



WHAT DO YOU
BELIEVE
- REALLY?

A Comparative Study of Faith

ROBERT A. WHITLEY
and STEVE DARDEN

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REALLY?**

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by

Robert A. Whitley, Ph.D.

**Major contributions and editing
completed by Pastor Steve Darden**

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What Do You Believe -- Really? is dedicated to our wives, Brenda Whitley and Donna Darden. Their moral support and editorial skills have greatly contributed to the completion of this work. Saying thank you is only a spark from the gratitude we each feel for our respective “gifts” from God. They have truly exemplified the word “helpmeet” in our lives.

PREFACE

It is not an easy task to find a book that is simple and precise yet thorough enough to be used as a comparative study tool of faiths. What Do You Believe -- Really? may be used for that purpose besides being a Bible study tool in itself.

The book is straightforward in its presentation with quoted scriptures to support the explanations. It covers the main theological ideas in Christianity that both students of Christianity and of other faiths may use as key comparative starting points in their theological and ethical quest. The reflections and questions at the end of each part and chapter will help guide students to find ways to examine themselves and compare their beliefs to Christianity.

What Do You Believe -- Really? will challenge the reader to deeper self-discovery through discussion and further research leading to even greater understanding of the stated and proposed truth.

Potchanat Samermit, Ph.D.
Professor and President
University of Interdisciplinary Studies (UIDS)
Dallas, Texas
and
Chancellor
UIDS International College of Interdisciplinary Studies
A UIDS Collaborative International Education Development
Project
at Siam Technology College-University of Interdisciplinary
Studies,
Bangkok, Thailand

FORWARD

Dr. Robert Whitely and Steve Darden's Bible study book, What Do You Believe – Really?, will be an excellent evangelistic tool, especially in cross-cultural settings. It's been my privilege to preach the Gospel in Muslim countries, Communist countries, Roman Catholic countries, secular countries, countries where Christians are persecuted, and countries where Spiritual Awakening is a present reality. This book, I believe, could be used effectively in evangelistic Bible studies in any of these settings. It sets forth the main doctrines of the Christian faith in a simple, direct, and yet non-combative manner. At the end of each section, the individual of a non-Christian belief system is given the opportunity to compare Biblical truth with his own understanding of spiritual reality. What Do You Believe – Really? is saturated with Scripture; the authors reveal a very high view of the Bible and an utter confidence in the Word of God used by the Holy Spirit to do its work in a nonbeliever's heart. It is marked with clarity and practicality.

What Do You Believe – Really? needs to be translated into many languages. I wish it were available in Spanish today.

Dan Grindstaff, Evangelist

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INTRODUCTION

Today, the Eastern world and the Western world are more knowledgeable of each other's culture due to modern communications and business/personal travel around the world. Knowledge alone is not enough. Understanding is necessary for knowledge to be complete. The purpose of this book is two-fold.

First, it is designed to be used as a Bible Study. Christians will read the text and lookup the related scriptures before each session. The Study Leader will then lead a discussion on the material. There are questions at the end of each section to help the reader relate the material to their personal beliefs.

Second, since the principles presented in this book are universal, readers from other cultures should be able to relate these principles to their own culture/beliefs. Therefore, this book may be used by universities or colleges worldwide as a Comparative Religions class. This study is different from most Comparative Religion classes that compare one religion to many other religions or beliefs.

Instead, this study is written to allow a comparison of your own religion, personal beliefs, and/or non-beliefs to Christianity. There are questions presented at the end of each section of the book to aid in this process. The answers should be based on the students understanding of both their own beliefs and those presented in this book. The answers can then be handed in or mailed/e-mailed to the professor for evaluation.

If you are a graduate student, the professor may require extensive research outside the confines of this book. It is suggested that you begin with this work and then, with specific assignments determined by the professor, continue on a journey of discovery that will enlighten your heart and mind. It is our most sincere wish that God will guide and bless your journey.

Note: Explanations of the underlined words are found at the end of this work.

CHAPTER I

UNDERSTANDING SALVATION

“The Lord is not slow in keeping his promise, as some understand slowness. He is patient with you, not wanting anyone to perish, but everyone to come to repentance.” 2 Peter 3:9

God created us for fellowship with Him. He is not willing that any should perish, so He sent Jesus to restore our broken relationship with Him. An understanding of salvation gives us assurance of this restored relationship. As we look at salvation, it is extremely important to look at the big picture, at least as much as we are able. Our understanding is limited but God’s is not and He has given us His Word and the Holy Spirit to help us know Him. According to history, Christ did His redemptive work on the cross about two thousand years ago. To us, this is a specific point in time, but Revelation 13:8 tells us *“the Lamb was slain from the creation of the world.”* Jesus loved us from the beginning of time since He created the world (John 1:1-5). He was with His Father when Noah built the ark and when Moses crossed the Red Sea.

The people, who lived in the Old Testament times, came to God by faith just as we do today because God’s forgiveness is not bound by time. Jesus died for all sinners, past, present and future. This is hard for us to understand because we are limited in understanding. We see the truths of God dimly and only in part now, but He reveals things to us as He wills and as we seek Him. Be assured of this: there is only ONE true God even though He has presented Himself to man as the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. Many problems arise when we try to understand the Bible, not because of what Scripture says but because of man’s different interpretations or applications of Scripture. This should not be an excuse to neglect salvation. Paul said, *“Accept him whose faith is weak, without passing judgment on disputable matters”* (Romans 14:1). The fact is that we are all weak in knowledge when compared to an omnipotent (all-knowing) God.

The great Armenian, John Wesley, and the great Calvinist, Charles Spurgeon, differed on some theological views, yet both led thousands to Christ because they both knew Jesus was the only way for salvation. That is the bottom line.

Although we do not understand it all, God's Holy Word is perfect and without contradiction in its original manuscripts, even though we experience problems in translation. God's Word is truth; it is powerful enough to lead us to a right relationship with Him and is sufficient to guide us in our walk with Him. The following is a study of words related to Biblical salvation. The Holy Bible is the foundation for this study. It is the basics of answering the question, "What is Christianity?" As you study these words, compare them to your own religion, faith, and/or personal beliefs. Questions are provided after each topic to help you in this task.

SIN

“For just as through the disobedience of the one man [Adam] the many were made sinners, so also through the obedience of the one man [Jesus] the many will be made righteous.” Romans 5:19

Sin, simply put, is disobedience to God. The Bible tells us all people have sinned (Romans 3:23) and it makes no difference if they are Jew or Gentile (Romans 3:9) or if they are under the law or not under the law (Romans 2:12). No one, past, present, or future is exempt. We know right from wrong through the law, by nature (creation), or by our conscience (Romans 2:14-15), but it is God’s Spirit that specifically convicts us of sin. One day God will judge sin, even sin held in secret (Romans 2:16). Sin is what brings us short of God’s glory and it places us in bondage. It keeps us from being free and it separates us from God. Death is its price (Romans 6:23) and the only escape from sin is through God’s grace — the redemptive work of Jesus Christ on the cross (Romans 3:24).

We must listen to the Holy Spirit when He calls us to turn from our sin and to accept Jesus as our personal Lord and Savior (John 16:7-8). Failure to obey the Holy Spirit’s call results in eternal sorrow. All sin can be forgiven, with the exception of rejecting Jesus as personal Lord and Savior (Matthew 12:31-32). Rejecting Jesus causes eternal damnation, but accepting Him as Lord and Savior gives eternal life. The problem we face is that while we are on earth we will not be perfect because of the sin nature we inherited from Adam. Jesus understood this. We can see His understanding in the way He dealt with those around Him. For example, He knew that Peter would deny Him three times at the crucifixion, yet He also knew it was a moment of weakness and not Peter’s lifestyle. Peter repented, was forgiven and became one of the greatest witnesses for Christ who ever lived.

We are not strong enough by ourselves to do battle against the spiritual evils in this world. As our personal Savior, Jesus shares in the struggles we face in this life. We must constantly keep our minds and hearts on Him so we can avoid sin and live lifestyles pleasing to Him and be better witnesses for Him. Jesus left this earth and returned to His Father in heaven to prepare a place for us. In His absence, He sent the Holy Spirit to lead and comfort us. We are not alone in the battle against Satan and sin.

++ REFLECTION ++

There are always consequences to sin. We can choose to sin or not to sin but once we have sinned, we cannot choose the consequences. We could stand on the roof of a three-story building and think about jumping or not. If the choice was made to jump, we can repent on the way down but the probable consequence of experiencing severe or fatal injury will not change. Changing our mind on the way down will not stop the consequences. The best choice would have been not to jump. The same is true about any sin. It is best to choose not to sin but if we falter along the way we can ask God for and receive forgiveness if we repent, but that may not change the consequences. Even the world cautions us to “think before we leap.”

Consider the following statement: Sin is disobedience to God.

How does your religion/faith define sin?

What do you personally believe?

Does your religion/faith believe there are consequences to sin?

What do you personally believe?

FORGIVENESS

“Then he opened their minds so they could understand the Scriptures. He told them, ‘This is what is written: The Christ will suffer and rise from the dead on the third day, and repentance and forgiveness of sins will be preached in his name to all nations, beginning at Jerusalem’.” Luke 24:45-47

Because of our human nature, we often find it hard to ask for forgiveness or even to admit we need it. We keep trying to work out our own lives and our own salvation or else we start to believe we have sunk so far that we are not worthy of forgiveness. The truth is we are breaking God’s heart as well as our own when we do not let Him forgive us. This is because He gave His all for us so we could have real peace in this world and then be with Him forever throughout all eternity. The Bible says God will forgive all of your confessed and repented sins (1 John 1:9). Confession as meant in the New Testament implies a desire to turn from your sins. You cannot hide them from God for He already knows what they are and it grieves Him. The fact is if you will come to Him and let Him forgive you He will rejoice (Luke 15:11-31). He really does want you to be free of your heartaches and loneliness.

Just as God forgives us of our sins against him if we repent, He expects us to do the same in our relationship with others (Matthew 6:14-15). In fact, if you choose not to forgive others who sin against you God will not forgive your sins. Jesus is not referring to God’s initial act of forgiveness (reconciliation) that occurs when we were first saved (salvation). He is referring to the everyday sins that break our relationship with Him and our fellow man. He will not forgive our sins if we do not forgive others. In reality, unforgiveness hurts the unforgiver.

++ REFLECTION ++

Have you ever driven through a rainstorm that was so heavy it was hard to see the road ahead? All the cars had slowed down to reduce the chances of running into the back of someone

ahead because of the reduced visibility. Then the storm passed over or you drove out of it and you could see clearly again. It is as if your eyes were fully opened all of a sudden. All of us need to pray that God will open our minds in such a way that we will come out of our spiritual darkness and acknowledge our need for Him and for the forgiveness He offers. Living in spiritual darkness is like never driving out of the rainstorm. You can never have true peace until you let Jesus open your eyes.

Consider the following statement: Repentance of sin is required before forgiveness is given.

Does your religion/faith believe this statement?

What do you personally believe?

REPENTANCE

“In the same way, I tell you, there is rejoicing in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner who repents.”
Luke 15:10

Repentance is recognizing sin under the conviction of the Holy Spirit, asking for forgiveness, and turning away from our sinful life by embracing a new way of life in Jesus Christ. God is not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance (2 Peter 3:9). Repentance, in relation to salvation, does not mean a person must straighten up his or her own life to be saved. The fact is one cannot “be right with God” until after accepting Jesus as Lord and Savior. Saving repentance means one must stop believing that they can save themselves through good works, good deeds, a good life, religion, morality, philosophy, marriage, law or anything else. A person must believe Jesus when He said, *“I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me”* (John 14:6). Do not lose out by waiting until you are a better person because no matter how good you become it will never be good enough. One must accept the Biblical fact that only sinless Jesus can bridge the gap between a sinful world and God.

Repentance is reason for joy in heaven (Luke 15:10). God is pleased when someone turns from harmful ways. When a person becomes a Christian, he or she is turning from hopelessness to live a life filled with hope. Just as we are pleased when those we love avoid things that will harm them, it is God’s desire that we turn from the damnation of sin to life eternal with Him. With His help, we must strive to live Godly lives. We must repent and ask God to help us not repeat our failures (1 John 2:1). We must ask for His forgiveness, or we cannot receive the blessings God has in store for us. He hates sin and because of His Holy nature, He will only forgive and bless us when we turn our backs to sin. Repentance involves a commitment not to repeat a sinful act. Strength of character involves how well we keep that commitment. We must first

repent to come to God (Luke 15:1-10); then we must avoid sin and obey Christ to walk with Him (1 John 2:1-6).

++ REFLECTION ++

Some people feel they can live life any way they want because they think all they have to do is march into a church and ask forgiveness to be right with God. Jesus only promises to forgive a repentant heart. He never promised forgiveness for anyone who purposely and continuously chooses to live a sinful lifestyle (Hebrew 10:26-27). ²⁶*If we deliberately keep on sinning after we have received the knowledge of the truth, no sacrifice for sins is left,* ²⁷*but only a fearful expectation of judgment and of raging fire that will consume the enemies of God.* When Jesus forgave the woman living in adultery, He told her to go and sin no more (John 8:1-11). Repentance is a precious word in the ears of God, for repentance on our part and God's forgiveness on His part is what restores a Christian's fellowship with Him.

OBEDIENCE

“If you obey my commands, you will remain in my love, just as I have obeyed my Father’s commands and remain in his love.” John 15:10

Obedience is the direct opposite of sin. While sin (disobedience to God) separates us from God, obedience to God brings us to Him. The first step of obedience is to turn from sin and accept Jesus as Lord and Savior (Acts 4:12). Unless we take this first step, our walk through life is out of step. Jesus’ life on earth is our example for obedience. He alone was perfect and His life reflected perfection. We should do what Jesus asks and follow His living example (John 12:26). He did not leave us alone in this task. He sent the Holy Spirit as our guide (Galatians 5:16). We cannot earn our salvation by good works, but good works are evidence that we are obeying Christ (James 1:22). In the New Testament, Jesus refers to His followers in a way so they can understand their relationship with Him. One example He used to illustrate this is by comparing His followers to sheep, because sheep will follow someone they trust. Jesus knows His sheep, and they will obey Him (John 10:14-16).

Many think believing in Jesus is all they have to do to be saved. Even evangelists sometimes leave this impression. While the Bible does say one must believe to be saved, it does not stop there. Even Satan believes in Jesus. Jesus said, *“Not everyone who says to me, ‘Lord, Lord,’ will enter the kingdom of heaven, but only he who does the will of my Father who is in heaven”* (Matthew 7:21). A Christian who understands Jesus’ words will know that obedience always follows belief. Obedience clears a path for God to use you for every good work (2 Timothy 2:20-21).

++ REFLECTION ++

In a military parade, it becomes very evident when a soldier is out of step with the rest of the unit. It becomes even

more confusing when the leader is marching to the band's tune while the troops are marching to another tune. The troops must march to the same tune as their leader in order to pass inspection. You can be sure that when God is the leader, anyone who marches to Satan's tune of lies and deception will not pass the review. Being in the parade will only give false hope to the soldiers who are out of step. In life, it is essential to be in step with Jesus Christ and march in obedience to Him.

Consider the following statement: Obedience is the direct opposite of sin.

What does your religion/faith believe about obedience?

What do you personally believe?

RECONCILIATION

“For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life.” John 3:16

Reconciliation means God provided a way to restore His relationship with sinful man (getting right with Him). Sin had caused a great void to be formed between mankind and his or her Creator. This void is impossible to cross on our own. It can only be bridged by Christ’s sacrificial death on the cross (Colossians 1:19-22). God, in His love, created us in His image and in doing so gave us one of His greatest attributes—freedom of choice. He did not want us to be puppets or robots or to be limited by choices based on the natural instincts He gave animals. It is His desire we make wise choices, so it must break God’s heart when we use this great gift, choice, to reject or disobey Him.

