-chain of hope for the elect that their future is secured). Because no matter how unreliable *I* may be, how unlikely *I* may truly follow through on my faith, what God starts He *always* finishes. *Philippians 1:6*
- d. It makes us deeply grateful. To collapse before God in gratitude is all that we can do once we realize that like Jacob, God chose us simply because He chose us, simply because He set His love on us.
- e. Can alleviate the fear that a lost loved one is too far gone for God to get.

- b. Conviction: Through any number of means God the Spirit takes initiative to get the unbeliever to see that before God, he/she is guilty of crimes deserving judgment. *John:7-11*
- c. Regeneration: (see 2b above)
- d. Repentance/belief: The regenerated sinner (the instant after regeneration) turns to Christ in repentance and faith. *Acts 20:21; Romans 10:9-10*
- e. Salvation is the result.
 - i. Perseverance: the work of God the Spirit in a genuine believer to assure that he/she will retain faith right up to the end and receive his/her reward. *Hebrews 3:14; Romans 14:4*
 - 1. God's grip on you: *John 10:27-29; Hebrews 13:5; Romans 8:1, 29-30, 33-39; Philippians 1:6; Jude 1:24*
 - 2. God has sealed you. *Ephesians 1:13-14; 2 Corinthians 1:21-22; 5:5*

Counterfeit Christians: It is more likely that people who appear to have lost their salvation were never saved in the first place. The Bible often depicts such people. *Titus 1:16; 2*

Corinthians 11: 14-15, 26; Galatians 2:4; 2 Timothy 3:5; Jude 1:4

Assignment #9: *Battling Unbelief* (read pages 9-36)

Memorize ...*Ephesians 1:11*

Why is there Suffering?

[Suffering makes no sense apart from the gospel.]

1. **Why is there suffering if there is an all-powerful God who is good?** (Any answer to this huge question is called a “theodicy”.)
 - a. We dislike suffering whether it’s physically because of things like illness, disease, injury, natural disasters, abuse, crime, accidents, poverty, or war, or emotionally because of things like loneliness, depression, fear, anxiety or abandonment. Most people assume that anything they dislike must be a bad thing. Since Christians also endure bad things, can God still be good and love His children since He doesn’t even spare them from suffering? [This question has led to the blasphemous suggestion that a suffering believer needs to forgive God.]
 - b. God is all-powerful and *could* relieve any and all suffering, but doesn’t.
 - c. Although He’s God, He knows all about suffering, even experientially.
 - i. Sent his only Son to be executed for an unappreciative world.
 - ii. Though early in His ministry on earth many followed God the Son, in time many turned their backs on Him. *John 6:66*
 - iii. God the Son was executed by the most torturous means ever devised. *Isaiah 53:10; Mark 8:31*
 - d. Some purposes of suffering.
 - i. Get believers to depend more and more upon God. *2 Corinthians 1:8-11*
 1. [Similarly, makes us more likely to persevere. *Romans 5:3*]
 - ii. Nourishes the thankfulness of believers. (aren’t the good things/good times more wonderful if we’ve experienced bad things/bad times?)
 - iii. Provides radical contrast for believers’ future. *Romans 8:17-18*
 - iv. Aids believers in their sanctification, spiritual growth, and learning obedience. *Hebrews 5:8; 12:7-11*
 - v. Magnifies God; brings Him glory, more fame. *Exodus 32:11-13; John 9:1-3*
 - vi. Puts God’s wisdom on display to angelic beings. *Ephesians 3:10*

Who is the Holy Spirit?

