

Shepherd's Bible institute- 1st Semester

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LESSON: The Training of the Twelve

Intro: A well-documented book on how Jesus trained His disciples is Dr A.B. Bruce's "*The Training of the Twelve*." In this book Dr Bruce insists that Jesus was not casual in choosing His Twelve, nor was He casual in how He trained them. When reading the four Gospel accounts of the public ministry of Jesus, we might miss this important strategy. It can get lost in the dynamics of the narrative. The purpose of this lesson is to reveal the plan and purpose of Christ in calling and training His men. From this discovery we can apply Christ's method to our own disciple-making. First, let us look at the Intentionality of Christ's training of the Twelve.

Intentional methods

Explain: Shortly after His own baptism by His cousin John the Baptist, Jesus begins to gather men who will carry His message to the world. These men were carefully chosen, not casually gathered. He "called" them. It was His intentional plan. As we shall see, these men held certain commonalities, skills, and traits.

Dr A.B. Bruce pointed out in his book that there are **three stages** (periods of time spent with them) in Christ's relationship with the twelve. When we understand these stages, it will help us in making disciples as we work with others today.

1. The "believe in me as the Messiah" period.

Explain: The Twelve were occasional followers showing up at certain times and events. For example, Jesus meets Simon and Andrew through John the Baptist. They were seeking the messiah and followers of John. Other events-like the wedding at Cana, festive events, Passover etc. (see John 1-4), they transitioned their loyalty- from John the Baptist to Jesus. These men had limited knowledge of who the messiah might be, could be, or how the messiah would be a Son of David, or a greater David. In the first year or so, they were attracted to Christ because of His teaching, his miracles, and His healing powers. They had no concept that Jesus was the Son of God, or that they would one day die for their faith in this strange new prophet.

Apply: Millions of professing Christians are still living in this elementary stage of following Christ. They only see Jesus as savior, the forgiver of their sins. They live in two worlds- they want to go to heaven when they die but are not yet willing to completely follow Christ whatever the cost.

2. Stage two- is characterized by the willingness of the Twelve to **abandon their occupations** and follow him completely.

Explain: Matthew is a tax collector for the Romans, and he abandons his livelihood and follows Christ. This is not immediately true for the fishermen, Peter, Andrew, James, and John. They are Galilean fishermen, working in the family business. After some part time as followers, Jesus says to them, "*come follow me, and immediately they dropped their nets and followed*." This is a deeper level of commitment to Jesus as Messiah. It is the "count the cost

and follow me" stage. See Luke 14:25-33 It is a big step from seeing Jesus as savior to following Him as Lord. It is the step from being merely a convert to becoming a true disciple. The very root idea in the New

Testament concept of being a disciple is that of a follower, a learner, a devotee to a Master. Jesus said “you cannot be **MY** disciple unless...then he revealed the cost of seeing Messiah as Lord of all.

Apply: So very few Christians have been confronted with this second stage. It comes upon you as you walk with Jesus awhile, following Him, knowing Him, coming to worship Him will lead you to bow down before Him, kiss His feet and cry out “my Lord and my God.”

3. The final stage- Jesus calls out the twelve as apostles.

Explain: The Twelve become Jesus’ “sent ones” out of a larger group of more than 500 disciples. All of this in the 1st year of Christ’s public ministry. The Greek word translated “apostle” is literally “one sent forth with a message.” We would think of a courier sent by a King carrying a royal decree or message.

What was the call? it was to represent him in the World- to recall His words, His character, his purpose, and His redemptive work and most of all- his bodily resurrection! Before Christ’s crucifixion and resurrection, the Twelve were uncertain as to what the calling as apostles really meant. However, Jesus’ resurrection changed everything for the Disciples. They began to shout to the world that “he is risen!”

The Call:

What kind of men were these men whom Christ called as His ambassadors, His “sent ones?” In the gospel we see them as common ordinary, even simple men. There are no scholars among them, no elite or titled men, not even a famous person among them. What did Jesus see in those men that they did not see in themselves?

1. Jesus only called men he could train to reproduce. Matt 4:19

Explain: Jesus saw the world behind these men. Not just a village, or a nation, but the world. These men were teachable. He could train them to train others. He wins them over to Himself, then trains them to go train others. He intentionally called men (and women) who were faithful to Him and to the calling.

Apply: The true disciple of Jesus is a reproducer of other disciples! Christ’s great commission to the Twelve (and us) is to “*go, make disciple of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you.*” Matthew 28:19,20. We are born into the Kingdom to reproduce our discipleship in others. If you have no Timothies, if you are not sharing the gospel, you cannot seriously call yourself a Disciple of Jesus. You may be born again, but not yet a disciple.

2. Jesus was intentional about his vision to change the world thru these very men!

Explain: They did not look like a group you or I might select to be world changers-but they were. They were called of Christ, empowered by His indwelling Spirit, and called to tell the world of the glad tidings- the good news of the gospel.

John17

We see how seriously Jesus expected them to succeed when we read His Prayer for the Twelve in John 17. We call John 17 “Christ’s High Priestly prayer for His disciples. He is leaving them to return to the Father, but He intercedes for them. His prayer is powerful, protective, predictive, and personal. In verse 20, Jesus prays, “*I do not ask on behalf of these alone, but for those also who believe in Me through their word.*” Do you hear Christ’s intentional prayer that the disciples might reproduce themselves in others? Jesus is praying for us today. We were saved because some else was a reproducer!

Apply: A true disciple of Jesus has it in his heart to be a world changer. We each light our candle in the darkness until our King returns. We are not called to sit but to serve, not called to observe but to be the ones others observe. It is in the calling of every disciple to make a difference in the world until he returns. See his prayer for them in John 17.

What kind of men were these humble guys?

1. Men capable of embracing the universal **revolutionary idea of the kingdom of God.**

Explain: they were not traditional, provincial Jews, bound by rules, structure, or culture.

Apply: All Disciples of Jesus must seek 1st the kingdom! **Matt. 6:33**

We cannot be bound by culture, denominational Christianity, or this world and its “goods.”

If we are disciples like the Twelve, we are heavenly minded people, not earth-bound creatures.

2. They were **spiritually minded men & women**, rather than religious, legalistic Jews.

Explain: They had a hunger and thirst for true righteousness. They were God seekers.

Apply; Romans 12:1-2 describes a disciple, he is not a conformist to culture, but is willing to be conformed to the image of Christ.

3. They were men **willing to glory in the Cross** and to bear their own Cross.

Explain; They embraced **Luke 9:23 & Luke 14** as their lifestyle. Jesus had warned them that the world would hate them even as it hated Him. He prepared them for persecution he knew was coming. They were faithful to take up their cross and even die upon it, as did Simon Peter.

Apply: For us today the “crucified life” may mean a life of discipline, a life sold out to Christ, a life that runs hard after Jesus.

4. They were **men of great potential** even though at the time of their calling they were Culture-bound creatures. They were ignorant, superstitious, and often fearful- yet Jesus believed in their potential.

Matt 4:19 “ ...I will **MAKE** you fishers of men ”

Apply: We must never sell ourselves short of God’s plan for us. Paul’s “*I can do all things through Him who is my strength.*” (**Phil. 4:13**) is our belief as a disciple. God will never ask more of us than He is willing to supply what’s necessary to fulfil it.

5. They were **men in whom Jesus could entrust with His authority & power. Acts 1:8**

Explain: What we see in the disciples are strong and powerful leaders who remain humble before the Lord. They took authority of the world, the flesh, and the devil, giving all the glory to Christ.

6. They were willing to become His “witnesses” Acts 1:8, Romans 1:16

- 1) Witnesses to his resurrection

- 2) Witnesses to his cross/redemption event

These qualities are what the disciple maker seeks in his own life and the qualities that he seeks in his Timothys.

Notes

Lesson: The Birthmarks of a Disciple

There is a good deal of discussion about who is a true disciple of Christ and what the characteristics of a Disciple are. Our Lord Jesus gave us definitive guidelines on the lifestyle of his true followers. I want us to look carefully at three “birthmarks” of a Disciple. We call these birthmarks or the “marks” of a Disciple. You can recognize one of Jesus followers by these distinctive marks.

I. The Mark of the Cross

First, we hear Jesus say in Luke 9:23; “*if anyone wishes to come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily and follow me.*” What are the implications of taking up the cross in the life of a disciple? Today this idea of carrying a cross has become ornamental in that we wear a cross for jewelry, rather than take up a cross in our daily living. A history lesson would help us here. Josephus the Jewish historian tells us that in about 12 AD there was a Jewish rebellion against the Roman occupation in Israel. Led by a rebel named Simeon, several thousand young Jews revolted against Rome and a civil war broke out. The Roman army quelled the rebellion, and to make examples of them, the Romans crucified two thousand revolutionaries along the road from Jerusalem to Nazareth. Josephus says the vultures darkened the sky as they came to feed on the dying bodies hanging on crosses along the road. In 12 AD Jesus and his future followers would have been young teenage boys. Those crucified revolutionaries would have been their family members, neighbors & heroes. So, when Jesus says, “*Take up your Cross daily and follow me,*” those words had great meaning. To take up a cross was to enlist for martyrdom. It was an invitation to die to self and even to die physically if need be.

In His classic book, The Cost of Discipleship, German Lutheran pastor Dietrich Bonhoeffer wrote these opening lines; “When Jesus says, ‘come and follow me’ He is inviting you to come and die.” The call to discipleship is a call to die. Bonhoeffer himself became a martyr because he took up his cross and followed Christ.

Let me visualize this for you. Suppose you are a new believer in Christ as your savior. You are a new convert, a young disciple. You may be saying to yourself, “Well, what do I do now?” My sins are forgiven, and I’m saved for all eternity. What does Christ expect from me?” Then the next morning there is a knock on your door. You get up and go to the door. As you open the door you are shocked! There stands Jesus, and He has this huge 9-foot cross on his shoulder.

Christ then says to you, “Here I’m bringing this cross to you. I had it made just for you. There is not another one like it anywhere in my Kingdom. It is your cross and I expect you to carry it everywhere you go. As you go through your day, you carry this cross on your shoulder as a moment-by-moment reminder of who you are. You are my disciple, and your life belongs to me. This cross is for dying to self. It is yours just as I have mine.”

Now, what do you think of that? Can you imagine if a student went to school carrying her cross; or if a businessman went to the office carrying a 9-foot 80-pound cross on his shoulder?

I can tell you one reaction for sure; those who see you will know you are a Christian. The cross will define who you are and to whom you belong. The Cross will forever mark you as His disciple.

If you do not take up your cross, you can never call yourself a true follower of Jesus for He said, *“he who does not take up his cross and follow me, is not worthy of me.”* {Matt. 10:38}

II. The Mark of the Yoke

About the time you have gotten used to taking your cross with you every day & everywhere; Jesus comes to knock on your door a second time. As you open the door you are amazed to see a very large, heavy wooden yoke standing there by your door. Then the voice of Christ says to you, *“Here, take my yoke upon you and learn of me, for my yoke is easy and my burden is light.”* (Matt. 11:29, 30)

You realize immediately that this large yoke is neck collar for oxen. It has a hole in it just the size of your neck. Jesus says to you, “Here try it on for size.” Then he lifts this big wooden apparatus and puts your head thru the hole and then screws it tight. By now you are staggering beneath the load. Get a good look at you now! With a yoke on your neck & a cross on your back you are ready to meet the world! You may look strange to all who meet you this day, but you do not look strange to God. To Him you are beginning to look like a disciple of His beloved Son. Just as you have a cross for dying to self, you must have a yoke for learning the deeper ways of God. The Yoke is for discipline, learning and submission.

You see, my friend, to be a disciple of Jesus means more than being a follower; it means also that you are a disciplined learner. The word “disciple” has a root idea of discipline. The Disciple must be yoked to Christ to learn the ways, the will, and the walk of Christ. Do you have His yoke around your neck? Are you willing to be like those oxen; all hooked up and harnessed up in such a way that you cannot so much as move without direction from the master’s hand? (Or his whip)

The yoke speaks to us of submission to the master’s will and to His commands. We are to be so yoked to Him that when our Lord speaks, we obey. Why, because we believe that His way & will is best. In it we believe we will find rest for our souls. He is lord and that is all a disciple needs to know.

III. The Mark of the Towel

Now that you are willing to die to self-everyday {the cross} and are willing to submit to His will and way with you {the yoke}; then Jesus come to knock on your door for a third time. Maybe a bit reluctantly you open the door thinking, “What will my Lord ask of me now?” Jesus says to you, “Congratulations, you are doing a good job of being my disciple. You seem adjusted to carrying your Cross and wearing my Yoke. Now I want one more thing of you. You are not dressed properly to be my disciple. Go disrobe, and then put on this bath towel and come back to me.” So, you do as Jesus says and return wearing only a towel wrapped around you.

Then you pick up your cross & put on your yoke. We should take your photo! You look rather odd, but you for certain have the look of a follower of Christ.

You may ask, “Why am I wearing a towel?” Just as the cross is for dying to self, & the yoke is for submission; the towel is for serving others. In John 13, Jesus gave us the extreme example of being a servant. He laid aside his robe and dressed only in a servant’s “towel” He then washed his brother’s feet. He served them, so we could learn to serve others. Every follower of Christ must learn that the way up is down. We must learn that God is not interested in how many servants we have; but He is extremely interested in how many men we serve. All of Jesus’ true followers must daily have a “towel” ministry of serving others. Messiah Jesus was a servant, and the disciple cannot be greater than his Lord.

Leadership Principles

Do you see it? The Cross, the Yoke, and the Towel are all leadership principles in Christ's Kingdom. This is how Our Lord led men and now it is how His followers must also lead men.

The Christian leader is to be a crucified, submissive, servant of Jesus. This kind of leader can change the world. Those early disciples turned their world "upside down." We can too!

Lesson: The Laws of Spiritual Harvest

“Sir we would see Jesus”

John 12:20-25 *“except a grain of wheat falls into the earth and dies, it abides alone...”*

This passage begins with some Greeks coming to the disciples and asking to see Jesus. These Greeks represent lost humanity, the non-Jewish world for whom Christ will die. Phillip comes to Jesus to tell Him that there are Greeks who wish to see Him. Christ’s mystical & mysterious response to Phillip contains what some have called the Laws of Spiritual Harvest. We must be “Jesus” to a world that does not know Him. Only as we become seed in the soil of others can life come forth. The “harvest” represents our success in life, our legacy as a leader. You will not have a spiritual harvest if you do not become a seed Christian.

You and I will never make a difference in this world until we understand these laws of spiritual harvest and live them out in our daily walk.

Truth #1 The Law of Urgency: The seed must get into the soil and die to bear fruit.

In Kingdom living we are to be like a seed = you were Born to Reproduce. We are a seed planted in the soil of others. If we die to self and are investing our lives in the soil of others, we can have a harvest. However, it is urgent that we begin now. Seed in a sack on a shelf in a store does no one any good. It must enter the soil and die to be of any value.

1. Jesus was speaking of Himself, and His soon coming death [**Rom.5:8; 8:29**] He was God’s seed, dying for the sins of the world.
2. Jesus was describing His followers. We are to be seed for God to use. It is urgent that we begin now investing in the soil of others’ lives.

Truth #2 The Law of Life coming forth out of Death: The seed dies, and life is born.

In Kingdom living life comes forth out of death **vs. 24**.

1. Jesus is speaking about Himself, *“the hour has come for the Son of Man to be Glorified.”*
2. Jesus is describing the lifestyle of His followers, **Luke 9:23**
Only as we die to self and selfish ambitions can we produce life in others. Whoever would save his life must lose it. The Seed must die before life can come forth. We must become seed Christians to produce a harvest.

Truth #3 The Law of Quality over Quantity: The seed must be good seed.

In Kingdom living, Quality counts more than quantity = it’s not what you have, but Whose you are.

1. Jesus is speaking about Himself= it’s the character of the seed that determines the quantity & quality of the fruit. Jesus was God’s good seed planted & raised to life to save millions.
2. Jesus is describing His followers, *“whatever you, do all to the Glory of God”*
3. We are to be good seed, men & women of character, commitment, & sacrifice so God can plant us in the soil of others. Good seed can produce much fruit.

Truth #4 The Law of Imminence verses Permanence: The seed has its "hour"

In Kingdom living, the principle is= it's not how long you live, but how well. *"The hour has come..."*

1. Jesus is speaking about Himself; he knew His death was imminent. He did not live long, but He lived well and died a death that brought many sons to glory.

2. Jesus was describing His followers, *"to whom much is given, of him shall much be required"*

"Seek first the Kingdom..." **Matt. 6:33; John 15: 5 & 8**

"Except a grain of wheat falls into the earth and dies, it abides alone, but if it dies, it brings forth much fruit."

Explain: The seed must get into the soil to begin to germinate. Seed in the store, in a sack, does no one any good. Seed was not meant to "be alone." Its nature is to bear fruit.

Apply: We as Christ-followers are like that seed. We are destined to be planted in the lives of others. We are born into the Kingdom to reproduce. The sooner the better. What are we waiting for? How long must you live to make a difference? There are believers that live long extended lives but never impact the world for Christ. Jesus' example is clear- we each have our "hour" even as He had His. Imminence, not permanence is our calling.

LESSON: Born To Reproduce

Activity is no substitute for production, and production is no substitute for re-production.

Dawson Trotman, founder of the Navigators, once wrote a little pamphlet entitled, *Born to Reproduce*. I first read it in about 1960. In it, Dawson Trotman stresses the concept that we are saved to be disciples and then commissioned of Christ to “go and make disciples.” (**Matthew 28:19, 20**) It is an enormous folly to think that when Jesus gave this challenge to take the message of salvation, “to all the nations,” that He did so without a plan. Indeed, how was it possible that this little group of followers could hope to make disciples of all the nations of the world?

There are those of us who think the great commission is in itself the plan. It contains Christ’s strategy for world conquest. Look at the instructions carefully:

1. **Go** = the call to witness & evangelize.
2. **Make Disciples** = the call to equip believers
3. **Training them** = the call to reproduce ourselves in those we equip
4. **I am with you always** = the promise of His power

Actually, all of Jesus’ time on earth with His disciples was spent preparing them to go forth in His name to tell the world the good news. He was enrolling them in the school of discipleship.

Robert Coleman’s classic work, *The Master Plan of Evangelism*, shows us vividly that Christ had a plan & purpose in all that He did with the twelve. Coleman’s book outlines Jesus’ method as follows:

- I. * Selection
- * Association
- * Consecration
- * Multiplication

Selection

Christ’s first method was to select the right men. Have you noticed that Jesus was very selective in the men He chose to be His “twelve?” He didn’t call everybody, or just anybody. He only called a select few. They were not much to look at from the world’s perspective, but they were men who would follow Him. They were “fat” guys- faithful, available, and teachable. There was a plan in Christ’s choosing of those twelve men. They were not perfect or even supermen as the world values talent, but Jesus saw their potential and built His purpose into them.

Even so we are to “go” and witness to all who will listen. We are to then baptize that new convert. The next step is to make a disciple out of him. Here is where we can learn from Christ. Even Jesus could not make a faithful follower out of Judas. Being selective is important to the plan. Find the person who will follow you and learn from you. A Pastor can lead a congregation, but he cannot disciple a whole congregation. What he can do is what Jesus did. He can prayerfully select two or three.

Association

His second method was the “with Him” principle. Coleman in his book makes much of this strategy. He says it was Christ’s plan to keep the Twelve near Him those first three years. Long after they might forget where they went, or whom they met, they would always remember Him! This being associated with

Christ would forever change these men. The command to “follow me” was a deliberate plan and purposes to mentor the Twelve. They “caught” as much as they were taught. Just being with Christ intimately day in and day out, won their hearts. They would eventually die for Him. Christ understood the “with Him” principle of leadership.

We too, must adopt the “with me” strategy. You cannot reproduce your life and lifestyle in another person without spending much quality time with him. This is true in raising children and it’s true in rising up spiritual disciples. Parents who spend long hours with their child will forever imprint themselves in the soul of the child. Discipleship is “caught” as much as it is “taught.” It was said of the early disciples, “they took notice of them, that they had been with Jesus.” He who would lead others must be as available to his disciples as Christ was to His. Spiritual reproduction is a birthing process and takes time and painful labor.

Consecration

Jesus’ plan included getting those men He called to “*seek first the kingdom*” Priorities are primary to the disciple. In Luke 14, Jesus’ parables are all about counting the cost. Three times in Luke 14, our Lord says, “*you cannot be my disciple,*” unless you love me more than people, places and things. His plan calls men to a holy, disciplined walk with Him. Repeatedly during those three years they traveled together, Jesus let the disciples see His commitment to God’s Kingdom and He challenged them to be as He was.

We too, must live consecrated lives to lead others. It is a spiritual principle of leadership, that you cannot lead others where you’ve never been. You cannot lead others out into the deep, when you yourself cannot swim. You cannot lead another man to live any closer to God, than you yourself live. Why? Because he spends much time with you, and he will “find you out.” If you tell him to pray, but he does not see and hear you pray often, then he will not believe he should make prayer a priority. Do you think the twelve ever forgot their hours in prayer with Jesus? Never! When Jesus prayed to His Father, those men hungered to know God like that! Leading others to be disciples is about “being” a disciple first, then telling others about it.

Principle of Multiplication

It is amazing to think that Jesus could look at that odd collection of men; fishermen, tax collectors, Zealots, and common men, and see the Kingdom of God in them. He saw what no one else could see; he saw the world being saved through their witness. Not one of those men had ever traveled a hundred miles from home, yet Jesus commanded them to tell “all the nations” about Him! He must have had a plan. He did. His vision was for each man to win one other man and train that man to win another. The plan is spiritual reproduction. It is the principle of multiplication.

How does this work, and does it work? It is so simple that few have really tried it. It works like this. If a disciple wins one person to Christ and spends the 1st year training that person to win another; meanwhile the disciple is also winning his second person. The convert that he has trained now wins his 1st person to Christ. So, at the end of a year there will only be four of them.

This doesn’t sound like a very successful plan to win the world. Few pastors could build a church this slowly. You might think this will never win the world.

Think again. Now the **second year**, there will be eight disciples, because each disciple is winning and training one each year. In **ten years**, there will be 1,024 disciples doing the same strategy. In **twenty years**, the world will have 1,048,576 followers of Jesus. This isn't so bad, is it? Then if just each one will win and train one, in **thirty years** there will be 1,073,741,824! In one generation, **forty years**, over 1 trillion will come to Christ in salvation! Think about the Master's plan for a second. This figure of 1 trillion people is such a staggering number the church has had enough time since Jesus gave us this plan to win the world 100 times over! The church could have fulfilled the Great Commission in the first generation through those twelve men. It's not a bad plan; it's just not been tried very faithfully. Now, we all know there are flaws in this idea of spiritual multiplication. Not every person you train will be faithful to win one each year. However, they should. It isn't too much to ask, is it? Is it Unreasonable? Certainly not! The Apostle Paul multiplied his life in Timothy, Luke, Silas, Titus, and Trophimus. He by himself was an evangelist and won many. However, through those he trained he won multitudes. He says of the Thessalonian believers, "*you became imitators of us. And of the Lord...and so you became a model to all the believers... in that the Lord's message rang out from you not only in Macedonia and Achaia- your faith in God has become known everywhere.*" (**1st Thessalonians 1:6-8**)

It is critical that we understand the Master's plan for bringing in the Kingdom. We are not called to make converts, whom we baptize, put on our church roles and then forget them. We are not to be about getting numbers of converts, but we are to be about growing disciples. Dawson Trotman said it well, "*Activity is no substitute for production, and production is no substitute for reproduction.*" Christ calls us to "make disciples and train them." We are born to reproduce ourselves in others. Jesus did it with His chosen men and we are to follow his example.