Although man sinned, God loved His creation so much that He already had a plan to restore this broken relationship. God prepared the way, but in His sovereignty, He chose to allow us to come to Him willingly. This should not be hard to understand since we find this attribute of God in us. Consider your own relationships. Can you force your friends to love you? Can parents force their children to love them? The answer to both questions is, “No.” We want those we love to return that love willingly; besides forced relationships are poor relationships. When it comes to getting right with God, He made the rules. Man broke the rules, yet God made a way that would enable man to return to Him, not by force, but by love. The Bible tells us Jesus is the way. Jesus’ blood paid the price for all sin (1 John 2:2). We are reconciled to God by Christ’s death and are saved by His life (Romans 5:10-11).

++ REFLECTION ++

It is God’s desire to restore His relationship with you and have fellowship with you now and throughout eternity.

Explorers searched for years to find the “fountain of youth” in hopes of extending their lives. They did not want to grow old. They searched in vain for this “living water”. The good news is that the Living Water is already here and paid for, and yet so many choose not to drink.

“When a Samaritan woman came to draw water, Jesus said to her, “Will you give me a drink?” (His disciples had gone into the town to buy food.) The Samaritan woman said to him, “You are a Jew and I am a Samaritan woman. How can you ask me for a drink?” (For Jews do not associate with Samaritans). Jesus answered her, “If you knew the gift of God and who it is that asks you for a drink, you would have asked him and he would have given you living water.” (John 4:7-10). Will you drink of the Living Water found in a personal relationship with Christ Jesus?

Consider the following statement: Reconciliation means God provided a way to restore His relationship with sinful man.

How does reconciliation relate to your religion/faith?

What do you personally believe?

REDEMPTION

“You were bought at a price. Therefore honor God with your body.” 1 Corinthians 6:20

Biblical redemption (salvation) is our deliverance from sin through Jesus (Colossians 1:13-14). Simply put, Jesus Christ, and He alone, is our Redeemer (1 Corinthians 1:30). There is no other way to God (John 14:6). *“There is a way that seems right to a man, but in the end it leads to death”* (Proverbs 14:12). We cannot earn our redemption by leading moral lives or doing good works. It is a gift from God (John 4:10). We must choose to accept this gift. Jesus will not force Himself on us. We must ask Him into our lives. Knowing about Jesus is not enough. Satan knows who Jesus and he is so scared of Him that he trembles (James 2:19). Jesus must become our personal Savior, our Redeemer. Just remember this gift, free to us, was not bought by earthly treasures but by the precious blood of Jesus Christ (1 Peter 1:18-19).

++ REFLECTION ++

Every year at Christmas, we remember our Redeemer’s birth by sharing gifts with each other. Most gifts are given because the giver cares. In many cases, the giver is expressing love for another. The giver paid the price of the gift so the recipient could receive it free. How much more does our Savior love us since the price of His gift was His very life? Salvation is only free to us because of the great price paid by Jesus.

Consider the following statement: Christians believe that redemption is only available through the blood of Jesus Christ.

What does your religion/faith believe about redemption?

What do you personally believe?

GRACE

“But because of his great love for us, God, who is rich in mercy, made us alive with Christ even when we were dead in transgressions—it is by grace you have been saved. And God raised us up with Christ and seated us with him in the heavenly realms in Christ Jesus, in order that in the coming ages he might show the incomparable riches of his grace, expressed in his kindness to us in Christ Jesus.” Ephesians 2:4-7

Biblical grace is God’s redemptive love. It allows love when there is no reason to love, but it goes even beyond that. Grace allows love when there is reason not to love. When we sin God has reason not to love us, but instead He loved us enough to provide a way of escape for our sins (1 Corinthians 6:20). While we were yet sinners He paid the price we could not pay; for it is by His grace we are saved and not of our own works (Romans 11:5-6).

God’s grace influences us beyond our salvation though. By faith, we accept God’s grace (Romans 5:2) and allow it to influence and strengthen our daily lives (2 Corinthians 12:9). This means our daily walk must be Christ-centered. We must accept God’s grace to become Christians, and we must accept God’s grace to live as Christians (1 Corinthians 15:10). Christians are not bound by ceremonial law but by a higher law because of God’s grace (John 1:17). They are free to live Godly lifestyles according to Jesus’ teachings. We obey Jesus, not because we have to, but because we want to and because it is the right thing to do. We obey, in love, because our Lord is a compassionate and gracious God (Exodus 34:6).

++ REFLECTION ++

It might help to understand the extent of God’s grace if we look at how we react to significant events that affect our personal lives. How often do we let our emotions rule our lives and influence our grace towards others? This is especially true

when the actions taken against us were harsh. For example, what if a man walked into an elementary school and killed dozens of innocent children and teachers? The natural reaction would be one of hate and a desire for revenge. It would grieve and anger you even more if the man was not caught and punished. In contrast, God chose to show mercy and forgive the world for the criminal act of killing His Son on the cross. That is God's grace.

Consider the following statements: Biblical grace is God's redemptive love. It is love given even if there is reason not to love.

What does your religion/faith believe about grace?

What do you personally believe?

FAITH

“For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith—and this not from yourselves, it is the gift of God—not by works, so that no one can boast.” Ephesians 2:8-9

It is through faith in Christ that we are saved but it is His grace toward us that makes salvation possible. Even so, faith is not one sided as God is faithful to us (1 Thessalonians 5:24). His faithfulness is seen as we grow in our walk with Him. We feel Him as He gives us peace in a world of turmoil. Creation itself is a witness to His faithfulness and the truth of His Word (Romans 1:20). We see Him in a sunset, in the beauty of a bird in flight, in the majesty of a mountain, or in the complexity of the eye.

Faith is what tests the strength of a Christian’s belief. We do not see God with our eyes nor touch Him with our hands, but we are sure He exists (Hebrews 11:1) and that He will keep His promises (Philippians 1:6). By faith, we believe in heaven, but the proof of eternal life only comes after we leave this world. God wants us to put our trust in Him, first by accepting Jesus, then by depending on Him for what is best in our lives. He is pleased when we trust Him by faith (Hebrews 11:6).

++ REFLECTION ++

It was a dark and dreary morning. The rains had fallen heavily for the past week. The eerie flashes of lightning had been enough to frighten anyone. The dark gray clouds overhead seemed to blot out any hope that light would ever return. As we taxied the Boeing 767 out on the end of the runway, the rain had finally stopped but the low hanging clouds still blotted out the light of day. Aircraft crossing the runway down field were invisible to our eyes. Clearance for takeoff was given, and the throttles were moved full forward. Halfway down the runway, the yoke was pulled back and the aircraft smoothly left the runway and rose swiftly into the air. Soon the airplane was engulfed in the clouds and all faith was placed in the

instruments just inches from our eyes. Then, in a few short moments, the sun was shining brightly on a horizon of pure white, billowy clouds. Above the clouds, our world was no longer dreary but bathed in the freshness of a new morning's sun.

Pilots are naturally persons of faith. They have faith in their aircraft. They have faith in their instruments, believing that there is a bright day awaiting them above the clouds. After the flight, a pilot can tell those on the ground about what it is like above the clouds, but they may not listen. Their faith is lacking because all they see is the gloomy weather that surrounds them. God loves us and is our help in all circumstances, but because we too often focus on our current hurts, we lack the faith to trust Him. Faith gives hope. It is what tests the strength of a Christian's belief. We do not see God with our eyes nor touch Him with our hands, but we are sure He exists (Hebrews 11:1) and are sure He will keep His promises (Philippians 1:6). By faith, we believe in heaven, but the proof of eternal life only comes after we leave this world.

Consider the following statement: Biblical faith is believing in God and trusting in His Word concerning His relationship with us through Jesus.

What does your religion/faith believe concerning faith?

What do you personally believe?

JUSTIFICATION

“Therefore, since we have been justified through faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we have gained access by faith into this grace in which we now stand. And we rejoice in the hope of the glory of God.” Romans 5:1-2

Justification is how God chose to make possible a restored relationship with fallen man. Because God is just, He cannot overlook sin. In the Old Testament, He covered sin through the Jewish sacrificial system as a sign of the true blood sacrifice that was to come. Moreover, it did come -- through the life, death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. Judgment, resulting in condemnation, came about through Adam's offense, but by Christ's righteous act the gift (salvation) was made available to all men resulting in justification (Romans 5:18). It was through Adam's disobedience we were made sinners, but it is by Christ's obedience many will be made righteous (Romans 5:19). It is not by our works, but by faith we are justified (Romans 3:27-28). We cannot be justified by works of the law (Galatians 2:16). Justification is only found in sinless Jesus.

++ REFLECTION ++

In our society, when people commit crimes, they often pay for that crime through some kind of prison sentence. The serving of that sentence is their justification to return to society. When we sin against God, time served cannot justify our sin. In fact, there is nothing we can do to justify sin. Only the blood of Jesus justifies us and enables us to be new creatures in Christ. There is no other way.

Consider the following statement: Jesus Christ's death is the only justification for complete forgiveness of our sins.

What does your religion/faith believe about justification?

What do you personally believe?

REGENERATION

“Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; the old has gone, the new has come!” 2 Corinthians 5:17

Biblical regeneration is starting over through a life changing personal relationship with Jesus. When we were created, God made it happen through a “fleshly” birth. To enter the Kingdom of God, we must also be born of the Spirit. *“In reply Jesus declared, ‘I tell you the truth, no one can see the kingdom of God unless he is born again.’ ‘How can a man be born when he is old?’ Nicodemus asked. ‘Surely he cannot enter a second time into his mother’s womb to be born!’ Jesus answered, ‘I tell you the truth, no one can enter the kingdom of God unless he is born of water and the Spirit’”* (John 3:3-5). This is what Christians call being “born again” and this regeneration is displayed by our following Jesus’ example of water baptism. This represents the burial of our old nature, the old sinful man, and our new nature rising up to walk in a new life (Romans 6:3-4).

God wants to take away all that excess baggage that drags us down as we walk through life. Through a personal relationship with Jesus, we can begin anew. He casts aside whatever is holding us down and lifts us up, regenerated to walk in newness of life. We are loosed from the snare of eternal death into a life eternal with Him. Our old unacceptable self is dead, and the new regenerated self is on the road to glory. Regeneration is also associated with repentance since repentance encompasses obeying God by turning from the old life to the new life in Christ (Acts 3:19). With our hearts and minds, we choose God’s way over man’s ways, and we seek to live lifestyles to reflect this new birth.

++ REFLECTION ++

When you go to sleep each night, your body and mind is regenerated through rest. When you rise up in the morning, the woes of yesterday usually do not seem nearly as drastic. You can put them behind you and begin the new day with a fresh

outlook. When you are regenerated by Christ, you can take the “usually” out of the equation. You are a new creation in Christ and the old self is left to yesterday (2 Corinthians 5:17). You have all eternity to spend with a new and wonderful family. Being regenerated by God gives you a new outlook on life. Your desires will be to live a new life in obedience to Christ.

Consider the following statement: Biblical regeneration is starting over through a life changing personal relationship with Jesus.

What does your religion/faith believe about regeneration?

What do you personally believe?

SANCTIFICATION

“May God himself, the God of peace, sanctify you through and through. May your whole spirit, soul and body be kept blameless at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ.” 1 Thessalonians 5:23

Sanctification is God’s purification process. It means growing in holiness or being made holy. When we become Christians God begins the process of making us holy, a process that is not completed until we are with Him in glory. We are completely saved but not completely perfect. Even so, our relationship with Him and others is hampered by our sin nature. Sanctification is a Christian growing in Christ. A Christian's willingness to obey and capacity to understand will influence his or her Christian growth. A true Christian's desire is to follow Christ's example and do right in God's eyes which is manifested in bearing good fruit (Matthew 7:18-20). Bearing good fruit produces a lifestyle that will enable him or her to be useful in God’s service.

++ REFLECTION ++

Only the one true God, as the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit can impart holiness in our lives:

Christians are sanctified through and through by God the Father (1 Thessalonians 5:23).

Christians are sanctified in Christ Himself (Ephesians 5:25-27).

Christians are sanctified through the work of the Holy Spirit (1 Peter 1:2).

Consider the three statements above concerning sanctification.

What does your religion/faith believe about sanctification?

What do you personally believe?

IN SUMMARY

Know that everyone has sinned (Romans 3:23) and deserves eternal death (Romans 6:23), but God loves us so much that Jesus died for us (Romans 5:8), and whosoever will confess this Jesus and believe God raised Him from the dead will be saved (Romans 10:9-10).

Know that it is God who calls us to repentance, and there is nothing we can do to save ourselves. It is God's grace, His great love for us, which allows us to come to Him through faith (Ephesians 2:8).

Know that one day we will stand before God, and that there is no escape for rejecting so great a salvation (Hebrews 2:3). On that day Jesus will be the Advocate for the saved (1 John 2:1) and the Judge of those who have rejected His death and resurrection (Acts 17:31).

Know that now is the time for salvation (2 Corinthians 6:2). We do not know the day of our death or the day of Christ's return. We must share this Good News now.

Chapter 2

THE CHRISTIAN LIFE

“When Jesus spoke again to the people, he said, ‘I am the light of the world. Whoever follows me will never walk in darkness, but will have the light of life.’” John :12

Even though we were created in God’s image, we will never be perfect on this earth because of our sin nature, but with God’s help, we can strive toward perfection. With Him we can walk in the light (John 8:12). Jesus asked His Father to send us a Counselor who is the Spirit of truth (John 14:16-17). This Counselor is God Himself in the form of the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit will teach us the things that will help us grow (John 14:26). We are “spiritual babies” when we first become Christians and we mature as we walk with Jesus. We choose walk (live a lifestyle) in the Spirit, or we choose to walk (live a lifestyle) in the flesh. If we walk in the flesh, our works will be works of the flesh, and we will not inherit the kingdom of God (Galatians 5:21). On the other hand, those who are in Christ have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires (Galatians 5:24), and with the help of the Holy Spirit, will be able to live lifestyles filled with good fruit.

Consider this statement: God's Spirit is our guide toward perfection.

Does your Religion/Faith agree or disagree with the statement above?

What do you personally believe?

FRUIT OF THE SPIRIT

“No good tree bears bad fruit, nor does a bad tree bear good fruit. Each tree is recognized by its own fruit. People do not pick figs from thorn bushes, or grapes from briars. The good man brings good things out of the good stored up in his heart, and the evil man brings evil things out of the evil stored up in his heart. For out of the overflow of his heart his mouth speaks.” Luke 6:43-45

Paul, in Galatians 5:22-23a, listed some key characteristics of God. He called them the fruit of the Spirit. If we strive to make these fruit part of our own lives, we will have a good start in living a lifestyle pleasing to God. The fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control. It is somewhat neat that Paul stated that, *“Against such things there is no law”* (Galatians 5:23b).

Consider the passage found in Luke 6:43 – 45.

How is this the same and how is it different from your Religion/Faith?

What do you believe?

LOVE

“And now I will show you the most excellent way.” 1
Corinthians 12:31b

The above verse introduces 1 Corinthians, Chapter 13. It does not say *a* most excellent way, but *the* most excellent way. This implies that Chapter 13 explains the best way to love. God wants you to know that even though we do not always understand why things happen or do not always see the big picture, we can and should respond to others in love. Isn't that what He did for us? Chapter 13 speaks for itself:

If I speak in the tongues of men and of angels, but have not love, I am only a resounding gong or a clanging cymbal. If I have the gift of prophecy and can fathom all mysteries and all knowledge, and if I have a faith that can move mountains, but have not love, I am nothing. If I give all I possess to the poor and surrender my body to the flames, but have not love, I gain nothing.