1. He is God! *Acts 5:3-5; Matthew 28:19; Psalm 139:7-8*
 - a. **What He used to do.** Under the Old Covenant God the Spirit lived only in those He called to special service such as king, military commander, prophet, tabernacle builder, priest. *1 Samuel 16:13; Judges 3:10; Exodus 31:3; 35:31; Micah 3:8; 2 Chronicles 24:20.*
 - b. **What He does now.** For the past 2000 years God the Spirit has worked differently from the Old Covenant and now lives in all who belong to God. *1 Corinthians 3:16; Romans 8:9, 11; 1 John 4:13.* Permanently. Which means that the prayer "And Lord, just be with us..." was answered before you prayed it! *Hebrews 13:5*
 - c. **The extent of His presence.** All believers have the Spirit in equal measure. While gifts may vary both in kind and in strength, no believer suffers from a partial, diluted, or restricted Holy Spirit. Yes, the breadth of our faith and our obedience can *release* Him for *greater* work—or *restrict* His work, but all the power we need, we have. *2 Peter 1:3.*
2. Busy God of great power!
 - a. **Convicts:** The Spirit is the One who made us realize the guilt of our sin when we were lost—and continues to now that we're God's. *John 16:7-11*
 - b. **Regenerates:** The Spirit is the One who raised our spirits to life so we could repent and put faith in Christ. *John 3:3-8; Titus 3:5*
 - c. **Baptizes:** The Spirit is the One who makes us members in the Body of Christ. *1 Corinthians 12:13*
 - d. **Adopts:** The Spirit is the One who makes us daughters and sons of God and promises us full placement one day. *Romans 8:23*
 - e. **Teaches & illuminates:** The Spirit is the One who points us in the right direction whether we're wayward or simply confused. This is less about choosing between two offered jobs, or which of two houses to buy, and more about choosing right over wrong, God's will over ours, and about understanding the Bible. *John 14:26; 16:13; 1 Corinthians 2:11-15;*
 - f. **Fills:** As we establish a climate of cooperation with—or resistance to God's will, the Spirit is the One who is given greater or lesser freedom to rule our lives. The filling is in constant flux: sometimes down a quart, sometimes nearly full. Other times, in between. *Ephesians 5:18*
 - g. **Assures:** The Spirit is the One who whispers, "Yes, you *are* saved!" *Romans 8:16*
 - h. **Seals:** The One who keeps us saved. *Ephesians 1:13-14; 2 Corinthians 1:21-22; 5:5*
 - i. **Empowers & gifts:** The One who equips & empowers us to minister to others. *Acts 1:8; 1 Corinthians 12:7-11*
 - j. **Sanctifies** (or purifies): The One who changes us from the inside out.
 - k. **Prays:** The One who prays *for* us when we're too stuck or overwhelmed to pray. *Romans 8:26*
3. Confusion about the Spirit
 - a. **Baptism of the Holy Spirit:** Our Pentecostal friends and some Charismatics, believe this is *more* than placing a person into the family of faith. They believe

it's a second work of grace sometime after conversion when the Spirit God enters a person and provides supernatural power and giftedness, marked by speaking in tongues. But the baptism in 1 Corinthians 12:13 is clearly something *every* believer has experienced—not possible if some are still waiting.

- b. Praying to the Holy Spirit: Despite being God, there is never an example in the Bible of someone praying to the Spirit. Since His job is to glorify the Son and *not* himself (*John 16:13*), it seems unwise to do what is not patterned in Scripture.
- c. Pointless manifestations: In recent decades, some Pentecostal and Charismatic Christians have claimed that increasingly bizarre manifestations such as barking like dogs, roaring like lions, holy laughter, or “drunkenness” in the Spirit—as well as the more well-traveled “slain in the Spirit”, are the result of the Holy Spirit’s work. Even critics within these movements (*Charisma* editor J. Lee Grady, Pentecostal pastor Jim Cymbala) are reminding their people that the Spirit is a God of order (1 Corinthians 14: 33)—not chaos, and his work is peace, and that whatever we see today that’s legitimate should be seen in the Scriptures. True, on the Day of Pentecost some thought those who spoke in other tongues might be drunk, but the confusion was over what was not understood, not over what was bizarre.

Who is Satan and what are demons?