What are you doing?

Are you committed to the Master's plan? If not, you've misdirected your energies. One day you will look back on your life and look for some lasting difference you made in this world. Jesus told us to pray, "*that you bear fruit and that it would remain*" (**John 15**) He himself prayed for His disciples' "fruit" when He prayed for those who would believe through their witness. (**See John 17:20**) In effect Jesus was praying His followers would become disciple makers!

When I was a young man, a spiritually mature leader challenged me. When I saw him at a conference, I greeted him, "how are you doing?" He responded, "I'll not ask you how you are doing, but how are others doing, because of what you've been doing?" I was stunned! His words penetrated my heart. That question has stayed with me all through the years. This is the lifestyle we as followers of Christ are to live. What are others doing, because of what you've been doing?" That is our Lord's question to every true disciple. Are you reproducing fruit that will remain? Can you point to your "Timothy" and say, "There is my effort to help fulfill the great commission in my lifetime? These men and women are my life's work.

I am with you always

Finally, we go forth in His name, filled with His spirit, and anointed by His power. Jesus gets excited when we try to fulfill His plan. He will go before us, get behind us and speak through us. You have his promise of that blessing. "*Go and make disciples, teaching them to do what I've commanded you to do, and I myself will be with you.*"

The Pastor as a Shepherd Leader **

LESSON: Great Things to Know about Good Leaders

(This lecture is influenced by the teachings of John Maxwell)

1. They know that leadership is influence.

Leadership is many things, but essentially it is about influence and the ability to influence others. The English word, “influence” means literally to “flow into” others. A leader is a person who directly and intentionally “flows into” others. The greater the influence he has, greater the leader. You can measure your effectiveness as a leader by the number of persons you directly influence each day, week, month a year or a lifetime.

2. They know that leadership is a process.

It has been said that leaders are born not made. This is only a half truth. Some are born with a temperament that can facilitate leadership skills, but the great leaders of the world know that leadership develops over time and requires discipline. Leadership grows daily not in a day; so busy yourself by sharpening your skills. The greater your skills the greater will be your opportunity to influence people. Moses begins by saying to God, “But Lord I stutter, how can I go to pharaoh and speak?” After God equips him, and faith moves him, Moses can leader a nation! He grew into the job. You can become more than you are if you set your mind and heart to do so.

3. They know that only you set the limits of your influence.

John Maxwell calls this “*The Law of the Lid.*” How great a leader do you want to be? Whatever you decide will “cap” or determine your influence and your future as a leader. You can increase your skills and only you can decide how good a mentor you wish to be; it means you are as good as you set out to be. “Hitch your wagon to a star, open your eyes and there you are!” Many people of great potential accomplish little because they cannot hitch a trailer to a car, much less a wagon to a star! Don’t limit yourself or God’s purposes thru you, by being lazy, or indifferent to a high calling.

4. They know that the fuel of the leader’s drive is his passion.

Leaders are passionate about their cause. Leaders have a fire in their belly that drives them to succeed. The leader is usually “consumed” with his vision or passion, and he must share it with others. Leadership is as much caught as it is taught. Much of a leader’s ability is in his emotions as it is in his knowledge or ability. Give me a warrior who loves the battle any day over a soldier who has all the training but no heart for the fight. Passion wins over planning most of the time. Both are needed for success, but it is difficult to stop a passionate leader.

5. They know that leaders are Navigators & Visionaries.

While flying my airplane I asked my wife if she wanted to “fly” the plane. She said “yes.” After holding the wheel for a few minutes, she said, “I can steer the plane, but I don’t know where I’m going.” This tells us that most anyone can steer the ship, but only the leader can set the course. A leader is like the pilot who

navigates. They have a vision, a direction they are going. To say a leader is the navigator, or pilot is to say that they are “big picture thinkers.” Usually, leaders will leave the details to others. That’s why managers are not leaders. Managers must give attention to the details of the day to day. The Leader has a bigger vision than “our daily bread.” He is planning how to make enough bread to feed the world!

6. They know that leaders have learned to prioritize.

Jesus told us to seek first the Kingdom of God and His righteousness. [Matt. 6:33] This is the way great leaders think. They are good at putting 1st things 1st. Leaders have a unique ability to focus on the things that really matter. They don’t “sweat the small stuff.” The ability to prioritize your values, your time & energy is a good leadership talent.

7. They know that leaders are servants not bosses.

In the national best-selling book, “**Good to Great**” we learn that all the great companies have a leader who is a servant to his people. This is a Jesus principle of Leadership. In John 13 is recorded the experience of Jesus washing the disciple’s feet. He tells them, “Do you know why I have done this to you? I am giving you my example, that even as I have washed your feet, you must also wash one another’s feet.” A great leader will never ask his followers to do something he himself is not willing to do. Military people tell legendary stories of their commanding officers leading the charge into battle. Risking life and limb, their general leads the fight. Like Mel Gibson in “**Brave Heart;**” portraying William Wallace he fearlessly leads his men into the fray. Leaders are servants, not bosses. Great leaders are not so much “Supervisors” & over-seers as they are “under-seers” and supporters. They lead from the bottom up, not from the top down.

8. They know that people will follow the man, before they will commit to his vision.

Often a young or immature leader will be very passionate about his vision and will try to get others to accept his vision and follow it. John Maxwell calls it the Law of “buy-in.” However, when people don’t follow or “buy-into” his vision he cannot understand why. The reason is that men follow the leader before they accept and own his vision.

Think of how Jesus led his followers. He spent years with them letting them get to know Him, love Him, and eventually commit themselves to Him. Only then did He share His vision with them. Great leaders know that men follow a MAN of vision before they follow the vision. By being a humble servant, and a person of integrity & purpose, the leader is like a magnate drawing others to himself. Then he can compel them to follow his dream.

9. They know that a leader must win your heart before asking for a hand

Great leaders know that trust is a key to gaining followers. Men are not captured by ideas so much as by a man’s spirit. When people trust you, they will follow you. Jesus knew this and before He asked his followers to do anything for Him like “take up your cross and follow me;” He first won their hearts. Far too often immature Christian leaders will ask others to support them financially, or to get involved in their projects, without first winning the trust and confidence of those they are asking to help them. For an example, some African pastor will hear that this “white guy” loves Africans and helps churches & pastors financially. So, without so much as knowing the “white guy” he e-mails him his “vision” to build an orphanage. The white guy gets the e-mail proposal asking for money for orphans, and thinks, “Who is this African guy, whom I do not know, asking me for money?” I don’t know him and yet he dares to ask me to fund his work. Let me tell you Jesus would not do that. He would not ask for a helping hand

without first winning your heart. A good leader will develop trust before asking anyone to adopt his vision.

10. They know that people follow a man they respect.

In Africa we call this the “Law of Mzee.” In Kiswahili language an “Mzee” is a wise older man. He is an older person whom many admire because of his life-experiences and wisdom. The African culture honors and respects the elderly. Our western culture tends to discount and devalue older people. However, a leadership principle is that people will not follow a man they do not respect. They may fear him, and come along, but they will not adopt his vision if they do not believe in him & respect him. Thus, a good leader understands that it takes time and effort to win the people’s respect. His life message is the foundation of his leadership. It takes character to lead.

11. They know that great leadership is about reproduction.

A great leader can look at one man and see an army behind him. He knows that if he can inspire that one man, & train him to lead others, then he can multiply himself in his disciple. The Leader can do the math- multiplication is better than addition. To spread his vision, he must reproduce himself in others. A truly great leader of Christian men, Dawson Trotman, used to say, “Activity is no substitute for production, and production is no substitute for reproduction.” The apostle Paul, another great leader told his young disciple Timothy to reproduce himself in other faithful men. {2nd Timothy 2:2}

Ask not what you have been doing, but ask yourself, “what are others doing because of what I have been doing.” Leaders are born to reproduce. Jesus looked at the twelve disciples and saw the whole world in them! He trained them then gave them the great Commission to “Go and make disciples of all the nations...” He understood a leader’s need to reproduce. production is no substitute for reproduction.

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12. Great Leaders leave a legacy.

This desire to multiply your vision in the lives of your followers comes from a passion to leave a legacy behind you after you are gone. A great leader is not just living for the “now;” but rather is living for the next generation. In John 17 when Christ is praying for his disciples he prays, “*I ask not just for them, Father, but for those who will believe in me because of them.*” See, He was living for the legacy, for the future generations that would be saved thru the faithfulness of his followers. All great leaders believe that their cause, their vision is worthy to be perpetuated into the future. So, leaders give themselves to investing their best time into their best people. They see a changed future; yes, even a better future, lived out in their followers and their followers, followers. The leader’s legacy is that you are either building yours now or you are neglecting yours now.

LESSON: The Servant Leader

I once saw a cartoon of a boy scout leader who took his troop of boys hiking, got lost and said to them, “anyone bring a compass?” The very first quality of a leader is that he can lead! When the Apostle Paul gave his various lists of Spiritual Gifts, one of those gifts of the Spirit is “leadership.” **Romans 12:8** says, let “*he who leads, lead with diligence.*”

We can learn much about how to lead by watching Jesus lead his disciples. In fact, the gift of leadership is nothing less than Christ the leader living out his leadership in and through the life of a gifted child of God.

It has been said that leaders are born, not made. For the Christian leader this is true. He is born again and gifted with the spiritual gift of leading. He was reborn to lead.

Leading through Character

He who would lead others in Christian service can learn from Christ. He led by principles, not by His strong will, or by dictating or by intimidating. Jesus showed the Twelve how to lead by Godly virtues and Biblical principles. Jesus’ character was his greatest mentoring tool. Out of His character, he taught eternal principles to live by.

How Jesus Led Men

Christ’s true genius as a leader of men is that he was a servant-leader. His style was to lead by serving others. His humility, love, and servant heart won the affections of those he mentored. Jesus did not measure the greatness of a man by how many servants he has, but rather the greatness of the man is how many men he serves.

Indeed, Jesus fulfilled Isaiah’s prophecy that the Messiah would be “*meek and lowly at heart.*” (**Isaiah 53**) The Messiah is to be a king, but he is a servant-king! Paul tells us that Christ came “*in the form of a servant,*” (**Phil. 2:6, 7**) This then is the “mind” of Christ, it is his set attitude and lifestyle. He leads others by being a servant leader.

Washing Feet

John 13:4ff records the great life-message Jesus gave his men in the last hours of his earthly existence. He washed the disciple’s feet. He is training them by his example. They will never forget this example of the King of Glory down on His knees, humbly washing the feet of those men He loved. Let’s learn some eternal principles from Christ’s example of washing dirty feet:

1. Humility is the Key to Servant-Leadership

Seeing King Jesus washing their stinking feet was an object lesson in humility. Jesus dressed only in a towel, like a common slave washes their feet to show them that the way up is down! The path to great leadership is humility. The leader is willing to do the most menial task to inspire others to service. A leader must not ask others to do what he himself is not willing to do. The Christ-spirit in you will give you His humility to fulfill the words “*Humble yourselves under the mighty hand of God, that He may exalt you at the proper time.*” (**1st Peter 5:6**)

2. The Servant-leader doesn't wait to be asked to serve

The image of Jesus wrapped in a towel, washing feet is that of a volunteer spirit. No one asked Him to do this humble task, but He chose to do it. He sees a need and meets it. The disciples would never have dreamed of asking Jesus to wash their feet. That is why great leaders are volunteers. They inspire others to volunteer by their example. The fact that Christ was a volunteer (even on the Cross!) inspires us to be like Him.

3. The servant-leader does not pick and choose whom he will serve

Remarkably, Jesus washed the feet of Judas, knowing full well that Judas was a traitor! There is great love and mercy in that act. Like Jesus, great leaders are willing to serve whomever needs it, regardless. Servant love is unconditional. We can learn from Christ's example.

4. Servant-leaders wear towels!

Wearing a towel, Jesus is ready for the dirty work that needs to be done. This is love in action. It reminds us that *doing* is always a stronger lesson than just *telling*. Leadership is more about what we *do* than what we *tell* others to do. Jesus was "among" His men, being a part of their daily lives. He mentored them by serving them every day. A leader is willing to do whatever is needed to make others around him better.

Sam Walton, founder of Wal-Mart stores, became famous in Bentonville Arkansas the Headquarters of Wal-Mart, because after he had become one of the richest men in the world; he still drove to work in a ten-year-old pickup truck. He said he drove the old pickup because it reminded him to stay humble and remember where he came from.

5. Servant-leaders give with no thought of return

Jesus did not ask the disciples to wash His feet. There is a lesson to be learned here. The Servant does not demand to be served in return. This is not about getting from others by giving to them. Great leaders have the greater good in mind, not personal gain. They see the "big picture" not just their own little world.

6. Servant-leaders must learn to receive as well as give

Peter comes forward and says, "*Lord you shall never wash my feet!*" This sounds noble, but it is also prideful. That is why Jesus corrected Peter. Christ wants use to know that leaders must accept service from others. We need the humility to let others be in control and let them do for us as we do for them.

7. Servant-leaders are most like Christ.

After washing their feet Jesus said to the twelve, "*Do you know what I have done to you? I have given you an example (life-message) that if I your Lord and Teacher has washed your feet, then you ought to wash one another's feet.*" (John 13: 14,15) The lesson is clear to all who will apply it. We are most effective as leaders when we behave toward others as Christ did. He is the model of Christian leadership.

He led men by His example. He didn't just tell them to love their enemies; He actually loved His enemies. He made a disciple out of a Roman tax collector! He ate dinner with despised Zacchaeus. He forgave the woman caught in the act of adultery. His example was as strong a teacher as his teaching.

Servant-leaders are Pacesetters.

The Greek word for leader literally means, "he who stands before others." A dictator tells others to do what he himself is not willing to do. Not so with a true leader. He is a pacesetter. He says, "Follow me, and my example, do as I'm doing. I'll show you how. That is Christ's way of leading others. He tells you to take up a cross daily, and then He goes and dies on the Cross for you! No wonder men loved him and still follow Him. We must also be Pacesetters by our example of servant leading.

Servant-leaders are committed to Excellence

A leader is focused. Jesus our example was a focused man. He was forever about two things: 1.) His Father's business (see **Luke 2**). 2.) Pleasing His Father. (see **John 8:29**) We too must be captured by this concept of doing the will of God and doing it well. Excellence is the byproduct of a heart's desire to please our Heavenly Father. Excellence is about giving your very best effort to the things God calls you to. This is why we must train young men & women early in life to be people of excellence.

By beginning early to train servant leaders, we can develop a generation of leaders to shape the world.

- Emerging leaders= Tend to be 18-25 years of age
- Energized leaders= Tend to be 25-40 years of age
- Established leaders= Tend to be 40 years old or older.

Your Life Message

Finally, Jesus modeled the profile of a leader. His life was the message. Long after the crowds forgot His words and deeds, they still remember the Man. His disciples wanted to be like Him. That is the ultimate compliment. We must be "Christ" to others as they see Him in us.

You cannot lead one way and live another way. You must walk your talk. What you are speaks louder than what you teach. The true leader says, "follow me, I've been there." He has lived what he asks others to do.

LESSON: Authentic Manhood

1st Corinthians 16:13-14

Intro:

Paul the beloved apostle in concluding his 1st Corinthian letter has some strong words for men. It is his apostolic challenge to us “males”- **“Be on the alert, stand firm in the faith’ act like men, be strong. Let all you do be done in love.”** The phrase **“act like men”** has caught my eye on more than one occasion. Let’s explore it together.

Today’s definition of manhood is in a state of confusion. What it takes to be a man is anybody’s guess. Today there is no vision of manhood that calls a man upward to his best, noblest and highest. Indeed, even “maleness” itself is under attack as the modern model of gender “neutral-ness” is advocated in cultural circles. As we would say in Texas, “John Wayne is dead, and in his place is a neutered “Girley-man.”

We have lost the Biblical model. We no longer know what it means to **“act like men.”** So, our goal is to search for an authentic biblical model of maleness and a biblical language to express it. Hopefully we can discover this biblical model and each of us can learn from it.

What does your idea of manhood look like?

Explain: Because most men are achievers, our image of a real man is that of perfection. The result is that we often see ourselves as less than perfect and therefore as failures. However, this cultural model of Perfection is not the God’s model for being authentically “male.” When scripture says, **“Be ye perfect, even as your Father in Heaven is perfect.” (Matt.5:48)**, Jesus is not calling us to perfection in the performance sense, but rather to a life of balance, wholeness, and maturity. The Bible calls men to a balanced life, not a perfect life. The idea of perfect in scripture means complete, whole, or mature, or as Jesus said, “God-like.”

Jesus our Hero

Explain: The only Perfectly balanced “male” who has ever lived is Jesus of Nazareth. He is God’s prototypical male. Paul calls Jesus- the 2nd Adam (Romans 5:14-21). What we see in Him is what we are to be! Thus, our male goal is not sinless perfection, but Christlikeness.

Apply: Most men, due to culture and peer pressure have adopted multiple false role models. Their heroes come from sports, movies, media, or tribal hero types. In our search to be authentic real men as God desires us to be, we must forsake all false narratives of manhood and focus on God’s Son- a real man!

The Quest for Authentic Manhood- by Robert Lewis

If we can lay aside our preconceived ideas of manhood, it is possible to learn a new scriptural language that pictures true authentic maleness. Years ago, I read Robert Lewis’ wonderful book- **“The Quest for Authentic Manhood”** In his book Dr Lewis creates a new and scriptural way of describing what it means to be Christ-like, and therefore, authentic.

Using his analogy, we will see 4 **“faces”** of the genuine male as God created us to be. I am borrowing these 4 faces of manhood from Lewis’ book, Authentic Manhood.

I. The King Face= Integrity, Character

Explain: if we use Jesus Christ as our prime example of what a real man looks like, we can see in Jesus, first of all the face of a King. He is the righteous King. He is indeed the King's king, meaning he rules in authority over all ideas of what Kings are and do. He models kingship for us. We use the "face" motif as representative of Character or Characteristic. Jesus is the King face for us to follow. This King face is the inborn nature of a man to exhibit "*righteous energy*." Meaning authentic maleness will lead us to be courageous in defending righteousness.

Apply: From birth in every boy's heart is the desire to do right, to be right and to fight for the right. This desire is God's character in him as a Male. This call in a boy is a calling to character and nobility, let's call it the King face of a male.

This will be re-enforced in him from his parents. He is challenged by stories of heroes, from Bible heroes of the faith, from his religion, there is created and developed this love of standing tall for the right things. He is inspired to choose character over comfort. He is to be a man of strength, integrity, character. He knows this all the days of his life. This king face reflects righteous energy. It is God's gift to every man. It is there from birth.

Illust: King David is an example:

When the prophet Nathan comes before David and confronts the king with his adultery and murder saying to David, "*you sir, are that man!*" David's repentance results in strong convictions, in keeping promises. When we read David's lament over his lost integrity in Psalm 51, we see the King's true nature; "*create in me a clean heart O God and renew a right spirit within me.*" **Ps 51:10** This righteous energy leads David to rebound, to restore what was lost. The point is- we men were made for integrity; it is in our DNA. We can fail, we can sin and often do, but within our very soul is the call upward to righteousness. Our very nature is to be right, to do right, and to lead others to integrity and righteousness.

Proverbs 20:7 says, "*The righteous man leads a blameless life, blessed are his children after him*" Scripture tells a man to walk in his own integrity. We males are built for it, it is the King face in us.

II. The Warrior Face= to defend the king's integrity

Explain: Jesus is not only our hero as Righteous King, but he is also a warrior king. Like David of old, Jesus the greater David is a warrior. He will fight those evil giants like Goliath in defense of God's Honor. He stands courageously for the righteous honor of his Father. Paul tells the men of Corinth "*be a man of Courage*" just like Jesus, our Righteous Warrior. (**see 1st Cor. 16:13**) He says, "*act like a man- be strong.*" This is "Guy talk."

Apply: Men love a fight, a challenge, a battle. Especially when the battle is for the right thing. We men say things like, "*Let's do it*" "*I will do this because I can do this,*" or "*let's make a difference.*" "*let's go for it.*" This explains why we men celebrate the male warrior heroes in movies, sports, and business. It is in our very blood to defend the righteous integrity of the King. This explains why we feel such shame when we fail God, family, or friends. When we do not show up for the battle, we feel ashamed. We have "benched" our warrior spirit.

Explain; The Warrior Face= *reflects Conquering energy*

The Warrior has initiative, he will try, and he'll go after it. He'll try to win, to compete, to come out ahead of others. This is because he has within himself a God-given energy to defend and fight for truth and righteousness. If he suppresses this energy, he is unhappy, and often feels ashamed and even depressed.

Question: What are some ways the warrior face defends and supports the King?

1. **The warrior provides** for the king face, (his energy is to support righteousness) He will apply his energy to those causes he knows to be right and noble.

2. **Warrior protects the king face**, (he will fight for values, character, and godly causes) This warrior energy creates in him a righteous anger at sin, injustice, abuse etc.

3. **Warrior fights for the place of [rights] the king face**. The warrior is not a quitter, he will stay the course.

Paul tells Timothy to be a warrior, to “*Fight the good fight, you man of God,*” Notice the union of “*Fight*” and “*man of God*” The warrior is God’s man, fighting for the place (authority) of his God/king.

Apply: in a feminized world that is becoming gender neutral, this warrior spirit is being shamed in men. Even a feminized church does not welcome nor want the warrior! How tragic! The world embraces a Jesus meek and mild but rejects a Warrior King riding on a white stallion with His hair on fire, a sword between His teeth, and righteousness tattooed on his thigh! (See Revelation 19)

III. The Lover Face- reflects loving energy

Explain: The Warrior face is natural to most men, but the lover face in today’s culture seems unnatural to many men. To be a lover is to be a sissy, or it shows weakness according to our cult heroes. We say things like, “*real men don’t cry.*” Yet this idea that real men cannot love is foolishness. Look carefully at Jesus our role model of manhood. Who is the most loving, most self-sacrificing man who ever lived-Jesus the ultimate lover! Jesus is king, warrior and lover. He says to us men, “*Greater love has no man than this-than a man lay down his life for his friends*” Jesus said that our love for one another would be his sign to the world that we are his disciples. (See **John 13:34,35**) Real warriors will die for love of God, country, family, truth, and righteousness. There is in the heart of a mature man a romantic energy that cares deeply for the right things. The king, the warrior, he FEELS, he gets emotional about the things he loves and believes in.

Apply: The lover face in a man will be seen in his **romantic energy**. John Eldridge in his book, “*Wild at Heart*” says every man is looking for a woman to romance. We men want to be some girl’s hero! We are like peacocks strutting our wings, seeking her attention. We need her praise and admiration. In order to get it, we use our loving, romantic energy to convince her that we are a man of integrity (her King) and her warrior who will defend her honor, her home, and her children.

Illust; This romantic energy is characterized by our openness, affection, sympathy, compassion, and kindness.

Ephesians 5:25 tells us, “*Husbands love your wives as Christ loved the Church and gave Himself for her.*” The lover face means the man cares deeply about family. His heart of love means the warrior will die for those he loves, and his king face means he will lead them in righteousness.

IV. The Friend Face= reflects connecting Energy

Explain; the 4th face of an authentic man is that of a friend. Wearing the friend face means a busy man must slow down and take time for friends. An often overlooked insight into the life of Jesus is that he developed close, intimate friendships throughout his life. The very fact that his band of men would follow him at risk of their very lives speaks to the depth of their bonding with Christ and his with them. We see in Jesus a real man who makes time for his friends. He makes time for accountability, caring, & community. His authentic manhood shows us his connectedness with other men, it tells us that those lone wolves among us are dysfunctional males who fear being accountable and connected to others. When Jesus was “making disciples” he was using his **connecting energy** to build lasting friendships that was

transformational in the lives of others. Jesus' command was, "follow me," not follow my teachings or follow my example. He was their friend; their brother and they loved him in return.

