

MYTH Busting



By The BOOK

The Forum Terrace Church of Christ

Wednesday Night Adult Class Winter Quarter 2026

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“The Bible and Science Do Not Mix”

Time magazine quotes John Van Seters of the University of North Carolina: “there was no Moses, no crossing of the sea, no revelation on Mount Sinai.” Why? All of these stories go against modern science.

A modern Muslim apologist, Maurice Bucaille, contends that Genesis 1 is “a masterpiece of inaccuracy from a scientific point of view” (10.28 Geisler). Each point and day of creation is shown to be illogical and scientifically unacceptable. The scientific information used to refute Genesis 1 is from the highly speculative theories of evolution. Indeed the creation of the sun and moon after the creation of the Earth does not work with the prevailing views of science about the evolution of our solar system (Gen. 1:14-19). However, the scientific inaccuracies are only valid if you believe in evolution. In the Bible God is the all-powerful creator and in the Qur’an Allah is the mighty one who can do all things. Therefore, whether you are a Muslim or a Christian creation is a supernatural event that cannot be explained by scientific laws.

The Bible and science are compatible with each other. The Bible makes no claim to be a textbook on science. However, when the Bible makes a statement touching any field of science it is scientifically accurate. Science and the Bible are like two locomotives running on parallel tracks, they never collide. None of the writers of the Bible include the spurious scientific beliefs of their day. Though Daniel was *“skillful in all wisdom, endowed with knowledge and understanding science”* (Daniel 1:4), he did not record any of that Babylonian science in the Bible. Actually, the Bible condemns false science *“O Timothy, keep that which is committed to thy trust, avoiding profane and vain babblings, and oppositions of science falsely so called”* (1 Tim. 6:20).

Yet, how do we deal with seeming contradictions between science and the Bible? Conflicts come between theories which are not proven laws of nature. The theory of evolution and the Big Bang theory are in direct conflict with the Bible’s explanation of origins. The word “science” is from the Latin word “scientia” meaning “knowledge” or “to know”. A thing is scientific when it is known. Science really involves experimentation, observation and classification of facts. Evolution and the Big Bang theories are merely philosophies of how the world came to be and not scientific fact. Neither they or creation can be demonstrated or observed scientifically. Both must be accepted by faith.

Another reason for conflict are those religious doctrines that are not part of the Bible, but are mere theories invented by men. For example, it has been argued that the Bible teaches the universe is geocentric (earth-centered) instead of heliocentric (sun-centered). However, as demonstrated below, the Bible teaches just the opposite. Some understood the phrase *“the four corners of the earth”* (Isaiah 11:12) to be Biblical proof that the world was flat during the days when the explorers were first trying to sail around the world. Yet even today the phrase is still used to refer to the four points of the compass (north, south, east and west).

The language of the Bible was popular not scientific. It used the common vernacular of every day man and not the technical jargon of a specific science. Furthermore, the Bible language is phenomenal meaning “pertaining to appearances”. For example, the Bible as well as modern man uses “sunrise” and “sunset” though neither of these terms are technically accurate. Remember, it is common to speak of things as they appear and not always as they are in fact. The Bible contains scientific statements but it is not written as a book of science. Bernard Ramm explains in his work *The Christian View of Science and Scripture* on page 46, “The scientist writes his essay for his technical journal in the jargon of his speciality, and this jargon is a most valuable tool for the communication of his ideas. When he chats with his neighbor as they meet in some social gathering the scientist prudently recurses to the vocabulary

of popular speech."

The Bible's scientific accuracy demands an explanation. Not only are there no contradictions between true Biblical doctrines and genuine scientific teaching, the Bible is pre-scientific. It runs ahead of the scientists. The fact is, the same God who created this universe is the same God who wrote the Bible. God superintended the writing of the Bible to keep it from making scientific mistakes. Although other books written ages ago contained out-dated facts about science, the Bible is never obsolete. It is a book which is new and modern, even though it is old and ancient. Nature's Laws (which science is just now discovering) has the same author as the Bible, therefore, the two "books" cannot be contradictory.