1. Bible names for God's archenemy
 - a. Satan (Hebrew word for *adversary*). *Zechariah 3:1; Mark 1:14; Luke 13:16*
 - b. The Devil (Greek word for *slanderer*). *James 4:7; 1 Peter 5:8*
 - c. Dragon. *Revelation 12:9, 20:2*
 - d. Serpent. *Revelation 12:9*
 - e. The Evil One. *1 John 2:13*
 - f. The god of this world. *2 Corinthians 4:4*
 - g. Beelzebub. *Matthew 12:24*
 - h. Belial. *2 Corinthians 6:15*
 - i. The Tempter. *Matthew 4:5; 1 Thessalonians 3:5*
 - j. Ruler of this world. *John 12:31*
 - k. Ruler of the Kingdom of the Air. *Ephesians 2:2*
 - l. Accuser of our Brothers. *Revelation 12:10*
 - m. Father of Lies. *John 8:44*
 - n. Abaddon (Hebrew) or Apollyon (Greek). *Revelation 9:11*
 - o. Day Star, son of Dawn (only KJV uses "Lucifer"). *Isaiah 14:12*
2. Bible names for Satan's henchmen
 - a. Demons. *Mark 6:13; 1 Timothy 4:1*
3. Origins
 - a. Satan and demons did not always exist. Back when He was creating (Genesis 1), God created them and all angels, to serve Him. *Ezekiel 28:12-15*
 - b. In *Genesis 1:31* they were still serving God but sometime before *Genesis 3:1* a portion of the angels revolted against God. *2 Peter 2:4; Jude 1:6*
 - c. Satan led the rebellion, seeking God's position itself. *Isaiah 14:12-15; Ezekiel 28:17;*
4. Satan and his riff-raff used to have free access to heaven. *Job 1:6; 2:1*
5. Expelled from heaven after Jesus' victory (ascended back to heaven). *Revelation 12:4-9*
6. What he & his demons do and/or try to get *others* to do:
 - a. Sin. *1 John 3:8, 10*
 - b. Keep people from Christ. *2 Corinthians 4:4; Luke 8:12*
 - c. Turn people away from God's plan. *Matthew 4:10; 16:23; Mark 1:15; 4:13*
 - d. Tempt. *Genesis 3:1-6; Matthew 4:1-11; 1 Corinthians 7:5*
 - e. Torment. *2 Corinthians 12:7*
 - f. Test. *Job 1:9-12; Luke 22:31; Revelation 2:10*
 - g. Cause sickness. *Luke 13:16; 2 Corinthians 12:7*
 - h. Deceive. *2 Corinthians 7:14; 2 Thessalonians 2:9; Revelation 12:9; Acts 13:10*
 - i. Teach false doctrine. *1 Timothy 4:1*
 - j. Lie. *John 8:44; Acts 5:3;*
 - k. Accuses believers. *Zechariah 3:1*
 - l. Murder. *John 8:44; 1 John 3:12*
 - m. Destroy. *1 Peter 5:8*
7. False gods are actually demons. *Deuteronomy 32:16-17; 1 Corinthians 10:20*
8. God's power is greater than that of Satan and his demons. *Job 1:12; 2:6; Ephesians 6:10-16; James 4:7; 1 John 4:4; Jude 1:6; Colossians 2:15*

- a. In Jesus' name, believers have authority over demonic forces. *Luke 10:17; 1 Peter 5:8-9*
- 9. Correctives
 - a. Not all evil & sin is from Satan or demons. You cannot dodge your responsibility for sin by claiming "The devil made me do it!" Even believers have a sin nature that is still active, and we know how to use it! *James 4:1* Also, the "world" is an influence, luring and misdirecting us toward its sinful ways. *1 John 2:15-17; James 4:4.*
 - b. Do not worry that Satan or demons can read your mind—or even instill thoughts. However, Satan is a shrewd student of human nature in general, and each of us in particular. He knows where our weaknesses are and how to exploit them. It only *seems* like he can read our minds.
 - c. Doing "Spiritual Warfare" today
 - i. Yes, demons still exist.
 - ii. Yes, Jesus and the apostles cast them out in the NT
 - iii. There may be a time to "command" a demon to come out of a person.
 - 1. Look for bizarre or God-opposing behavior. *Matthew 8:28; Acts 16:16-18*
 - 2. Discern the Holy Spirit's leading: is this a demon or not? *1 John 4:1-3*
 - 3. Pray.
 - 4. Command (Note: while some "deliverance" ministries describe long and agonizing sessions of shouting, etc., in the NT the work of casting out demons did not look like that.)
 - iv. In general, the NT ***teaching*** to believers is not how to cast out demons, but how to battle sin and walk uprightly.
 - v. Because sin makes us vulnerable to demonic activity. *Ephesians 4:26; 6:14*
 - vi. There is no NT pattern that would suggest we can or should cast out demons of "lust" or "alcoholism" or "depression" or "gluttony."
 - 1. Example: when a guy was living with his stepmom at Corinth, rather than telling them to cast out a demon of incest, Paul told them to rebuke the sinner and *actually turn the guy over to Satan!* *1 Corinthians 5:1-5*
 - 2. Example: when 2 Christians were in conflict, Paul didn't tell them to cast out a demon of disputation or division, but told them to "agree with one another in the Lord." *Philippians 4:2*
 - vii. There is no NT pattern that would suggest we can—or should call out to/interact with a "territorial" demon.