Love is patient, love is kind. It does not envy, it does not boast, it is not proud. It is not rude, it is not self-seeking, it is not easily angered, it keeps no record of wrongs. Love does not delight in evil but rejoices with the truth. It always protects, always trusts, always hopes, always perseveres.

Love never fails. But where there are prophecies, they will cease; where there are tongues, they will be stilled; where there is knowledge, it will pass away. For we know in part and we prophesy in part, but when perfection comes, the imperfect disappears. When I was a child, I talked like a child, I thought like a child, I reasoned like a child. When I became a man, I put childish ways behind me. Now we see but a poor reflection as in a mirror; then we shall see face to face. Now I know in part; then I shall know fully, even as I am fully known. And now

these three remain: faith, hope and love. But the greatest of these is love. 1 Corinthians 13:1-13

Jesus came to earth to show us the way. He showed love through His earthly deeds and through His death. When He took all of man's guilt upon Himself in that moment of loneliness on the cross, the hurt and agony must have been indescribable. That moment not only changed the course of history, it was history. *"For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life"* (John 3:16). By allowing His Son to die on the cross, God defined the word love. John the apostle understood this love, *"Greater love has no one than this, that he lay down his life for his friends"* (John 15:13).

Consider that Christians call 1 Corinthians 13 the love chapter.

Does your Religion/Faith have a similar passage?

If so, how is it the same and how is it different?

What do you personally believe concerning love?

JOY

“If you obey my commands, you will remain in my love, just as I have obeyed my Father’s commands and remain in his love. I have told you this so that my joy may be in you and that your joy may be complete.” John 15:10-11

Joy is normally associated with things that make us happy. We have all experienced this level of joy, but there is a joy beyond mere happiness. We find true joy in giving praise and thanks to God no matter what our circumstances (1 Peter 4:16). It is easy to be joyful when everything is going our way. The test comes when we face adversity. It is not so easy to be thankful when we feel down or oppressed.

Paul and Silas were singing and praising God even while they were in prison (Acts 16:25). This part of their Christian lifestyle led others to become Christians. A jailer saw a type of strength in Paul and Silas that he lacked. Paul and Silas’s joy came from knowing Jesus. This kind of joy was new to the jailer since he was accustomed to constant complaints from the prisoners. Because Paul and Silas demonstrated this wonderful fruit of the Spirit, the jailer and his family were saved (Acts 16:30-32).

The key to experiencing joy is in knowing that God is in control and that He loves us beyond all human understanding. We can rejoice, even with Isaiah, in knowing the Lord will return with songs and everlasting joy. It is not always easy to trust God in this because our emotions tend to interfere, but in the end, the benefits overcome the sorrow. Isaiah trusted God to be his source of joy. Joy and gladness will be ours and sorrow and sighing shall flee away (Isaiah 35:10). This kind of joy will lead to peace, even in the harshest circumstances.

Consider the statement: Christians should be joyful even when things get tough (praise God even when things get tough).

How is this the same as or different from your Religion/Faith?

What do you personally believe?

PEACE

“Peace I leave with you; my peace I give you. I do not give to you as the world gives. Do not let your hearts be troubled and do not be afraid.” John 14:27

Any nation that condones evil will not know peace (Isaiah 48:22). An excellent example of what happens to a nation who drifts from God is found in Ezekiel Chapter 7 (focus on 7:25). Only God can give real peace, and it is a peace beyond the understanding of the world (Philippians 4:7). We want peace in our land today, but like Israel of old, our country has become open to obstacles of peace. Hate is exemplified in crime and violence. The same theme penetrates the minds of our children through TV and movies and secular hard rock music. Terrorists strike fear in the hearts of the innocent. The good news is that even though we live in a scary world we do not have to be afraid. If we have been justified by faith in Christ Jesus, we can have peace regardless of our outward circumstances (Romans 5:1).

We all have a longing in our hearts for peace. No one likes being agitated all the time. Satan loves to get us all worked up and take away the peace God wants us to have. Satan tells us things are always someone else's fault and takes away our desire to forgive others. Peace comes to those who can let go of blame and to those who can forgive those who have wronged them. We can have this peace, even in the face of death. Jesus sent the Holy Spirit to us, not only as a Teacher, but also as a Comforter. When a loved one dies, the Holy Spirit comforts us as we shed our tears of sadness. These tears are okay, for the loved one will be missed for a while, but they are not tears of hopelessness. We have the knowledge that Jesus defeated death, and death has no sting for His children (1 Corinthians 15:55-58).

Consider the statement: The Holy Spirit comforts us and gives us peace in times of need.

How does this compare to your Religion/Faith? How is it the same and different?

What do you personally believe?

PATIENCE

“And we pray this in order that you may live a life worthy of the Lord and may please him in every way: bearing fruit in every good work, growing in the knowledge of God, being strengthened with all power according to his glorious might so that you may have great endurance and patience, and joyfully giving thanks to the Father, who has qualified you to share in the inheritance of the saints in the kingdom of light.” Colossians 1:10-12

Paul tells us patience is a direct attribute of love (1 Corinthians 13:4). Impatience only intensifies strife. Therefore, we should be patient with others when they struggle. Patience is a gift that allows others to see Christ in us. Most of all, patience allows us to develop a heart of forgiveness (Colossians 3:12-13). Sometimes it is just as tough to be patient in our desires as it is in our dealings with others. We live in an “instant gratification” society. When we want something, we want it now. However, waiting on God to provide will bring greater satisfaction in the end. Let us look at what could be considered three levels of patience:

Level 1. Patience—this is when we were patient because we had to wait in a long grocery line or wait for someone who was in the bathroom too long. Maybe we had to wait ten minutes before our ride showed up to take us home. Becoming angry at this level shows a basic lack of self-control. A person who has no patience at all is an irritant to those nearby. It is pleasant to be with those who are patient.

Level 2. Patient Endurance—this is when we were patient because someone stayed in the bathroom so long we were late for school, work or an appointment. This is when we had to walk home two days in a row. This is when the baby cried all night, and we did not get any sleep at all. It gets a bit harder at this level. Keeping a spirit of love may become a challenge. Even though people may understand our impatience and be a little more tolerant toward us at this level, it is a

wonderful opportunity to show Christ-likeness when we patiently endure these irritations of life.

Level 3. Forbearance—this is when we were patient after we had been hurt so bad by someone that our whole being wanted revenge and it took all of our will power to refrain from retaliation. A society that teaches revenge does not understand forbearance. Forbearance is God’s level of patience. He showed patience toward us while we were yet sinners deserving His revenge. He has the right to demand retribution because we break His laws. Instead, Jesus paid the price for us on the cross and waits patiently for us to come to Him.

God has always been patient. In the Old Testament, He gave Israel chance after chance after chance to repent when they turned from Him (Nehemiah 9:29-31). In the New Testament, Peter reaffirms God’s patience. He is not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance (2 Peter 3:9). He gives us chance after chance to come to Him. Although God’s patience is great, it is not endless. If a person continuously refuses to listen to the Holy Spirit when He calls him or her to repentance, there will come a time when it is too late to be saved. Committing continuous sinful or evil acts only hardens one’s heart against God, and a hardened heart makes it difficult to respond to God. Since we do not know our appointed time to die, it would be wise not to put off a decision to follow Christ. If you have not made that decision, now is the appointed time to repent and be saved.

Consider this statement: God's patience is not endless.

How is this the same or different in your Religion/Faith?

What do you personally believe?

KINDNESS (GENTLENESS)

“And the Lord’s servant must not quarrel; instead, he must be kind to everyone, able to teach, not resentful.” 2 Timothy 2:24

“Be kind and compassionate to one another, forgiving each other, just as in Christ God forgave you.” Ephesians 4:32

The word kindness is translated gentleness in some versions. Either way you look at it, we should follow Jesus’ example in dealing with those around us. Jesus healed the soldier’s ear after Peter sliced it off in anger (Luke 22:51). Jesus was kind and gentle to the woman caught in adultery (John 8:10-11), and He was gentle with children (Mark 10:16). Often pleasant memories in life are associated with kind deeds. Some of those memories were of times when a person was kind to us, but many were of times when we were kind. Nothing promotes a good feeling like a kindness done.

We should show kindness to others even when they are harsh to us for once harsh words are spoken, they cannot be taken back. If on the other hand, we return kindness for hurt, forgiving the offender, the path to reconciliation is a lot easier. Jesus’ kindness extends to forgiveness. Even though we sin against Him, He forgives us when we repent. We should do no less as Christians in our dealings with those around us (Colossians 3:13).

Consider the statement: Christians are taught to be kind to each other.

How is this the same or different in your Religion/Faith?

What do you personally believe?

GOODNESS

“How great is your goodness, which you have stored up for those who fear you, which you bestow in the sight of men on those who take refuge in you.” Psalms 31:19

Anyone can do good deeds, and we all should (1 Peter 3:8-12), but apart from God we are not good. Our best is as filthy rags compared to the holiness of God (Isaiah 64:6). We cannot even look at God’s face because He is so holy (Exodus 33:19-23), but God loves us in spite of our sin, and in His goodness He calls us to repentance (Romans 2:4). Many believe God would never send anyone to hell who is loving and does good deeds. It is a nice thought, but totally untrue. The Bible teaches accepting Jesus into our lives as Lord and Savior is the only way to Heaven.

It is interesting that even though our good works cannot save us, a Christian is compelled to do good works. The goodness in us is because of the goodness of God who lives within us. We are new creations in Christ. We do good because we are saved, not to get us saved (Colossians 1:10). In fact, our faith would be dead without works (James 2:17). The good Christians do for others demonstrates God’s love through us (Galatians 6:10). Being alive in Christ and following His example of good works is like a cool drink of water on a hot summer day. Christ is the well from which we drink so that others may see His goodness in us.

Consider this statement: No one could be good enough or do enough good deeds to earn their way to heaven.

How is your Religion/faith the same and how different from this statement?

What do you personally believe?

FAITHFULNESS

“I thank Christ Jesus our Lord, who has given me strength, that he considered me faithful, appointing me to his service.” 1 Timothy 1:12

Faithfulness is a sign of our Christian character. If we love Christ, we will be faithful in our obedience to Him. Faithfulness indicates reliability and steadfastness. The faithful will hold strong to integrity. Paul is a good example of a faithful servant (1 Timothy 1:12). If we trust the Word of God to be true, then our witness will be strong. Only through the power of God can we stand firm in our faith against things the world can bring against us.

If we are faithful and true, we will turn our personal problems over to God. Then we won't worry about our own problems and we can concentrate on loving and helping others. In this way, faithfulness leads to unselfishness. God is not selfish in His love for us, and we can be confident that God will always be faithful to us (Colossians 1:13-14). God's faithfulness to us is real whether we believe it or not (Romans 3:3-4). He loves us and calls us to the faith that brings our salvation (Ephesians 2:8). Our faith is strengthened as we search God's Word, listen to the Holy Spirit, and attend church. May we praise God in Christ for His faithfulness to us and seek Him with all that is in us so we too can be faithful.

Consider the statement: If we love God, we will be faithful in our obedience to Him as He is faithful to us in keeping His promises to us.

How is this the same and how is it different in your Religion/Faith?

What do you personally believe?

GENTLENESS (MEEKNESS)

“Be completely humble and gentle; be patient, bearing with one another in love.” Ephesians 4:2

Gentleness is expressed through a meek and humble nature. It requires courage for a man to be gentle in today's world. It is a trait usually given to women. How sad that is. There is nothing more natural and wonderful than to see a big man holding and loving the small baby in his arms. Paul spoke of gentleness as a bold weapon in spiritual warfare (2 Corinthians 10:1-4). Peter says to tell others about hope in Christ with gentleness and respect (1 Peter 3:15). Proverbs, the wisdom book, states that a gentle answer turns away wrath (Proverbs 15:1).

Jesus said, *“Blessed are the meek, for they will inherit the earth”* (Matthew 5:5). When we are hurt or angry, we want to be harsh and vindictive, but God would have us to be gentle and forgiving to those who have wronged us. In our dealings with fellow Christians, we are called to gentleness in love (Ephesians 4:2). The apostle Paul was often gentle in his ministry to the early churches (1 Corinthians 4:21). Wouldn't we all be a little wiser if we made this fruit a daily part of our lifestyles?

Consider the statement: Gentleness is expressed through a meek and humble nature.

How is this the same and how is it different in your Religion/Faith?

What do you personally believe?

SELF-CONTROL (TEMPERANCE)

“For the grace of God that brings salvation has appeared to all men. It teaches us to say ‘No’ to ungodliness and worldly passions, and to live self-controlled, upright and godly lives in this present age.” Titus 2:11-12

To be temperate in our actions is not always an easy chore. It is only with God’s help that we can control the extreme and unwanted areas of our lives. With Him, we can live a lifestyle that is upright and godly. Our witness, as Christians, may depend upon our self-control. If we give in to ungodliness and worldly lusts, we may very well lose our witness (Titus 2:12). The news media just loves to tear down a highly visible “religious” person who has fallen to a particular sin. We should use self-control in the way we dress, in our eating habits, in the way we talk, and in the way we conduct business.

There are some things we should not do, even though they may not be wrong in themselves. The problem is that if we do them we may be a stumbling block to someone else. This is why Paul sometimes chose not to eat meat or drink wine (Romans 14:20-21). Our love for others should go beyond our own self-gratification (Romans 15:1-3). We may think no one watches what we do, but there is always someone who looks up to us. It may be a little brother or sister. It may be a young, impressionable girl or boy down the street. It may be someone at school or at church. It may be a co-worker. It takes a lot of self-control to be a good Christian example.

The apostle Paul reminds us to stand fast and hold to the Christian traditions that we were taught (2 Thessalonians 2:15). Jesus, in His lifetime on earth, faced many situations where He could have lost control and struck back at those who hated Him. Yet, He went beyond His own personal insults to bear with us the insults we receive when we live a lifestyle for Him (Romans 15:1-4).

Consider the statement: We should use self-control in the way we dress, in our eating habits, in the way we talk, and in the way we conduct business.

How is this the same and how is it different in your Religion/Faith?

What do you personally believe?

COMMANDMENTS

“The most important one,” answered Jesus, “is this: ‘Hear, O Israel, the Lord our God, the Lord is one. Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind and with all your strength.’ The second is this: ‘Love your neighbor as yourself.’ There is no commandment greater than these.” Mark 12:29-31

To walk with God we must know right from wrong. In order to help us distinguish between right and wrong, God gave us direct commands. Some of these are in the form of commandments. They were not given to restrict us but were given to free us from the consequences of condemnation. As we have said, we are free to make choices, but we are not free to determine the consequences of those choices. The teachers of Jesus’ day identified some 613 commandments in the Old Testament. Jesus emphasizes two of these commandments in Mark 12:29-31. In Mark 12:29, Jesus quoted from Deuteronomy 6:4 to remind us the Lord our God is one Lord. As the Israelites worshiped the one true God, Jesus reminds us we are to do the same.

Nothing changed from the Old Testament to the New Testament in that there is one God, one Lord. Jesus then goes on to say in Mark 12:30 that we are to love the one God with all our heart, soul, mind, and strength. God gave this command to the Israelites in Deuteronomy 6:5. We are commanded to love God with all our being. By quoting the Old Testament, Jesus confirms that this has always been the most important law of God, and it will always be the most important law of God. In Mark 12:31, Jesus quotes from Leviticus 19:18. He tells us that to love our neighbor as ourselves is the second most important commandment. Two apostles also referenced the importance of this commandment. Paul says the whole law of God is fulfilled in loving your neighbor as yourself (Galatians 5:14; Romans 13:8). James calls this commandment the royal law (James 2:8). We must obey these two commandments in order to be in

fellowship with God. Loving others is the best way to show God we love Him.