Consider a few examples of the scientific precision of the Bible.

- **Basic Principles of Science**

The famous British philosopher, Herbert Spencer (1820-1903) stated that there are only five basic scientific principles: time, space, matter, force, and motion. This is what all else in science is based on. In the very first verse in the Bible we find: *"In the beginning [time] God [force] created [motion] the heavens [space] and the earth [matter]"* (Genesis 1:1).

- **Suspension of the Earth in Space**

Job said over 4,000 years ago that God *"... hangs the earth on nothing"* (26:7b). Ancient man did not know this. Egyptians said it was supported by large pillars. Greeks said it was supported by Atlas' shoulders. They didn't tell us on what Atlas was standing. Our astronauts have taken beautiful photographs showing that it literally rest *"upon nothing"*. Job did not reproduce the science of his day.

- **The Hydrologic Cycle**

The Mississippi River, when running at normal rate dumps approximately 6,052,500 gallons of water per second into the Gulf of Mexico. Where does all that water go? The wisest man, Solomon explains *"all the rivers run into the sea, yet the sea is not full; to the place from which the rivers come, there they return again"* (Ecclesiastes 1:7). Later he gives greater detail: *"if the clouds are full of rain, they empty themselves upon the earth; and if a tree falls to the south or the north, in the place where the tree falls, there it shall lie"* (Ecclesiastes 11:3). Even the prophet Amos enlightens us as to the hydrologic cycle *"He who builds His layers in the sky, and has founded His strata in the earth; who calls for the waters of the sea, and pours them out on the face of the earth-- the LORD is His name"* (Amos 9:6). As far back as Job the process of rain is explained, *"for He draws up drops of water, which distill as rain from the mist, which the clouds drop down and pour abundantly on man"* (Job 36:27,28).

Not until the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries through the experiments of Pierre Perrault and Edme Mariotte did modern man comprehend this law of nature

- **All Nations Of One Blood**

As Paul stood before the Athenians upon Areopagus he said *"And He has made from one blood every nation of men to dwell on all the face of the earth, and has determined their preappointed times and the boundaries of their dwellings"* (Acts 17:26). Scientist can tell between animal blood and human blood, but not between the races of men. Transfusions can be given from one race of men to another without trouble. If all men descended from one man, they would all have the same blood. All ape and monkey blood falls in the category of animal blood, not human. Nor is there a category of half-human or half-animal blood. Therefore, the scriptures harmonize with medical science, but evolution which declares man descended from monkeys or apes does not. Evolution does not provide any answers.

The points mentioned above are just the beginning for the Bible also demonstrates scientific foreknowledge about static electricity (Jer. 10:13); air having weight (Job 28:25); stars are said to give off signals indicating radio astronomy (Job 38:7) light is a particle for it has mass, a photon (Job 38:19); light can be split up into component colors (Job 38:24); lightning and thunder are related (Job 38:25); Arcturus and other stars move through space (Job 38:32); plants use sunlight to manufacture food (Heb. 11:3); etc.

It is amazing the Bible is so accurate in all these sciences. Even in our own time most of the books which discuss science are out-dated by the time they go to the press. The writers of the Bible such as Moses and Job could not have known these things of themselves. Their cultures were not advanced enough scientifically. The only logical explanation is that God revealed these Laws of Nature to them as He revealed His Spiritual Laws.

Though no one discusses whether or not the writings of Aristotle, Plato, Homer, and other early writers are scientifically accurate, because the answer is so blatantly obvious, men are still discussing whether or not the Bible is scientifically accurate which is a tribute to the Book of books in itself.