...once the Christian is born again he must get ready for war. Entrance into the Christian life is entrance into cosmic warfare. The way of sanctification is the way of militance. R. C. Sproul [*The Mystery of the Holy Spirit*].

Sanctification is "becoming what you are". John Piper [*Battling Unbelief*]

In our story, heaven is not our goal; it's the destination. ...the goal of Christianity is spiritual transformation into Christlikeness. Todd Hunter, Anglican priest [*Christianity Today* interview, September, 2009]

What is Sanctification?

[Note: "sanctify" means to separate something or someone from the rest to be holy.] Sanctification is what is usually meant by "following Christ", "discipleship", "spiritual growth", "obedience", "growing in holiness" or "Christian maturity".

1. Sanctification stages
 - a. **Definite:** At regeneration the Spirit completely sanctifies you so that you are clean, perfect, good, and holy in God's eyes. Since God the Son earned your sanctification on the cross, in the presence of God the Father you are positionally sanctified. Now. *1 Corinthians 6:11; 2 Thessalonians 2:13; Acts 20:32*
 - b. **Progressive:** But even though there was a definite beginning to your sanctification, it's not complete because you're *not* holy or clean in the eyes of the people who live with you. So for the rest of your life, the Holy Spirit—operating from His home base *in* you, will also sanctify you progressively, rooting out sin more and more, and making you *actually* more and more like Christ as you cooperate.
 - i. [Caution: sanctification does not *save* us, but occurs because we *have been* saved.]
 - ii. [Caution: sanctification is not a self-improvement program or a DIY personal makeover that you grind out on your strength. It is God transforming us to the degree that we cooperate with Him.]
 - iii. God the Son is our example of holiness. *Hebrews 4:15*
 - iv. God the Spirit provides the power to be holy and initiates sanctification. *Philippians 2:13*. Which is why we can be confident of growth. We may be unreliable but He's not. *Philippians 1:6; 2 Corinthians 3:18*
 - v. The believer is not passive in this work. He/she is called to fight [unbelief!] against his/her prevailing tendency to sin. *2 Peter 3:18; Romans 6:12-13; Ephesians 4:25-32; Hebrews 12:14*
2. What does God use to sanctify us?
 - a. Holy Spirit's personal intervention. *2 Thessalonians 3:3, 5*
 - a. Scripture. *John 17:17; Psalm 119:9-11; Matthew 4:4*
 - b. Prayer. *Ephesians 6:18; Philippians 4:6; 1 Timothy 2:1-2*
 - c. Conscience. *Acts 24:16; Romans 2:15; 2 Corinthians 1:12;*
 - d. The church. *2 Timothy 2:25-26; 1 Corinthians 5:1-5 2 Corinthians 2:6-7*