Consider the passage found in Mark 12:29 – 31.

How are these two commandments the same as in your Religion/Faith?

How are they different?

What do you personally believe?

IN SUMMARY

Jesus sent the Holy Spirit to help us live lifestyles pleasing to God. In His Word we are shown the characteristics (fruit) that will enable us to live that kind of lifestyle. We should strive very hard to avoid the works of the flesh found in Galatians 5:19-21 and seek the good fruit found in Galatians 5:22-25. We should worship the one true God in love and show that love by loving others as we walk through life.

Chapter 3

CREATION

“In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth.” Genesis 1:1

“You are worthy, our Lord and God, to receive glory and honor and power, for you created all things, and by your will they were created and have their being.” Revelation 4:11

There are two popular belief systems concerning how the universe and mankind came into existence. One belief is that there is a Creator God. The other belief is evolution. The Christian Bible believes in a Creator God who highly values dignity, hope and eternal life. The other, presented by secular science, is about evolved animals foraging through life with no hope. The Bible indicates that the earth and its inhabitants are the focal point of creation. Worldly scientists, on the other hand, believe that the universe was accidentally formed.

Evolutionists would have you believe you evolved from some lower life form. Charles Darwin wrote down some theories on evolution. Because the secular media and educational institutions have promoted Darwin’s theories for many years, these theories have become accepted as scientific fact by a great majority of society. The theory of evolution is foundationally weak and flawed in many ways. The written account of Creation was given by the only one and only God who was there as it was happening.

Evolutionists do not believe in a Creator God so they must rely on “guesswork facts” to substantiate their beliefs. Without a record by someone who was there, it is impossible to know what happened thousands of years ago. Believers in a Creator God rely on “Biblical facts” from historical documents such as the Jewish and Christian Bibles to substantiate their beliefs. While it is true that the evolution and the Biblical belief are both accepted by faith, scientific evidence and other facts of

life overwhelmingly favor creation. One must be honest in evaluating both sides to see this. A study of the issues in light of the following four key areas: faith, human dignity, logic, and science should help clarify the difference between these two belief systems.

Consider the statement: God created the heavens and the earth.

What does your Religion/Faith believe?

What do you personally believe? Why?

FAITH

“But at the beginning of creation God ‘made them male and female’.” Mark 10:6

Men and women are God’s most precious creation. The story of creation is found in the Old Testament, but the New Testament verifies creation. For Christians, the only evidence needed for creation is Jesus’ words. Unless Jesus was a liar, His Word (Mark 10:6) is testimony of the truth of Old Testament Scripture. Others in the New Testament also testify to creation. John, in his Gospel, tells us that before anything else, there was the Word. This Word is God; is Jesus; is the Holy Spirit. Since God created, He must have existed before that which was created. Even though this must be so, those who do not know Jesus cannot comprehend it because they are in darkness (John 1:1-5).

Although we accept the Bible by faith, it is not blind faith. The Holy Spirit gives the Christian confidence that Scripture is truth. Jesus believed in the literal truth of Old Testament Scriptures. He quoted from Genesis many times. We must have faith to believe God meant what He said and said what He meant. One example concerns the days of creation. The Bible says God created in six days, but because of the popularity of evolution, many try to explain days of creation to mean anything but 24-hour periods. What a novel idea to believe that when God said "day" He meant a literal 24-hour day!

There are several reasons why the days of creation should be interpreted as literal days, but the most significant is found in Exodus 20:11: *“For in six days the LORD made the heavens and the earth, the sea, and all that is in them, but he rested on the seventh day. Therefore the LORD blessed the Sabbath day and made it holy.”* The English plural word “days” in Hebrew is “yamim.” When “yamim” is used in the Old Testament, it always means literal days as it is in this passage (six days). For the Christian, it should suffice that God’s pattern of creation in six literal days, “yamim,” of work and one day of rest was to set

the example for man to take a needed day of rest for every six working days (Exodus 20:8-11).

Evolution teaches man evolved through bloodshed and death, while the Bible teaches bloodshed and death are the result of sin. For evolution to be true, sin would have existed before Adam. God's Word tells us sin came into the world after Adam was created. For evolution to be true, evil and destruction would have existed before creation was completed, but God said at the end of each day of creation what He created was good. How could we have the faith to believe God's Word if sin and destruction existed before God said it did.

Since evolution teaches that we are nothing but evolved animals, it has lessened our self-respect and respect for others. According to the Bible, creatures do not evolve into other kinds of creatures. In the New Testament, Paul clearly explains in 1 Corinthians 15:39, *"All flesh is not the same: Men have one kind of flesh, animals have another, birds another and fish another."* The New Testament verifies that man and animals are different and this is what we see with our eyes today. These observable facts should strengthen our faith in Scripture when it says we were created in the image of God.

Consider the statement: It is by faith that Christians believe by faith that humans are God's most precious creation.

What does your Religion/Faith believe about the worth of people?

What do you personally believe? Why?

HUMAN DIGNITY

“So God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them.”
Genesis 1:27

God said we were created in His image (Genesis 1:27). We were wonderfully made and not just accidents. We were purposely formed in the image of God the Creator. We did not come out of some slimy evolving life form, but we came from the breath of God. As Christians, we should not believe our ancestors were apes swinging in the trees. This must be an insult to God

The Bible teaches that we should treat each other with respect by showing kindness and love to one another. Evolutionary thinking promotes slavery and disrespect. For years, slavery was justified in the southern United States by the belief that Black people were an inferior race, not much higher than apes. The aborigines of Australia were killed because of this reasoning. The dignity of all men is slandered by the idiotic thinking that one race is lower, on an evolutionistic scale, than another. All mankind's skin is a shade of the same color. The lightness or darkness of a person's skin is determined by the pigment melanin. Melanin is found in the skin, hair and retina of the eye. More melanin means darker color. A person's ability and/or "smartness" are not determined by skin color. Education and confidence in one's own ability often determines a person's opportunities. Prejudice is wrong and often is detrimental to both these factors.

Adolf Hitler believed he was to develop a superior race—a super race with super rights. He killed thousands, maybe millions because he believed them to be inferior. He also considered anyone with a handicap to be worthless to society. Hitler was a strong evolutionist. Evolutionism belittles our worth from the very beginning of our lives since it is the foundation for justifying abortions. Abortionists consider the tiny baby an inferior, non-living being. Instead of considering

the small wonderful being as alive, evolutionistic thought reduces this being to an evolving fetus with no right to life. The fact is, medical science knows the baby in the womb has a heartbeat and the blood of life and feels pain long before most abortions are performed.

In the Old Testament, Jeremiah 1:5 and Psalm 139:13-18, God reveals how very important life in the womb is to Him. God said He knew Jeremiah before He formed him in the womb. In the Psalms, the writer spoke of “being knit” together in his mother’s womb, of being fearfully and wonderfully made and that God saw his unformed body. In the New Testament, the Bible speaks of a very early relationship between John the Baptist and Jesus. The angel Gabriel told Mary that by the power of the Holy Spirit she would become the mother of the Messiah. He also told her that her elder cousin Elizabeth was with child. Mary went to visit Elizabeth. When Mary first arrived, she greeted Elizabeth, and John, still inside Elizabeth’s body, leaped for joy at the nearness of Jesus who was in Mary’s body (Luke 1:39-45).

God considered these two babies to be live persons in the womb and babies still react to “outside the womb” happenings today. It is a proven fact that things like music, soft or harsh words and volatile emotions by the mother and those nearby affect the baby in the womb. The unborn baby is alive and is loved by the Heavenly Father just as much as He loved you when He placed you in the womb to be nurtured by your earthly mother. You are of great worth to God. He came to earth as His own Son to show us the way to Him and how to relate to each other in love. Evolution is selfish and self-centering while God’s love is giving and eternal. He gives us dignity and we should not let evolutionistic thought rob us of that.

Consider the statement: The Holy Bible indicates that all human beings have worth and this includes babies living in their mother's womb.

What does your Religion/Faith believe?

What do you personally believe? Why?

LOGIC

“God saw all that he had made, and it was very good. And there was evening, and there was morning—the sixth day.” Genesis 1:31

Before historical time as we know it, there were only two logical possibilities. Either God existed, or matter existed. If God existed, we have His record of creation. He was there, and it happened exactly as He said. He said it was good (Genesis 1:31), which means there was order and purpose. It is logical to believe that the complexity of man and the order in the universe was by design. If only matter existed, we would have to believe that every galaxy, every planet, every atom and molecule from the smallest entity to the greatest star system, just accidentally fell into perfect working order. This is not logical. There is always a cause to any reaction. For the universe to come into existence there had to be a first cause. The only logical possibility of a first cause is an eternal Creator.

If there was only non-living matter in the beginning, as evolutionists teach, we would also have to believe nonliving matter somehow became living matter. There is absolutely no scientific evidence this has ever happened. Scientists, no matter how brilliant, have never been able to change a nonliving cell into a living cell. Cloning is a duplication of living cells that already exist. Even if God allowed man to accomplish this, it does not prove evolution. God has allowed man to do incredible things throughout history especially in the last 100 years. It is not logical, nor scientific, to suppose change occurs outside genetic boundaries (macro- or mega-evolution). There is, on the other hand, scientific evidence to support micro-evolution or change within genetic boundaries. This is really adaptation. It covers the ability of living things, including humans, to adapt to changing conditions. It also covers mutations within a species. Darwin and others noticed this and applied it to change outside a species, without proof. They were wrong. A dog is still a dog

and a man is still a man even when they can change or adapt to the world around them.

Macro-evolution is a belief in slow change of one species into another outside genetic boundaries (Darwinism). There is absolutely no evidence of this. A true transitional form (part one kind of animal and part another) has never been found. There are no skeletons that show a progressive change of one creature into another. The monarch butterfly is a great example of micro-evolution, but evolutionists list it as proof of macro-evolution. Mega-evolution is a belief that change occurs in spurts in different segments of time (punctuated equilibrium). Mega-evolutionists say transitional forms (missing links) don't exist because one species transformed into another species so fast that it left no trace of the transition. These scientists acknowledge that there is no scientific evidence for macro-evolution. The theory of mega-evolution was started because of the lack of evidence for macro-evolution. Problem – there is not any evidence for mega-evolution either. It is not logical to base man's history on so weak a foundation. First Corinthians 15:39 is very clear in stating kind comes after kind and this is what is recorded in known history and is what we see in today's world. Mega- and micro-evolution are theories successfully used by atheists to try to convince the world there is no God.

The Bible speaks truth we can feel in our spirit and gives hope in this life and in the life to come. When we have a choice between eternal life and eternal damnation, it seems logical to choose the Giver of life. It is not logical to believe in hopeless evolution that only offers destruction and death. If there is no God we all eventually lose, but if there is, and He has a Son then those who reject Him lose, forever. Logically, choosing Christ is a win-win situation. Christians have a peace the world cannot know as well as hope for everlasting life with a loving God. Atheists, who promote humanism and evolutionism with a passion, cannot know this peace now and have no hope for the future (lose-lose). To be honest, let us go one-step further. Let us say a person lives a decent life and treats others well but doesn't know Christ. This could be said to be a win-lose

situation for while they might have a “good” life on earth they are damned for eternity. The only logical choice is the win-win scenario with a God who forgives and walks with you through life’s trials and tribulations and promises you a home with Him throughout eternity.

Consider the statement: It is logical to believe in creation.

What does your Religion/Faith believe?

What do you personally believe? Why?

SCIENCE

“For since the creation of the world God’s invisible qualities—his eternal power and divine nature—have been clearly seen, being understood from what has been made, so that men are without excuse.” Romans 1:20

God tells us that He has given us visual evidences of His creation (Romans 1:20). Our educational system, the news media, and secular science programs have filled our minds with evolutionistic thinking for so long that many have come to accept evolution as science by default. As more people are educated through seminars, books, conferences and other programs, they can see the scientific evidence for creation is much stronger than the scientific evidence for evolution. Truthful science is an aid to Biblical truth, not a contradiction as evolutionists would have you believe. Current evidence is in-exhaustive and beyond the scope of this book. (See recommended reading at the end of this book.) Therefore, the rest of this chapter will only be a small sampling of the evidences for creation that strongly challenge evolutionistic thinking.

Evolutionists believe we evolved from apes. They have spent untold millions (often your tax dollars through grant money) looking for a missing link. In reality, there are no “missing links.” Now more popularly called “transitional forms,” “missing links” were used for many years as “proof” for evolution of man from apes. Mostly these have proved to be a major embarrassment to modern science. For example, Nebraska Man—found in Nebraska in 1922 was used in the “Monkey Trial” to later open public schools to evolutionistic teaching. This man was artistically constructed from a single tooth, which later proved to be the tooth of a pig. It seems odd that a major belief of our education is based on a lie that is still taught as fact in modern museums and classrooms.

The Bible states man and creatures were created in the same week (Genesis 1:1-31). Evolutionists believe dinosaurs

existed and died millions of years before man evolved. In reality, the fossil record denies evolution. One example is that a fossilized human finger was found along the Paluxy River (in Texas) in the same layer that dinosaur bones were found. This shows human and dinosaur relics exist in the same strata which is evidence they existed at the same time. Another example is fossils of trilobites and dinosaurs, many human footprints, and a large cat footprint have been discovered on the Paluxy River in the same layer strata with dinosaur footprints. This accurately documented evidence strongly shows that man and dinosaurs did walk together, as they must have, since God created all animals and man on the same day.

According to the Bible, God destroyed the world with a global flood (Genesis 6:5-8:22). Evolutionists deny the possibility of a global flood even though it is a provable scientific fact that catastrophic action can cause changes, in a relatively short time, that evolutionists claim must have taken millions of years. The Biblical account of the flood of Noah was not a gentle rain that covered the earth. A great destructive storm literally wiped out most life and changed the face of the earth.

Mt. St. Helens' eruption has provided overwhelming proof (not just evidence) that catastrophic action can produce major geological changes. The eruption left a one-quarter size "Grand Canyon" in its wake, including layered strata, in just a few hours, and Mt. St. Helens is a small volcano. Evolutionists want you to believe that all canyons and other formations take millions of years to develop. This action is like a dripping hose making a gradual rut in the dirt over a long period of time. Mt. St. Helens' flow can be compared to turning the faucet wide open and making the same rut in a very short period of time. The actual erosion of Niagara Falls is evidence of a young earth. Niagara Falls is wearing back at a known rate each year. Calculating back to its original precipice only allows for about five thousand years (the estimated time of Noah's flood).

Existing life is evidence of a young earth. The oldest thing alive on earth today is the tough bristle-cone pine trees found in the White Mountains of California and Nevada. Their

growth rings indicate an age of only about five thousand years. Geological and Biological Dating methods for ancient dating are often unreliable, guess work, or deception. It is a scientific fact, in carbon dating, that the data is not accurate when dating items over a few thousand years old. A scientist can keep changing the conditions of the experiment until the resulting test data matches his or her beliefs.

Secular scientists often use circular reasoning as evidence for evolution. This is like saying, "I am 30 years old because the house I was born in is 30 years old," then saying, "My house is 30 years old because I am 30 years old." This is not science. Another example of circular reasoning is when a biologist would say a trilobite is 300 million years old because it was found in Cambrian rock. Then, another geologist will tell you the Cambrian rock is 300 million years old because trilobites were found in it.