On the other hand it is possible for one to believe in the laws of nature, the true facts of science and the Bible. Many great scientist of the past and even the present have faith in both. Sir Isaac Newton wrote, "I have a fundamental belief in the Bible as the Word of God, written by those who were inspired" and "I study the Bible daily". The father of oceanography, Matthew Fontaine Maury, used Psalm 8:8, which mentions "the paths of the seas" as motivation to chart the ocean winds and currents. Nobel Prize winner, William D. Phillips, claims "Being an ordinary scientist and an ordinary Christian seems perfectly natural to me. It is also perfectly natural for the many scientists I know who are also people of deep religious faith,"

Questions:

1. Why do some Muslim apologist reject the Bible?
2. Is the Bible a scientific book? If not, does this prove that it is unscientific?
3. What does the term "science" mean?
4. What is the difference between a scientific theory and a scientific fact?
5. What is "phenomenal language"? Give an example of it in modern English?
6. According to Christians who is the author of the Bible? According to the Bible who is the author of the Laws of Nature? Why should these two agree?
7. What are the five basic laws of science? Where are these found in the Bible?
8. According to the ancient world what were the views of who the earth was suspended in space?

9. What passage of scriptures teach the hydrologic cycle?
10. What does it mean that all nations are of one blood? Is this compatible with evolution?
11. Is it possible to be a good scientist and a believer in the God of all creation as the author of the Bible? Explain.

Application & Discussion:

1. Must the Bible and the known Laws of Nature agree? Explain.
2. Must the Bible and current scientific theories agree? Explain.

Homework: Make a list of the many scientist both past and present who believed in the God of the Bible and believe the Bible is of God.

“It Does Not Matter If God Exists or Not”

The renown atheist Friedrich Nietzsche (1844-1900) wrote, “God is dead. God remains dead. And we have killed him. How shall we comfort ourselves, the murderers of all murderers? What was holiest and mightiest of all that the world has yet owned has bled to death under our knives: who will wipe this blood off us? What water is there for us to cleanse ourselves? What festivals of atonement, what sacred games shall we have to invent? Is not the greatness of this deed too great for us? Must we ourselves not become gods simply to appear worthy of it?” During the 1960s emerged a movement called “God is dead.” It too was short-lived.

For Christians God is not dead. In fact, I just spoke to Him this morning and from the looks of the world and the heavens He must be doing just fine. I also heard from him this morning and if you keep reading you are going to hear for Him yourself.

J.B. Phillips, in *Your God Is Too Small*, tells of a psychological test given to a mixed group of older adolescents during World War II. They were asked the question, “Does God understand radar?” In nearly every case they answered “No”. Do advances in the sciences make God obsolete. Is man really performing his own “miracles” and thus making an all-knowing and all-powerful God irrelevant?

Since God is the Creator He knows all the laws of science. *“For by Him all things were created that are in heaven and that are on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or principalities or powers. All things were created through Him and for Him”* (Col. 1:16). God not only knows all the past and is with us in the present, He knows all about the future (Hebrews 13:8; Matthew 28:20; Isaiah 46:9-10). When man makes a “new” discovery in science it does not surprise or bewilder God. Except He may say, “Wow! Good for you mankind. What took you so long to discover another one of My laws of nature?”

However, an argument among atheist and agnostics and even some believers in God is whether of existence of God is really all that important. Is the existence of God is relevant?

God Gives Meaning to Life

Without God life is meaningless. Billy Graham said, “life without God is like an unsharpened pencil - it has no point.” Without God man’s life is left without a purpose. William Lane Craig says it this way, “If God does not exist, life does not have ultimate meaning, purpose, or value.” William Shakespeare wrote: “life is a tale told by an idiot, full of sound and fury, signifying nothing.” Longfellow wrote: “Life is but an empty dream.” Ernest Hemingway believed, “Life is just a dirty trick, a short journey from nothingness to nothingness.” Life was so empty he took his own life. So did his father, two siblings, and granddaughter Margaux Hemingway committed suicide.

If atheism is true the universe was not made for anything and humans are not made for anything or for any reason whatsoever.