Apply: Each man should ask himself if he is known for this friend face? Am I a man who is a connector, a man who intentionally makes many friends? The answer is found in how you use your time and energy, which should be characterized by fun, activities, and causes that are done in concert with others. This friend energy will generate loyalty in you and others as a band of brothers who share common values, loyalties, and affections.

An authentic man shows himself to be "friend worthy" by his investment in other men. He is a Christ-follower- making friends in Jesus' name. According to Proverbs he is "*iron sharpening iron so one man sharpens the countenance of a friend.*" **Proverbs 27:17**

Observations:

Observation #1- There are caricatures-

The 4 Faces of authentic manhood are frequently replaced with ugly caricatures of what real Manhood should be.

What do we mean by "**caricature**" The dictionary defines a caricature as "a picture, description, or imitation of a person in which certain striking characteristics are exaggerated in order to create a comic or grotesque effect." There are many such caricatures of real manhood among even Christian men today. Here are some examples:

The king Caricature:

on the right= The King becomes a dictator. He is insecure, controlling, and demanding. (He is weak on love, and overbearing on authority)

on the left= He becomes an abdicator, lacking leadership, boundaries, or discipline. (he is weak on values, and defined righteousness)

The Warrior Caricature:

On the right = he becomes a destroyer (he fights for the wrong causes; he lacks love and direction. He needs the King to lead him)

On the left= he becomes a wimp, he lacks courage to defend the king (He is not strong, but infirm, he will not show up or stand up)

The Lover Caricature:

On the right= the lover becomes critical, cynical, and selective in whom he will love. (You cannot please him)

On the left= lover becomes heartless and uncaring (he has no real love)

The Friend Caricature:

On the right= He becomes a user (his friends are for selfish motives)

On the left= becomes a doormat (He is only a pleaser)

Observation #2- The Warrior needs a King

Without a king he becomes a destroyer and loses his sense of righteousness.

Explain; The Warrior needs a King to serve. Without a King he is a destroyer. Our king is the Lord Jesus Christ! The more intensely a man runs hard after Jesus; the more authentic he becomes. Being Christ-like

is authentic manhood. Our goal is the imitation of Christ. This imitation is our desire to emulate his character, his love, and his purpose.

Apply: To become authentic, we must put an end to all our heroes.

Only Jesus is “*the Hero and perfecter of our faith.*” **Heb. 12:2** All those “*follow me*” commands in scripture are admonitions to make Jesus your Hero. Each man needs the righteous energy of King Jesus motivating him from within.

So, what will the character of our Hero do in us? Jesus shows us what we will live like and look like when He is king over us:

1. We will love one another- the lover face will appear-John 13:34,35
2. We will forgive one another- the friend face will appear in us- Eph 4:32ff
3. We will be willing to suffer unjustly-the warrior face will appear in us-1 Peter 2:20ff
4. We will live generously as Christ gave himself-the lover face will appear again 2Cor.8:9
5. We will become humble as He is humble-the King face will appear-Phil. 2:3-8
6. We will become servants as He served us-Again the king face will appear- Mark 10:45

Illust: now look carefully at these six characteristics of real manhood. It certainly does not match the cultural ideal of a man, but it does reflect God’s ideal – Christ in you, the hope of glory!

LESSON: The Pastor as Disciplemaker

The Pastor's Calling

Becoming a pastor should be a "God calling" not a just a job or profession. Being a pastor is in fact a spiritual gifting. Paul the apostle, describes the fivefold gifted Church leaders in **Ephesians 4:11-12** "*and he gave the apostles, the prophets, the evangelists, the shepherds and teachers, to equip the saints for the work of ministry, for the building up of the body of Christ...*" We notice that these leaders are "given" to the church by Christ. They are gifted and called to serve the body of Christ (the church.) Each of the gifted and called leaders has a specific job to do.

The Pastor/teacher

Uniquely, the role of the pastor is described as that of "*shepherd/teacher.*" It is a combined gifting. Obviously the pastor is a shepherd of God's flock, the church. He is to do what a shepherd does for his sheep. He guides, protects, feeds, and cares for them as a loving shepherd. He also has the dual role of teaching them Kingdom values and Kingdom truths. In his teaching role he feeds his flock the bread of life-God's Word. This is most often done through the pastor's role as preacher of God's Word. However, there is much more to being a Shepherd than just telling the sheep what to do in a sermon. He is to grow the saints into mature men and women who can then equip and train others to do ministry work. Experience has shown us that you cannot disciple a congregation through preaching. It helps, and is a part of teaching, but is not adequate to grow men & women into mature Christ-followers. Paul's admonition in **Ephesians 4:11-13** requires that a pastor become a disciple maker. The Pastor is to be a trainer, resulting in reproducing himself in others.

Teacher/trainer

The African church is full of preaching, not much teaching, and almost no training. However, making disciples is the one thing Christ called Church leaders to do. Jesus set the example for us. He had the Twelve and spent three years preparing them to change the world. So, much good can be done following Christ's example. This example included training the Twelve, not just preaching to them and teaching them. Jesus equipped them to carry on his ministry after he was gone.

As we have already noted in the Disciple Leader Manual (pages 155-157) Jesus had a strategy for training the Twelve. We can learn from his strategy and apply it today in guiding our churches. In his wonderful book, The Master Plan of Evangelism, Robert Coleman reveals the plan Jesus followed with his disciples. There are four parts to it:

1. Selection

Christ's first method was to select the right men. Have you noticed that Jesus was very selective in the men He chose to be His "twelve?" He didn't call everybody, or just anybody. He only called a select few. They were not much to look at from the world's perspective, just ordinary men, but they were men who would follow Him. They were "fat" guys- faithful, available, and teachable. There was a plan in Christ's choosing of those twelve men. They were not perfect or even supermen as the world values talent, but Jesus saw their potential and built His purpose into them. Likewise, every pastor should be praying for, looking for, and calling forth select men to be his disciples. The Apostle Paul saw Jesus' method and copied it. Paul knew that the only way to fulfill the Great Commission of **Matthew 28:19** was to do as Jesus did- train more men. Paul was a reproducer. Paul says to Timothy, his beloved son in ministry, "*The*

things which you have heard from me in the presence of many witnesses, these entrust to faithful men, who will be able to teach others also. (2nd Tim 2:2) Here we see Pastor Paul, who planted so many churches, was working out Jesus method of selecting key men to invest his time with.

Pastor- where is your Timothy?

Even so we are to “go” and witness to all who will listen. We are to then baptize that new convert. The next step is to make a disciple out of him. Here is where we can learn from Christ. Even Jesus could not make a faithful follower out of Judas. Paul could not disciple John Mark. Being selective is important to the plan. Find the person who will follow you and learn from you. A Pastor can lead a congregation, but he cannot disciple a whole congregation. What he can do is what Jesus did. He can prayerfully select two or three good men who have a heart for God and want to learn. Every pastor should be able to point to his “guy” and say, that’s my Timothy!

2. Association

Christ’s second method was the “*with Him*” principle. Dr. Coleman in his book makes much of this strategy. He says it was Christ’s plan to keep the Twelve near Him those first three years. Long after they might forget where they went, or whom they met, they would always remember Him! This being “associated” with Christ would forever change these men. The command to “follow me” was a deliberate plan and purpose to mentor the Twelve. They “caught” as much as they were taught. Just being with Christ intimately day in and day out, won their hearts. They would eventually die for Him. Christ understood the “*with Him*” principle of leadership.

We too, must adopt the “with me” strategy. You cannot reproduce your life and lifestyle in another person without spending much quality time with him. This is true in raising children and it’s true in rising up spiritual disciples. Parents who spend long hours with their child will forever imprint themselves in the soul of the child. Discipleship is “caught” as much as it is “taught.” It was said of the early disciples, “*they took notice of them that they had been with Jesus.*” He who would lead others must be as available to his disciples as Christ was to His. Spiritual reproduction is a birthing process, and takes time and consistent, often painful labor.

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3. Consecration

Jesus’ plan included getting those men He called to “*seek first the kingdom*” Priorities are primary to the disciple. In Luke 14, Jesus parables are all about counting the cost. Three times in Luke 14, our Lord says, “*you cannot be my disciple,*” unless you love me more than people, places and things. His plan calls men to a holy, disciplined walk with Him. Over and over again during those three years they traveled together, Jesus let the disciples see His commitment to God’s Kingdom and He challenged them to be as He was.

We too, must live consecrated lives in order to lead others. It is a spiritual principle of leadership, that you cannot lead others where you’ve never been. You cannot lead others out into the deep when you yourself cannot swim. You cannot lead another man to live any closer to God, than you yourself live. Why?

Because he spends much time with you, and he will “find you out.” If you tell him to pray, but he does not see and hear you pray often, then he will not believe he should make prayer a priority. Do you think the twelve ever forgot their hours in prayer with Jesus? Never! When Jesus prayed to His Father, those men hungered to know God like that! Leading others to be disciples is about “being” a disciple first, then telling others about it.

4. Principle of Multiplication

It is amazing to think that Jesus could look at that odd collection of men; fishermen, tax collectors, Zealots, and common men, and see the Kingdom of God in them. He saw what no one else could see; he saw the world being saved through their witness. Not one of those men had ever traveled a hundred miles from home, yet Jesus commanded them to tell “all the nations” about Him! He must have had a plan. He did. His vision was for each man to win one other man and train that man to win another. The plan is spiritual reproduction. It is the principle of multiplication.

How does this work, and does it work? It is so simple that few have really tried it. It works like this. If a disciple wins one person to Christ and spends the 1st year training that person to win another; meanwhile the disciple is also winning his second person. The convert that he has trained now wins his 1st person to Christ. So, at the end of a year there will be four of them. This doesn't sound like a very successful plan to win the world. Few pastors could build a church this slowly. You might think this will never win the world. Think again. Now the **second year**, there will be eight disciples, because each disciple is winning and training one each year. In **ten years** there will be **1,024** disciples doing the same strategy. In **twenty years** the world will have **1,048,576** followers of Jesus. This isn't so bad is it? Then if just each one will win and train one, in **thirty years** there will be **1,073,741,824!** In one generation, **forty years**, over **one trillion** will come to Christ in salvation! Think about the Master's plan for a second. This figure of one trillion people is such a staggering number the church has had enough time since Jesus gave us this plan to win the world a 100 times over! The church could have fulfilled the Great Commission in the first generation through those twelve men. It's not a bad plan; it's just not been tried very faithfully.

Training/ Skills

If a pastor is to fulfill his calling he must learn to train others. Paul told Timothy (his disciple) “*all scripture is breathed out by God and is profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for training in righteousness.*” **2nd Timothy 3:16** Notice the profit to us “*training in righteousness*”

A good pastor is a trainer! He must learn how to develop “skills” in his disciples. What exactly does this mean?

For example: If a pastor is a man of prayer, that is a good thing; but until he trains others to pray, very little is accomplished thru the power of prayer. How does he train his people to pray? He SHOWS THEM HOW TO PRAY! Until they pray with him, hearing him pray, learning to pray like he prays, they will not be passionate about prayer. Jesus spent long hours in prayer with his men. After watching him pray and hearing him talk to his Father, the disciple cried out “*Lord, teach us to pray like that!*” (**Luke 11:1**)

There are many skills that a pastor can sharpen in his disciples. What he knows how to do, he can train someone else to do. He can train them to witness, to pray, to teach, to lead others, to serve humbly, to be good stewards, to trust God, to even become disciple makers themselves.

The African Church

Every African pastor has a choice to make. He can continue to lead his congregation in the traditional African manner, or he can choose to lead the way Christ led his men. He can follow his tribal, traditional model; or he can become a Biblical pastor leading his people according to Ephesians 4. If he chooses to become a disciple maker; some remarkable things will result.

1. His Timothys (both male & female) will become an extension of himself. He multiplies himself in others.
2. These new disciples are potential elders, evangelists, even pastors to plant new churches. Through his disciple making, he becomes an apostolic leader, a bishop in the biblical sense of the word. He becomes a mentor to many.

3. He will set an example to others in the African Church that there is a better way to lead than the denominational model he was raised up in. When many men and women begin to multiply themselves, the word will spread that God is indeed at work here.
4. Making disciples will become the pastor's true legacy. He will leave behind him changed lives, mature leaders who can carry on the work he started. If he does not make disciples, the work dies when he dies. It is that simple.

Which Generation are you living for?

The Disciple Making leader is not living for the immediate generation. He is a future, forward thinking leader. He wants to leave a changed culture behind him when he is gone. By training a generation of disciples, he leaves behind an army of those who can change a culture for years to come. What he does now with his Timothys will be like waves upon the seashore, forever reshaping the landscape. So, pastor, what kind of leader are you determined to be? We challenge you to follow Christ, Paul, Peter, Titus, Timothy and many other New Testament leaders who changed their world by making disciples of all the nations.

LESSON: Finding a Faithful Man

Where is your “man?” The early church leaders were always training their man. Barnabus had Saul, Paul had Timothy, and Peter had Mark. Where is your faithful man (or Woman)?

2 Timothy 2:2 *“and the things which you have heard from me in the presence of many witnesses, the same commit to faithful men, who shall be able to teach others also.”*

This is a remarkable insight into the Apostle Paul’s strategy of making disciples. Notice the four “generations” of disciples:

- II. 1. Paul to Timothy
- 2. Timothy to faithful men
- 3. Faithful men to others also.

In God’s economy of reaching the world with the Gospel, we can see the different levels of leadership in the church.

The Convert

This is the newborn babe in Christ (see 2 Peter 2:2) he/she needs the basics of how to “feed” himself. He needs “How to” skills in quiet time, Scripture reading, prayer, fellowship, and obedience.

The Disciple (D)

This is the growing Christian learning to walk with Christ (see Luke 14:25-35) he/she has basic skills of walking in obedience with Christ but needs encouragement and direction in his vision to make a difference in his world. He needs to be learning to “make disciples” of others in his realm of influence.

The Disciple Maker (DM)

This is a man like Timothy. He has come to the place of leadership in his walk with Christ. He is born to reproduce. He like Paul before him gathers converts & disciples who are “faithful men”. He/she has a Great Commission mentality and compulsion.

The Leader of Disciple Makers (LDM)

Very few reach this level of maturity and vision. Paul was such a man. In our day there are those who lead the leaders and create the vision that impacts the world for Christ.

Finding a Faithful man

All “going forth and making disciples” begins in finding those men who are deemed worthy of the time and effort it takes to mentor others. Who are those “faithful men? What did Paul envision when he tells Timothy to teach faithful men? Proverbs, raises the question,” *most men will proclaim everyone his own goodness, but a faithful man who can find? (Proverbs 20:6)*

Paul is urging Timothy to find men who are like himself. Timothy was a faithful man to Paul. There are at least three elements in looking for a faithful man, or in being a faithful man.

Someone said the faithful man is a “FAT” man.

F= faithful

A= available

T= teachable

I. The man you can train is FAITHFUL

He has come to the place in his life that he wants the will of God to be done in his life at any cost. He is dedicated, motivated and consecrated. He has a heart for God. He is faithful to God and is willing to be faithful to you. Not every man is willing to be your faithful man. Timothy allowed Paul to mentor him. Demas forsook Paul, having loved this present world. Even the great apostle could not mentor Demas. Also, John Mark left Paul to eventually follow Peter. You must find men who will follow your lead and submit willingly to your spiritual leadership. He is loyal to you. You are his disciple maker. He is faithful to you as you follow Christ.

1) Will he follow you?

Faithful doesn't mean just faithful to Christ and the kingdom. You and your faithful man have a leader/follower relationship. He so admires and respects your walk with God that he will follow you in order to learn from you.

2) Will he be willing to follow transferable conduct and concepts?

A basic principle of leading another in disciple training is that you have a plan. This plan is your strategy to give your faithful man transferable concepts. What is a transferable concept? It is when you teach another how to do a task the same way you are doing it. It is telling him how and then showing him how repeatedly by your disciplined behavior. You as a disciple maker must never ask a disciple to do something you yourself are not willing to do. He must see you doing it. You are a servant leader to your disciple as Jesus was to his disciples. Training a faithful man is "caught" as well as taught. He must want to be like you and to do what you do.

For example: you teach your faithful man the Navigator Wheel as a method of Scripture memory. He sees that you are memorizing the Wheel and using your verses to live your life. If he is willing to do as you do, to learn the 12 verses in the Wheel, then that means he is "faithful" to follow your training. However, if he refuses to do the Wheel and its verses, but goes off on his own, and memorizes other verses, then he may be faithful to God, but he is not faithful to you! He cannot be your disciple.

3) He has an appetite to learn and is willing to learn from you.

He must have a love for The Word of God. The prophet Jeremiah said, *"Thy words were found, and I did eat them; and Thy word was unto me the joy and rejoicing of my heart"* (Jeremiah **15:16**)

There is a saying, "you can lead a horse to water, but you cannot make him drink" I would add to that, "and you cannot make him drink from your trough" When the disciple maker looks for a faithful man, be careful to not only look for a loyal man, but also to look for a hungry man! Your faithful man must be starving for the Word of God! There is a fire burning in his belly to learn and grow. He will let you feed him from your trough.

II. The man you train is AVAILABLE

He has a servant heart. He is a potential servant-leader. Jesus never measured a man by how many servants he had, but rather by how many men he served. Your faithful man must be willing to follow you and serve Christ.

Your faithful man feels called of God to be available to you for mentoring. He has committed his TIME for the very purpose of learning transferable concepts from you. He is available for a quiet time, journaling, prayer, and training. He is available for Scripture memory and will allow you to hold him accountable. For a set amount of time he is available to learn the "things you have learned from me in the presence of many witnesses." He understands that he is not to be a "cul-de-sac" but a conduit. There is another potential Faithful man out there waiting on him to come train him also. He is available.

1) He is available to learn

He does not have an independent spirit. He can live under authority. He is at a place in his life where he will make his growth as a follower a priority. He is available to his mentor. It will require sacrifice on both your parts. It takes time to grow a disciple. He is available to you! He is faithful.

2) He is able to teach others

Not every person the disciple maker trains has the strong ability to teach others. I suggest that the disciple leader give his best quality time to the best people. Seek a person to follow you who is "apt to teach" as Paul describes him. By training your faithful man you may be winning and training thousands through him. Always pray and ask God to send you those who will in turn be able to take the training to "others also" (2nd Timothy 2:2) Your faithful man may be a follower to you, but he can be a leader of others. God through you is his future leadership! God in and through him can multiply your witness many times over.

III. The man you train is TEACHABLE

Not every Christian you meet has a teachable spirit. The faithful man has a God hunger to learn. Also, he is willing to learn from you! By teachable we mean open to your leadership. He is Meek before God and his mentor. He does not have a proud spirit. He is humble enough to learn from his mentors. More than anything your faithful man is willing to let YOU teach him. This is crucial. The disciple maker soon learns that he cannot mentor everyone. Paul could not mentor John Mark until the last days of Paul's life. Find a man or men who respect your Godly walk so much that they hunger for what you have and will submit to you to get it!

He is teachable to your methods and transferable concepts. He must understand that by teaching him you are teaching those whom he will teach also. The strategy is critical. You are preparing him to prepare others. Your faithful man must be willing to be a part of this kingdom process.

As the Disciple grows in his desire to reproduce his skills and life in others, he must prayerful seek those "FAT" men and women who manifest these qualities. Put quality time into quality people.

Someone observed that the faithful man is a man of faith! If you take the word "faith" and break it down, you'll see the characteristics of the man you can grow to maturity.

F = faithful- _____

A = available- _____

I = initiator (self starter) _____

T = teachable _____

H = heart for God _____

Notes

LESSON: The Disciple Maker's Methods

Sometimes it is helpful to define what we mean by disciple making. In our Lord's last words to his followers he told them to "go and make disciples". Now, just what is meant by "making disciples?" Some think this means evangelism, winning the lost to Christ. No, that is the "go" of Christ's command. We are to:

- Go
- Baptize
- And make disciples.
- Teach

Is teaching Sunday school making disciples? Is preaching a sermon on Sunday morning making disciples? These things are good and helpful, but they fall far short of what our Lord intended. teaching and preaching are not enough to make disciples.

The Master's Plan

Think of it this way. The Lord Jesus called out a few men to be his disciples. How did they become what he called them to be? He had a method in the training of these men. A.B. Bruce in his classic book, *The Training of the Twelve*, shows us how Jesus made disciples of this rag-tag group of guys! Robert Coleman's *The Master's Plan of Evangelism* also shows us Jesus' method. The essence of making disciples is in the word "**training.**" Christ trained the twelve to take over when he was gone. Let's take a look at how he trained them.

The Master's Training

Training and teaching are not the same. Training will include teaching, but teaching may not include training. To train a man is to "on purpose" have a plan and a goal in mind. Jesus certainly had a plan and a purpose with the twelve. He was "with them" for the purpose of training them.

Training will include these five elements that the disciple maker uses to make his young convert into a disciple:

TELL HIM HOW

Tell him how to pray, how to witness, how to share his testimony, how to read his Bible, and how to memorize Scripture. This is the "teaching part of training. Teaching is needed and necessary, however it is only the first step in growing a new believer to maturity.

SHOW HIM HOW

This is where most teachers and preachers fail. They stop at the teaching and preaching and say, "Now go do it". The true disciple maker will do as Jesus did and show him how to do it. The disciples asked our Lord. "*Lord teach us to pray.*" He taught them the model prayer (Luke 11) but he then showed them how to pray. Being "with him" those three years they over and over time and again listened to Jesus pray! He SHOWED them how! True mentoring happens when the leader literally "shows" a young convert how to do a new life skill.

GET HIM STARTED

The disciple maker is a "hands on" teacher. Showing is better than telling any day! For example, I can teach you how to witness, and even show you how to witness, but until I get you started doing it for yourself, you are not yet witnessing! If I am with you and little by little get you started, watching me witness, before too long, you'll be doing it on your own! This is mentoring! This is training others.

KEEP HIM GOING

This is the hard part. The leader of men must have the patience of Job. Young disciples get distracted and discouraged. They need encouragement. Paul in speaking to the Thessalonians said, *“we proved to be gentle among you, as a nursing mother tenderly caring for her children” (1st Thess. 2:7)* This is the maker of disciple’s task. You must keep him going. Your young convert will stop memorizing, stop his quiet time, and stop reading his Bible. Satan is at work. However, you are there for him! You are the Leader of your man. You must build character and discipline in him. Stay after your faithful man until he is faithful on his own.

TRAIN HIM TO REPRODUCE

This is the maturing final stage. Show him that he must teach and train someone else just as you have taught and trained him. He must not break the chain. Train him how to train another. The disciple makers greatest joy is in seeing your faithful man reach another and train him. That’s a blessing! The best way to get him to reproduce is by giving him a transferable concept or tool that he can give to another convert.

Finally, you can see that making disciples is hard work. That’s why so very few men do it well. However, those who invest their time in men reap great rewards. This kind of expedient growth is how God meant us to win the world.

Notes

LESSON: Beginning to Disciple a new Convert

Assumptions:

This guideline is written in very simple style & content. It assumes you as a Disciple Maker are working with a newborn babe in Christ. This newborn “babe” needs only baby-food; he cannot digest strong meat. So, we are assuming the new believer knows NOTHING! We must both teach him & train him as you would a new born baby.

- *Teaching* him has to do with doctrine & his belief system.
- *Training* him has to do with developing his Skills as a disciple.