Since the moon has no erosion, scientists and evolutionists expected a large layer of cosmic dust to be found when they sent man to the moon. Landing equipment and the land rover were built to operate over a deep blanket of this dust. They expected average depths to be over 50 feet deep. To their surprise, the dust layer was only one to three inches deep. Calculating the amount of dust actually found on the moon would date the moon at less than 8-10,000 years old.

Consider the statement: Science provides strong evidence to support Biblical creation.

What does your Religion/Faith believe?

What do you personally believe? Why?

CONCLUSION

Christians who believe the Holy Bible is true and unerring will have no trouble with science. True unbiased science does not contradict Scripture. While it is true that the Bible was not written as a book of science, it does include passages that relate to science. After all, the Creator is the one who began and sustains what we classify as science. Observable scientific evidence provides a better case for creation than for evolution. This is why many secular scientists will not publicly debate creation scientists. Nonetheless, it boils down to faith in the perfect God of truth or faith in imperfect man who is capable of mistakes and deception. Christianity was never meant to be proven and evolution cannot be. It always comes down to faith.

Consider the statement: Both Creationism and Evolution are accepted by faith.

What does your Religion/Faith believe?

What do you personally believe? Why?

CHAPTER 4

THE FAMILY

“So God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female created he them. God blessed them and said to them, ‘Be fruitful and increase in number; fill the earth and subdue it. Rule over the fish of the sea and the birds of the air and over every living creature that moves on the ground’.” Genesis 1:27-28

“Haven’t you read,” he replied, “that at the beginning the Creator ‘made them male and female,’ and said, ‘For this reason a man will leave his father and mother and be united to his wife, and the two will become one flesh’? So they are no longer two, but one. Therefore what God has joined together, let man not separate.” Matthew 19:4-6

What a wonderful idea—families! God had our best interest in mind when He designed them. He put a man and a woman together to fill the earth, and He gave them authority to train their children in Godly ways (Ephesians 6:4). Families are now and have always been the basic unit of society. A study of Malachi chapter 2, Matthew chapters 5 and 19, and Mark chapter 10 will show that God never intended for a family to break up. Families whose members put each other first, instead of themselves, contribute to a strong nation. A strong, unselfish family builds a strong nation. A nation made up of weak and broken families is a weak and broken nation. The primary nuclear family unit consists of one man, one woman, and their children, but can also include other family members within the same household. He allows this sharing of the home with those outside the immediate family because He is a God full of grace and He allows us to participate in that grace. He wants us to share in His love by living up to the family responsibilities He has given us.

It is important to remember that God never changes. He is perfection and deals with us in perfect truth in all matters. We

become confused when we do not distinguish between what God intends for us and what He sometimes allows us to do. This is true concerning many aspects of our life and definitely applies to the family. For example, He will allow us to make bad choices in the family. King Solomon, early in his life, was a very wise man. Later he gave in to worldly desires and did not look to God for his wisdom. Although it was not God's will for his life, he was allowed to marry many wives and have many concubines. Scripture records that Solomon suffered many consequences mainly because of his decision to worship their pagan gods. There are always consequences to bad choices, even for a king like Solomon. We would be a lot better off if we would remember that.

We need to know what the Bible really says about family members. Those who control the news would have you believe that the Bible teaches that men are more important or better than women. The fact is the Bible teaches that God made men and women equal (Genesis 1:27-28). He loves neither more than the other. It is only their roles that are different. These roles are different, not by accident, but by God's own design. It is a wonderful design. When families function the way God intends, they reap fulfillment beyond belief. When they don't, then strife, loneliness, and heartbreak are the result. The Bible has much to say about how we should live together as husbands, wives, fathers, mothers and children. The following sections on husbands and wives, fathers and mothers, and children present a brief overview of these roles.

Consider Matthew 19:4-6.

How is your Religion/Faith similar to this? How is it different?

Consider the narrative in this section.

What do you personally believe? Why?

HUSBANDS AND WIVES

“Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her.” Ephesians 5:25

“Wives, submit to your husbands as to the Lord.”
Ephesians 5:22

Adam and Eve were perfect lovers at first. They were as innocent as two babies in a bathtub. How could they not be innocent? There was nothing to hide between them, neither spiritually nor physically. From one flesh, they had become two, and by the wonderfulness of marital sex, they were once again one flesh. God blesses this relationship within the bounds of marriage and it is a major factor that strengthens the love between man and wife.

Problems began for Adam and Eve only after sin entered their wonderful world. We know of two extraordinary trees in the Garden. One was the Tree of Life. This tree gave life. Adam and Eve were allowed to eat of its fruit. The other tree was the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil. God specifically forbade Adam to eat of its fruit, but when Adam disobeyed and ate, death and all the problems of life began (Genesis 2:17). A curse was placed upon the purity of the relationship between husband and wife. The husband, as head of the family would now enforce his rule, and the wife would rebel against her husband's rule. The husband was cursed to hard work, and the wife would have pain in childbirth (Genesis 3:16-19). The irony of this is even though hard work and pain are the result of a curse, God is merciful and allows satisfaction from hard work and unbelievable joy from the birth of a new life. Even so, marriages still must work through problems.

Marriages always struggle when the man or the woman rebel against God's intended role for them. Men and women are co-equal in God's design for marriage, and yet they have such different roles in it. Ever-changing cultural roles increase friction and animosity between men and women as their roles

become confused by society. So, are we then doomed to animosity between husband and wife? From a worldview perspective, we might suppose so. The media is inundated with the results of bad marriages. Instead of hearing about love, respect and honor in the family, our minds and our children's minds are being filled with immoral sex, foul language, disrespect, and violence from the secular movies, music, and television shows. That is the bad news, but there is good news. Because of Jesus Christ and His Word, we have available both the power and knowledge to allow God to bring restoration to His plan for husbands, wives, and children. We do not have to conform to the world's ways. We can make up our own minds to live lifestyles together, as God intended. We may stumble occasionally, but our lifestyles can reflect a Godly marriage if Christ is the center of it. Only with Him in our lives can we be freed from the curse and function as the family God intended us to be.

In Ephesians 5 & 6, Paul gives us some key points concerning the way God intended families to live and it is not chauvinism or women's liberation. It is sacrificial love for one another. Remember the second greatest commandment that we should love our neighbor as ourselves. Paul applies it here in Ephesians to emphasize its importance in the marriage relationship. In a Christian marriage, the relationship of a husband to his wife is compared to Christ's relationship to His church. A man is to love his wife so much he is willing to give his own life to save hers. Paul also tells husbands "*to love their wives as their own bodies.*" A normal husband takes care of his own body. He makes sure it is fed and nurtured. A Christian husband should take care of his wife, treat her with kindness, gentleness, and respect and be in fellowship with her. A husband who is not in fellowship with his wife will find it very difficult or maybe impossible to be in fellowship with God.

All Christians, men and women, should submit to the Lord in love even though He never forces us to submit to Him. Our submission to Jesus is in response to the love He first showed us. In the same way, a wife is to submit to her husband

in response to the love he shows her. Remember, if a husband does not love his wife unselfishly, it is going to be very difficult for her to respond with submissive love. Contrary to public opinion, submission is not a bad thing. Submission does not degrade the character of a person. It is a sign of great strength and love. Jesus submitted Himself to a death on the cross because of His love for us.

Consider Ephesians 5:25 and 5:22.

How is your Religion/Faith similar to this? How is it different?

Consider the narrative in this section.

What do you personally believe? Why?

FATHERS AND MOTHERS

“Fathers, do not exasperate your children; instead, bring them up in the training and instruction of the Lord.”
Ephesians 6:4

“The wise woman builds her house, but with her own hands the foolish one tears hers down.” Proverbs 14:1

Many modern educators are telling parents that it is not their responsibility to teach God’s ways to their children. They are saying that parents have no right to impose their values on their children. Liberal educators would rather your children only be exposed to their values. They do not understand that Christians are obligated to teach their children about God and Godly values. It is God’s values that keep families and even whole societies together. These values do not change with time or circumstances or with man’s current philosophy of life. Satan would be delighted if he could stop children from hearing Godly wisdom. It is sad that Satan has succeeded in doing this in our current public school system.

Educators in many countries have deserted the idea of right and wrong. They believe there is no “absolute truth”. In the United States of America, this prevailing attitude of political correctness has caused much confusion in the hearts and minds of our youth. In God’s design of the family, this responsibility lies solely within the parents, regardless of culture or the politically correct view. This does not mean they can abuse this responsibility. Parents are still held accountable to God and society for bad decisions.

God made marriage partners “one” because He seeks Godly offspring (Malachi 2:15). The foundation for this is in Genesis (Genesis 1:28). Jesus gave a very stern warning to those who would keep the children from Him. He said, *“And whoever welcomes a little child like this in my name welcomes me. But if anyone causes one of these little ones who believe in me to sin, it would be better for him to have a large millstone hung around his*

neck and to be drowned in the depths of the sea” (Matthew 18:5-6). When laws are passed that hinder a little one from learning the name of Jesus, the consequences for the lawgiver will be grave. A nation of Godless children becomes a nation of Godless leaders and historically bring destruction to the nation.

Children need instruction because they are not born wise. In fact, they do some rather dumb things in their growth years. They must learn wisdom, and if they do not, they will continue to do stupid things throughout their adult years. Lack of instruction in the home has led to higher crime rates, drug usage, alcoholism, broken homes, and the list goes on. What about the future? How can our children teach wisdom to their children if they have not learned it themselves?

Christian fathers should not provoke their children to anger. They should discipline their children (Proverbs 13:24), but they should not punish in anger or punish so harshly they break a child’s spirit. Children are very vulnerable, and can be hardened way too early in life by a thoughtless or abusive parent. Punishment should be administered in a way that shows love in spite of child’s wrong doing. If a father fails to show more love than discipline to the tender child under his care, he will answer for it. Fathers must be consistent in instruction. They should teach by example and not say one thing and do another. Fathers should be wise in the Lord’s ways and pass this wisdom down to their children.

Mothers naturally love and cherish their children. This special love seems to be equal for both natural children and adopted children. Radical feminists are confusing this natural love by telling young mothers they are more important than their children. Sadly, many organizations that pretend to promote women’s rights have actually done more harm than good because they have destroyed the beauty of womanhood and motherhood in our society today. By luring young women from God’s purpose for their lives, they have been leaders in the destruction of the family as God would have it. They have even convinced many that it is okay to destroy the life living inside of them. How tragic! God told Jeremiah, *“Before I formed you in the*

womb I knew you, before you were born I set you apart; I appointed you as a prophet to the nations” (Jeremiah 1:5). God formed you too. What a tragedy it would have been if you had been aborted.

Christian mothers also have a responsibility to teach their children (Proverbs 6:20). They should not let the world pervert them from God’s plan for their lives and their responsibilities to their children. They should love their children, including their unborn children, and take time from their own lives to help them grow in wisdom. While it is true that mothers who are not Christians can love their children unselfishly, the greatest love mothers can give is to teach their children about the author of love, the Lord Jesus Christ. A wise woman tends to the affairs of her own home (Proverbs 14:1). In the story of a good wife, *“Her children arise and call her blessed;”* (Proverbs 31:28).

There are many other stories in the Bible about Godly mothers. Most of the stories show much sacrifice on the part of the mother for her children. Biblical mothers loved their unborn children, also. Remember, Mary, the mother of Jesus, and Elizabeth, the mother of John, thought well of their babies even while they were in the womb (Luke 1:39-41). Let us not forget that God also created woman in His image. This means the characteristics of a Godly mother are from God. We so often think of God in the masculine that we forget He created both male and female in His image. Isn’t it wonderful that God made all the members of the family special?

Consider Ephesians 6:4.

How is your Religion/Faith similar to this? How is it different?

Consider the narrative in this section.

What do you personally believe? Why?

CHILDREN

“Children, obey your parents in the Lord, for this is right. ‘Honor your father and mother’—which is the first commandment with a promise—‘that it may go well with you and that you may enjoy long life on the earth.’” Ephesians 6:1-3

Children are a gift from God. *“Sons are a heritage from the LORD, children a reward from him”* (Psalm 127:3). A child of God should be happy to have children (Psalm 127:4-5). Raising children is a special privilege entrusted to parents by the Father of all children. Just as it is a father and mother’s duty to teach their children, it is the children’s duty to obey their parents. Old Testament Jewish fathers taught their children. It is through the study of God’s Word that children learn to walk with God. Proverbs, God’s book of wisdom, is filled with verses pertaining to the instruction and discipline of children. It addresses consequences of both wise (obedient) and wicked (disobedient) children. *“A wise son heeds his father’s instruction, but a mocker does not listen to rebuke”* (Proverbs 13:1). *“A fool spurns his father’s discipline, but whoever heeds correction shows prudence”* (Proverbs 15:5). In the New Testament, Ephesians 6:4 emphasizes instructions to children in the ways of the Lord. For a child to obey is well-pleasing unto the Lord (Colossians 3:20). Obedience at home fosters obedience to God; this leads to wisdom.

Children are to honor their parents. This is the first commandment “with promise.” This is a reference to one of the Ten Commandments found in Exodus 20:12. It is repeated in Deuteronomy 5:16. It is a promise of long life. God wants children to “live long and prosper.” On the other hand, rebellion to God’s plan in the form of disobedience, hate, drugs, immorality, etc., will only lead to a shortened life. Good things will come to those who honor their father and mother through their obedience. God knows that if we honor our parents we will be the kind of people who will honor Him. Children should be

exposed to the Word of God. The years of youth are very special. A young mind learns new things every day. If time is spent listening to the wrong things (i.e. New Age philosophies, secular rock music, etc.), then the mind is filled with things that will only cause harm. The best time to fill his or her mind and heart with the love of Jesus is when a person is young. God has a lifetime of blessings for young people who make Jesus the Lord of their lives (Proverbs 3:5-6).

Consider Ephesians 6:1-3.

How is your Religion/Faith similar to this? How is it different?

Consider the narrative in this section.

What do you personally agree believe? Why?

IN SUMMARY

The family is very important to God. He ordained it from creation. When Christians marry, they enter into a covenant with God. God's intention is for this covenant never to be broken. When children come along, God intends for both parents to teach them in His ways and be a living example by doing right. He intends for children to grow in wisdom. Unselfish love between family members is the key to a stable family. This is only possible when Christ is head of the family.

CHAPTER 5

THE CHURCH

“And I tell you that you are Peter, and on this rock I will build my church, and the gates of Hades will not overcome it.” Matthew 16:18

In the Old Testament, God worked through the Hebrew nation. The Jews were His chosen people, but anyone who worshiped the one true God of the Jews was also part of God’s people. In the New Testament, followers of Christ, or the Church, became God’s chosen. There are two Greek words that are interpreted as church. One is *kuriakon* meaning “house of the Lord or a building. *Kuriakon* is not found in the Bible. Instead, the Greek word found in the Bible is *ecclesia* which means an assembly of people who are “called out from.”

Jesus established the church and is the chief cornerstone of those called out (1 Peter 2:6). Because He loves us, He calls His church from a life of sin in preparation for a life with Him through all eternity. The term church may refer to a local body of Christians (Acts 8:11) or it may refer to all Christians (Acts 9:31). Either is correct, but most of the work of the church is done through local groups who meet and worship together. Jesus’ church is portrayed from Scripture in ways to help us understand the church’s relationship to Him. Specifically, the church is described as the Bride of Christ and the Body of Christ.

Consider Matthew 16:18. How is your Religion/Faith similar to this? How is it different?

Consider the narrative in this section.

What do you personally believe? Why?