Solomon how investigated life and found in the end that it was not meaningless. *“Let us hear the conclusion of the whole matter: Fear God and keep His commandments, For this is man’s all. For God will bring every work into judgment, Including every secret thing, Whether good or evil”* (Eccl. 12:13-14).

God Gives Value to Life

Evolution says man is but an accident, a blind result of time and chance. Humans are regarded

as no different than any other animal. They have no greater importance than a roach or single-celled organism. Atheist Richard Dawkins said, "The universe that we observe has precisely the properties we should expect if there is, at bottom, no design, no purpose, no evil, no good, nothing but pitiless indifference." He concludes humans are nothing more than "machines for propagating DNA." Even Solomon observed that men die just like the animals. *"For what happens to the sons of men also happens to animals; one thing befalls them: as one dies, so dies the other. Surely, they all have one breath; man has no advantage over animals, for all is vanity. All go to one place: all are from the dust, and all return to dust"* (Ecclesiastes 3:19–20),

However, our value to God is greater than that of animals. Jesus said, *"Are not two sparrows sold for a copper coin? And not one of them falls to the ground apart from your Father's will. But the very hairs of your head are all numbered. Do not fear therefore; you are of more value than many sparrows"* (Matthew 10:29-31). In the first century sparrows were so cheap the smallest coin could purchase two. God is aware when any one sparrow dies. When a man or woman dies God never thinks, "What is one more or less?" Among all of earth's creatures, humans are unique. Among all the billions of people who exist on this earth each individual matters to God. For each and every sinner Christ was sent to die.

Man is unique in creation, because he was created in the image of the Creator. *"So God created man in His own image; in the image of God He created him; male and female He created them"* (Genesis 1:27). This is why each soul is worth more than all the world. *"For what profit is it to a man if he gains the whole world, and loses his own soul? Or what will a man give in exchange for his soul?"* (Matthew 16:26). This is why God sent His Son to die for us. *"But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us"* (Romans 5:8).

God Gives Direction to Life

From a Humanist perspective Aldous Huxley wrote: "For myself as, no doubt, for most of my contemporaries, the philosophy of meaninglessness, was essentially an instrument of liberation. The liberation we desired was simultaneously liberation from a certain political and economic system and liberation from a certain system of morality. We objected to the morality because it interfered with our sexual freedom." Fyodor Dostoevsky in "The Brothers Karamazov" wrote, "Without God all things are permitted." Men even are so bold as to think they can develop their own standards of morality apart from God. "Morality is more than possible without God, it is entirely independent of him" (Julian Baggini (2009). "Atheism", p.53, Sterling Publishing Company, Inc.). In reality all that atheism can afford mankind is the idea of amorality that is nothing is right and nothing is wrong.

What is the basis for morality? In other words, how do we know what is right and wrong? Alphonse de Lamartine observed, "a conscience without God is like a court without a judge." Solomon understood man's dilemma without Divine guidance. *"There is a way that seems right to a man, but its end is the way of death"* (Proverbs 16:25). Jeremiah said, *"O Lord, I know the way of man is not in himself; it is not in man who walks to direct his own steps"* (Jer. 10:23).

God is essential in helping with problems and decisions. This is why He has given us a Bible. *"All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness, that the man of God may be complete, thoroughly equipped for every good work"* (2 Tim. 3:16-17).

God Gives Eternal Life

Life is 100% fatal. The great enemy of all life is death. Death is God's exaction for sin (Rom. 6:23). Even if you manage to make it through to old age, you will die. You may die sick, or you may die healthy. But you will die. About ninety thousand people die each year in hospitals due to medical mistakes. Every twelve minutes on our nations roads a fellow American is killed. Death even finds its victims as accidents in the home take a life every twenty-nine minutes. But there is hope that life will go

on. Every thirty seconds a woman somewhere in this world gives birth to a child.