- e. Other Christians. *Galatians 2:11; James 5:16*
- f. Suffering. *1 Peter 4:1; Hebrews 5:8-9; Psalm 119:71; 1 Peter 1:6-7*
- 3. Active opposition to our sanctification
 - a. Satan. *Ephesians 6:10-18; Job 1-2; Revelation 2:10*
 - b. World. *Colossians 2:8; Titus 2:12; James 4:4*
 - c. Our own sin nature: *Galatians 5:16-19*
- 4. How can we be sure we're being sanctified?
 - a. Fruit is growing. *Galatians 5:22-23*
- 5. What about the believing sinner who shows little or no *interest* in improving—or actual *improvement* in the areas of sin and righteousness?
 - i. Suggests Holy Spirit is not present. *Galatians 5:16-24*
 - ii. Suggests sin's power has not been broken. *Romans 6:6-7*
 - iii. Suggests person not truly regenerated. *Titus 1:16*
- 6. **Speed of the Progress:** Since people are all different—and since we all have differing measures of faith (*Romans 12:6*), this will vary from person to person: some will grow faster, others slower.
- 7. Alternative understandings of Sanctification
 - a. Entire Sanctification: John Wesley taught (and spiritual descendants such as the Methodists, Wesleyans, Nazarenes and Brethren-in-Christ either do or did) teach that “entire sanctification” or “sinless perfection” is possible for the believer. They think verses like Matthew 5:48; 1 Peter 1:16 command this—and so, if it's commanded, it must be possible.
 - i. This is usually thought to occur at a moment, but a second work of grace sometime *after* conversion. By this teaching the believer stops sinning in a moment as a result of God's grace (rather than the believer gradually improving to the point of no longer sinning).
 - ii. But 1 John 1:8, 10 make clear that this side of heaven, everyone will continue to struggle against sin—without complete victory.
 - b. Let go and let God. This pithy “teaching” originated in Keswick circles in the late 1800's (theme verse, *Galatians 2:20*) but has widespread acceptance among evangelical Christians of all stripes. It's not a bad approach if we're talking about something that God is exclusively responsible for. Such as the future. That's something we should stop worrying about and let God handle; because we can't change it anyway. On the other hand, a partnership like sanctification has no place for this kind of passivity. We mature *only* as we say “yes” to the Holy Spirit and cooperate with Him; react positively to his proddings. *2 Thessalonians 3:4-5*
 - c. Mystic: This was practiced by many of the ancient saints including Anthony, John of the Cross and Martin Luther. They believed the only way to harness the remaining sin nature was to get away from temptation. Thus, the monasteries were born. Unfortunately, as Luther discovered, temptations are not just on the outside, they're on the inside too. And Anthony, after giving away his family fortune in the late 3rd century A.D., lived by himself in the Egyptian desert. Where he was tempted by boredom, laziness, and visions of women!
 - d. Confusing grace (Antinomian = *against law*): No one group endorses this but increasingly evangelical Christians either misrepresent or misunderstand grace—or both. They view it as God's way of assuring us that sin doesn't matter, rather than seeing it as God's gift to *defeat* sin. *Jude 1:4*

Love the Church!

- a. The “Church” is not so popular these days—even among Christians. Why do you think that is?
 - i. *The church has people that aren’t likeable; or like me.*
 - ii. *Things don’t always go right in the church.*
 - iii. *The church is sometimes little more than a club for select people.*
 - iv. *Sometimes the church isn’t using its people.*
 - v. *People’s ideas sometimes shot down.*
 - vi. *People’s feelings get hurt*
 - vii. *Disagree on what should be done.*
 - viii. *People fall through the cracks, don’t feel loved or cared for.*
 - ix. *People don’t like to be under authority or accountable.*
 - x. *In other words, sin remains.*
- b. Mike’s a Christian but *not* part of a local church;
 - i. What’s the upside for him?
 1. *Sleep in Sunday morning*
 2. *Doesn’t have to sit for an hour or two with people he doesn’t like, listening to speeches he objects to, and feeling pressured about his time and money.*
 3. *No need to exercise his spiritual gifts.*
 4. *Won’t be offended or give offense.*
 5. *Accountable to no one.*
 6. *Can keep all his money for himself.*
 7. *No need to learn to work with other people.*
 8. *No need to compromise to get something done.*
 - ii. What’s the downside?
 1. *Can neither give nor receive love from fellow believers.*
 2. *Not part of something bigger than himself.*
 3. *No crucible in which to learn about compromise,*
 4. *Accountable to no one.*
 5. *Doesn’t hear corporate teaching*
 6. *Doesn’t participate in corporate worship*
 7. *The church doesn’t benefit from his gifts.*
 8. *No opportunity to be blessed by God for giving.*
 9. *The church suffers from his absence.*
- c. Based on gripes unbelievers might hear from Christians, or that substantial numbers of Christians are not a part of a local church (yes, a house church *is* a local church), what conclusions might unbelievers draw?
 - i. *Christians don’t value or love the church*
 - ii. *Christians don’t like other Christians.*
 - iii. *God can’t get His people to work together.*
 - iv. *Any value church has is for the benefit of the individual Christian.*
 - v. *Christians have a streak of independence*
 - vi. *Apparently the gospel can’t change people to the degree that they learn to love each other and work together. (So unlike the fame of the early church “See how they love each other”.)*