BRIDE OF CHRIST

“The bride belongs to the bridegroom. The friend who attends the bridegroom waits and listens for him, and is full of joy when he hears the bridegroom’s voice. That joy is mine, and it is now complete.” John 3:29

Jesus illustrates His unique relationship to the church by describing Himself as the Bridegroom and the church as His bride. The love Jesus has for His people was so strong He wants to ensure no one misunderstood His feelings for the church (Eph. 5:22-24). There is a similar comparison in the Old Testament. Isaiah 62:5 says, “...as a bridegroom rejoices over his bride, so will your God rejoice over you.” God loves His church in a way that is as exciting as newfound love. Just as we should not let the excitement of our first love for our earthly bride wear off, we should not let the excitement of our first love for the Bridegroom wear off. Jesus knows what is best for His church and blesses it when it abides in His Word. A church that belongs to Jesus is submissive to Him just as the bride is submissive to the bridegroom. As Christians, we submit to the Holy Spirit’s guidance.

Consider John 3:29. How is your Religion/Faith similar to this? How is it different?

Consider the narrative in this section.

What do you personally believe? Why?

BODY OF CHRIST

“And He is the head of the body, the church; he is the beginning and the firstborn from among the dead, so that in everything he might have the supremacy.” Colossians 1:18

The church is also referred to as the body of Christ. Just as our physical body is obedient to our head, the spiritual body is to be obedient to the spiritual Head. Since Christ is our Spiritual Head, we should look to Him in every decision we make. He came to earth and showed us how to live. He is the power that gives us the ability to reject worldly ways and live lifestyles pleasing to God. Even more so, He is the resurrection power that gives us eternal life. Jesus is the Lord of all creation. As the Head, He knows what is best for the body. The church has survived long after the nations that persecuted it have fallen to destruction. The church (the body) has endured this persecution because Jesus (the Head) is preeminent. He is superior in all ways over His creation. His life is perfect excellence. Though His church may be battered here on earth, He will sustain it.

Consider Colossians 1:18. How is your Religion/Faith similar to this? How is it different?

Consider the narrative in this section.

What do you personally believe? Why?

THE LOCAL CHURCH

“I have given them the glory that you gave me, that they may be one as we are one—I in them and you in me—so that they may be brought to complete unity. Then the world will know that you sent me and have loved them even as you have loved me.” John 17:22-23

In the Old Testament, God used the descendants of Noah to carry out His purposes. One purpose was to prepare the way for Jesus. Old Testament prophets told of the first coming of the Messiah (Jesus). Now it is the church’s task to prepare the world for His Second Coming. The church, guided by Scripture and the Holy Spirit, is commissioned to spread the Good News that God loves us and will return for those who have accepted His love. As the church, we should try to live Godly lives so others can see God’s love in us. Every believer is a living witness for Jesus Christ and should strive to avoid situations that lead to sin. When Christians sin, it weakens not only their testimony but also the testimony of the church as a whole, and the greater the visibility of the sin, the more widespread the damage.

Christians are not perfect. In addition, since we are not perfect, those who do not know Jesus should not use a Christian’s imperfection as the reason to reject Jesus as personal Lord and Savior. Of all the excuses one may come up with for not trusting God, one of the most popular excuses for rejecting Christ is, “I’m a better person than my neighbor who goes to church.” Yes, it is important for a Christian not to give a lost person this excuse, but it still is not a valid excuse for rejecting Christ. Lost people must look only to Jesus for their salvation. Neither should Christians place their faith in other Christians. Even though there are great men and women of God that we can respect and admire, we must ultimately place our faith only in Jesus Christ. God promised that He would never leave or forsake us (Deuteronomy. 31:6).

How is your Religion/Faith similar to this? How is it different?

Consider the narrative in this section.

What do you personally believe? Why?

CHURCH ATTENDANCE

A person does not have to attend church to be saved, but it is God's wish that His children be part of a Christian group. We should follow the example of early New Testament Christians and mature as Christians through the local church. The following are three major reasons for meeting together as an assembly: worship, fellowship, and mission.

WORSHIP

(Reaching Up)

“Jesus answered, ‘It is written: ‘Worship the Lord your God and serve him only.’” Luke 4:8

Worship deals with a Christian's relationship to God. Since God is the Creator, we owe Him our existence and our worship. He bought us with the price of Jesus' life. When Satan tempted Jesus, He rebuked Satan by saying we are only to worship and serve God. God seeks those who will worship Him in spirit and in truth for they are the true worshipers (John 4:23-24). The Apostle Paul was adamant about believers committing themselves to meeting regularly to worship, pray and preach God's word. In the Old Testament, God's people met to give God glory, to bring an offering, and to come before Him to worship Him in the beauty of holiness (1 Chronicles 16:29).

In the New Testament, Paul met with the people to break bread and to preach to them (Acts 20:7). Paul sent many letters to the churches he started to give them advice on how to function as a church, thus giving each local body his full support. In First Timothy, Paul gives guidance in doctrine, and in Second Timothy, he exhorts us to preach the Word. In Titus, Paul gives qualifications of elders/deacons and ministers. In addition, he states some qualities of a sound church. The pastor is the leader and shepherd of the church. One should worship at a church where the leaders speak the truth of God. The only way to be

sure of doing that is to read and study the Bible for yourself so you will know, first hand, what is in God's Word.

Consider Luke 4:8. How is your Religion/Faith similar to this? How is it different?

Consider the narrative in this section.

What do you personally believe? Why?

FELLOWSHIP

(Reaching In)

“But if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus, his Son, purifies us from all sin.” 1 John 1:7

Fellowship is a Christian's relationship with other Christians with the understanding that the common bond is fellowship with Jesus Christ. The first chapter of First John deals with our fellowship with each other. Surely showing love to one another is the same as showing love to God, having fellowship with one another is having fellowship with God (1 John 1:3). The Holy Spirit is our guide as we fellowship. This fellowship is important to our Christian maturity. Studying the Word together, under the guidance of called men of God, is a proven method of Christian growth. Sharing our joys and sorrows, our strengths and struggles, and our blessings and testimonies are ways Christians help each other grow.

A very important benefit of fellowship with each other is accountability. This accountability helps us remain in the light and reminds us to repent and seek forgiveness when we stumble. If we do, then Christ will purify us from our sins. In 1 John 1:6-7, John tells us to walk in the light and not in darkness. He says our fellowship with one another depends on us walking in the light and we are liars if we claim fellowship with one another but walk in darkness. An application of this verse might be about “Sunday Christians” who come to church on Sunday but live ungodly lives the other six days. Any person who claims to be a Christian but lives openly or secretly in sin casts serious doubt on his or her salvation. Christians are the church every day of the week, even though they meet together only one or two days a week. Regular Bible study and prayer groups are excellent ways to fellowship.

Consider 1 John 1:7.

How is your Religion/Faith similar to this?

How is it different?

Consider the narrative in this section.

What do you personally believe? Why?

MISSION

(Reaching Out)

“Do you not say, ‘Four months more and then the harvest’? I tell you, open your eyes and look at the fields! They are ripe for harvest. Even now the reaper draws his wages, even now he harvests the crop for eternal life, so that the sower and the reaper may be glad together.” John 4:35-36

Mission is a Christian’s relationship to the lost. The pastor has a special call to witness to and shepherd a particular fellowship of believers. A missionary has a special call to reach outside the local church. God calls every believer to witness through his or her own life, be it at home, work, school or wherever.

Every church member, not just pastors and missionaries should have a desire to tell others about Jesus. We should not be ashamed of the gospel (2 Timothy 1:8) but instead allow God use us as sowers and as reapers in spreading the Gospel (John 4:37-38). Sowers plant seeds, and reapers harvest the crop. All of us are to be sowers by telling others about Jesus and by living Godly lifestyles. Reapers have the special call and gift of being involved in the final steps of the salvation process. The rewards are great for both sowers and reapers and they will rejoice together (John 4:36). If our lifestyles reflect the fruit of the Spirit and our hearts are so filled with the good news, others will be able to see the love of God in us and this is a Christian’s greatest witness.

Consider John 4:35-36. How is your Religion/Faith similar to this?

How is it different?

Consider the narrative in this section.

What do you personally believe? Why?

THE CHURCH'S MOST POWERFUL WEAPON - PRAYER

“Seek the Lord while he may be found; call on him while he is near.” Isaiah 55:6

Christians, who are the church, must pray for Godly lifestyles. We must call on the spiritual power of the Holy Spirit to defeat Satan when he tempts us. We far too often neglect real prayer in our lives. Often, we say a quick chant and then proceed to fight our battles our way. God says His thoughts and ways are much higher than ours (Isaiah 55:8-9). He knows what is best, and He promises to give us His best if we ask Him. The wise person will listen to God's leading and trust Him in all things. God hears all the prayers of His church. In His love and wisdom, He answers all Christians' prayers. Sometimes the answer is no, for He knows what is best. Sometimes His answer is to wait (Psalm 37:7). It may be that God considers other prayers when He answers. All this gives reason for us to pray that His will be done.

Sometimes a person's faith requires him or her to ask only once and wait for God's answer. Sometimes answers require prayer and fasting over a period of time (Mark 9:25-29). The bottom line is that God has the power to grant any petition and will if it is according to His will and purpose. We should not be afraid of His answer no matter what. He loves and desires fellowship with us and will always do what is best for us (Luke 11:11-13). Mostly we should pray for others. We should pray for the lost. We should pray for those that are hurting, then we should do what we can to help. Even though God knows our needs, hopes, and desires, He still wants us to talk to Him about them. He has many blessings for those who trust in Him and live according to His principles. Remember, Christians are winners, for Jesus has already won the war, and He prays for us (John 17:20-21). We should pray for our leaders. The Bible indicates that God has given the leaders of nations the responsibility for the welfare and protection of the people.

Historically, God has dealt with the unjust by allowing nations to defend its people against evil causes (Romans 13:1-4). He has also allowed pagan nations to rule over His own children when they turned their backs on Him. If we go to war, we should pray that the cause is just. Revenge is not a just cause, but concern for a hurting world is. Peace not war is what God desires for His world.

Consider Isaiah 55:6. How is your Religion/Faith similar to this?

How is it different?

Consider the narrative in this section.

What do you personally believe? Why?

IN SUMMARY

Jesus came to earth and established the church. He taught us how to worship. He sent the Holy Spirit to help us understand Scripture. We should follow the New Testament example and meet as a local body. We must remember that, as long as we walk this earth, we will be fighting spiritual battles that cannot be won with earthly weapons. We must remain in prayer with the one who has already won the war for us. He won it on the cross and that is why the blood of Jesus is the only payment God will accept for our eternal salvation.

CHAPTER 6

MONEY

“In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth.” Genesis 1:1

“To the LORD your God belong the heavens, even the highest heavens, the earth and everything in it.”
Deuteronomy 10:14

“Through him all things were made; without him nothing was made that has been made.” John 1:3

“For we brought nothing into the world, and we can take nothing out of it.” 1 Timothy 6:7

God is creator of everything in existence, so He is, by that right, the owner of everything (Genesis 1:1; Colossians 1:16-17). This study of stewardship is based on the Genesis foundation and is supported by New Testament Scriptures. First in importance is that God is owner, and we are stewards of what He owns. This is a humbling revelation because society often assigns worth to a person based on his or her material wealth. God assigned great worth to us because we are His special creation. He shares His whole world with us and in return He asks that we share with others, especially those who have less. It is not necessarily a sin to have things, but we must always remember that it is God who allows us possessions. He has given us the use of His world while we are here (Psalm 115:16) and He allows us to use what is His for our own benefit and for the benefit of others.

Money is merely a thing, it is neither good nor bad. Money is not the root of all evil as some misquote. The *love* of money is the root of all evil (1 Timothy 6:10). This love of material wealth often causes wandering from the faith. Material wealth is temporal while faith in Jesus Christ is forever. In itself, being either rich or poor is not wrong (Ecclesiastes 7:14). The wrong lies in greed—especially the greediness of the rich

leading to the poverty of the poor. Whether we are rich or poor, we should work hard and be satisfied with what God entrusts to us. It may help us to be good stewards of what God allows us to possess if we consider how we OBTAIN money and how we USE it.

Consider the statement: Money is merely a thing, it is neither good or bad.

How is this the same or different in your Religion/Faith?

What do you personally believe?

WAYS WE OBTAIN MONEY

Work is the primary way we obtain money either through our own work or the work of others. The focus here is on work within the family.

WORKING HUSBANDS AND FATHERS

“If anyone does not provide for his relatives, and especially for his immediate family, he has denied the faith and is worse than an unbeliever.” 1 Timothy 5:8

Work has its foundation in Genesis. Adam worked in the Garden of Eden and it was enjoyable and God given, but when he and Eve sinned, God sent him out of the garden to hard sweaty work (Genesis 3:17-23). This meant work would not always be enjoyable. From that time until now, God has ordained work as man’s most honest means to provide for himself and his family (Psalm 104:23). Obviously if a woman has no husband, she will probably be her own provider. If so, most of the comments in this section may apply to her in today’s society. Nevertheless, it was God’s original design that man be the provider for his family.

We are responsible to God as stewards, even though we work for “our” money. We must not forget it is God who has given us the ability to work in the first place (Deuteronomy 8:17-18). We must not forget He cares for us and wants the best for us.

We are created equal as persons, but not in ability or talents. It would be a dull, drab world if we were. Even so, hard work is often the key to opportunities. The average worker in America is considered wealthy according to world living standards. A young person in North America can choose his or her own career in life, and the choices are many. The key to real success is always to seek God’s guidance in those choices.

We often miss God’s purpose for our lives because we do things without giving Him a chance to lead us. Sometimes the

greed of others or our own greed becomes an obstacle to reaching goals. Sometimes God allows adversity in a life to bring a wondering “child” back to Him. People who are totally self-reliant or rich may find it easy to reject God’s call in their life because they feel no need for God. So do not despair when hardships abound, for it just might be the time that brings salvation and true happiness. It just might be the time a rebellious Christian returns home. God is sovereign, and there are many testimonies from those who give God praise for bringing them to Him through adversity. There are many passages in the Bible that deal with work, wealth and poverty. Here are a few:

Work—most people work for a living.

- It is wise to work (Proverbs 6:6-8).
- A man should work to provide for his family, especially his immediate family. If he is lazy and does not work, Paul says he has denied his faith and is worse than an unbeliever (1 Timothy 5:8).
- We are to do our best when we work (Ecclesiastes 9:10).
- We are to be satisfied in our work (Ecclesiastes 3:12-13).
- We are to be faithful employees (Proverbs 25:13).
- Hard work is good (Proverbs 14:23; 2 Thessalonians 3:8-13).
- A worker deserves wages (Luke 10:5-7; 1 Timothy 5:18).
- It is foolish to work excessively for riches (Proverbs 23:4-5).
- A lazy worker is a pain (Proverbs 10:26).
- The lazy worker is foolish (Proverbs 26:13-16).
- Work as if you are working for the Lord (Colossians 3:23).

Wealth—honest wealth is usually gained through work.

- Wealth is ultimately controlled by God (1 Samuel 2:7-8).
- Honest acquisition of wealth is okay (Proverbs 28:20).
- Wealth is a gift that can be enjoyed (Ecclesiastes 5:19-20).
- The wealthy should be generous (Proverbs 11:24-25; 1 John 3:17-19).
- Wealth can be a major stumbling block to salvation (Matthew 19:16-24), but is not always (Matthew 19:26).
- Love of wealth does not come from God (1 John 2:15-17).

- There are consequences in loving money (1 Timothy 6:10).
- Spiritual wealth is better than physical wealth (Proverbs 16:16).
- Greed leads to poverty (Proverbs 28:22).
- Greed is shameful (Job 31:16-22).
- Wealthy oppressors will be judged (James 5:1-5).