The real hope is that God gives man victory over death in the resurrection of Christ (1 Cor. 15). Something of greater importance is God giving man life after death. Man has wondered about life and death: "Is this all there is? Be born, live, and die?" Job wondered, *"If a man dies, shall he live again?"* (Job 14:14). Later he confessed his belief that the answer had to be "yes". *"For I know that my Redeemer lives, And He shall stand at last on the earth; And after my skin is destroyed, this I know, That in my flesh I shall see God, Whom I shall see for myself, And my eyes shall behold, and not another. How my heart yearns within me!"* (Job 19:25-27). Death is not the end. Solomon believed, *"Then the dust will return to the earth as it was, And the spirit will return to God who gave it"* (Ecclesiastes 12:7). Man has two destinies after death (Matt. 7:13,14; 24:46). He is encouraged to prepare for life after death by laying up treasures in heaven while he is still alive (Matthew 6:19-20).

If there is no God there is no Christ and if there is no Christ there is no resurrection. If there is no resurrection there is no afterlife. Man when he dies is like the dead dog Rover, he is dead all over. However, God has a plan to save every man. All every man has to do is obey the Gospel plan of Salvation. He is loving enough to desire our eternal life with Him in Heaven and He is powerful enough to help us procure it.

If God does not exist, life means nothing. If there is a God, life means everything. Without God life has no meaning, without meaning life has no direction, no value, no comfort or hope of life beyond death. Yes, it does matter if God exists.

"But without faith it is impossible to please Him, for he who comes to God must believe that He is, and that He is a rewarder of those who diligently seek Him" (Hebrew 11:6).

Questions:

1. Who would want to believe that God is dead?
2. How has God spoken to you today and how have you talk to Him?
3. Does God understand science? Explain.
4. Why is our life meaningless without God?
5. How do atheist view human life?
6. Is man more important to God than animals? Explain.
7. Are you of special value to God? Explain.

8. How valuable each human soul?
9. How does the existence of God affect morality?
10. How does the existence of God effect the mortality of humanity?
11. True False If there is no God there is no Christ and if there is no Christ there is no resurrection. If there is no resurrection there can still be life after death and for eternity.

Application & Discussion:

1. List the ways your life would be like without faith in the existence of God.
2. How would you go about helping someone believe in the existence of God?

Homework: Share your faith in the existence of God and why it is important.

“It Does Not Matter What Name is Used for God”

A couple of years ago Beverley and I took our about to be two year old granddaughter, Kenzie, shopping at a mall. At one particular store we found an inexpensive ball for Kenzie. When I carried her up to the cash register, she dutifully handed the ball to the cashier. He scanned it and quickly returned the ball. Since her parents have trained her to express gratitude, she took the ball and said, “Tankoo MeeMee.” At this the young man, who was at this point handing me the change from our transaction, said, “Oh! Isn’t that the sweetest. I had me a ‘MiMi’ when I was growing up. She was the kindest and sweetest little old grandmother a little boy could ever have.” Well I just had to set the record strait. Pointing to Beverley I informed him, “that’s Grammy. I’m MiMi!”

Ever since Kenzie (my first grandchild) was born I have wanted to be known as “GranDan.” The first grandchild, I have been told, helps teach the special names of the grandparents to all future grandchildren. Therefore, I have felt the necessity to correct this misnomer. I am not “MiMi”. However, I have been informed that grandchildren tend to pick out the special nicknames for their grandparents regardless of the grandparents’ wishes. But wait just a minute here! Who is older, more experienced, and wiser?

So later I was holding Kenzie and while using my index finger I poked Beverley on the arm and told Kenzie, “this is Grammy, Grammy, Grammy.” Then pointing to myself I told her, “I am GranDan, GranDan, GranDan.” And without any hesitation and a serious face she used her little index finder and poking me several times in my chest, firmly said, “MiMi, MiMi.” So now when she calls “MiMi,” I just answer submissively.

Special names given denote unique and special aspects of the relationship. Don’t ask me what “MeeMee” represents to Kenzie. On the other hand, the motives for names given to God by His children can easily be discovered by the Biblical context where they are found.