- vii. *Christians don't want to be under authority.*
- viii. *A church is little different from a store or other service supplier.*

What is the Church? *ekklesia*

1. Names for the church in the Bible
 - a. Bride of Christ. *Revelation 19:7*
 - b. Body of Christ. *1 Corinthians 12:27; Ephesians 4:12*
 - c. God's household. *1 Timothy 3:15*
 - i. House of God. *Hebrews 3:6; 10:21*
 - ii. Spiritual house. *1 Peter 2:5*
 - iii. God's building. *1 Corinthians 3:9*
 - d. Family in heaven & earth. *Ephesians 3:15*
 - e. Flock. *Acts 20:28; 1 Peter 5:3*
 - f. God's field. *1 Corinthians 3:9*
 - g. Church of the Firstborn. *Hebrews 12:23*
2. **Big "C" church:** This is the universal/invisible Church; the Church as God sees it. The collection of all believers of all times and every place.
3. **Little "c" church:** This is the local/visible church; the church as people see it. A collection of *some* believers—right here, right now. Sharing mutual convictions, mutual values, mutual objectives, mutual priorities.

When did the Church begin?

1. Since the Bible first mentions the church in the New Testament (Matthew 16:18), many Christians think the church is a totally new creation resulting from Christ's coming. But others believe the "Church" rightfully includes the people of God from the *Old Covenant* as well as the New. For example, in Acts 7:38 Luke calls the Israelites who had just escaped from Egypt under Moses, an *ekklesia*.
2. There are similarities between the new Church and the ancient Israel congregation: worship, reading of the law/ teaching, sacrificial giving, caring for one another in the community, discipline, and the authority of elders. However, even if the Church and ancient congregation *are* linked, there are also significant differences between the two: no more circumcision, no more sacrifices, no more priests, no more elevating the law, no more judgments on civil matters, no more worship at just one place.

What should mark the local church?

- Assembly. *Hebrews 10:24-25*
- Teaching the Bible/sound doctrine. *2 Timothy 4:2-3; Titus 1:9, 2:1; 1 Timothy 4:13-16*
- Proclaiming the gospel in word and deed. *Matthew 28:18-20; Acts 1:8; 13:2-3; Philipians 1:27; Colossians 3:17*
- Prayer. *1 Thessalonians 5:25; 1 Timothy 4:8; James 5:14; 1 John 5:16*
- Biblically qualified leaders. *1 Timothy 3:1-7; Titus 1:6-9; 1 Peter 5:1-3*
- God-Centered Worship. *John 4:24; Romans 12:1-3*
- Discipleship. *Ephesians 4:11-16; 2 Timothy 2:2*
- Brothers/sisters loving one another. *John 15:7; 2 Thessalonians 1:3; 1 Peter 4:8*
- Brothers/sisters serving one another. *Galatians 5:13; 1 Peter 4:10*
- Brothers/sisters using their gifts and talents. *1 Corinthians 12:7-11; Romans 12:6-8; Ephesians 4:11-13; 1 Peter 4:10-11*
- Baptism & Communion. *Matthew 28:19; 1 Corinthians 10:17; Luke 22:19-20*

- Accountability & church discipline. *Matthew 18:15-17; Hebrews 13:17; 1 Corinthians 5:1-5; 1 Timothy 1:20*

Why love the church? *Because it is the only thing Jesus Christ died for.* (Ephesians 5:25)

The context for a gospel-centered life is never merely individual. The gospel creates a new community, a unique community. "One of the immediate changes that the gospel makes is grammatical: 'we' instead of 'I'; 'our' instead of 'my'; 'us' instead of 'me.'" (Eugene Peterson, Reversed Thunder). This kind of new community is not an optional thing, an "extra" for the Christian; instead it's part of the overall purpose of God's kingdom. (Tim Keller, author & pastor of Redeemer Presbyterian in Manhattan, NY)

Love the Lord (so you'll love the lost)!