Poverty—some are poor because they are lazy, but some are poor because of circumstances beyond their control. Jesus was kind to the poor. We, also, should be less judgmental and more helpful in this area.

- There will always be the poor (Matthew 26:11; Deuteronomy 15:11).
- If one is poor because he won't work, then he shouldn't eat (2 Thessalonians 3:10).
- God hears the poor (Psalm 102:17).
- God cares for the poor (Luke 12:22-32).
- The poor are often the most generous (Mark 12:42-44; 1 Kings 17:8-16).
- Salvation comes easier to the poor (James 2:5).
- The faithful poor should not be concerned with worry (Matthew 6:25-34).
- We should not forget the poor (Galatians 2:10).
- God uses the wealthy to provide for the poor (Isaiah 58:7; Deuteronomy 15:11).

It is the condition of our hearts and not the degree of our wealth that is important to God. Hard work and generosity will bring riches the world can never understand.

WORKING WIVES AND MOTHERS

“Charm is deceptive, and beauty is fleeting; but a woman who fears the LORD is to be praised. Give her the reward she has earned, and let her works bring her praise at the city gate.” Proverbs 31:30-31

We know God is no respecter of persons. Men and women are equal in His eyes (Genesis 5:2). It is the roles He has given each that differ. A Christian should respect these roles. The problem is usually not working women but where and when women work. A married woman working outside the home may find it difficult to be a good wife as related in Proverbs 31. This section is not intended to condemn women for working outside the home. Many women make great sacrifices for their families and working away from home may be such a sacrifice. The wife’s decision to work outside of the home should be made jointly with the husband to ensure it is based solely on her sacrificial love for her family. Too many times this decision is made solely on selfish ambition, greed, or some other illegitimate “need” unrelated to the true nature of the family. Single mothers are an exception. They often have no choice but to work outside the home in order to provide for themselves and their children. Before a married woman chooses to work outside the home, there are five things she may want to consider:

- God’s Word on the subject—“What does God’s Word say?”
- Her husband’s opinion—“How does my husband feel?”
- Her children—“Who will raise them, and how will my working affect them?”
- The practical aspects—“Is it practical for me to work outside the home?”
- Herself—“Would work in the home be better for me?”

God’s Word

“Then they can train the younger women to love their husbands and children, to be self-controlled and pure, to be

busy at home, to be kind, and to be subject to their husbands, so that no one will malign the word of God. Titus 2:4-5

These verses contain God's wisdom for young wives and mothers. To be obedient to God calls for a disregard of modern teaching and propaganda. These verses call for commitment and love.

- Love their husbands—Women who work full time sometimes find it hard to devote mental and physical energy to this task.
- Love their children—Being there for their children is a part of loving them.
- Self-Controlled and Pure—Temptations in the workplace outside the home results in disaster far too often.
- Busy at home—Women working outside the home usually find they have two concerns: their “job work” and their “home work.” It may be difficult to do justice to both.
- Kind — An argument has no defense against kindness; kindness fosters love in a home.
- Subject to their husbands—Women working outside the home often find they must be subject to someone else's husband (professionally speaking), and sometimes they have to choose between the two.
- So that no one will malign the Word of God—Her work lifestyle must not discredit nor hinder God's Word.

God created woman very special. She is to be a helpmeet for her husband and a Godly mother for her children. When a woman chooses to stay home she should be given honor and praise for that choice.

Husband's Opinion

It is Scriptural that a wife look to her husband, especially in decisions of this magnitude. God's Word gives guidance to both husband and wife. The husband should not force his wife to work to support the family. The Bible says any man who does not provide for his own is worse than an unbeliever (1 Timothy

5:8). Of course, a husband out of work, through no fault of his own, is an extenuating circumstance. Hopefully, this is only a short-term hardship. A woman working to help her husband over hardships or through school so he can better provide for the family is a sacrificial act of love on her part. Even so, God may have another way to provide besides the wife working, even when circumstances are tough. Husbands should help wives make decisions that are best for the family. God may have different solutions for different families. Both husbands and wives should prayerfully come to an agreement on the matter of her working outside the home.

Her Children

Things were perfect for Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden. Sin, of course, messed that up. Adam was charged to go to work—like, sweat to earn a living. Therefore, that left Eve to take care of the little ones most of the day. God gave her a special love to handle this. God made a woman very special in the area of children. Babies have their first home and security in their mothers' body. Historically, babies had their first meal at their mothers' breast (which for most babies is still the best for both health and security reasons). A mother has a special sense about her baby's well-being, and a mother's love is a special kind of love that only a mother is capable of giving. Often a child's security depends on a parent being available. A mother should not sacrifice her children's well-being for her own gratification.

Practical Aspects

Practical considerations involve both spiritual and monetary considerations. We must ask if mother working adds to the spiritual growth of the family. Does work take away from her prayer life? Does it interfere with church attendance? Is she constantly tired from working two careers? Does the majority of her paycheck go to childcare, gas, work wardrobe, etc.?

Herself

“A wife of noble character who can find? She is worth far more than rubies.” Proverbs 31:10

Working in the home, although sometimes more tiring than work outside the home, has brought untold fulfillment through an investment in the lives of her husband and her children. It is a shame that modern culture tells women to work for their own self-esteem and fulfillment. The truth is that work outside the home is not a requirement for a woman to feel good about herself. The work that brought great fulfillment to the Godly wife in Proverbs 31 was related to working in the home:

- Her worth is far above rubies (v.10).
- Her husband trusts her (v.11).
- She does her husband good (v.12).
- She works with her hands (v.13).
- She shops (v.14).
- She provides food (v.15).
- She is a business woman (v.16).
- She is a strong and smart worker (v.17-18).
- She spins and sews (vs. 19, 22).
- She helps the poor and needy (v.20).
- She doesn't need to worry about her family's needs (v. 21).
- She is nicely clothed (v. 22).
- She sews garments to sell (v. 24).
- She is clothed with dignity and she has the ability to laugh (v. 25).
- She speaks wisely (v.26).
- She is not lazy (v.27).
- She gets respect from her children (v.28).
- She gets praise from her husband (v.28).

Wow! Trusting God and doing things His way is always right. Too often, we settle for okay and miss out on His best for us. A mother is probably more valuable to the family at home, especially if she has preschool-age children. The home is where she will most likely find real fulfillment and peace for herself. In today's society, there are many things she can do to earn money

at home. She can plan ways to save money such as wise grocery shopping. There are many suggestions in most Christian financial freedom books for families to live financially free.

Consider the statement: In the western culture, money was once primarily obtained by the head of the household, but today it takes at least two working people for a family to make ends meet.

How is this the same or different in your Religion/Faith?

What do you personally believe?

WAYS WE USE MONEY

There are two basic ways a Christian should use money. These are: (1) giving and (2) meeting personal and family needs through buying and saving.

GIVING

“Remember this: Whoever sows sparingly will also reap sparingly, and whoever sows generously will also reap generously. Each man should give what he has decided in his heart to give, not reluctantly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver.” 2 Corinthians 9:6-7

Returning a portion to God should take priority over all other giving. Jesus works through His church. Therefore, as Christians, we should consider the church as the first place for our tithes and offerings. Secondly, we give to others. How much should we give to the church? Many believe we should give 10% of what we earn back to God. Well, there is certainly nothing wrong with that. God has honored the tithe throughout Biblical history (Leviticus 27:30; Deuteronomy 14:22-23; Malachi 3:8-11; Matthew 23:23). To most, this translates that we own and can do anything we want with the other 90%. There are two problems here. First, most Christians don't even give 10% back to God through the church or other ministries. The other problem is even greater. We don't own the 90% either—God does. Godly stewardship holds us accountable for what we do with 100% of our possessions.

Christians should make loving generosity the key to giving. In Matthew 23:23, Jesus states tithing is right but it should be done for love and not for show. The “religious” leaders of His day tithed, but Jesus chastised them for “showy” giving while they neglected the more important matters of the law—judgment, mercy and faith. New Testament giving is not restricted to the tithe or to the law. Our generosity should be bound by our hearts. God blesses a generous heart (Proverbs 11:24-25). Paul said we should give as we purpose (or

determine) in our hearts. If we are selfish and greedy, then our hearts will not purpose much giving. If we do not give because we are afraid we won't have enough for our needs, we are expressing a major lack of faith in that we are not trusting God to be our Provider. If we humble ourselves and choose to live a moderate living standard, we would have more to give. If we choose a high living standard, we may have little left over to give. A major problem in western society is found in the ease of credit. Credit, more often than not, allows us to live beyond our means and then end up in bondage to society.

God does not need our money because everything belongs to Him. He created the elements our feeble coins are stamped from and the trees our paper money is printed on. He allows us to be stewards in His world. Giving is for our benefit. It helps express our willingness to be obedient. If we give little, we reap little, but if we give much, we reap much. God does not want us to give grudgingly or out of necessity. He wants us to give cheerfully and He knows our hearts in this matter (2 Corinthians 9:6-7). God does not need gifts from non-Christians either. Too often the lost are led to believe their giving (works) will give them entrance to heaven. Church leaders and television evangelists should discourage such giving. Jesus warns us that showmanship in giving, to others and to Him, has no reward with the Father (Matthew 6:1-4; Matthew 23:23).

Since giving is so very important to the Christian, to whom we give and how much we give should be Biblically based:

To whom should we give?

- First to God and His church (1 Corinthians 16:2).
- To one's own family (1 Timothy 5:8).
- To the poor (Deuteronomy 15:7; Proverbs 22:9, 28:27; Galatians 2:10).
- To the hungry, thirsty, stranger, naked (Matthew 25:35-40).
- How much should we give?
- As we decide in our hearts (2 Corinthians 9:7).

- According to our ability (Acts 11:29).
- In keeping with our income (1 Corinthians 16:2).

Acts 11:29 and 1 Corinthians 16:2 show God requires more of those who are able. Those who are in financial bondage have little ability to give because they are servants to their creditors (Proverbs 22:7). Remember, we should give cheerfully. We can never out give God who gave us the ultimate gift, His Son Jesus.

MEETING NEEDS

We use money to meet our needs (food, shelter, transportation) by paying cash, buying on credit or saving for future needs.

Paying Cash

“Suppose one of you wants to build a tower. Will he not first sit down and estimate the cost to see if he has enough money to complete it?” Luke 14:28

To be financially free is a goal most never reach even though God does not want His children to live in bondage. The Bible is filled with counsel against going into debt. Buying with cash is the best way to stay out of debt, but paying cash requires planning. Planning is an art most of us are very poor at when it comes to finances. Husbands and wives should support each other in this venture. Most people have not the slightest idea where their money goes which makes it hard to control finances. That is why it is wise to plan. God watches over the plans of Godly men (Psalm 1:6). A budget is a good tool to help put our financial lives in order (1 Corinthians 14:40). Professional financial counselors usually recommend a budget. Unfortunately, couples usually seek help only after the marriage is in deep financial trouble. There are many good budget programs available for home computers today. There are also several books on the subject.

In the free world, a car is most certainly a need for most families. Although it is easier to finance a new car, this is not always the best investment. A car will depreciate over 30% the first year and another 25% the second year. In other words, a two-year-old car is worth less than half as much as it was new. Of course, there is nothing wrong with owning a new car (someone has to), but it may not be worth going into debt early in one's marriage to have one. On the other hand, if you plan to keep it for six years or more, a new car may be a good investment. However, paying cash for used cars and most other things may be the best way to go. Be patient and build up assets

gradually over the years. Pay cash for clothing and food, and avoid grocery shopping when hungry. Use coupons and watch for sales. You will be surprised at how much you can save when you plan. Don't expect to have everything in the early years of marriage. Develop a steady plan and stick to it.

Buying On Credit

“Give everyone what you owe him: If you owe taxes, pay taxes; if revenue, then revenue; if respect, then respect; if honor, then honor. Let no debt remain outstanding, except the continuing debt to love one another, for he who loves his fellowman has fulfilled the law.” Romans 13:7-8

The Scriptures contain a lot of advice concerning debtors and lenders. Paul gives us the best advice in Romans 13:8. By owing no man anything but a debt of love, we have real freedom to walk with God. Borrowing money is not necessarily a sin. What it usually does is rob us of the best that God wants us to have. We often make life hard on ourselves by not waiting for God to provide. God promises to take care of us (Philippians 4:19), and to ignore this promise by trying to get things without His guidance leads to debt and financial bondage. Use credit cards sparingly and wisely. The interest is high, and good intentions of paying it off each time the bill comes is usually not a reality. Do not use credit cards for long-term purchases. Pay off credit cards used for gasoline or incidentals each month. The use of consumer credit cards should be avoided except in emergencies unless you can and do pay them off with each monthly statement. Nonetheless, statistics show credit card users impulsively buy 30% more than cash buyers.

Sometimes we buy on credit as an investment. For example, buying a house on credit is usually an investment. If the economy remains stable, you can build equity. Even here you need to plan and stay within your budget. In addition, you need to know a house loan comes with extremely high interest. You will probably pay 300 to 400% of the initial price on a 30-year loan. One of the harshest results of buying on credit is it

does not take long to accumulate enough debt to place you in financial bondage. You are in financial bondage when:

- You owe more each month than you are earning (long- and/or short-term debts), or
- You owe so much that you feel you can't give God His tithes and offerings, or
- You owe so much you have nothing left to share with others, or
- The husband will not work for his family's needs, or
- The wife must work to insure basic needs are met because more is owed than the husband can afford to repay.

Bondage Benefits:

NONE

Bondage Pitfalls:

- It is against Godly principles.
- It is a major factor in divorce (poor finances are involved in 70-80% of divorces in America).
- It tempts bankruptcy.
- The interest is high.
- It causes serious family problems.
- There is never enough money to enjoy life.
- No money for emergencies.
- You are tempted to leave God out (no tithes, gifts or offerings).
- There is no money for gifts.
- There is no money for giving to missions or charities.
- There is no money for family needs.
- The husband has doubts about his ability to provide.
- It causes frustration for the wife.
- It is a poor example for the children.
- The money lenders have control over your life.

Saving

“Therefore I tell you, do not worry about your life, what you will eat or drink; or about your body, what you will wear. Is not life more important than food, and the body more important than clothes?” Matthew 6:25

Worry is harmful and shows a lack of faith. Saving is a wise way to prevent worry and to meet future needs (Proverbs 21:20). God told Joseph to store up grain for the coming years of famine (Genesis 41:28-54). Still God allowed Joseph to use most of the grain for present needs. Worry is avoided by maintaining a balance between present and future needs. What should we save for? Every family has different priorities. The following is a list of some of the common things most families save for:

- Retirement—a good retirement plan helps keep you from being a burden on your children.
- Major purchases - i.e. cars, furniture, appliances, computers, etc.
- Emergencies.
- Children’s college education.
- Vacations—God knows we need rest.

Remember, as we consider saving, especially over a long period of time, our savings can double, triple, quadruple or even greater because we are earning interest not paying it. In order to save, we must be willing to give up a little now in order to reap the benefits later.

LENDING AND COSIGNING

Personal lending and co-signing are sort of in a category of their own. Relationships and the circumstances often vary making it difficult to know the right thing to do. In the Old Testament, Moses allowed interest-free lending to a brother or lending to a stranger with interest charged. For the New Testament Christian, personal lending should be tied with generosity. Many times God requires sacrificial giving instead of lending. Cosigning is a form of debt because it is a promise to pay someone else's debt. More than half the cosigners end up paying off the loan. Cosigning often leads to strife and broken relationships when the one you cosigned for leaves you to pay off the debt. You should never cosign unless you are prepared to accept the payoff responsibility in love and without complaint.