Your new disciple may know some things, but we will assume we are at the beginning. We must teach him how to:

- feed himself the Word
- have a quiet time.
- journal his walk with Christ.
- talk to God.
- share his testimony.
- witness to others.
- become a reproducing disciple.

Week One: 1st meeting- Does the new believer have a readable Bible?

We can disciple him without his owning a Bible, but with very limited results. We cannot bring him to maturity without him owning a Bible; preferably a complete Bible-not just a New Testament.

1. Show him how to find the Gospels-Matthew, Mark, Luke & John.
2. Explain to him that these were Jesus’ disciples whom God used to write the story of Christ’s life. We cannot grow in our faith without knowledge of Christ and our mission as His followers.
3. **Assignment:** He is to read chapter one of the Gospel of John before you & he meet again.
He is to read John chapter one with a notepad & pencil by his side. You want him to take notes of his insights
and questions so the two of you can discuss them when next you meet.
4. You tell him you will not meet with him until he has read & completed this assignment in John 1. When he is finished, he can bring his notes to share with you.
5. Review with him how to pray-use the A-C-T-S {Four Minutes with God}
A= Adoration
C= Confession
T= Thanksgiving
S= Service or supplication.

You pray with him using this four-minute model- you show him how to pray by praying with you.

Week Two: 2nd meeting- Begin “quiet time” skills.

1. Review Gospel of John, chapter one with your Timothy.

2. Encourage him to use notebook or a spiral bound writing pad for storing his notes.
3. Begin showing him how to APPLY the Word to his life, by asking himself questions from God's Word.

Example: John 1:1 says *“and the Word was God and was in the beginning with God”*

Ask him (her) how can Jesus be born a human and have pre-existed as God?

Question: What does this tell me about Jesus Christ? Do I believe that Jesus Christ is creator God? See John 1:10 & Colossians 1:15-17

Example: John 1:12 says those who receive Him become sons of God simply by believing in Him. What does it mean to “receive Christ?” Has he received Christ & become a child of God? See John 3:5-7 & 3:16 & 36

4. Encourage him to memorize John 1:12 by next week. Memorize it topically:

Topic: Must receive Christ- John 1:12. Encourage him to memorize it word perfect, just as it is in his Bible.

5. Assign him to read chapters two & three of John's gospel and to write his meditations in his notebook.

Week Three: 3rd meeting –Continue developing his time alone with God.

Question him about his quiet time. How consistent was he? Did he meet God everyday?

1. Review his Scripture memory verse- John 1:12. Can he quote it with the topic {Must receive Christ} reference & verse?

2. Review his prayer life using A-C-T-S {Disciple-leader Manual- Section one}

You must stress praying this “pattern” for prayer.

Adoration- Helps him learn to praise the Holy Father- We enter His courts with Praise.

Confession-Show Him 1st John 1:8-9, encourage him to accept God's forgiveness thru the blood of Christ.

Thanksgiving- an essential part of prayer is being thankful for God's blessings. Encourage him to list the many provisions God has made in his life.

Supplication- praying for others. Get him to list in his notebook the people he is praying for. He is to pray for the salvation of others in his family or sphere of influence.

3. Review his time in the Word- John chapters 2 & 3. Is your Timothy developing some meditation skills by writing his insights & questions in his journal {notebook}? If not, hold him accountable. Do not allow laziness or undisciplined behavior to start. He must follow your instructions in order to “earn” your time with him. Do not meet with him again until he does his “homework” assignments.

4. Assign another memory verse from John chapter 3. 3:7, 3:16, 3:18, or 3:36

Use a Topic for your memory verse- Salvation by Faith-John 3:16 & 36

Week Four: 4th meeting- Begin Doctrinal Study

1. You could begin with him in the New Life in Christ booklet, assigning your “Timothy” one Chapter a week. When you meet, you review the Chapter with him and memorize a verse on each Chapter topic.

Example: Chapter one of NLIC is Assurance of Salvation. Memorize 1st John 5: 11-12.

2. The next week review Eternal security and memorize a verse on that topic.

Note: Each week when you meet with your Timothy, always spend some time reviewing your verses- review, review, review! That is the method of learning Bible verses.

Week Five: 5th meeting- Review! Review! Review!

You now have a continuing pattern for each week:

1. Review memory verses
2. Go over Quiet time assignments & application.
3. Encourage him to be consistent in his disciplines of being a Christ-follower
4. Continue each week in the New Life in Christ booklet, memorizing a verse for each chapter topic, until you have completed the 13 lessons in NLIC.
5. Finally, become a pray partner with your Timothy- sharing burdens & victories as God answers prayer.

Weeks 6 & 7 meetings- Train your Timothy to witness to others.

As your Timothy grows in faithfulness to the Lord & to your disciplines of growth you can begin to develop him as a soul-winning witness.

1. Train him to share his testimony by writing it out and then speaking it to you & then to others. He can learn to do this by reading the lesson on sharing your testimony in the Disciple Leader Manual.
2. Begin to train him in the use of the Evangecube as a witnessing tool. There are at least 6 verses of Scripture that go with the Evangecube. Begin memorizing these verses & the panels they match on the Evangecube. On a regular basis take your Timothy witnessing with you. This “field training” will greatly advance his confidence as a witness. Soon he will be doing it on his own.

Week 8 meeting- Born to Reproduce

Now you return to the regular disciplines of quiet time, prayer & Scripture memory & review.

Each meeting you can deepen his knowledge of Christ thru Bible study together.

1. Born to reproduce: about now is time to talk to your Timothy about reproduction. Soon he must win someone to Christ & begin the process of discipling that new convert. He must see that each disciple is to reproduce himself in others.

2. When he begins his own “one on one” meeting with his Timothy; he can review with you the same methods you & he used. Walk him thru the week by week schedule with his disciple.

3. Continue to take him witnessing whenever possible to keep him focused on evangelism.

Notes

LESSON: Time alone with God

What a man is when he is alone with God is what a man really is. Therefore, to be more real to yourself and others, you must spend time everyday with God. One of the first things we teach a new believer is how to set aside a regular, consistent, time to be with God. The old-time theologians used to call it “the Quiet Time.” I still think it’s a good description. Do you have a daily “Quiet Time?” If not, then why not? It is impossible to be a public Christian without first being a private Christian. Your public behavior is a direct reflection of your time spent alone with God. In order to grow spiritually, every believer needs to structure his day around his quiet time.

A Time

When is the best time to meet with God? If you are like King David, you meet the Lord before you meet the day. David said, *“In the morning, ‘O Lord, you hear my voice; in the morning I lay my requests before you...”* This is sound advice. The Lord Jesus had his quiet time before he began the day. *“Very early in the morning while it was still dark, Jesus got up, left the house and went off to a solitary place; where he prayed.”* **Mark 1:35** It occurs to me, that if Jesus needed time alone with His Father before he faced a busy demanding world, then how much more do we?

I don’t care how you do it but do it! Schedule your devotional time first thing in the morning.

A Place

Jesus went to a “solitary” place. He needed privacy, and so do you. Is there a place you can set aside, early in the morning where you can read your Bible and pray? Is this place private enough that you can pray out loud without waking others up? Yes, prayer is a vital part of a meaningful quiet time. Praying verbally is critical to your talk with God. Your ears need to hear what your heart feels. Using your mouth and crying out to God is a normal conversation between a sinner and his merciful Father. What do you need in your “God meeting place?”

- Your Bible
- Your notepad
- Your pencil
- Your devotional book
- A journal for daily accountability

A Commitment

Now, promise yourself and the Lord that you will meet Him every morning for a set period. Can you promise Him a week? If so, then do it for a week. Probably, it will become such a joyful time for you you’ll want to continue. A warning: Satan will oppose you! He’ll let you go to church, sing in the choir, and teach a class, but the Devil trembles when he sees, the weakest saint upon his knees. Expect him to bring every kind of distraction to keep you from being alone with God! He hates and fears the believer’s quiet time.

A Method

Now that you have it scheduled, and you have your tools, what do you do? A few suggestions might be helpful:

Begin with prayer, using the four minutes with God.

A= Adoration, start praising God for 60 seconds.

C= Confession, ask for forgiveness for 60 seconds

T= Thanksgiving, praise God for all your blessings for 60 seconds

S= Supplication, pray for the needs of others for 60 seconds

Select a passage of Scripture to read for the week. Begin with something easy, like the 1st Psalm.

Read, Study, Meditate, and Memorize.

Using your notepad, begin to take notes on key thoughts and phrases. Ask the Holy Spirit to reveal truth to you. You may want to put a column in your notepad for “what does this mean God wants me to do?” This is personal application.

Journal what the Father is saying to you

Keep a notebook, and daily make entries of God’s words to you from His Word. This is your private dairy, and will record your growth, struggles, and victories. From it you may want to think on one thought for the day. Like, “today I will believe Jesus loves me no matter what comes my way.”

Take that one thought with you. Write it on a card or piece of paper and look at it throughout the day. This is meditation.

Memorize a verse or two for that week. Psalm one is so brief you can memorize the whole psalm if you chose.

End your time in prayer. Pray now for yourself and God’s guidance for the tasks of the day. Pray the prayer of Jabez in 1st Chronicles 4:9. That’s a great way to start the day!

Four Minutes with God in Prayer

Praying is not easy for beginners. Every new believer seems to struggle in knowing how to pray. However, Jesus in the Model Prayer (sometimes called the Lord’s Prayer) gave us the guidelines for approaching The Father in prayer. By following this outline, we can have a pattern for our prayer time.

In Luke 11:1-4 Jesus taught us:

I. Begin your prayer with ADORATION “Our Father who is in Heaven, sacred is your name...”

We approach the throne of God with praise and adoration. Begin your prayer by asking God for nothing but praising Him

for just being the God he is. Start “adoring” God by telling Him how much you love and adore Him. Scripture is full of the

mighty names of God. You can praise Him by just saying His Names, or just a simple “I love you Lord for being the Loving

Lord of my life”. Take one minute to adore our Father in Heaven.

II. Continue your prayer with CONFESSION

Jesus taught us to ask for forgiveness, *“Forgive us our trespasses as we forgive those who trespass against us”*

When we begin in adoration, seeing God as He is, we then see our self as we are. Now we confess our sins, knowing that in Christ there is no condemnation. We claim the promise of 1st John 1:9 that, *“if we confess our sins, he is faithful to forgive us our sins, and cleanse us of all iniquity”* Take at least one minute to Confess all known sin.

III. THANK God for all His Mercy and Grace

All prayer must include thanksgiving. Spend time expressing to God a grateful heart for his blessings. Take at least one

minute to say, “thank you” Jesus for your kindness to me.

IV. Now SUPPLICATE for others- There are friends and others who need you to pray for them. To “supplicate” is to intercede for others before the Throne of God. Take a minute to pray for others.

ACTS= 4 minutes with God

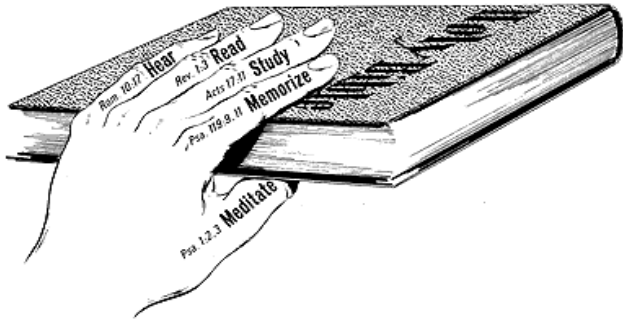
A=Adoration, C=Confession, T=Thanksgiving, S=Supplication

This little “ACTS” is an easy way to teach a new convert to begin to Pray. One minute in praise, confession, thanksgiving, and supplication, equals 4 minutes in prayer. This is a very good start to an effective prayer life.

LESSON: The Hand Illustration

The "Word Hand" shows the five methods of learning from the Bible. Each of these methods is important. This is how we get a "grip" on God's Word.

Hearing



Romans 10:17 *So then faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the word of God.*

Hearing the Word from godly pastors and teachers provides insight into others' study of the Scriptures as well as stimulating your own appetite for the Word.

Reading

Revelation 1:3 *Blessed is he that reads, and they that hear the words of this prophecy, and keep those things which are written therein: for the time is at hand.*

Reading the Bible gives an overall picture of God's Word. Many people find it helpful to use a daily reading program which takes them systematically through the Bible.

Studying

Acts 17:11 *These were more noble than those in Thessalonica, in that they received the word with all readiness of mind, and searched the scriptures daily, whether those things were so.*

Studying the Scriptures leads to personal discoveries of God's truths. Writing down these discoveries helps you organize and remember them.

Memorizing

Psalms 119:9, 11 *Wherewithal shall a young man cleanse his way? by taking heed thereto according to thy word. Thy word have I hid in mine heart, that I might not sin against thee.*

Memorizing God's Word enables use of the Sword of the Spirit to overcome Satan and temptations...to have it readily available for witnessing or helping others with a "word in season."

Meditating

Psalms 1:2, 3 *But his delight is in the law of the LORD; and in his law doth he meditate day and night. And he shall be like a tree planted by the rivers of water, that brings forth his fruit in his season; his leaf also shall not wither; and whatsoever he does shall prosper.*

Meditation is the thumb of the Word Hand, for it is used in conjunction with each of the other methods. Only as you meditate on God's Word--thinking of its meaning and application in your life--will you discover its transforming power at work within you.

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The Vertical Dimension: How You Relate to God

The Word Spoke

See: 2 Timothy 3:16; Joshua 1:8

As God speaks to you through the Scriptures, you can see His principles for life and ministry, learn how to obey, and become acquainted with the Christ who is worthy of your unqualified allegiance. A vital personal intake of God's Word is essential for health and growth.

The Prayer Spoke

See: John 15:7; Philippians 4:6-7

Prayer is a natural response to God as you hear Him speak to you through His Word. It is sharing your heart with the One who longs for your companionship and who cares about your concerns. Prayer unleashes the power of God in your personal battles and in the lives of those for whom you pray.

The Horizontal Dimension: How You Relate to Others

The Fellowship Spoke

See: Matthew 18:20; Hebrews 10:24-25



Learning from and encouraging others creates a chemistry pleasing to God. God has directed Christians to build each other up through inter-dependence and loving relationships with each other.

The Witnessing Spoke

See: Matthew 4:19; Romans 1:16

The natural overflow of a rich vibrant life in Christ should be sharing with others how they too can have this life. God has given believers the privilege and responsibility of reaching the world with the Good News about Christ.

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LESSON: Principles of Scripture Memory

“Thy Word I have hidden in my heart...” Psalms 119: 9, 11

Is there anything harder to do than memorize? So many young disciples struggle with trying to memorize Scripture. For some it seems easy, and for others it's nearly impossible. We can all agree it's important and necessary to live a strong, victorious Christian life; but still have difficulty doing it.

Getting a Grip

Remember the “hand illustration?” We can hear the Word, read the Word, study the Word, and even meditate on the Word, but until we go that last step and commit a biblical truth to memory, we don't really have a strong grip on that truth. Memorizing a verse of Scripture is like the “thumb” of your hand; that's where the grip is, in the thumb. So, it is with memorizing a verse in the Bible. You don't really have the verse in your heart until you can quote it back when you need to.

The Israelites did it

Those great men and women of God that we read about in the Bible, all had committed their Holy Scriptures to memory. This is especially true in Israel after the occupation of the Promised Land. As they settled in and the synagogue replaced the temple, it became the center of learning. There were no printed bibles, only the Torah that was kept by the rabbi in the synagogue. Children were taught to memorize the Law of Moses.

Moses says to the people: *“Hear, O Israel: The Lord our God is one. Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength. These commandments that I give you today are to be upon your hearts. Impress them on your children. Talk about them when you sit at home and when you walk along the road, when you lie down and when you get up. Tie them as symbols upon your hands and bind them on your foreheads. Write them on the doorframes of your houses and on your gates.”* **Deut. 6: 4-9**

This is how the children of Israel kept their sacred scriptures alive. The parents memorized the Law of God and taught their children to memorize it all the days of their life.

Jesus memorized the Word

In Luke 4 we read of the temptation of Christ in the wilderness. Each time Satan comes to our Lord, we see Jesus quote the Old Testament Scriptures to the Enemy. Where did Jesus learn those verses? He learned them as a boy in synagogue. He obeyed the teaching of **Psalms 119: 9,11** *“How can a young man keep his way pure? By living according to your word...I have hidden your word in my heart that I might not sin against you.”* Throughout His ministry we see repeatedly how often Jesus knew the scriptures by heart. He had spent the time to memorize God's Holy Word.

Christ's Disciples memorized the Word

One need only look at the ministry of the Apostles to see how they were men, “mighty in scripture.” Peter can stand up at Pentecost in the Temple yard and quote whole sections of the Psalms and the Prophets. Where did he learn that? He didn't have a scroll in front of him; all he had was his memory and the enabling power of the Holy Spirit. But it was all he needed!

A Lost Art

In generations past, Christian parents taught their children to memorize God's Word. However, it has become a lost tradition in the last century of the church. Yet it needs to be restored in the daily life of

every disciple. The true disciple of Jesus needs to put on the whole armor of God that he may stand against the enemy. Memorizing the Word is a vital part of that armor. It takes time, work and commitment, but the rewards are great.

Some Practical Helps

The Navigators organization in Colorado Springs Colorado, have done more to bring scripture memory back into the life of the church than any other force in the world today. They can be contacted over the Internet @ www.navigators.com, they offer multiple aids to memorizing the Word. Using their model, let's make some suggestions on how to get started and then keep going with a systematic memory program.

Select a system and stick to it

It is best to memorize topically. Put simply, it means you file verses in your mind, by naming the file. That's how your computer/brain likes to do it. For example: Years ago, Dawson Trotman trained his men by devising the "wheel" as a basic set of topics to get his men started memorizing. (See **The Wheel** in section two of this manual)

Christ the Center = the hub of the wheel. This topic which shows that Christ must be at the center of a disciple's life. This topic has two verses that say what the topic describes. Learning the twelve verses that go with the six topics in the wheel is a great way to start.

Create a Topic

You can create any system if you file the verses under a chosen topic. You may want to memorize verses on "Parenting" then find verses to say what the topic describes. Choosing a topic is the first step to success.

References "before and after"

It is a proven memory aid that repetition aids the memory. The more times you say it, the easier it is for the brain to file it away. If your topic is "parenting" and your verse is Ephesians 6:4, then you want to get into the habit of saying topic and reference "before and after" you quote the verse to yourself or your accountability partner. This habit of saying both the topic and the reference before you quote the verse, and also after you quote it, will really make it "stick" in your memory. The verse gets "filed in your data bank" under the topic "parenting" and the reference gets associated with the verse in your memory.

Review! Review! Review!

Repetition is the mother of learning. It certainly is the key to a good memory! You may be able to quote a verse you quickly memorized ten minutes ago, but if you don't repeatedly recite it over each day or at least several times a week, you will lose it from your memory. The only way to retain what we memorize is to review the verses, citing reference and topic many times over.

However, there will come a day when that verse is yours and you will not forget it. It becomes a part of you. This only happens with many repetitions over time.

The journey of a thousand miles

Someone said that the journey of a thousand miles begins with the first step. This is true of scripture memory. You must get started. Start with one topic, and one verse. Master it, before you add to it. Don't bite off more than you can chew! Or as they say in Africa, "you can eat an elephant one bite at a time." The secret is to do each verse and topic well, before moving on to others and getting discouraged. Memorize at a pace that fits you. Take pride in what you've memorized well, then go on to others. Being

consistent is what pays off. Before you know it, your one verse and topic have become many. That's why we suggest you start with the Nav Wheel. It's simple, easy and helpful.

Write it out on a card

You should write or type your verses out on a small card you can carry with you everywhere you go. It should look like this:

Parenting Eph. 6: 4

Fathers do not exasperate your children; instead, bring them up in the training and instruction of the Lord.

Parenting Eph. 6:4

By having your verses on cards, you can “redeem the time” by using your spare time as you go about your day. This keeps God’s Word in the center of your day, and it doesn’t become a burden. You just hide the word in your heart as you go about your routine of the day.

Find an accountability partner.

Finally, try to find a person to hold you accountable as you memorize. Perhaps you and another person can memorize together. A two-strand cord is hard to break. You will encourage each other, and bond together as you study and memorize. Whenever possible, recite your verses to each other. This helps you be accountable to yourself, to God, and your partner.

Notes

Biblical Theology Module

LESSON: The Canon of Scripture

The following notes have been edited from the English Standard Version Study Bible by Crossway publishers. These notes and many more are helpful to any Bible student.

The Canon of the Old Testament

The word “canon” (Greek. for “a rule”) is applied to the Bible in two ways: first, in regard to the Bible as the church’s *standard* of faith and practice, and second, in regard to its contents as the *correct collection and list* of inspired books. The word was first applied to the identity of the biblical books in the latter part of the fourth century AD; reflecting the fact that there had recently been a need to settle some Christians doubts on the matter. Before this, Christians had referred to the “Old Testament” and “New Testament” as the “Holy Scriptures” and had assumed, rather than made explicit, that they were the *correct* collections and lists.

The Causes of Uncertainty about the OT Canon

The Christian OT corresponded to the Hebrew Bible, which Jesus and the first Christians inherited from the Jews. In the Gentile mission of the church, however, it was necessary to use the Septuagint (a translation of the OT that had been made in pre-Christian times for Greek-speaking Alexandrian Jews. Because knowledge of Hebrew was uncommon in the church (esp. outside Syria and Palestine), the first Latin translation of the OT came from the Septuagint and not from the original Hebrew. Where there was no knowledge of Hebrew and little acquaintance with Jewish tradition, it became harder to distinguish between the biblical books and other popular religious reading matter circulating in the Greek or Latin language. These factors led to the uncertainty about the composition of Scripture, which the coiners of the term “canon” sought to settle.

Did the Hebrew Bible Contain the Same Books as Today’s Bible?

The above analysis assumes that the Hebrew Bible, which the church inherited in the first century, comprised the same books as it does today. The five books of the Law are obviously not an arbitrary grouping. They follow a chronological sequence, concentrate on the Law of Moses, and trace history from the creation of the world to Moses’ death. Moreover, the Prophets and the Writings, if arranged in the traditional order recorded in the Talmud, are not arbitrary groupings either. The Prophets begin with four narrative books—Joshua, Judges, Samuel, and Kings—tracing history through a second period, from the entry into the Promised Land to the Babylonian exile. They end with four oracular books—Jeremiah, Ezekiel, Isaiah, and the Book of the Twelve (Minor Prophets)—arranged in descending order of size. The Hagiographa (Writings) begin with six lyrical or wisdom books—Psalms, Job, Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, Song of Solomon, and Lamentations—arranged in descending order of size, and end with four narrative books—Daniel, Esther, Ezra–Nehemiah, and Chronicles—covering a third period of history, the period of the exile and the return. (The remaining book of the Writings, Ruth, is prefixed to Psalms, since it ends with the genealogy of the psalmist David.) The four narrative books in the Hagiographa are this time put second, so that Chronicles can sum up the whole biblical story, from Adam to the return from exile, and for this reason also Ezra–Nehemiah is put before Chronicles, not after it. A small anomaly is that the Song

of Solomon is in fact slightly shorter than Lamentations, not longer, but it is put first to keep the three books related to Solomon together.

Jesus and the NT authors quote the words of the OT approximately 300 times; uncertainty about the exact number arises because of a few instances where it is not clear whether it is an OT quotation or only an echoing expression using similar words. They regularly quote it as having divine authority, with phrases such as “it is written,” “Scripture says,” and “God says,” but no other writings are quoted in this way. Occasionally the NT writers will quote some other authors, even pagan Greek authors, but they never quote these other sources as being the words of God (see [Acts 17:28](#); [Titus 1:12–13](#); [Jude 8–10, 14–16](#)), as they do the canonical OT books. Sound historical study shows, therefore, that the Hebrew OT contains the true canon of the OT, shared by Jesus and the apostles with first-century Judaism. No books are left out that should be included, and none are included that should be left out.