During the span of my adult life, I've witnessed dozens of evangelistic fads. ...But each time a new approach surfaced, I secretly wonder (sic) how long the wave would last, how long the movement could possibly be sustained. Sure, even I hopped on a few of them, but I knew they all lacked longevity. (Bill Hybels in Just Walk Across the Room)

When Dr. C. I. Scofield (of Scofield Bible fame) was a pastor, a member of his congregation went to China as a missionary. Before leaving she visited with her pastor who said, "I suppose you're going to China because you love the Chinese." She shook her head. "Actually, I really don't even care for them. I'm going because I love my Lord and he has told me to go."

After 7 years of ministry she returned home for furlough. Visiting with Dr. Scofield she asked, "Do you remember when you asked me if I loved the Chinese?" He nodded. "Well, I didn't then, but I do now."

1. How not to hate talking to unbelievers about Jesus
 - a. Have the gift: Since Christians look forward to—and get energized when using their spiritual gifts, the fact that most both dread and feel guilty about evangelism suggests a tiny minority of believers have the gift of evangelism (Ephesians 4:11).
 - b. Have the commission: Yet Jesus Himself commissioned all believers to tell people the good news (Matthew 28:18-20; Acts 1:8).
 - c. Have the love: It doesn't appear that the latest evangelist fad—or knowing that unbelievers go to hell, keeps ungifted believers motivated to talk about Jesus. I'm convinced the only durable motivation is a love for God which comes from a deeper and deeper understanding of what we're owed, yet what He's given us in Christ. *This* is what attacks timidity, fears, doubts, the flesh...
2. Where's the Love? If you do not know this kind of love for the Lord, review the salvation notes of this study (pp.27-31). This kind of love is not simply "worked up", but the result of a growing understanding of how chained I was to sin, how disinterested I was in rescue, yet how God in his love, mercy and grace, rescued me and made me his child; all that and the SOLE thing I *deserved* was hell.
3. Using a technique?
 - a. The fads, the curriculums, the approaches all claim to make evangelism easy—easy enough for *anyone* to do. They rarely do since sharing the gospel is not mechanics 101, it's a spiritual war (Ephesians 6:12; 2 Timothy 2:26;). And since the enemy has supernaturally blinded those we want to talk to (2 Corinthians 4:4), it's pointless to bank on *any* human/natural technique.
 - b. However, ever believer should have a memorized framework of the gospel—not so much as a rigid outline to use on people, but as a way to keep his/her *own* mind straight. It helps with confidence, and it helps keep our minds from getting tangled in the heat of the moment during some divine encounters.
 - i. Romans Road
 1. Romans 3:10, 23
 2. Romans 6:23
 3. Romans 5:8
 4. Romans 10:9-10

ii. The Bridge Illustration (From Navigators)



Possible Scriptures to use...