Consider the statements: There are two basic ways a Christian should use money. These are (1) giving and (2) meeting personal and family needs through buying and saving.

How is this the same or different in your Religion/Faith?

What do you personally believe?

IN SUMMARY

Young people should learn from their parents' financial mistakes. There is no reason to repeat their mistakes or anyone else's. We all should take the time search out some good books or computer programs on personal finances. It may be prudent to take time to look into a personal budget. Most of all we all need to look to God for guidance each day and allow Him room to take care of us. Remember, He owns everything, and we should strive to be good stewards of all He allows us to possess. He created us, He loves us, and He knows what is best for us.

CHAPTER 7

ETERNITY

From some of the earliest recorded history, the belief (or non-belief) of a creator god or gods has been of great interest to mankind. A major aspect of this is the subject of eternity, especially concerning what happens to people after they die. Throughout our known history many books have been written on this subject. One belief is that when people die that's it. Their intellectual being no longer exists and physical body decays. A person can hold this belief whether they believe in a creator god(s) or not. There is no eternal hope in this belief.

Another belief is in many gods. The major tenant of this belief is that they roamed the heavens and the earth taking an active role in the life of humans. Sometimes they were benevolent but often "played" with people like a girl playing dress up with her dolls or a boy playing battle with a toy soldier. Today most consider these "gods" mythical. The gods determine the eternal fate of humans. Reincarnation is another belief as to what happens to people when they die. The type of life led in one "life" may determine what kind of being they become in the next life. This belief is mostly practiced in "far eastern" countries.

Atheism is another belief found all over the world. It is the belief that there is no one god or gods. Man is born, lives, and dies and that is it. Atheists often use the Theory of Evolution as "proof" that there is no god. Although there is on-going proof that there is change within genetic boundaries (micro-evolution) there is absolutely no proof that there is change outside genetic boundaries (macro- or mega-evolution). Atheism and evolutionism are supportive of each other.

Christianity, Islam, and Judaism believe in one god, but there are many differences between even these.

Christianity is remarkably different in that there is only one true God although He exists in three persons, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. Christians believe that Jesus came to earth through a virgin birth, is both man and God, and was crucified by the Romans at the Jews request. His blood spilled on the cross is the price paid for the sins of those who believe in Him. The Christian Bible is the written record. Christians believe that there is a heaven and a hell and that if one accepts Jesus as their savior they will spend eternity with God or if they deny Jesus, spend it in a place without God called Hell.

Consider the following statement: Christians believe that believing in Jesus, the Son of the one true God, and accepting Him as their personal Savior is the only path to heaven.

What does your religion/faith believe about eternity?

What do you personally believe?

CHAPTER 8

CONCLUSION

It has been made clear from the beginning that the main premises of this study was twofold: to serve as a Bible study for Christians and as an opportunity for anyone to compare their own beliefs or even non-beliefs to those views presented in this book. The questions at the end of each section should have provided many opportunities to express your own thoughts concerning the material in this book. For whatever reason you decided to participate in this study you now have one of several

choices. You can continue to believe exactly as you did before, you can modify what you believed before, or you can completely change your belief on the matters presented here.

Our prayer is that God will guide your decision. We want you to know that no matter where you are in life or what you believe, we believe that God loves you and wants the best for you. He created you and has a plan for all who choose to follow Him. We should continually search our minds and hearts concerning our relationship with Him. The key is to remember He is omnipotent and holy and we are not. We must realize our relationship does not depend on what we can do for Him but on what He has done for us. Through Jesus Christ we can be reconciled to fellowship with God. The following information is included for anyone who desires to have a personal relationship with Jesus Christ. We invite you to consider this as the wisest choice you will ever make.

GOD MADE A PERFECT WORLD

“So God created man in His own image . . .” Genesis 1:27

The first humans, Adam and Eve, were perfect people. God created them in His own image. He placed them in a perfect world to have fellowship with them. They had access to all that was in their world. God only asked them to avoid the one thing that would break their innocence and fellowship with Him. Adam was commanded not to eat of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, but because God gave him the right to choose, the choice was his. At first Adam and Eve obeyed and walked in perfect fellowship with their Creator. (Genesis 1:28-31)

MAN UPSETS THIS PERFECTION

“For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God,”
Romans 3:23.

When Adam and Eve chose to disobey God, the perfect fellowship with Him was broken (Genesis 3:16-17). Today, we still disobey God (sin) and disregard what He has clearly shown us about His eternal power and divine nature through what He has made (Romans 1:20-32). Our sins separate us from God.

MAN’S FAILURE

“For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord” Romans 6:23.

There are those who reject God, and those who seek God. Some of those who seek God do so in their own way and fail to listen to God’s way. Some seek God’s favor by obeying the law or doing good works, but the law was given to reveal sin (Romans 7:7) and cannot save us from sin (Romans 8:3). All of man’s efforts toward salvation are blocked by sin and only lead to death.

GOD’S SUCCESS

“But God demonstrates his own love for us, in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us.” Romans 5:8

God, because of His GRACE, provided the way to bring us back into fellowship with Him. In love, He sent His Son, Jesus, to die on the cross for us, but death could not hold Him, for God raised Him from the dead (Romans 6:9). God’s grace bridged the sin gap existing between God and His creation (Romans 3:24).

ONE WAY

“That if you confess with your mouth, ‘Jesus is Lord,’ and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved. For it is with your heart that you believe and are justified, and it is with your mouth that you confess, and are saved.” Romans 10:9-10

Our salvation is only found in Jesus Christ. We must, by faith, believe in our hearts that God raised Him from the dead. Because He conquered death and is alive today, He has promised eternal life to all who believe in Him and come to repentance. We must place our FAITH in Him (2 Peter 3:9) (Romans 3:25-28).

YOUR PART

When it comes to salvation, it is true that the best thing in life is free. God’s gift (salvation) is free to you because Jesus paid the price for it on the cross. In addition, becoming a follower of Christ will free you and give a peace and joy like you have never experienced before. If you have not accepted God’s free gift of salvation, won’t you do so now and ask Him to come into your life as your personal Savior? Now is the time, for we know not what the next moment holds.

TO BECOME A CHRISTIAN

The only requirement to become a Christian is to believe that Jesus Christ died on a cross for your sins. Christians pray a prayer similar to this: Dear Jesus, I admit I am a sinner, and I ask to be forgiven. I am willing to turn from my sins. I believe you died for me, and now I personally invite you into my life. By faith and in obedience, I will follow you as my Lord and Savior.

In Jesus’ Name, Amen.

If you have made the choice to become a Christian, be assured that your future is secure in Him.

“Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth, for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away, and there was no longer any sea. I saw the Holy City, the new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride beautifully dressed for her husband. And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying, ‘Now the dwelling of God is with men, and he will live with them. They will be his people, and God himself will be with them and be their God. He will wipe every tear from their eyes. There will be no more death or mourning or crying or pain, for the old order of things has passed away.’

“He who was seated on the throne said, ‘I am making everything new!’ Then he said, ‘Write this down, for these words are trustworthy and true.’

“He said to me: ‘It is done. I am the Alpha and the Omega, the Beginning and the End. To him who is thirsty I will give to drink without cost from the spring of the water of life. He who overcomes will inherit all this, and I will be his God and he will be my son. But the cowardly, the unbelieving, the vile, the murderers, the sexually immoral, those who practice magic arts, the idolaters and all liars—their place will be in the fiery lake of burning sulfur. This is the second death.’” Revelation 21:1-8

Amen

GLOSSARY

Aborigines

A member of any of the indigenous peoples who inhabited Australia before the arrival of European settlers.

Ancient

Belonging to the distant past, especially to the time before the collapse of the Western Roman Empire in ad 476.

Armenian, Armenianism

Armenianism is a term used to describe the theological views of Jacobus Arminius (1560–1609) and the movement that followed his teachings. Major theological emphases of Armenianism are: conditional election based on the foreknowledge of God; God's grace can be resisted; Christ's atonement was universal; man has a free will and through divine grace that precedes human decision, we can cooperate with God in salvation; the believer may lose his salvation.

Atonement

Meaning is that Christ puts the sinner in the right relationship with God. It is used to indicate that our sins are forgiven or "covered" by Christ's sacrifice.

Born-again

This expression was used by Jesus to describe spiritual regeneration.

Being Right with God

(See Justification)

Calvinist, Calvinism

A term used to describe the theological views of John Calvin (1509–1564). Calvinism maintains that within the Bible are the following teachings: That God, by His sovereign grace predestines people into salvation; that Jesus died only for those

predestined; that God regenerates the individual so that he is then able to and desires to choose God; and that it is impossible for those who are redeemed to lose their salvation.

Charles Spurgeon

Is a well-known preacher from late 19th Century London. Spurgeon's preaching continues to inspire many to this day. He is remembered as "the Prince of Preachers".

Comforter

(See Holy Spirit)

Covered

(See Atonement)

Crucifixion

A particularly cruel form of execution used by the Roman Empire and employed in the death of Jesus Christ. Jesus' crucifixion was the means by which he atoned for the sins of humanity.

Damnation

Damnation, or condemnation, is subjection to God's judgment and eternal separation from Him. This is the result of rejecting God's love.

Death

Death is the cessation of life. Death is generally viewed as the end of our life (physical death) but is also seen as eternal separation from God (spiritual death).

Forbearance (also known as Patience)

This is one's ability to take a great deal of punishment from circumstances or people, especially evil people, without taking vengeance or exhibiting anger.

Forgiveness

This is ceasing to feel resentment for wrongs and offenses; pardon, involving restoration of broken relationships. Primarily, forgiveness is an act of God, releasing sinners from judgment and freeing them from the divine penalty of their sin.

Gentile

This means, in general, all people groups and nations except the Jews.

God's Heart

In His relationships to man, God's heart is how He relates to our personality, emotions, intellect, and will.

Holy Spirit

He is the third person of the Trinity. The "Spirit" is understood to describe and explain God's divine power working in, upon and around mankind as seen in the writings of the Old and New Testaments.

Jew

This refers to someone of the nationality, religion, or ethnicity of Judaism or the nation of Israel. Judaism is the traditional religion of Israel, the state, in both modern times and antiquity.

John Wesley

John Wesley (1703-1791) was an 18th-century preacher and Christian theologian who was an early leader in the Methodist movement.

Just, Justification

This is the state of being justified with God. The act of God, whereby, He brings sinners into a new covenant relationship with himself through the forgiveness of sins. This is an act of God where He declares people righteous.

Law

Formally known as the Mosaic Law, the foundations of the principles are found in the Books of Moses; the first five books of

the Old Testament : Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, and Deuteronomy. In a more general term, it refers to the commandment of God as the foundation of all human duty.

Living Water

Jesus declared that He was the “living water” and those who drank of Him would never thirst again, His metaphor for eternal salvation.

Love

Love is the basic aspect of relationships between humans and between God and humans, encompassing affection, loyalty, and responsibility. In biblical usage the emphasis is on the quality of the relationship. Love is the foundation of God’s reason for creating mankind and his subsequent redemption.

Macro-Evolution

Slow change, outside genetic boundaries, of one species into another, over long periods of time (Darwinism). There is no proof of macro-evolution.

Mega-Evolution

Major evolutionary change that happens in a short period of time that is so fast that no transitional forms exist, thus no proof of this change exists. This is also known as punctuated equilibrium.

Micro-Evolution

This is evolutionary variation within genetic boundaries. This is really adaptation. There is scientific evidence to support micro-evolution.

ONE (The One True God)

Christians believe that there is no other god but the Lord God. Believers in the one true God are monotheists, but not every monotheist believes in the one true God.

Redemptive, Redemption

Meaning “to buy back,” such as a possession, object, or person, usually by payment of a ransom. In the theological context, the term “redemption” indicates a freeing from the slavery of sin. Specific to Christianity, this term is used to refer to the ransom or price Jesus Christ paid for our freedom.

Regeneration

This is the inner cleansing and renewal of the human nature by the Holy Spirit of God. Regeneration involves both moral restoration and the reception of new life. The idea of regeneration is expressed as rebirth, or being born again. This new birth suggests the newness of life in Christ. The process of regeneration is not brought about by human righteousness but by the gracious act of God

Repentance

This is a literal change of mind from a sinful course of action. This does not refer to a mere change in beliefs, plans, or intentions, but instead it indicates a whole personality change that accompanies faith in Christ.

Retribution

This is the concept of repaying persons in accordance with their crimes or sins.

Satan

He is the evil Spirit "being" who opposes God and seeks to frustrate his plans and lead his people into rebellion. He is also known as Devil and the Evil One.

Sin

Sin is lack of conformity to the moral law of God, in action, disposition, or state.

Sovereignty

This is the belief that God possesses all power and is the ruler of all things. God rules and works according to His eternal

purpose, even through events that seem to contradict or oppose His rule.

Spirit

Human spirit is the aspect of human existence that is neither material nor incorporeal in nature. In Christianity, spirit is generally meant to define the life within a man or woman that God has infused within us and is considered synonymous with soul.

Substantiate

This is to confirm that something is true or valid

Trinity

Even though this word is not found in Scripture, theologians use this term to express the doctrine of the unity of God as existing in three distinct Persons; God the Father, Jesus Christ the Son, and the Holy Spirit. Each of these Persons is unique with different characteristics, but not considered to be more or less than another and is therefore equal in authority.

Vindictive

Acts motivated by revenge.

ABOUT THE AUTHORS

Steve Darden

Steve Darden is the founding pastor of the Bar Cross Cowboy Church in Mansfield Texas. As pastor of Bar Cross, Steve's heart for the church and the community is to see the unchurched and "de-churched" people come back to the local fellowship as Christ intended. Begun in 2004, Bar Cross continues to reach in the local community, helping those in need to see lives truly changed.

Steve spent 26 years in the service industry before being called into fulltime ministry. Steve is a graduate of Liberty University with a Bachelor of Science Degree in Religion, and is currently pursuing a Master's Degree in Divinity from Liberty Baptist Theological Seminary. Donna has taught in the public schools for nearly 20 years and holds a Master's Degree in Education. Steve team ropes when his schedule allows. Married for over 34 years, Steve and Donna spend their free time at their home in Burleson, Texas with their four horses and five dogs.

Steve is in the final stages for a Masters degree in Religious Education.

Robert Whitley

Education: Louisiana Tech; University of Maryland; East Texas Baptist College; Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary; Louisiana Baptist University

Bachelor of Arts; Master Religious Education and Master of Divinity w/Biblical Languages; PHD- Biblical Studies; PHD- Communications/Leadership

Civil Air Patrol: Southwest Region Chaplain Emeritus, Leadership Instructor, Master Aviator, Technical Administration

Flying: Air Force Jet Pilot; Army Helicopter Test Pilot; Certified Flight Instructor (CFIIAM); Federal Aviation Administration-Type Ratings- B-707/ 720/ 727/ 737/ 757/ 767

Ministerial: Licensed- Emmanuel Baptist Church, Shreveport, Louisiana; Ordained Deacon- Koza Baptist Church, Okinawa, Japan; Ordained Minister- South Park Baptist Church, Texas; Children's Director- Mayfield Road Baptist Church, Texas and South Park Baptist Church, Texas; Elder and Children's Pastor- Bar Cross Ranch Cowboy Church, Texas

Retired: Federal Aviation Administration- Operations Supervisor

Current Status: Volunteer Park Ranger; United States Golf Teachers Federation Master Teaching Professional and Examiner (see WWW.EZRGOLF.COM)

Married: to Brenda for 44 years; three children and several grandchildren.