The Canon of the New Testament

The foundations for a NT canon lie in the gracious purpose of a self-revealing God whose word carries his own divine authority. Just as new outpourings of divine word-revelation accompanied and followed each major act of redemption in the ancient history of God’s people (the covenant with Adam and Eve, the covenant with Abraham, the redemption from Egypt, the establishment of the monarchy, the exile, and the restoration), so when the promised Messiah came, a new and generous outpouring of divine revelation necessarily ensued (see [2 Tim. 1:8–11](#); [Titus 1:1–3](#)).

The OT Authorization

The prospect of a NT Scripture to stand alongside the OT was anticipated, even authorized, in the OT itself, embedded in the promise of God’s ultimate act of redemption through the Messiah, in faithfulness to his covenant ([Jer. 31:31–33](#); and [Heb. 8:7–13](#); [10:16–18](#)). Jesus taught his disciples after his resurrection that “the Law of Moses and the Prophets and the Psalms” predicted not only the Messiah’s suffering and resurrection but also that “repentance and forgiveness of sins should be proclaimed in his name to all nations, beginning from Jerusalem” ([Luke 24:44–48](#)). Prophetic passages such as [Isaiah 2:2–3](#); [49:6](#); and [Psalm 2:8](#) spoke of a time when the light of God’s grace in redemption would be proclaimed to all nations. It naturally follows that this proclamation would eventuate in a new collection of written Scriptures complementing the books of the old covenant—both from the pattern of God’s redemptive work in the past (mentioned above) and from the actual writing ministry of some of Jesus’ apostles (and their associates) in the accomplishment of their commission.

The Commission of Jesus

God, who spoke in many and various ways in times past, chose to speak in these last days to mankind through his Son (see [Heb. 1:1–2, 4](#)). Bringing this saving message to Israel and the nations was a crucial part of the mission of Jesus Christ ([Isa. 49:6](#); [Acts 26:23](#)), the Word made flesh ([John 1:14](#)). He put this mission into effect through chosen apostles, whom he commissioned to be his authoritative representatives ([Matt. 10:40](#), “whoever receives you receives me”). Their assignment was to “bring to ... remembrance,” through the work of the Spirit, his words and works ([John 14:26](#); [16:13–14](#)) and to bear witness to Jesus “in Jerusalem and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth” ([Acts 1:8](#); cf. [Matt. 28:19–20](#); [Luke 24:48](#); [John 17:14, 20](#)). In time, the apostolic preaching came to written form in the

books of the NT, which now function as “the commandment of the Lord and Savior through your apostles” (2 Pet. 3:2).

Paul and the other apostles wrote just as they preached: conscious of Jesus’ mandate. From the beginning, the full authority of the apostles (and prophets) to deliver God’s word was recognized, at least by many (Acts 10:22; Eph. 2:20; 1 Thess. 2:13; Jude 17–18). This recognition is accordingly reflected in the earliest non-apostolic writers. For example, Clement of Rome attested that “The apostles received the gospel for us from the Lord Jesus Christ; Jesus the Christ was sent forth from God. So then Christ is from God, and the apostles are from Christ. Both, therefore, came of the will of God in good order” (*1 Clement* 42.1–2 written c. a.d. 95). In its deliberations about the particular books that make up the canon of Scripture, the church did not sovereignly “determine” or “choose” the books it most preferred—whether for catechetical, polemical, liturgical, or edificatory purposes. Rather, the church saw itself as empowered only to receive and recognize what God had provided in books handed down from the apostles and their immediate companions (e.g., Irenaeus, *Against Heresies* 3.preface; 3.1.1–2). This is why discussions of the so-called “criteria” of canonicity can be misleading. Qualities such as “apostolicity,” “antiquity,” “orthodoxy,” “liturgical use,” and “church consensus” are not criteria by which the church autonomously judged which documents it would receive. The first three are qualities the church recognizes in the voice of its Savior, to which voice the church willingly submits itself (“My sheep hear my voice ... and they follow me,” John 10:27).

The Gospels according to Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John (the earliest Gospels known) gained universal acceptance while arousing very little controversy within the church. If the latest of these, the Gospel of John, was published near the end of the first century (as most scholars think), it is remarkable that its words are echoed around AD 110 in the writings of Ignatius of Antioch, who also knew Matthew, and perhaps Luke. At about the same time, Papias of Hierapolis in Asia Minor received traditions about the origins of Matthew’s and Mark’s Gospels, and quite probably Luke’s and John’s. In the middle of the second century,

Justin Martyr in Rome reported that the Gospels (apparently the four)—which he calls “memoirs of the apostles”—were being read and expounded in Christian services of worship.

In 2 Peter 3:16, a collection of at least some of Paul’s letters was already known and regarded as Scripture and therefore enjoyed canonical endorsement. Furthermore, a collection (of unknown extent) of Paul’s letters was known to Clement of Rome and to the recipients of his letter in Corinth before the end of the first century, then also to Ignatius of Antioch and Polycarp of Smyrna and their readers in the early second century. The Pastoral Letters (1–2 Timothy and Titus), rejected as being Paul’s by many modern critics, are attested at least from the time of Polycarp.

By the end of the second century a “core” collection of NT books—21 of the 27—was generally recognized: four Gospels, Acts, 13 epistles of Paul, 1 Peter, 1 John, and Revelation. By this time Hebrews (accepted in the East and by Irenaeus and Tertullian in the West but questioned in Rome due to doubts about authorship), James, 2 Peter, 2 and 3 John, and Jude were only minimally attested in the writings of church leaders. This infrequent citation led to the expression of doubts by later fathers (e.g., Eusebius, *Ecclesiastical History* 2.23.25).

Yet, by some time in the third century, codices (precursors of the modern book form, as opposed to scrolls) containing all seven of the “general epistles” were being produced, and Eusebius reports that all seven were “known to most.”

By the 240s AD. Origen (residing in Caesarea in Palestine) acknowledged all 27 of the NT books but reported that James, 2 Peter, 2 and 3 John, and Jude were disputed. The situation is virtually the same for Eusebius, writing about 60 years later, who also reports the doubts some had about Hebrews and Revelation. Still, his two categories of “undisputed” and “disputed but known to most” contain only the 27 and no more. He named five other books (*The Acts of Paul*, *The Shepherd of Hermas*, *The Apocalypse of Peter*, *The Letter of Barnabas*, and *The Didache*) which were known to many churches but which, he believed, had to be judged as spurious.

In the year AD. 367 the Alexandrian bishop Athanasius, in his annual Easter letter, gave a list of the NT books which comprised, with no reservations, all 27, while naming several others as useful for catechizing but not as scriptural. Several other fourth century lists essentially concurred, though with various individual deviations outside of the most basic core (four Gospels, Acts, 13 epistles of Paul, 1 Peter, 1 John). Three African synods—at Hippo Regius in AD. 393 and at Carthage in 397 and 419—and the influential African bishop Augustine affirmed the 27-book Canon. It was enshrined in Jerome’s Latin translation, the Vulgate, which became the normative Bible for the Western church. In Eastern churches, recognition of Revelation lagged for quite some time. The churches of Syria did not accept Revelation, 2 Peter, 2 and 3 John, or Jude until the fifth (Western Syria) or sixth (Eastern Syria) centuries.

The apostolic word gave birth to the church ([Rom. 1:15–17](#); [10:14–15](#); [James 1:18](#); [1 Pet. 1:23–25](#)), and the written form of this word remains as the permanent, documentary expression of God’s new covenant. It may be said that only the 27 books of the NT manifest themselves as belonging to that original, foundational, apostolic witness. They have demonstrated themselves to be the Word of God to the universal church throughout the generations. Here are the pastures to which Christ’s sheep from many folds continually come to hear their Shepherd’s voice and to follow him.

The Apocrypha

Larger editions of the English Bible—from the Great Bible of Tyndale and Coverdale (1539) onward—have often included a separate section between the OT and the NT titled “The Apocrypha,” consisting of additional books and substantial parts of books. The Latin Vulgate Bible translated by Jerome (begun AD 382, completed 405) had placed them in the OT itself—some as separate items and some as attached to or included in the biblical books of Esther, Jeremiah, and Daniel. In Roman Catholic translations of the Bible, such as the Douay Version and the Jerusalem Bible, these items are still placed in their pre-Reformation positions. In Protestant translations, however, the Apocrypha is either omitted altogether or grouped in a separate section. Jerome called them by the name “apocrypha” (Gk. *apokrypha*, “those having been hidden away”). In accordance with his teaching and with the understanding of the OT canon held by Jesus, the NT authors, and the first-century Jews; thus the sixteenth-century Protestant translators did not consider those writings part of the OT but gathered them together in a separate section, to which they gave Jerome’s name, “The Apocrypha.”

The way in which Christian writers used the Apocrypha confirms the above analysis. The NT seems to reflect knowledge of one or two of the apocryphal texts, but it never ascribes authority to them as it does to many of the canonical OT books. While the NT quotes various parts of the OT about 300 times, it never actually quotes anything from the Apocrypha ([Jude 14–16](#) does not contain a quote from the Apocrypha but from another Jewish writing, *1 Enoch*) In the second century, Justin Martyr and Theophilus of Antioch, who frequently referred to the OT, never referred to any of the Apocrypha. By the end of the second century *Wisdom*, *Tobit*, and *Sirach* were sometimes being treated as Scripture, but none

of the other apocryphal books were. Their eventual acceptance was a slow development. Much the same is true with Christian lists of the OT books: the oldest of them include the fewest of the Apocrypha; and the oldest of all, that of Melito (c. AD 170), includes none.

By the late fourth century, Jerome found it necessary to assert the distinction between the Apocrypha and the inspired OT books with great emphasis, and a minority of writers continued to make the same distinction throughout the Middle Ages, until the Protestant Reformers arose and made the distinction an important part of their doctrine of Scripture. At the Council of Trent (1545–1563), however, the Church of Rome attempted to obliterate the distinction and to put the Apocrypha (with the exception of *1* and *2 Esdras* and *The Prayer of Manasseh*) on the same level as the inspired OT books. This was a consequence of (1) Rome's exalted doctrine of oral tradition, (2) its view that the church creates Scripture, and (3) its acceptance of certain controversial ideas (esp. the doctrines of purgatory, indulgences, and works-righteousness as contributing to justification) that were derived from passages in the Apocrypha. These teachings gave support to the Roman Catholic responses to Martin Luther and other leaders of the Protestant Reformation, which had begun in 1517.

Notes

LESSON: The Authority of Scripture

The Bible and Revelation

Knowing God is the most important thing in life. God created people fundamentally for relationship with himself. This relationship depends on knowing who he is as he has revealed himself. God is personal, which means he has a mind, will, emotions, relational ability, and self-consciousness. Because he is personal, and not merely an impersonal object, God must personally reveal himself to us. He has done this in general revelation (the world) and special revelation (the Word of God).

General Revelation

General revelation is revelation of God given to all people at all times. This revelation is found both in the external creation ([Ps. 19:1](#), “*the heavens declare the glory of God*” and in internal human experience ([Rom. 1:19–20](#), “*what can be known about God is plain to them, because God has shown it to them. For his invisible attributes, namely, his eternal power and divine nature, have been clearly perceived, ever since the creation of the world, in the things that have been made. So they are without excuse*”). General Revelation shows us the attributes of God—such as his existence, power, creativity, and wisdom; in addition, the testimony of human conscience also provides some evidence of God’s moral standards to all human beings ([Rom. 2:14–15](#)). This means that from general revelation all people have *some* knowledge that God exists, *some* knowledge of his character, and *some* knowledge of his moral standards. This results in an awareness of guilt before God as people instinctively know that they have not lived up to his moral requirements. Thus in the many false religions that have been invented people attempt to assuage their sense of guilt.

But General Revelation does not provide knowledge of the only true solution to man’s guilt before God: the forgiveness of sins that comes through Jesus Christ. This means that general revelation does not provide personal knowledge of God as a loving Father who redeems his people and establishes covenants with them. For this, one needs *Special Revelation*, which God has provided in his historical supernatural activities, in the Bible, and definitively in Jesus Christ.

Special Revelation

The Bible is God’s written revelation of who he is and what he has done in redemptive history. Humans need this divine, transcendent perspective in order to break out of their subjective, culturally bound, fallen limitations. Through God’s written Word, his people may overcome error, grow in sanctification, minister effectively to others, and live abundant lives as God intended.

The Inspiration of Scripture

The Bible is “God-breathed” (cf. [2 Tim. 3:16](#)) and gets its true, authoritative, powerful, holy character from God himself, who inspired human authors to write exactly what he wanted them to write. Instead of merely dictating words to them, God worked through their unique personalities and circumstances. Scripture is therefore both fully human and fully divine. It is both the testimony of men to God’s revelation, and divine revelation itself. “No prophecy of Scripture comes from someone’s own interpretation. For no prophecy was ever produced by the will of man, but men spoke from God as they were carried along by the Holy Spirit” ([2 Pet. 1:20–21](#)). Because the Bible is God’s Word in human words, it can be trusted as the definitive revelation from the mouth of God himself.

The Inerrancy of Scripture

The doctrine of inerrancy means that the Bible is entirely truthful and reliable in all that it affirms in its original manuscripts. Another way of saying this is that the Bible does not affirm anything that is contrary

to fact. Because God is the ultimate author of the Bible, and because God is always perfectly truthful, it follows that his Word is completely truthful as well: He is the “God who never lies” ([Titus 1:2](#)). It would be contrary to his character to affirm anything false. God is all-knowing, always truthful and good, and all-powerful, so he always knows and tells the truth and is able to communicate and preserve his Word. “O Lord God, you are God, and your words are true, and you have promised this good thing to your servant” ([2 Sam. 7:28](#)). “Every word of God proves true” ([Prov. 30:5](#); cf. [Ps. 12:6](#); [119:42](#); [John 17:17](#)).

Inerrancy does not require twenty-first-century precision or scientifically technical language. The following quotation from the [Chicago Statement on Biblical Inerrancy](#) summarizes what inerrancy does *not* mean:

“We affirm the propriety of using inerrancy as a theological term with reference to the complete truthfulness of Scripture. We deny that it is proper to evaluate Scripture according to standards of truth and error that are alien to its usage or purpose. We further deny that inerrancy is negated by Biblical phenomena such as a lack of modern technical precision, irregularities of grammar or spelling, observational descriptions of nature, the reporting of falsehoods, the use of hyperbole and round numbers, the topical arrangement of material, variant selections of material in parallel accounts, or the use of free citations” (*Chicago Statement on Biblical Inerrancy*, Art. XIII).

The inerrancy of Scripture gives the believer great confidence in the Bible as his sure foundation for understanding all God wants him to know and all that he needs for godliness and eternal life.

The Clarity of Scripture

The Bible itself acknowledges that some passages of Scripture are “hard to understand” ([2 Pet. 3:16](#), referring to some aspects of Paul’s letters). In general, however, with the illumination of the Spirit ([2 Tim. 2:7](#)), the teaching of the Bible is clear to all who seek understanding with the goal of knowing and obeying God. His Word is said to “*make wise the simple*” ([Ps. 19:7](#); [119:30](#)). Jesus based his teaching squarely on the OT Scriptures: he assumed its teaching was clear and would often ask, “*Have you not read ...?*” (cf. [Matt. 12:3, 5](#); [19:14](#); [21:42](#); [22:31](#)).

Because of the basic clarity of the Bible, when Christians disagree over the meaning of a passage they can assume that the problem is not with the Bible but rather with themselves as interpreters. God has given us gifted leaders to further help his people’s understanding ([1 Cor. 12:28](#); [Eph. 4:11](#) [Eph. 4:11](#)). Believers have the responsibility to read, interpret, and understand the Bible because it is basically clear. This was an assumption of the Protestant Reformers who sought to translate the Bible into the language of the common people. They believed that all true Christians are priests who are able to know God for themselves through his Word and to help others do the same.

The Sufficiency of Scripture

Scripture provides all the words from God that we need in order to know God truly and personally, and everything we need him to tell us in order for us to live an abundant, godly life ([Ps. 19:7–9](#); [2 Tim. 3:15](#)). God has given his people a sufficient revelation of himself so that they are able to know, trust, and obey him. “*All Scripture is breathed out by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness, that the man of God may be complete, equipped for every good work*” ([2 Tim. 3:16–17](#)). God commands that nothing be added or taken away from the Bible, which indicates that it has always been exactly what he has wanted at each stage in its development throughout the history of salvation. “*You shall not add to the word that I command you, nor take from it, that you may keep the commandments of the Lord your God that I command you*” ([Deut. 4:2](#); cf. [Deut. 12:32](#); [Prov. 30:5–6](#)). The powerful admonition against tampering that stands at the conclusion of the entire Bible ([Rev. 22:18–19](#))

applies primarily, of course, to the book of Revelation, but in a secondary sense what it says may be applied to the Bible as a whole: *“I warn everyone who hears the words of the prophecy of this book: if anyone adds to them, God will add to him the plagues described in this book, and if anyone takes away from the words of the book of this prophecy, God will take away his share in the tree of life and in the holy city, which are described in this book”* ([Rev. 22:18–19](#)).

Believers should find freedom and encouragement in the knowledge that God has provided all of the absolutely authoritative instruction that they need in order to know him and live as he intends. Therefore believers should be satisfied with what Scripture teaches and what it leaves unsaid. *“The secret things belong to the Lord our God, but the things that are revealed belong to us and to our children forever, that we may do all the words of this law”* ([Deut. 29:29](#)).

Jesus’ View of Scripture

The most convincing reason to believe that the Bible is inspired, inerrant, clear, and sufficient is because this is what Jesus believed. His teaching assumed that the OT was the authoritative Word of his Father: *“Do not think that I have come to abolish the Law or the Prophets; I have not come to abolish them but to fulfill them. For truly, I say to you, until heaven and earth pass away, not an iota, not a dot, will pass from the Law until all is accomplished”* ([Matt. 5:17–18](#)). Jesus referred to dozens of OT persons and events and always treated OT history as historically accurate. He quoted from Genesis as his Father’s Word when he said, *“Have you not read that he who created them from the beginning made them male and female, and said, ‘Therefore a man shall leave his father and his mother and hold fast to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh? So they are no longer two but one flesh. What therefore God has joined together, let not man separate”* ([Matt. 19:4–6](#)). Jesus not only assumed that the creation story was true, he also freely quoted words from the OT narrator as words that God himself “said.” It is not uncommon for Jesus’ theological arguments to depend on the truthfulness of the OT account. ([Matt. 5:12; 11:23–24; 12:41–42; 24:37–39; Luke 4:25–27; 11:50–51; John 8:56–58](#)). Jesus’ view of the OT as the Word of God aligns with the way the OT regularly speaks of itself.

Jesus saw his entire life as a fulfillment of Scripture ([Matt. 26:54; Mark 8:31](#)). Throughout his life, Jesus used Scripture to resist temptation ([Matt. 4:1–11](#)) and to settle disputes ([Matt. 19:1–12; 22:39; 27:46; Mark 7:1–13; Luke 10:25–26](#)). At the end of his life, Jesus died quoting Scripture (cf. [Matt. 27:46](#) with [Ps. 22:1](#)). On his resurrection day he explained Scripture at length on the Emmaus road and to his disciples in Jerusalem ([Luke 24:13–17, 44–47](#)).

Conscious of his identity as God the Son, Jesus saw his teaching as no less divinely inspired than the OT. Jesus taught with an authority that distinguished him from other teachers of the law. He interpreted the law on his own authority rather than depending on rabbinic sources ([Matt. 5:21–48](#)). He described his teaching and the law as sharing the same permanence: *“heaven and earth will pass away, but my words will not pass away”* ([Matt. 24:35](#), cf. [Matt. 5:17–18; John 14:10, 24](#)). Jesus viewed both the OT and his own teaching as the Word of God. The NT apostolic witness was a result of Jesus giving his disciples authority and power through the Holy Spirit to impart spiritual truths in writing no less than by word of mouth ([Mark 3:13–19; John 16:12–14; Acts 26:16–18; 1 Cor. 2:12–13](#)).

Jesus took Scripture to be the authoritative Word of God upon which he based his entire life. Those who follow Christ are called to treat Scripture (OT and NT together) in the same way. For Christians, the Bible is a source of great delight and joy. God is to be diligently sought in his Word ([1 Pet. 2:2](#)). The Word of God is a precious treasure that deserves to be studied, meditated upon, and obeyed:

My son, if you receive my words and treasure up my commandments with you, making your ear attentive to wisdom and inclining your heart to understanding; yes, if you call out for insight and raise your voice

for understanding, if you seek it like silver and search for it as for hidden treasures, then you will understand the fear of the Lord and find the knowledge of God ([Prov. 2:1–5](#))

The Living Word

Finally, and most importantly, The Apostle John declares Jesus to be the living embodiment of God's Word. In the prologue to the 4th Gospel John says of Jesus "*in the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God and the Word was God;*" then he climaxes this prologue with "*and the Word became flesh, and pitched his tent among us, ... and we beheld his glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of Grace and truth.*" [John 1:14](#)

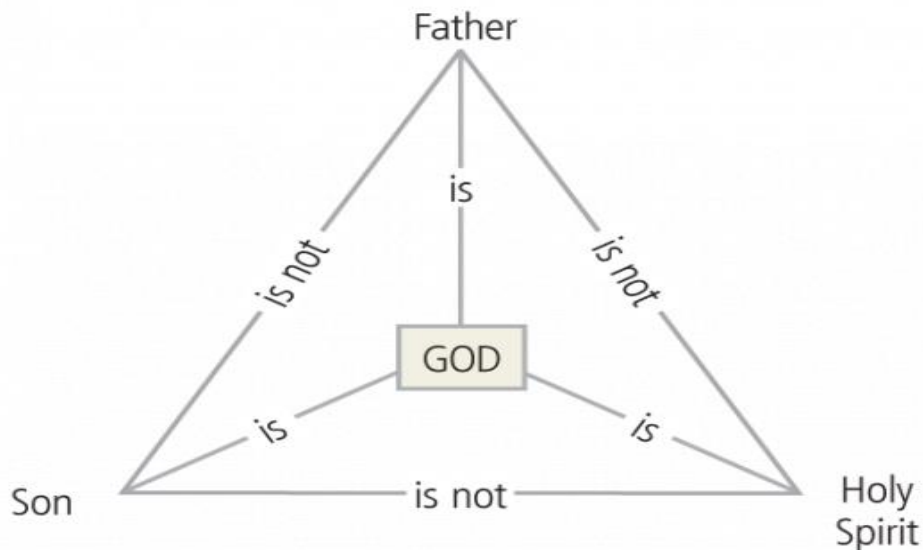
Therefore, we can declare that God the Father's final and greatest word (message) to mankind is embodied in His Son Jesus, the living Word.

LESSON: The Trinity (ESV resources revised)

The biblical teaching on the Trinity embodies four essential affirmations:

1. The Scriptures teach that there is One and only One true and living God. **Deuteronomy 6:4**
2. Both Old and New Covenants affirm that the One true God eternally exists in three persons—God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit.
3. These three persons in the Godhead are completely equal in attributes, each with the same divine nature.
4. While each person in the Godhead is *fully* and *completely* God, the persons are not identical.

The differences among Father, Son, and Holy Spirit are found in the way they relate to one another and the role each plays in accomplishing their unified purpose. The unity of nature and distinction of persons of the Trinity is helpfully illustrated in this diagram.