Sin & the problem it's created: *Romans 3:10, 23; 6:23*

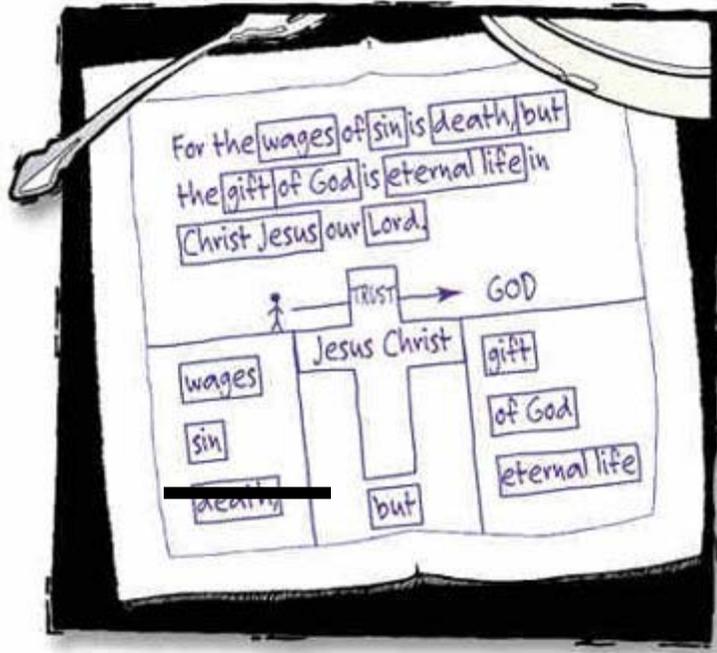
Futility of me doing works to impress God: *Isaiah 64:6; Ephesians 2:9*

Gospel: *1 Peter 3:18; John 1:12*

How to receive the offer: *Acts 20:21; Ephesians 2:8-9*

The promise: *John 1:12; John 3:18a; Romans 8:28-39*

iii. Bridge with single verse: *Romans 6:23* (Randy D. Raysbrook)



- iv. Way of the Master: Help "good" people see that they are all guilty of breaking God's laws: have you ever told a lie? Have you ever taken the Lord's name in vain? Have you stolen anything? Have you ever looked at someone with lust?

v. Do/Done (from Willow Creek)

Religion is spelled D-O, and is all about trying to DO enough to please God. Trouble is we don't know if we ever do enough, and the Bible says we never can (*Romans 3:23*).

Christianity is spelled D-O-N-E. Jesus has done what we could never do. He lived the perfect life and died on the cross to pay for all the wrong stuff we have done. But it's not enough just to *know* this; to

receive it, agree to change your mind about your love affair with sin (repent), and put faith in what Christ has done to forgive you.

vi. Four Spiritual Laws (Campus Crusade)

Principle 1: God loves you and offers a wonderful plan for your life.

(Why is it that most people are not experiencing it? Because...)

Principle 2: All of us sin and our sin has separated us from God.

Principle 3: Jesus Christ is God's only provision for our sin. Through Him we can know and experience God's love and plan for our life.

Principle 4: We must individually receive Jesus Christ as Savior and Lord; then we can know and experience God's love and plan for our lives.

Receiving Christ involves turning to God from self (repentance) and trusting Christ to come into our lives to forgive our sins and to make us what He wants us to be. Just to agree intellectually that Jesus Christ is the Son of God and that He died on the cross for your sins is not enough. Nor is it enough to have an emotional experience. You receive Jesus Christ by faith, as an act of the will.

vii. EvangeCube (requires tool purchases from e3 Partners Mission organization)

4. Evangelism power

- a. *Not by might, nor by power, but by my Spirit says the Lord Almighty.* Zechariah 4:6
- b. *Apart from me you can do nothing.* John 15:5
- c. *No one can come to me unless the Father who sent me draws him.* John 6:44
- d. *And all who were appointed for eternal life, believed.* Acts 13:48

5. Cautions

- a. Sharing the gospel is your job; saving the person is God's.
- b. Prayerless evangelism is not evangelism
- c. Ask lots of questions. It not only says "I care more about you than just saying my peace," but also gives you time to learn what their big questions are—rather than answering a lot they're not asking.
- d. You don't score points for being obnoxious and irritating. Be willing to respect boundaries another person may lay down.
- e. This is not about you, so stop worrying about success or failure. You may be the one who gets to escort the other person to Christ, or merely one in a long chain of people God uses before that happens.
- f. The gospel always includes talk of sin and talk of Jesus (not just "God"); always. Help people understand sin is *everything* that falls short of perfection; any attitude, deed, or word that misses God's mark.
- g. Let the Spirit guide you. There may be times *not* to speak to an unbeliever. But don't camouflage your fears with "the Spirit's not telling me to speak".