God Is One God: Monotheism

There is nothing more fundamental to biblical theology than monotheism (the biblical belief that there is one and only one God): “Hear, O Israel: the Lord our God, the Lord is one” ([Deut. 6:4](#)). This verse, known as the *Shema* in Hebrew (from the opening verb of the verse, meaning “hear” or “listen”), is one of the most familiar and foundational verses in the OT. God rejects polytheism (belief in many gods) and demands exclusive devotion: “I am the Lord, and there is no other, besides me there is no God” ([Isa. 45:5](#); cf. [Deut. 4:35, 39](#); [1 Kings 8:60](#); [Isa. 40:18; 46:9](#)). The NT affirms the deity of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, as we shall see, but does not waver from OT monotheism ([John 17:3](#); [1 Cor. 8:4–6](#); [1 Tim. 2:5](#); [James 2:19](#)). Jesus quotes the *Shema* in a debate with the Jewish leaders ([Mark 12:29](#)), and Paul continues to teach that there is one God while recognizing Jesus as the divine-human Mediator between God and man ([1 Tim. 2:5](#)).

Implications of Monotheism

Because there is only one God, idolatry of any kind is evil, foolish, wrong, and harmful. Worship of other “gods” robs the true God of the devotion and glory he alone deserves. Idolatry can take many forms. Idols are not only man-made objects but are *anything* allowed to compete with God for ultimate loyalty. According to Jesus, money can become an idol: “You cannot serve God and money” ([Matt. 6:24](#)). Greed, lust, and impurity can also become indicators of idolatry ([Eph. 5:5](#); [Col. 3:5](#)). Idolatry is foolish, deceptive, and dangerous—and may even involve demonic activity ([1 Cor. 10:19–20](#)). Because there is only one God, he alone should be the ultimate object of the believer’s affections. He alone deserves absolute allegiance and obedience. The Great Commandment that follows the *Shema* is the obvious implication of monotheism: “You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your might” ([Deut. 6:5](#)). The one true God deserves all we are and have. He deserves wholehearted love because nothing compares with him.

God Is Three Persons: The Tri-unity of God

As the nature of God is progressively revealed in Scripture, the one God is seen to exist eternally in three persons. These three persons share the same divine nature yet are different in role and relationship. The basic principle at the heart of God’s triune being is *unity* and *distinction*, both coexisting without either being compromised. Anything that is necessarily true of God is true of Father, Son, and Spirit. They are equal in essence yet distinct in function.

The doctrine of the Trinity is most fully realized in the NT where the divine Father, Son, and Spirit are seen accomplishing redemption. But while the NT gives the clearest picture of the Trinity, there are hints within the OT of what is yet to come. In the beginning of the Bible, the Spirit of God is “hovering over the face of the waters” at creation ([Gen. 1:2](#)) and is elsewhere described as a personal being, possessing the attributes of God and yet distinct from Yahweh ([Isa. 48:16](#); [61:1](#); [63:10](#)). Some interpreters think that the plurality within God is seen in the Hebrew word for God, *Elohim*, which is plural in form (though others disagree that this is significant; the word is used with singular verbs and all agree that it has a singular meaning in the OT). In addition, the use of plural pronouns when God refers to himself hints at a plurality of persons: “Then God said, ‘Let *us* make man in *our* image’” ([Gen. 1:27](#); cf. [Gen. 3:22](#); [11:7](#); [Isa. 6:8](#)).

The plurality of God also seems to be indicated when the Angel of the Lord appears in the OT as one who represents Yahweh, while yet at times this angel seems to be no different in attributes or actions from God himself (cf. [Gen. 16:7, 10–11, 13](#); [18:1–33](#); [Ex. 3:1–4:31](#); [32:20–22](#); [Num. 22:35, 38](#); [Judg. 2:1–2](#); [6:11–18](#)). There are also passages in the OT that call two persons God or Lord: “Your throne, O God, is forever and ever. The scepter of your kingdom is a scepter of uprightness; you have loved righteousness and hated wickedness. Therefore God, your God, has anointed you with the oil of gladness above your companions” ([Ps. 45:6–7](#)). David says, “The Lord says to my Lord: ‘Sit at my right hand, until I make your enemies your footstool’” ([Ps. 110:1](#)). The God who is set above his companions ([Ps. 45:6](#)) and the Lord of [Psalm 110:1](#) are recognized as Christ in the NT ([Heb. 1:8, 13](#)). Christ himself applies [Psalm 110:1](#) to himself ([Matt. 22:41–46](#)). Other passages give divine status to a messianic figure distinct from Yahweh ([Prov. 8:22–31](#); [30:4](#); [Dan. 7:13–14](#)).

The OT glimpses of God’s plurality blossom into the full picture of the Trinity in the NT, where the deity and distinct personalities of Father, Son, and Spirit function together in perfect unity and equality (on the deity of Christ and the Holy Spirit, see [The Person of Christ](#)). Perhaps the clearest picture of this distinction and unity is Jesus’ baptism, where the Son is anointed for his public ministry by the Spirit, descending as a dove, with the Father declaring from heaven, “This is my beloved Son, with whom I am well pleased” ([Matt. 3:13–17](#)). All three persons of the Trinity are present, and each one is doing something different.

The NT authors employ a Trinitarian cadence as they write about the work of God. Prayers of blessing and descriptions of gifts within the body of Christ are Trinitarian in nature: “The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ and the love of God and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you all” ([2 Cor. 13:14](#)); “Now there are varieties of gifts, but the same Spirit; and there are varieties of service, but the same Lord; and there are varieties of activities, but it is the same God who empowers them all in everyone” ([1 Cor. 12:4–6](#)). The persons of the Trinity are also linked in the baptismal formula of [Matthew 28:19–20](#), “baptizing them in [or into] the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.” There are many other passages that reveal the Trinitarian, or at least the plural, nature of God (e.g., [John 14:16, 26; 16:13–15; 20:21–22](#); [Rom. 8:9; 15:16, 30](#); [2 Cor. 1:21–22](#); [Gal. 4:4–6](#); [Eph. 2:18; 4:4–6](#); [1 Pet. 1:1–2](#); [1 John 4:2, 13–14](#); [Jude 20–21](#)).

Differences in roles also appear consistently in biblical testimonies concerning the relationships between the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. The uniform pattern of Scripture is that the Father plans, directs, and sends; the Son is sent by the Father and is subject to the Father’s authority and obedient to the Father’s will; and both Father and Son direct and send the Spirit, who carries out the will of both. Yet this is somehow consistent with equality in being and in attributes. The Father created through the Son ([John 1:3](#); [1 Cor. 8:6](#); [Col. 1:16](#); [Heb. 1:2](#)), and the Father planned redemption and sent the Son into the world ([John 3:16](#); [Rom. 8:29](#); [Gal. 4:4](#); [Eph. 1:3–5](#)). The Son obeyed the Father and accomplished redemption for us ([John 4:34; 5:19; 6:38](#); [Heb. 10:5–7](#); cf. [Matt. 26:64](#); [Acts 2:33](#); [1 Cor. 15:28](#); [Heb. 1:3](#)). The Father did not come to die for our sins, nor did the Holy Spirit, but that was the role of the Son. The Father and Son both send the Holy Spirit in a new way after Pentecost ([John 14:26; 15:26; 16:7](#)). These relationships existed eternally ([Rom. 8:29](#); [Eph. 1:4](#); [Rev. 13:8](#)), and they provide the basis for simultaneous equality and differences in various human relationships. Within God there is both unity and diversity: unity without uniformity, and diversity without division. The early church saw this Trinitarian balance clearly. For example, the **Athanasian Creed** (c. A.D. 500) says:

“We worship one God in the Trinity and the Trinity in unity; we distinguish among the persons, but we do not divide the substance. ... The entire three persons are co-eternal and co-equal with one another, so that ... we worship complete unity in Trinity and Trinity in Unity.”

This unity and diversity is at the heart of the great mystery of the Trinity. Unity without uniformity is baffling to finite minds, but the world shows different types of reflections of this principle of oneness and distinction at every turn. What is the source of the transcendent beauty in a symphony, the human body, marriage, ecosystems, the church, the human race, a delicious meal, or a perfectly executed fast break in basketball? Is it not, in large part, due to the distinct parts coming together to form a unified whole, leading to a unified result? Unity and distinction—the principle at the heart of the Trinity—can be seen in much of what makes life so rich and beautiful. Woven into the fabric of the world are multiple reflections of the One who made it with unity and distinction as the parallel qualities of its existence.

Practical Implications of the Trinity

1. The doctrine of the Trinity makes definitive revelation of God possible as he is known in Christ: “No one has ever seen God; the only God, who is at the Father’s side, he has made him known” ([John 1:18](#)). No man can see God and live ([Ex. 33:20](#); [1 Tim. 6:16](#)), but God the Son provided an actual manifestation of God in the flesh.
2. The Trinity makes the atonement possible. Redemption of sinful man is accomplished through the distinct and unified activity of each person of the Godhead: “how much more will the blood of *Christ*, who through the eternal *Spirit* offered himself without blemish to *God*, purify our conscience from dead works to serve the living God” ([Heb. 9:14](#)).

3. Because God is triune, he has eternally been personal and relational in his own being, in full independence from his creation. God has never had any unmet needs, “nor is he served by human hands, as though he needed anything, since he himself gives to all mankind life and breath and everything” ([Acts 17:25](#)). Personhood becomes real only within realized relationships, and the reality of relationship can only exist where one has something or someone that is not oneself to relate to; if, then, God had not been plural in himself he could not have been a personal, relational God till he had begun creating, and thus would have been dependent on creation for his own personhood, which is a notion as nonsensical as it is unscriptural. Between the persons of the Trinity, there has always existed total relational harmony and expression; God is, from this standpoint, a perfect society in himself. Apart from the plurality in the Trinity, either God’s eternal independence of the created order or his eternally relational personal existence would have to be denied.

4. The doctrine of the Trinity is well beyond human ability to ever fully comprehend. However, it is central to understanding the nature of God and the central events in the history of salvation, in which God is seen acting as, in effect, a tripersonal team. Biblical Christianity stands or falls with the doctrine of the Trinity.

LESSON: THE PLAN OF SALVATION IN SCRIPTURE

The One Big Story of the Bible

(The plan of Salvation from the ESV Study Bible)

How does the Bible as a whole fit together? The events recorded in the Bible took place over a span of thousands of years and in several different cultural settings. What is their unifying thread?

One unifying thread in the Bible is its divine authorship. *Every book of the Bible is God's word.* The events recorded in the Bible are there because God wanted them recorded, and he had them recorded with his people and their instruction in mind: “For whatever was written in former days was written for our instruction, that through endurance and through the encouragement of the Scriptures we might have hope” ([Rom. 15:4](#)).

God's Plan for History

The Bible also makes it clear that *God has a unified plan for all of history.* His ultimate purpose, “a plan for the fullness of time,” is “to unite all things in him [Christ], things in heaven and things on earth” ([Eph. 1:10](#)), “to the praise of his glory” ([Eph. 1:12](#)). God had this plan even from the beginning: “remember the former things of old; for I am God, and there is no other; I am God, and there is none like me, declaring the end from the beginning and from ancient times things not yet done, saying, ‘My counsel shall stand, and I will accomplish all my purpose’” ([Isa. 46:9–10](#)). “When the fullness of time had come,” when the moment was appropriate in God's plan, “God sent forth his Son, born of woman, born under the law, to redeem those who were under the law” ([Gal. 4:4–5](#)).

The work of Christ on earth, and especially his crucifixion and resurrection, is the climax of history; it is the great turning point at which God actually accomplished the salvation toward which history had been moving throughout the OT. The present era looks back on Christ's completed work but also looks forward to the consummation of his work when Christ will come again and when there will appear “new heavens and a new earth in which righteousness dwells” ([2 Pet. 3:13](#); see [Rev. 21:1–22:5](#)).

The unity of God's plan makes it appropriate for him to include *promises and predictions* at earlier points in time, and then for the *fulfillments* of these to come at later points. Sometimes the promises take *explicit* form, as when God promises the coming of the Messiah, the great Savior whom Israel expected ([Isa. 9:6–7](#)). Sometimes the promises take *symbolic* form, as when God commanded animal sacrifices to be offered as a symbol for the forgiveness of sins ([Leviticus 4](#)). In themselves, the animal sacrifices were not able to remove sins permanently and to atone for them permanently ([Heb. 10:1–18](#)). They pointed forward to Christ, who is the final and complete sacrifice for sins.

Christ in the Old Testament

Since God's plan focuses on Christ and his glory ([Eph. 1:10](#)), it is natural that the promises of God and the symbols in the OT all point forward to him. “For all the promises of God find their Yes in him [Christ]” ([2 Cor. 1:20](#)).

When Christ appeared to the disciples after his resurrection, his teaching focused on showing them how the OT pointed to him: “And he said to them, ‘*O foolish ones, and slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have spoken! Was it not necessary that the Christ should suffer these things and enter into his glory?*’ And beginning with Moses and all the Prophets, he interpreted to them in all the Scriptures the things concerning himself” ([Luke 24:25–27](#)). One could also look at [Luke 24:44–48](#): “Then he said to

them, ‘These are my words I spoke to you while I was still with you, that everything written about me in the Law of Moses and the Prophets and the Psalms must be fulfilled.’ Then he opened their minds to understand the Scriptures, and said to them, ‘Thus it is written, that the Christ should suffer and on the third day rise from the dead, and that repentance and forgiveness of sins should be proclaimed in his name to all nations, beginning from Jerusalem. You are witnesses of these things.’

When the Bible says that “*he opened their minds to understand the Scriptures*” ([Luke 24:45](#)), it cannot mean just a few scattered predictions about the Messiah. It means the OT as a whole, encompassing all three of the major divisions of the OT that the Jews traditionally recognized. “The Law of Moses” includes Genesis to Deuteronomy. “The Prophets” include both the “former prophets” (the historical books Joshua, Judges, 1–2 Samuel, and 1–2 Kings) and the “latter prophets” (Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, and the 12 Minor Prophets, Hosea–Malachi). “The Psalms” is representative of the third grouping by the Jews, called the “Writings.” (The book of Daniel was placed in this group.) At the heart of understanding all these OT books is the truth that they point forward to the suffering of Christ, his resurrection, and the subsequent spread of the gospel to “all nations” ([Luke 24:47](#)). The OT as a whole, through its promises, its symbols, and its pictures of salvation, looks forward to the actual accomplishment of salvation that took place once for all in the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ.

The Promises of God

In what ways does the OT look forward to Christ? First, it directly points forward through *promises of salvation and promises concerning God’s commitment to his people*. God gave some specific promises in the OT relating to the coming of Christ as the Messiah, the Savior in the line of David. Through the prophet Micah, God promises that the Messiah is to be born in Bethlehem, the city of David ([Mic. 5:2](#)), a prophecy strikingly fulfilled in the NT ([Matt. 2:1–12](#)). But God often gives more general promises concerning a future great day of salvation, without spelling out all the details of how he will accomplish it (e.g., [Isa. 25:6–9](#); [60:1–7](#)). Sometimes he promises simply to be their God (see [Gen. 17:7](#)). One common refrain is that, “I will be their God, and they shall be my people” (cf. [Jer. 31:33](#); [Hos. 2:23](#); [Zech. 8:8](#); [13:9](#); [Heb. 8:10](#)). Variations on this broad theme may sometimes focus more on the people and what they will be, while at other times they focus on God and what he will do. God’s promise to “be their God” is really his comprehensive commitment to be with his people, to care for them, to discipline them, to protect them, to supply their needs, and to have a personal relationship with them. If that commitment continues, it promises to result ultimately in the final salvation that God works out in Christ. The principle extends to all the promises in the OT. “For all the promises of God find their Yes in him [Christ]” ([2 Cor. 1:20](#)). Sometimes God gives immediate, temporal blessings. These blessings are only a foretaste of the rich, eternal blessings that come through Christ: “Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us in Christ with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places” ([Eph. 1:3](#)).

Curses and Warnings

God’s relation to people includes not only blessings but also warnings, threatening’s, and cursing’s. These are appropriate because of God’s righteous reaction to sin. They anticipate and point forward to Christ in two distinct ways.

First, *Christ is the Lamb of God, the sin-bearer* ([John 1:29](#); [1 Pet. 2:24](#)). He was innocent of sin, but became sin for us and bore the curse of God on the cross ([2 Cor. 5:21](#); [Gal. 3:13](#)). Every instance of the wrath of God against sin, and his punishments of sin, looks forward to the wrath that was poured out on Christ on the cross.

Second, *Christ at his second coming wars against sin and exterminates it*. The second coming and the consummation are the time when the final judgment against sin is executed. All earlier judgments against

sin anticipate the final judgment. Christ during his earthly life anticipated this final judgment when he cast out demons and when he denounced the sins of the religious leaders.

Covenants

The promises of God in the OT come in the context not only of God's commitment to his people but also of instruction about the people's commitment and obligations to God. Noah, Abraham, and others whom God meets and addresses are called on to respond not only with trust in God's promises but with lives that begin to bear fruit from their fellowship with God. The relation of God to his people is summed up in various *covenants* that God makes with people. A covenant between two human beings is a binding commitment obliging them to deal faithfully with one another (as with Jacob and Laban in [Gen. 31:44](#)). When God makes a covenant with man, God is the sovereign, so he specifies the obligations on both sides. "I will be their God" is the fundamental obligation on God's side, while "they shall be my people" is the fundamental obligation on the human side. But then there are variations in the details.

For example, when God first calls Abram he says, "Go from your country and your kindred and your father's house to the land that I will show you" ([Gen. 12:1](#)). This commandment specifies an obligation on the part of Abram, an obligation on the human side. God also indicates what he will do on his part: "And I will make of you a great nation, and I will bless you and make your name great, so that you will be a blessing" ([Gen. 12:2](#)). God's commitment takes the form of promises, blessings, and curses. The *promises and blessings* point forward to Christ, who is the fulfillment of the promises and the source of final blessings. The *curses* point forward to Christ both in his bearing the curse and in his execution of judgment and curse against sin, especially at the second coming.

The obligations on the human side of the covenants are also related to Christ. Christ is fully man as well as fully God. As a man, he stands with his people on the human side. He fulfilled the obligations of God's covenants through his perfect obedience ([Heb. 5:8](#)). He received the reward of obedience in his resurrection and ascension (see [Phil. 2:9–10](#)). The OT covenants on their human side thus point forward to his achievement.

By dealing with the wrath of God against sin, Christ changed a situation of alienation from God to a situation of peace. He reconciled believers to God ([2 Cor. 5:18–21](#); [Rom. 5:6–11](#)). He brought personal intimacy with God, and the privilege of being children of God ([Rom. 8:14–17](#)). This intimacy is what all the OT covenants anticipated. In Isaiah, God even declares that his servant, the Messiah, will *be* the covenant for the people (see [Isa. 42:6](#); [49:8](#)).

Offspring

It is worthwhile to focus on one specific element in OT covenants, namely, the promise concerning offspring. In making a covenant with Abram, God calls on him to "walk before me, and be blameless" ([Gen. 17:1](#)). That is a human obligation in the covenant. On the divine side, God promises that he will make Abram "the father of a multitude of nations" ([Gen. 17:4](#)), and he renames him Abraham ([Gen. 17:5](#)). The covenant with Abraham in fact extends beyond Abraham to his posterity: "And I will establish my covenant between me and you and *your offspring after you* throughout their generations for an *everlasting* covenant, to be God to you and to your offspring after you. And I will give to you and to your offspring after you the land of your sojourning, all the land of Canaan, for an everlasting possession, and I will be their God" ([Gen. 17:7–8](#)).

The promises made to Abraham are exceedingly important within the OT because they are the foundation for the nation of Israel. The history after Abraham shows that Abraham had a son, Isaac, in fulfillment of God's promise to Sarah. Isaac was the immediate result of God's promise of offspring who will inherit

the land. Isaac in turn had a son, Jacob, and Jacob was the father of 12 sons who in turn multiplied into the 12 tribes of Israel. The nation of Israel became the next stage in the offspring that God promised.

But how does this relate to Christ? Christ is the descendant of David and of Abraham, as the genealogy in Matthew indicates ([Matt. 1:1](#)). Christ is the offspring of Abraham. In fact, he is the offspring in a uniquely emphatic sense: “Now the promises were made to Abraham and to his offspring. It does not say, ‘And to off springs,’ referring to many, but referring to one, ‘And to your offspring,’ *who is Christ*” ([Gal. 3:16](#); see notes on [Gen. 22:15–18](#)).

Abraham was told to “walk before me, and be blameless” ([Gen. 17:1](#)). Abraham was basically a man of faith who trusted God ([Gal. 3:9](#); [Heb. 11:8–12, 17–19](#)). But Abraham also had his failures and sins. Who will walk before God and be blameless in an ultimate way? Not Abraham. Not anyone else on earth either, except Christ himself ([Heb. 4:15](#)). All the other candidates for being “offspring” of Abraham ultimately fail to be blameless. Thus the covenant with Abraham has an unbreakable tie to Christ. Christ is the ultimate offspring to whom the other offspring all point. One may go down the list of offspring: Isaac, Jacob, then the sons of Jacob. Among these sons, Judah is their leader who will have kingship ([Gen. 49:10](#)). David is the descendant of Abraham and Judah; Solomon is the descendant of David; and then comes Rehoboam and the others who descend from David and Solomon ([Matt. 1:1–16](#)).

Christ is not only the descendant of all of them by legal right; he is also superior to all of them as the uniquely blameless offspring. Through Christ believers are united to him and thereby themselves become “Abraham’s offspring” ([Gal. 3:29](#)). Believers, Jews and Gentiles alike, become heirs to the promises of God made to Abraham and his offspring: “There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is no male and female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus. And if you are Christ’s, then you are Abraham’s offspring, heirs according to promise” ([Gal. 3:28–29](#)).

Christ as the Last Adam

Christ is not only the offspring of Abraham, but—reaching back farther in time to an earlier promise of God—the offspring of the woman: “I will put enmity between you [the serpent] and the woman, and between your offspring and her *offspring*; he shall bruise your head, and you shall bruise his heel” ([Gen. 3:15](#)). The conquest over the serpent, and therefore the conquest of evil and the reversal of its effects, is to take place through the offspring of the woman. One can trace this offspring down from Eve through Seth and his godly descendants, through Noah, and down to Abraham, where God’s promise takes the specific form of offspring for Abraham (see [Luke 3:23–38](#), which traces Jesus’ genealogy all the way back to Adam). Thus Christ is not only the offspring of Abraham but the last Adam ([1 Cor. 15:45–49](#)). Like Adam, he represents all who belong to him. And he reverses the effects of Adam’s fall. **4** Shadows, Prefigures, and “Types.” The NT constantly talks about Christ and the salvation that he has brought. That is obvious. What is not so obvious is that the same is true of the OT, though it does this by way of *anticipation*. It gives us “shadows” and “types” of the things that were to come (see [1 Cor. 10:6, 11](#); [Heb. 8:5](#)).

For example, [1 Corinthians 10:6](#) indicates that the events the Israelites experienced in the wilderness were “examples for us.” And [1 Corinthians 10:11](#) says, “Now these things happened to them as an example, but they were written down for our instruction, on whom the end of the ages has come.” In [1 Corinthians 10:6 and 11](#), the Greek word for “example” is *typos*, from which derives the English word “type” (cf. [Rom. 5:14](#)).

A “type,” in the language of theology, is a *special example, symbol, or picture that God designed beforehand, and that he placed in history at an earlier point in time in order to point forward to a later, larger fulfillment*. Animal sacrifices in the OT prefigure the final sacrifice of Christ. So these animal sacrifices were “types” of Christ. The temple, as a dwelling place for God, prefigured Christ, who is the final “dwelling place” of God, and through whom God comes to be with his people ([Matt. 1:23](#); [John 2:21](#)). The OT priests were types of Christ, who is the final high priest ([Heb. 7:11–8:7](#)).

Fulfillment takes place preeminently in Christ ([Eph. 1:10](#); [2 Cor. 1:20](#)). But in the NT those people who are “in Christ,” who place their trust in him and experience fellowship with his person and his blessings, receive the benefits of what he has accomplished, and therefore one can also find anticipations or “types” in the OT that point forward to the NT church, the people in the NT who belong to Christ. For example, the OT temple not only prefigured Christ, whose body is the temple ([John 2:21](#)), but prefigured the church, which is also called a temple ([1 Cor. 3:16–17](#)), because it is indwelt by the Holy Spirit. Some OT symbols also may point forward especially to the consummation of salvation that takes place in the new heaven and the new earth yet to come ([2 Pet. 3:13](#); [Rev. 21:1–22:5](#)). Old Testament Jerusalem prefigured the new Jerusalem that will come “down out of heaven from God” ([Rev. 21:2](#)).

Christ the Mediator

The Bible makes it clear that ever since the fall of Adam into sin, sin and its consequences have been the pervasive problem of the human race. It is a constant theme running through the Bible. Sin is rebellion against God, and it deserves death: “the wages of sin is death” ([Rom. 6:23](#)). God is holy, and no sinful human being, not even a great man like Moses, can stand in the presence of God without dying: “you cannot see my face, for man shall not see me and live” ([Ex. 33:20](#)). Sinful man needs a *mediator* who will approach God on his behalf. Christ, who is both God and man, and who is innocent of sin, is the only one who can serve: “there is one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus, who gave himself as a ransom for all” ([1 Tim. 2:5–6](#)). Though there is only one mediator in an ultimate sense, in a subordinate way various people in the OT serve in some kind of mediatorial capacity. Moses is one of them. He went up to Mount Sinai to meet God while all the people waited at the bottom of the mountain ([Exodus 19](#)). When the people of Israel were terrified at hearing God’s audible voice from the mountain, they asked for Moses to bring them God’s words from then on ([Ex. 20:18–21](#)). God approved of the arrangement involving Moses bringing his words to the people ([Deut. 5:28–33](#)). But if there is only one mediator, as [1 Timothy 2:5](#) says, how could Moses possibly serve in that way? Moses was not the ultimate mediator, but he *prefigured* Christ’s mediation. Because Moses was sinful, he could not possibly have survived the presence of God without forgiveness, that is, without having a sinless mediator on his own behalf. God welcomed Moses into his presence only because, according to the plan of God, Christ was to come and make atonement for Moses. The benefits of Christ’s work were reckoned beforehand for Moses’ benefit. And so it must have been for all the OT saints. How could they have been saved otherwise? God is perfectly holy, and they all needed perfection. Perfection was graciously reckoned to them because of Christ, who was to come.

That means that *there is only one way of salvation*, throughout the OT as well as in the NT. Only Christ can save us. “And there is salvation in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved” ([Acts 4:12](#)). The instances of salvation in the OT all depend on Christ. And in the OT, salvation frequently comes through a *mediator*, a person or institution that stands between God and man. All the small instances of mediation in the OT prefigure Christ. How else could it be, since there is only one mediator and one way of salvation? So, understanding of the unity of the Bible increases when one pays attention to *instances where God brings salvation*, and *instances where a mediator stands between God and man*. These instances include not only cases where God brings *spiritual* salvation in the

form of personal fellowship, spiritual intimacy, and the promise of eternal life with God. They also include instances of *temporal*, external deliverance—“salvation” in a physical sense, which prefigures salvation in a spiritual sense. And indeed, salvation is not *merely* spiritual. Christians look forward to the resurrection of the body and to “new heavens and a new earth in which righteousness dwells” ([2 Pet. 3:13](#)). Personal salvation starts with renewal of the heart, but in the end it will be comprehensive and cosmic in scope. The OT, when it pays attention to physical land and physical prosperity and physical health, anticipates the physicality of the believer’s prosperity in the new heavens and the new earth.

Instances of mediators in the OT include prophets, kings, and priests. *Prophets* bring the word of God from God to the people. *Kings*, when they submit to God, bring God’s rule to bear on the people. *Priests* represent the people in coming before God’s presence. Christ is the final prophet, king, and priest who fulfills all three functions in a final way ([Heb. 1:1–3](#)). One can also look at *wise men*, who bring God’s wisdom to others; *warriors*, who bring God’s deliverance from enemies; and *singers*, who bring praise to God on behalf of the people and speak of the character of God to the people.

Mediation occurs not only through human figures, but through institutions. *Covenants* play a mediatorial role in bringing God’s word to the people. The *temple* brings God’s presence to the people. The *animal sacrifices* bring God’s forgiveness to the people. In reading the Bible one should look for ways in which God brings his word and his presence to people through *means* that he establishes. All these means perform a kind of mediatorial role, and because there is only one mediator, it is clear that they all point to Christ.

Notes

BIBLICAL THEOLOGY CONTIUNED:

LESSON: The Theology of The New Testament

New Testament theology as a discipline is a branch of what scholars call “biblical theology.” Systematic theology and biblical theology overlap considerably since both explore the theology found in the Bible. Biblical theology, however, concentrates on the historical story line of the Bible and explains the various steps in the progressive out-working of God’s plan in the redemptive history. In this article some of the main themes of the NT theology are presented.

Already but not yet

The message of the NT cannot be separated from that of the OT. If you read only the NT without an understanding of the OT story you will fail to really know who Jesus is and what he came to do. The OT promised that God would save his people beginning with the promise that the seed of the woman would triumph over the seed of the serpent (**Gen. 3:15**). God’s saving promises were developed especially in the covenants he made with his people (1) the Abrahamic covenant promised God’s people land, seed, and universal blessing (**Gen.12:1-3**); (2) the Mosaic covenant pledged blessing if Israel obeyed the Law (**Exodus 19-24**); (3) the Davidic covenant promised a king in the Davidic line forever, and that through this king the promises originally made to Abraham would become a reality (**2 Samuel 7**; **Psalm 89**; **132**) and (4) the new covenant promised that God would give his Spirit to the people and write his law on their hearts, so that they would obey his will (**Jer.3:31-34**; **Ezek. 36:26-27**).

As John the Baptist and Jesus arrived on the scene, it was obvious that God’s saving promises had not yet been realized. The Romans ruled over Israel, and a Davidic King did not reign in the land. The universal blessing promised to Abraham was scarcely a reality, for even in Israel it was sin, not righteousness that reigned. John the Baptist therefore summoned the people of Israel to repent and to receive water baptism to announce they were ready to receive the Messiah. They were to prepare for a coming One who would pour out the Spirit and judge the wicked.

Jesus of Nazareth

Jesus represents the fulfillment of what John the Baptist prophesied. Jesus, like John, announced the imminent arrival of the Kingdom of God (**Mark 1:15**), which is another way of saying that the saving promises found in the OT were about to be realized. The Kingdom of God, however, came in the most unexpected way. The Jews had anticipated that when the Kingdom arrived, the enemies of God would be immediately wiped out and a new creation would dawn (**Isa. 65:17**). Jesus taught, however, that the Kingdom was present in the person of Jesus and his ministry (**Luke 17:20-21**) and yet the foes of the Kingdom were not instantly annihilated. The Kingdom did not come with apocalyptic power but in a small as a mustard seed, and yet it would grow into a great tree that would tower over the entire earth. It was as undetectable as leaven mixed into flour, but the leaven would eventually transform the entire batch of dough (**Matt. 13:31-33**). In other words, the Kingdom was already present in Jesus and his ministry, but it was not yet present in its entirety. It was “*already- but not yet*.” It was inaugurated but not consummated.

Jesus fulfilled the role of the servant of the Lord in **Isaiah 53**, taking upon himself the sins of his people and suffering death for the forgiveness of their sins. The day of judgment was still to come in the future, even though there would be an interval between God's beginning to fulfill his promises in Jesus (the Kingdom inaugurated) and the final realization of his promises (the Kingdom consummated). Jesus, who has been reigning since he rose from the dead, will return and sit on his glorious throne and judge between the sheep and the goats (**Matt. 25:31-46**). Hence, believers pray both for the progressive growth and for the final consummation of the Kingdom in the words "*your Kingdom come*" (**Matt.6:10**).

The Synoptic Gospels

Matthew, Mark, and Luke focus on the promise of the Kingdom, and John's gospel expresses a similar truth with the phrase "*eternal life*." Eternal life is the life of the age to come, which will be realized when the new creation dawns. Remarkable in the John's Gospel is the claim that those who believe in the son enjoy the life of the coming age now. Those who have put their faith in Jesus have already passed from death to life (**John 5:24-25**), for he is the resurrection and the life (**John 11:25**) still, John also looks ahead to the day of the final resurrection, when every person will be judged for what he or she has done (**John 5:28-29**). While the focus in John is on the initial fulfillment is in view as well.

The "*already-not yet*" theme dominates the entire NT and functions as a key to grasping the whole story. The resurrection of Jesus indicates that the age to come has arrived, that now is the day of salvation. In the same way the gift of the Holy Spirit represents one of God's end-time promises. The NT writers joyously proclaim that the promise of the outpouring of the Holy Spirit has been fulfilled (e.g., **Acts 2:16-21; Roman. 8: 9-16; Eph.1:13-14**). The last days have come through Jesus Christ (**Heb. 1:1-2**), through whom we have received God's final and definitive word. Since the resurrection has penetrated history and the Spirit has been given, we might think that salvation history has been completed- but there is still the "*not yet*." Jesus has been raised from the dead, but believers await the resurrection of their bodies and must battle against sin until the day of redemption (**Rom. 8:10-13 23; 1Cor. 15:12-28; 1 Pet. 2:11**). Jesus reigns on high at the right hand of God, but all things have not yet been subjected to him (**Heb. 2:5-9**).

LESSON: NT Theology Part 2

Fulfillment through Jesus Christ, the Son of God

The NT highlights the fulfillment of God's saving promises, but it particularly stresses those promises and covenants are realized through his son, Jesus the Christ.

Who is Jesus? According to the NT, he is the new and better Moses, declaring God's word as the sovereign interpreter of the Mosaic Law (**Matt. 5:17-48; Heb. 3: 1-6**). In-deed, the law and the prophets point to him and find their fulfillment in him, Jesus is the new Joshua who gives final rest to his people (**Heb. 3:7-4:13**). He is the true wisdom of God, fulfilling and transcending wisdom themes from the OT (**Col. 2:1-3**.) In the Gospels, Jesus is often recognized as a prophet. Indeed, Jesus is the final prophet predicted by Moses (**Deut.18:15; Acts, 3: 22-23; 7:37**). Jesus' miracles, healings and authority over demons indicate that the promises of the Kingdom are fulfilled in him (**Matt. 12:28**), but his miracles also indicate that he shares God's authority and is himself divine, for only the Creator –Lord can walk on water and calm the sea (**Matt.8:23-27 cf. Ps. 107:29**). Jesus is the Messiah, who brings to realization the promise that one would sit on David's throne forever. Recognizing Jesus as the Messiah is fundamental to all the Gospels and the missionary preaching of Acts and is an accepted truth in the Epistles and

Revelation. To say Jesus is messiah is to declare he is king. When his disciples call him “lord” they are recognizing him as God’s sovereign King.

The stature of Jesus shines out in the NT narrative, for he authoritatively calls on others to be his disciples summoning them to follow him (**Matt. 4: 18-22; Luke 9:57-62**). Indeed, a person’s response to Jesus determines his or her final destiny (**Matt.10.32-33; cf, 1 Cor.16:22**) Jesus is the Son of Man who will receive the Kingdom from the Ancient of Days (**Dan. 7:13-14**) and will reign forever. The Gospels emphasize, however, that his reign has been realized through suffering, for he is also the servant of the Lord who has atoned for the sins of his people (**Isa. 52:13-53:12; Mark 14:24; Rom. 4: 25; 1Pet.2:21-25**).

The One who atones for sin is fully God and divine. He has the authority to forgive sins (**Mark 2:7**). Various NT occurrences of the word “name” indicate Jesus’ divine status: people prophesy in his name (**Matt. 7:22**). And are to hope in his name (**Matt. 12:21**). And salvation comes in his name alone (**Acts. 4:12**). But the OT establishes that human beings are to prophesy only in God’s name. hope only in the Lord, and find salvation only in him; thus, such use of Jesus’ name indicates his divinity.

The Greek translation of the OT (the Septuagint) identifies Yahweh as “the Lord.” In quoting or alluding to OT texts that refers to Yahweh, the NT authors often apply title “Lord” to Jesus and evidently use it in that strong OT sense (e.g., **Acts.2: 21; Phil. 2:10-11; Heb. 1: 10-12**). The title is therefore another clear piece of evidence supporting Christ’s divinity Jesus is the image of God (**Col.1:15 cf. Heb. 1:3**). He is in the very form of God, and is equal to God, though he temporarily surrendered some of that so human beings could be saved (**Phil.2:6-8**). Jesus is the Son of God (**cf. Matt.28:18; John 20:31; Rom. 8:32**) and is worshipped just as the Father is (**cf. Revelation 4-5**) His majestic stature is memorialized by a meal celebrated in his memory (**Mark 14: 22-25**) and by people being baptized in his name (**Acts 2: 38; 10:48**). The Son of God is the eternal divine word (GK logos) who has become flesh and has been identified as the man who is God’s Son (**John 1: 1, 14**). Finally, in a number of texts Jesus is specifically called “God” (e.g., **John. 1:1, 18; 20:28; Rom.9:5; Titus 2:13; Heb. 1:8; 2 Pet. 1:1**). Such texts involve no trace or the heresy of either modalism or tritheism. Rather, such statements contain the raw materials from which the doctrine of the Trinity was rightly formulated.

New Testament theology, then, is Christ- centered and God-focused, for what Christ does on earth brings glory to God (**John 17: 1; Phili.2:11**). The NT particularly focuses on Jesus’ work on the cross, by which he redeemed and saved his people. The story line in each of the Gospels culminates in and focuses on Jesus’ death and resurrection. Indeed, the narrative of Jesus’ suffering and death consumes a significant amount of space in the Gospels, indicating that the cross and resurrection are the story.

In Acts we see the growth of the church and the expansion of the mission, as the Apostles and others proclaim the crucified and resurrected Lord. The Epistles explain the significance of Jesus’ work on the cross and his resurrection, so that believers are enabled to grab the height, depth, breadth, and width of the love of God (**Rom. 8:39**). The significance of the cross is explained in relation to themes such as new creation, adoption, forgiveness of sins, justification, reconciliation, redemption sanctification, and propitiation woven together, these themes teach that salvation comes from the Lord. And that Jesus as the Christ has redeemed his people from the guilt and bondage of sin.

The promise of the Holy Spirit

Bound up with the work of Christ is the work of the Holy Spirit. Jesus promised to send the Spirit to those who are truly his disciples (**John 14:16-17, 26; 15:26**). And he poured out the Spirit on his people at Pentecost (**Acts 2: 1-4; 33**) after he had been exalted to the right hand of the Father. The Spirit was given

bring glory to Jesus Christ (**John 16: 14**) So that Christ would be magnified as the great Savior and Redeemer. Luke and Acts in particular emphasize that the Spirit is given for ministry, so that the church is empowered to bear witness to Jesus Christ. At the same time, having the Spirit within is the mark of person belonging to the people of God (**Acts. 10:44-48; 15:17-9; Rom. 8: 9; Gal. 3:1-5**). The Spirit also strengthens believers, so that they are enabled to live in a way that is pleasing to God. Transformation into Christlikeness is the Spirit's work (**Rom. 8:2, 4:13,14; Cor. 3:18; Gal. 5:16,18**).

The Human Response

Because of sin, all humanity stands in need of the salvation that Christ brings. The power of sin is reflected in the biblical story line, for even Israel as the chosen people of the Lord lived under the dominion of sin, showing that the written law of God by its own power cannot deliver human beings from bondage to sin. Paul emphasizes that sin and death are twin powers that rule over all people, so that they stand in need of the redemption Christ brings (see **Rom, 1:18-3:20; 5:1-7:25**). Sin does not merely constitute failure to keep the law of God but represents personal rebellion against God's lordship (**1 John 3:4**). The essence of sin is idolatry, in which people refuse to give thanks and praise to the one and only God and worship the creature rather than the Creator (**Rom. 1:18-25**).

But sin is not the last word, since Jesus Christ came to save sinners, hereby highlighting the mercy and grace of God. The fundamental response demanded by God is faith and repentance. The call to faith and repentance is evident in the ministry of John the Baptist. In Jesus' announcement of the Kingdom (**Mark 1:15**). In the speeches in Acts, in the Pauline letters, and throughout the NT. Those who desire to be part of Jesus' new community (the church) and part of the Kingdom of God (God's rule in people's hearts and lives) must forsake false gods; renounce self-worship and evil and turn to Jesus as Lord and Master. The call to repentance is nothing less than a summons to abandonment of sin and to personal faith, whereby people are called to trust in the saving work of the Lord on their behalf instead of thinking that they can save themselves. All people everywhere have violated God's will and must look outside of themselves to the saving work of Christ for deliverance from God's wrath. Indeed, the whole of the NT can be understood as a call to repentance and faith (cf. **Hebrews 1:10**). Even those who are already believers are to exert themselves in faith and repentance as long as life lasts, for this is the mark of Christ's true disciples. The NT writers constantly encourage their readers to persevere in faith until the end and warn of dangers of rejection of Jesus as Lord. True believers testify that salvation is of the Lord, and that Jesus Christ is the One who has delivered them from the coming wrath.

The People of God

The saving promise of God, then, have begun to be fulfilled in the new community, the church of Jesus Christ. The church is composed of believers in Jesus Christ, both Jews and Gentiles, for the laws in the OT that separated Jews and Gentiles (e.g., circumcision, purity laws, and special festivals and holidays) are no longer in force. The church is God's new temple indwelt by the Holy Spirit and is called to live out the beauty of the gospel by showing the supreme mark of Christ's disciples; love for one another (**John 13:34-35**). The Church recognizes, however, that she exists in an interim state. She eagerly awaits the return of Jesus Christ, and the consummation of all of God's purpose. In the interim, the church is to live out her life in holiness and godliness as the radiant bride of Christ and the herald the good news of salvation to the ends of the earth, so that others who live in the darkness of sin may be transferred from Satan's Kingdom to the Kingdom of the Lord. The Church longs for the day when she will behold God face to face and worship Jesus Christ forever. The new creation will be a full reality. All things will be new, and the Lord will be praised forever for his love and mercy and grace—for NT theology is ultimately about glorifying and praising God.

LESSON: How the New Testament Quotes and Interprets the Old Testament

A Variety of Kinds of “Uses”

We begin by observing that there is a variety of ways the NT authors can refer to the OT. They can quote it directly (as [Matt. 1:23](#) cites [Isa. 7:14](#)); they can allude to it (as [John 1:1–5](#) alludes to [Genesis 1](#)); they can use OT vocabulary with a meaning conditioned by OT usage (e.g., “the righteousness of God”); they can refer to the OT’s broad concepts (such as monotheism and creation); and they can refer to the basic overarching story of the OT (e.g., [Rom. 1:1–6](#)).

The second observation is that there is no reason to expect a single, one-size-fits-all explanation that covers every instance of the NT using the OT. For example, an author may be intending to specify the one meaning of the OT text, or he may be using the OT text as providing an example or pattern that illuminates something he is writing about. He may draw a moral lesson from some event (e.g., [Mark 2:25–26](#)), and he might find an analogy between his audience and the ancient people (e.g., [1 Cor. 10:6–11](#)). He might be making a point about how the Gentile Christians inherit the privileges of Israel ([1 Pet. 2:9–10](#)), or he might be explaining why Christians need not keep some provision of the OT (e.g., [Mark 7:19](#); [Eph. 2:19](#)). Paul describes his own calling in terms that remind us of the servant of the Lord ([Gal. 1:15](#) evoking [Isa. 49:1](#)): since Isaiah’s servant is a messianic figure (as Paul knew, cf. [Acts 13:47](#); [Rom. 10:16](#); [15:21](#)), it is best to see Paul as likening his own calling in some way to that of the servant, rather than as claiming that *he* was the servant.

Text Form

This part is the least controversial. As a general rule, NT authors cite the OT in a Greek form that is basically the Septuagint that is available in printed form today (see [The Septuagint](#)). There are places where the NT author’s citation differs slightly from that of the Septuagint: either because the author has adjusted the quotation to fit the syntax of his own sentence or otherwise adapted it to his purpose, or because he has quoted the Septuagint from memory. Therefore one cannot say that, in using a Greek version, the NT authors have in any way slighted the original intent of the OT authors.

NT Reflection on the Use of the OT

Several NT texts discuss the general stance by which Christians do, and should, approach the OT. The first is [Romans 1:1–6](#), where Paul describes the “gospel of God” as “promised beforehand through his prophets in the holy Scriptures.” The content that follows narrates Jesus’ public entry onto his Davidic throne through his resurrection, and Paul’s apostleship as the outworking of Jesus’ program “to bring about the obedience of faith for the sake of his name among all the nations”: Paul is explaining that the events of Jesus’ victory, and the witness of the early Christians, are just what the OT had foretold. This is the kind of reading the OT itself invites (see [The Theology of the Old Testament](#)). Later in the same letter ([Rom. 15:4](#)), Paul says, “For whatever was written in former days [i.e., in the OT] was written for our instruction [i.e., as Christians].” He then goes on (in [vv. 9–13](#)) to cite several OT texts about the expectation of the coming era when the Gentiles would receive the light and join in worship with the faithful of Israel: the mixed congregations of Jewish and Gentile Christians are the fulfillment of that hope.

In [1 Corinthians 10:1](#), Paul alludes to OT events, saying “our fathers” experienced them. The church in Corinth, however, had a considerable proportion of converted Gentiles; so this means that Paul is treating the Gentile Christians as having been “grafted in” ([Rom. 11:17ff.](#)) to the olive tree (the people of God, cf.

[Jer. 11:16](#)), and every bit as much heirs of the story as Jewish Christians are. After listing the ways that God judged the unfaithful among the ancient people ([1 Cor. 10:6–10](#)), Paul explains that “these things happened to them as an example, but they were written down for our instruction, on whom the end of the ages has come.” God expects those who profess to be Christians to be sure their faith is real, just as he did the people in the Pentateuch. [Hebrews 11](#) is able to parade the OT faithful before its audience (probably mostly Jewish Christians) to show them that they must persevere in faith just as the ancients did.

In [Luke 24:25–27, 44–47](#), Jesus “interpreted to [his disciples] in all the [OT] Scriptures the things concerning himself.” Luke does not tell us what that Bible study actually said. Some Christian interpreters have understood this to mean that it is possible to find in every part of the OT a “foreshadowing” of some aspect of the work of Jesus. However, other interpreters think it is enough to recognize both that there are specific texts that predict the messianic work, and that the entire trend of the OT story was heading toward Jesus’ victory after his suffering, which would usher in the era in which the Gentiles would receive God’s light ([Luke 24:47](#), “to all nations”).

LESSON: Basic Catalog of NT Uses of the OT

When the apostles applied the OT to NT realities, they were following a long line of citing earlier Scripture, using a set of practices that can be found in the OT itself. For example, OT writers could allude to an earlier passage and elaborate on it (e.g., [Psalms 8 and 104](#) use [Genesis 1–2](#)); or they could allude to an earlier text and give a more precise nuance to it (as [Ps. 72:17](#) takes the more general [Gen. 22:18](#) and ties it specifically to the house of David). They could recognize a promise (e.g., [Dan. 9:2](#) finding in [Jer. 25:12](#) a promise for the length of Babylonian domination). They could see patterns of God’s behavior repeated (e.g., many Psalms allude to [Ex. 34:6–7](#) as God’s way of dealing with his people). They could also take texts from earlier generations and apply them to new situations (e.g., [Neh. 8:14–17](#) is often seen as an example of actualizing the laws of [Lev. 23:39–42](#) in concert with [Deut. 16:13–15](#); cf. also the well-known pairing of [Jer. 22:24–27](#) and [Hag. 2:23](#)).

The NT writers exhibit these uses due to their conviction that Christians are the heirs of Israel’s story; they exhibit other uses as well due to their conviction that the resurrection of Jesus had ushered in a new era, the messianic age—“the last days” foretold by the prophets. These authors saw themselves as God’s authorized interpreters for this new era that God had opened in the story of his people.

The early Christian missionaries went to synagogues to prove from the OT Scriptures that Jesus is the Christ (cf. [Acts 17:1–3; 18:26–28](#)). This implies that they relied on and used publicly accessible arguments from the text itself, rather than merely private insights—otherwise, they would have been unjust to hold anyone responsible for failing to see something that was not truly there. Luke praises the Berean Jews, who examined the OT to see whether what Paul and Silas told them was so ([Acts 17:11](#)): this implies that the NT invites critical interaction over its appeal to the OT, and is not solely dependent on the “insider’s” point of view.

In classifying these uses, the basic questions are:

- What is it about the OT text that enables the NT writer to use it the way he does?
- What is the NT writer’s stance toward the “original meaning” of the OT text?
- What rhetorical goal is the NT writer trying to achieve by using the OT text as he does?

- In what ways does the NT author resemble and differ from interpretative principles found among other interpreters who come from the same period of time, particularly other Second Temple Jewish authors who were not Christians?

The categories in this catalog are intended to be broad and suggestive; there is no substitute for a case-by-case examination of the various passages.

Promise and fulfillment. In many cases the NT writers understood their OT texts as providing a promise about where the story was headed, and identify a particular event as the fulfillment (or partial fulfillment) of a promise. For example, [Matthew 12:17–21](#) understood the servant of the Lord in [Isaiah 42:1–3](#) as the Messiah, with Jesus being the promised person. Likewise, in [Romans 15:12](#) Paul sees the spread of Christian faith among the Gentiles as fulfilling the expectation of [Isaiah 11:1–10](#).

Pattern and fulfillment. This is often called “typology,” and it refers to the way patterns found in the OT enable Christians to understand their own situation in, through, and under Christ. For example, the way that a lamb in the sin or guilt offering serves as an innocent substitute to work atonement explains how Jesus’ sacrifice benefits believers (see note on [Isa. 53:7](#), the probable background to [John 1:29](#)).

Analogy and application. Sometimes the NT writers find some kind of resemblance between their situation and an earlier one, and derive principles from the OT passage for addressing the new situation. The examples of [Mark 2:25–26](#) and [1 Corinthians 10:6–10](#) have already been mentioned.

When an author is using an analogy, he is not offering an interpretation of the original intent of the OT text; nevertheless, the analogies respect the original intent. For example, in [Matthew 21:42](#), Jesus uses [Psalm 118:22–23](#) (about “the stone the builders rejected”) to describe the way the Jewish leaders rejected him. Though many understand this to be a messianic prediction, the main point Jesus makes is that Jewish leaders who rejected him are (by analogy) just as wrong and wretched ([Matt. 21:41](#)) as the great world powers that thought so little of Israel (see note on [Ps. 118:22–23](#)).

Understanding the use of analogy in this way will help when encountering some NT texts that are more difficult. In [1 Corinthians 9:9](#) and [1 Timothy 5:18](#), Paul cites an OT law ([Deut. 25:4](#)) about not muzzling an ox, and he applies it as a justification for paying those in ministry. The OT text is based on a principle of caring for working animals; Paul’s application seems to be based on a “How much more should we care for those who serve us with the word” kind of argument in [Galatians 4:21–31](#), Paul constructs an “allegory” from Hagar and Sarah in Genesis, in order to convince his readers to reject the false teachers. There is no need to think he is disclosing any kind of additional meaning in Genesis, nor is he disregarding the original intent of the OT passages; he is simply likening those who follow his message to the “children of promise” (supernaturally produced like Isaac), and those who follow the false teachers to him “who was born according to the flesh” (i.e., to Ishmael).

Eschatological continuity. As indicated in [The Theology of the Old Testament](#), “eschatology” in the OT is focused on the coming era in which the Messiah will lead his people in bringing the light to the Gentiles; the NT position is that this era began with the resurrection and ascension of Jesus. These are separate chapters in the unfolding story of God’s work in the world, but they exhibit continuity because it is the same God at work, who saves people in the same way (cf. [Rom. 4:1–8](#)), who grafts believing Gentiles into the olive tree of his people ([Rom. 11:17](#)), and who is restoring the image of God in them. Hence Christian believers, both Jew and Gentile, share the privilege of the mission of Israel (e.g., [1 Pet. 2:9–10](#), looking back to [Ex. 19:5–6](#) and other texts). Thus, the Ten Commandments supply moral guidance to

Christians ([Rom. 13:8–10](#)). The same “righteousness of God”—God’s uprightness and faithfulness in keeping his promises—that the OT celebrates lies behind God’s sending Jesus ([Rom. 1:17](#)).

Eschatological discontinuity. This category is related to the previous one and reflects the change in redemptive era. For example, God’s faithful no longer need to observe the OT food laws, whose purpose was to distinguish Israel from the Gentiles ([Lev. 20:24–26](#); cf. [Acts 10:9–23](#)). Other aspects of the Sinai covenant are likewise no longer directly applicable to God’s people, such as the sacrificial system and the theocratic government centered in Jerusalem.

Development. [Psalm 72:17](#) does not change the promise of blessing-to-the-nations of [Genesis 22:18](#) but rather develops it by bringing the manner of fulfillment into sharper focus. In the same way, [Isaiah 52:13–53:12](#) certainly describes the career of the Messiah in terms of rejection and humiliation followed by vindication and victory. As the note on [Isaiah 53:10](#) explains, death is clearly not the messianic servant’s end; but resurrection is not explicit there (although it now seems to be the natural inference). Thus [1 Corinthians 15:3–4](#) can say, “Christ died for our sins in accordance with the Scriptures” (probably echoing [Isa. 53:10](#)), and “he was raised on the third day in accordance with the Scriptures” (developing, or clarifying, [Isa. 53:10](#)). The assumption behind these examples is that the story is moving along, and God can feed new events and insights into the process (in the case of [Ps. 72:17](#), by giving an oracle establishing the Davidic covenant; in the case of [1 Cor. 15:4](#), by raising Jesus from the dead).

Fuller sense.” Christians have used the Latin term *sensus plenior* (“fuller sense”) for cases where the NT seems to find a meaning in the OT that goes much farther beyond the original intent of the earlier passage than simple development. There is every reason to allow for such cases, when one considers that God is both planning events and inspiring the biblical authors as his authentic interpreters. Nevertheless it is wise to be careful: in many cases the suggestion of *sensus plenior* stems from a misapprehension of the earlier text or of the NT usage (see discussion of [Matt. 2:15/Hos. 11:1](#) below; see note on [Ps. 16:9–11](#)). There are some instances, however, where this does in fact seem to be what the NT author has done: e.g., in [John 1:1–5](#), John describes “the Word” as a divine Person active in the creation; he is echoing [Genesis 1:1–2:3](#) but seeing something there that Moses did not say. Nevertheless, as the notes on [Psalm 33:4–9](#) explain, this is not out of step with Genesis (see also note on [Gen. 1:26](#) for the Trinity). One can imagine Moses saying, if he had been presented with John’s Gospel, “Well, I never thought of it that way, but now that you come to say it like that, I can see where you got it, and I like it”: that is, he would not think that his original intent had been violated. It is tenuous, however, to advocate a *sensus plenior* that dispenses with original intent. [Matthew 2:15](#) is often taken as a case of *sensus plenior* because it says that when the holy family took shelter in Egypt (later to return to Palestine), this was to “fulfill” the words of [Hosea 11:1](#), “Out of Egypt I called my son.” Is Matthew finding a “messianic meaning” in Hosea that no one could have seen before? Probably not: it is more likely that Matthew found in Hosea a convenient summary of the exodus that contained the term “son.” (Many prophets summarize the exodus as a way of reminding Israel of their obligations to the Lord: cf. [Amos 3:1–2](#).) One of Matthew’s themes is that Jesus showed himself the true Messiah (the Davidic representative of Israel) by embodying all that Israel was called to be and doing so faithfully (in contrast to Israel). On the “son of God” idea, an important theme for Matthew, see note on [Psalm 2:7](#). So Jesus’ experience “fulfilled” the pattern of the exodus, which means that this is a case of pattern and fulfillment.

Deity of Christ. NT authors often apply OT texts to Jesus that originally applied to Yahweh, the God of Israel. For example, [Hebrews 1:10–12](#) describes Jesus by using [Psalm 102:25–27](#), which is about God’s eternity. This is not because the psalm is directly messianic but because NT authors accept that Jesus is Yahweh incarnate (cf. [John 1:1–14](#)). Thus, the NT uses these texts consistently with their original

intent—they describe the Lord—and recognize that their description applies to Jesus as being no less truly the Lord than is God the Father. In all of these cases the NT authors view themselves as the proper heirs and faithful interpreters of the OT.

LESSON: Traditions and the Gospel

Introduction:

Every culture has its manifold traditions. Indeed, culture and traditions are often synonymous. History has shown that when the pure truth of the Gospel of Jesus Christ penetrates a culture, it will challenge cultural traditions. The Light of gospel truth penetrates the darkness, and much of secular and religious culture is manifold darkness.

A Two-fold dilemma:

We must sort out and resist those traditions that are man-made and against the truth of the Gospel; and secondly, we must affirm those traditions that are from the Gospel and thus are good traditions. Also, many cultural traditions are “neutral” in that they are not evil just simply cultural legends passed down from generation to generation.

Definitions: What is a tradition?

The Greek word that is used in the New Testament is “*paradosia*” it is a combination of two Greek words- *para*=above or over & the Greek word- *dokea*= to give. Thus, a tradition is “*to give over to*” This is the fundamental meaning of traditions. They are ideas, customs, beliefs, stories, and cultural habits that a group “gives over to.” They embrace them as truth and give them over to the next generation. There are many kinds of traditions, some are tribal, some are cultural (many tribes doing the same tradition), some are religious; some are evil and demonic.

Example: In John chapter 13 is the story of Jesus washing the disciple’s feet. It was never meant as a tradition, but only as an illustration of servant hood. However, there are Christian groups that have made it a doctrine, a lifestyle, a part of their traditional way of life. In Kentucky there are “Foot washing Baptists.” They have made foot washing as a regular part of their worship.

Culturally Conditioned or Abidingly Relevant

The challenge to any Biblical theologian or student is to discern what is “*culturally conditioned*” and what is “*abidingly relevant*.” In doing so, he hopefully can remove bad traditions from the life of the Church and keep those Godly traditions that bless the Church.

See Mark 7:1-15 & Matthew 15: 1-20

Both Matthew and Mark record an event in Jesus’ life where He encountered Jewish religious traditions which stood in the way of truth. The Pharisees held their traditions (interpretations) over the commandment of Moses. They gave it more importance than God’s law. In **Mark 7:13** Jesus says to them, “*you invalidate the word of God by your tradition which you handed down; and you do many such things like that.*” They did it then, and we do it now! Jesus resisted such traditions, and we must do likewise. We must discern what is only cultural; and what is eternal truth. We must discern what is abidingly relevant in any age or culturally conditioned.

Question: What traditions has the Church adopted that we hold equal to or greater than the Gospel? What traditions have we “added to” the Gospel that have changed the Good News into man-made bad news? As we look carefully at both cultural traditions and even denominational traditions, we like Jesus will need to sort out what to keep. Some traditions can and will advance the Gospel, others will not.

Guidelines for discerning the value in a tradition:

Guideline #1-Where did the tradition come from? What is its source?

Explain: This was the method of Jesus and the Apostles regarding traditions. Jesus often began his teaching on traditions

by saying, “*You have heard it said by men of old...but I say unto you...*” Jesus as the living Word of God

knew the difference between a worthy tradition and a man-made custom that distorts truth or is added in the place of truth.

Christ’s example regarding traditions:

1. He kept the Law of Moses- none could accuse Him of breaking the Law. Jesus honored the Decalogue as God’s truth given to Moses.
2. He resisted and often rejected the Mishnah (the 613 Talmudic laws of the Rabbis) Jesus did not always agree with rabbinical interpretations of the Law, and many times broke their rules intentionally in order to teach the truth.
3. Jesus gave us the New Covenant to fulfill the Old and created new traditions for His Church to live by.

Paul’s example regarding Traditions:

1. Paul was a learned Rabbi, schooled in the Law. See **Galatians 1:14** “*I was advancing in Judaism beyond many of my contemporaries among my countrymen, being more extremely zealous for my ancestral traditions.*”
As a devout Jew he sought to keep the Law and the traditions of his people.
2. Paul had to re-evaluate his childhood traditions in the light of the Gospel and began to reject those traditions not worthy of the Gospel.
He refused to burden his gentile brethren with circumcision, dietary rules, and feast days etc. that were common to the Jews. See **Col. 2:16-23**
2. Paul followed Christ’s example in establishing new traditions based on the Gospel. His teachings and instructions became Church traditions. “*“stand firm and hold to the traditions which you were taught, whether by word of mouth or by letter from us.” 2nd Thessalonians 2:15; then again he says, “...keep aloof from every brother who leads an unruly life and not according to the tradition which you received from us.” 2nd Thessalonians 3:6*

Summary of Guideline #1- The Gospel when correctly taught and lived out brings with it those good traditions that advance the Gospel. It also will expose false and useless traditions that hinder the Gospel. We today must do as Christ and the Apostles did-Reject those traditions that hinder the Gospel and embrace those New Testament traditions that advance the Gospel.

Guideline #2-“Does the Tradition advance or hinder the Gospel” Is it from God or is it man made? Paul tells the Corinthian church “*hold firmly to the traditions just as I delivered them to you.*” **1st Cor. 11:2**

Explain:

Paul came to Corinth and led many to Christ, then began to teach them both the Gospel (doctrine) and also, many instructions (traditions). Among those traditions was teaching about the observance of the

Lord's Supper. Observing the Lord's Supper meal is a Christ given tradition. Jesus told his followers to gather and eat the meal as a way to remember Jesus and His sacrificial death on the Cross.

The early church had many good traditions handed down by Christ and the Apostles. These traditions were often instructions about various matters like foods, holidays, elders, church policies and behaviors within the Church. The Apostles had established those traditions which are "**ABIDINGLY RELEVANT**" in any age. They had removed and rejected those traditions which were "**CULTURALLY CONDITIONED**".

APPLY: Each Christian generation must examine its traditions. Have we taken cultural traditions which are culturally conditioned and made them abidingly relevant? This is a gross error. The Jews did that and missed the Messiah because of it.

Illustration: The Church in Corinth was guilty of changing and abusing the Lord's Supper. Rather than using the Supper to remember Christ and His sacrifice on the Cross, they made it into a wild, indulgent drinking party. The tradition was being changed as to its meaning and practice.

Much of 1st Corinthians chapter 11 is concerned with correction from the Apostle regarding the misuse of traditions.

History of the Passover tradition into the New Testament Church

When we look at the evolution of the Jewish tradition of Passover, we can see how traditions change and often morph into something entirely different than when they began.

The Passover observance was a God directed tradition given by Moses to remember how God delivered the tribe of Israel out of Egyptian bondage. The Hebrews were instructed to put the blood over the door posts of their houses so the Death Angel would see the blood and "pass over." The Egyptian houses without this Blood over them were not spared but the first born died, even Pharaoh's son.

This passing over event became a Hebrew tradition celebrated in Jewish homes from that time onward. It is celebrated in a "Seder" meal with many symbolic portions of the meal-all remembering God's rescue of the nation Israel from Egypt. It was this traditional Seder meal that Jesus ate with his disciples the night of his betrayal by Judas.

The changing of a Tradition

Jesus kept the Passover tradition, but He also changed it forever. He moved the past into the present and future. He told his disciples that the ancient Passover is a type and shadow of God's Passover on the Cross, when the blood of the Lamb of God would not be smeared over the doors, **BUT UPON THE WOODEN CROSS**. His blood will allow God to pass over our sins. Thus, Jesus turned an Old Covenant tradition into a New Covenant Church ordinance. He made it a "new remembrance;" not remembering Egypt's Passover, but a remembrance of

His sacrifice for the sins of the whole world. The Lord's Supper was to be celebrated as a remembering of Christ's death and resurrection. It was never meant to be more than that-a reverent remembering of Christ and His Cross in our behalf. Later the Roman Church will make the Supper into a Sacrifice with saving merit. In so doing a tradition is changed into a means of Grace and thus a Doctrine added to the Gospel! This then becomes a good tradition gone bad!

Apply;

Each generation must evaluate the history of its traditions, consider its source, origins and merit. Always weight it against the truth of the scriptures.

Paul's comments about women and length of hair

Paul raises issues like the length of a man's hair in comparison to a woman's and the issue of a woman covering her head in prayer. These customs are culturally conditioned but can teach us eternal principles that arise out of the Gospel.

Paul's eternal Principle=God's order for men and women is that a man has headship over the woman and there is to be

distinctive differences in men and woman in the way they dress and behave.

Illustration: The Masai tribe in East Africa has the unusual custom of the young men growing their hair long during initiation rites into manhood. The women always have short hair. The long hair worn by the Moran (young warrior) is a mark of his manhood. After he is initiated into manhood, he will cut his hair. The idea is that he is a MAN, not a woman!

Apply: God would not approve of a cultural tradition where men and women dressed alike and behaved as one gender. We are not to be trans-sexual, cross-dressers, or the like.

Summary of Guideline #2

We must ask is the tradition Biblical. Does it advance and testify to the Gospel. If not, then it is man-made and must be rejected. This was the teaching of Jesus as He came up against the organized traditions of Judaism in His day. The Jews had taken God's Ten Commandments and added 613 Talmudic rules to God's Ten! Their traditions stood between them and God's Messiah.

Guideline #3- What is the Motive behind the Tradition?

Explain: a God given tradition will always point to Christ, and the Gospel. A Godly tradition will give God glory! The motive behind the tradition will be pure, not fleshly, man centered, nor self-serving. This explains why Jesus rejected the outward show of religion he saw in the religion of the Scribes and Pharisees. They loved to be seen of men doing their religious duties (traditions).

This is the context of **Matthew 15** and **Mark 7**. The Jews criticized Christ's disciples because they did not ceremonially wash their hands before eating. Christ's response to them is a scolding rebuke, "*Neglecting the commandment of God, you hold to the tradition of men.*" **Mark 7:9**

Apply:

Any religious tradition that glorifies you or is used to prove yourself "religious" in God's eyes is not worthy of the Gospel and must be rejected. Why is this so? Because the flesh (Paul's term for our sin nature) can be both incredibly evil and also remarkably religious. The "Flesh" is manifested as both bad and good. There can be in the life of a man both selfishly evil deeds and he can dress up the flesh in religious robes like the Pharisees and murder the Son of God! It was this fleshly Judaism of the Pharisees who used their traditions as a means to work their way to heaven. This was the lifestyle of Rabbi Saul, who tells us that before he knew Christ as Savior and Lord, he was "*advancing in Judaism beyond many of my contemporaries among my countrymen, being more extremely zealous for my ancestral traditions.*"

Gal 1:14

Illustration: In Paul's letter to the Colossians Paul condemns those who seek to use traditions to gain favor with God. In **Colossians 2:16-23** he lists the many practices of those who use their religious new moons, worship of Angels, festivals & Sabbaths as means of the flesh justifying itself before God. All

these traditions fail the motive test. Our Christian traditions should come out of the Gospel, advance the Gospel, and glorify Christ.

Question: What traditions are used today to gain favor with God, rather than to trust God's Grace-gift of salvation in Christ? All denominations contain the traditions of men that alter, distort or deny the Gospel. It is the task of the Biblical preacher/teacher to see this error and expose it, correct it, and apply the Gospel to it.

Summary of Guideline #3- each so-called Christian tradition must be evaluated as to its source (the Gospel) and its motive. If it distorts Grace, adds works, or denies the sole sufficiency of the Cross- we must reject it.

Guideline #4- Does the tradition promote, protect and defend the truth of the Gospel?

Explain; there are some traditions within the Church that appear on the surface to be Christian, but when looked at carefully they contain many elements of paganism.

Examples: Infant baptism; the worship of Mary, the doctrine of purgatory, teachings regarding blessings and curses, the modern day "prosperity gospel" and many other man-made church traditions will not stand the test of Biblical orthodoxy.

Illustration: The observance of December 25th as the day of Christ's birth should be disputed, challenged, or even rejected. Its origins are rooted in the pagan holiday of Saturnalia, (the winter solstice), a week of drunkenness, rape and free rioting that climaxed on December 25th. It was not until the late 4th Century that John of Chrysostom declared December 25th the date of Christ's birth. The two holidays were joined by the Roman church to attract pagans into the Church! For centuries orthodox believers knew this to be true and rejected practicing this pagan Christmas holiday. In America, the Puritans denounced Christmas as "non-Christian" and it was forbidden in many cities of New England for many years.

Apply: How successful would modern day denominations be if they rejected the pagan elements in Christmas? What would happen if the Elders in major denominations were to apply the criteria Jesus applied to Judaism? What if our Church leaders questioned the church traditions about Christmas? Just by questioning its SOURCE, it's MOTIVE, its ADVANCEMENT of the Gospel or its self-serving elements- Christmas as we know it today will fail the test!

If any famous American pastor were to formally renounce Santa Claus as fable, declare Rudolph a myth, and tell our kids that reindeer do not fly, he will get his nose bloodied by the media. He dare not renounce Christmas!

Being realistic, it will never happen. Commercial America is too loud a voice. Christmas is big money for all who sell it as truth. What is remarkable about this is that the Christmas tradition in America began as a celebration of the Advent of the Christ-child. Not so today! Jesus is not invited to His own birthday party. Manger scenes are no longer welcomed in public places, government buildings, or elsewhere by our pluralistic society. "Season's greetings" has replaced "Merry Christmas" in secular America. Perhaps the church has lost Christmas forever.

Summary of guideline #4 every church leader, bishop, and pastor must question each of his cultural traditions or denominational traditions in the light of these biblical guidelines. Most important of all is this principle- does the tradition promote, protect and advance the Gospel of Jesus Christ? If not, is he willing to oppose the tradition? Does he have the prophetic courage to challenge it?

Examples of African cultural traditions that come against the Gospel:

1. Practice of witchcraft, or the combining of witchcraft with the Christian faith.
2. Praying to one’s ancestors.
3. Keeping and using amulets in the house
4. The male dominated culture in African tribes that does not willingly educate, advance, or treat women with dignity.
5. Polygamy
6. Female circumcision
7. Some extreme Pentecostal practices like slaying in the spirit, & other practices need to be tested in the light of scripture.
8. Any and all church traditions that have come to Africa thru denominational teachings that are not Biblical, Apostolic and Christ honoring.

Conclusion:

- Let us remember that traditions are Not the Gospel, but they can and should support the Gospel.
- Never do as the Jews did- elevate a tradition to the position of “law.” Traditions serve the Gospel not the other way around.
- Accept the challenge to do as Jesus and the Apostles did- apply these guidelines to every tradition within the church or in the culture.

Notes