Hagar, the second wife of Abraham, was pregnant with Ishmael. Sarah became jealous and was so unkind to Hagar she fled into the wilderness. While alone and felling helpless she was confronted by the Angel of the Lord and told to return home. *“Then she called the name of the Lord who spoke to her, You-Are-the-God-Who-Sees (El Roi, drv); for she said, “Have I also here seen Him who sees me?” (Gen. 16:13, KJV).*

Later, Abraham had his faith tested by God when he was commanded to go three days journey to a mountain. There he was to sacrifice Isaac. Abraham obeyed. He went built an altar, bound Isaac, and placed him on the altar. Just as he was about to spill the blood of his own son...

the angel of the Lord called unto him out of heaven, and said, Abraham, Abraham: and he said, Here am I. And he said, Lay not thine hand upon the lad, neither do thou any thing unto him: for now I know that thou fearest God, seeing thou hast not withheld thy son, thine only son from me. And Abraham lifted up his eyes, and looked, and behold behind him a ram caught in a thicket by his horns: and Abraham went and took the ram, and offered him up for a burnt offering in the stead of his son. And Abraham called the name of that place Jehovahjireh: as it is said to this day, In the mount of the Lord it shall be seen (Genesis 22:11-14, KJV).

The name *Jehovahjirah* means “the-Lord-Will-Provide.” When Abraham and Isaac had come to

the mountain to worship God, Isaac noticed they had wood for the fire but no lamb for the sacrifice. *“And Abraham said, ‘My son, God will provide for Himself the lamb for a burnt offering’* (Gen. 8:22). God did provide the sacrifice, and it was not Isaac.

When the children of Israel had crossed over the Red Sea into the wilderness, they were attacked by Amalek (Ex. 17:8ff). God told Moses to have Joshua lead the Israelites in battle for the first time. Moses was to take the rod of Aaron to the top of a hill and as long as he raised it up, the Israelites would prevail against Amalek. This worked until Moses’ arms began to tire. So Aaron and Hur rolled over a stone for Moses to sit upon while each supported one of his arms. Israel gained the victory. *“And Moses built an altar, and called the name of it Jehovahnissi: For he said, Because the Lord hath sworn that the Lord will have war with Amalek from generation to generation”* (Ex. 17:15,16, KJV).

The Hebrew term *Jehovahnissi* means “The-Lord-is-My-Banner.” This underlines the fact that God fought for this band of slaves just out of Egyptian bondage. God gave them the victory.

Years later the descendants of Abraham had attained the land promise and occupied the Promise Land. Because of their disobedience, God sent the Midianites to oppress them for seven years until they cried out to Him for mercy. God raised up a Judge or Savior named Gideon. *“And the Angel of the Lord appeared to him, and said to him, The Lord is with you, you mighty man of valor!...’ Then the Lord turned to him and said, ‘Go in this might of yours, and you shall save Israel from the hand of the Midianites. Have I not sent you?’”* (Judges 6:12,14). At first Gideon was reluctant to obey.

And when Gideon perceived that he was an angel of the Lord, Gideon said, Alas, O Lord God! for because I have seen an angel of the Lord face to face. And the Lord said unto him, Peace be unto thee; fear not: thou shalt not die. Then Gideon built an altar there unto the Lord, and called it Jehovahshalom: unto this day it is yet in Ophrah of the Abiezrites (Judges 6:22-24, KJV).

The term *Jehovahshalom* means “The-Lord-Is-Peace.” And through Gideon the Lord did bring peace to Israel for forty years.

King David in his famous Shepherd’s Psalm called God *Yahweh Rohi* which is “The-Lord-Is-My-Shepherd” (Psalm 23:1). David had been a shepherd and knew the care and guidance needed to take care of sheep. David saw his relationship with God as a little lamb needing the care of the Shepherd.

So there are at least three instances of men and a woman giving special names to God reflecting their special relationship with a Lord who provides, brings peace, delivers the victory, and shepherds them. All of God’s names affect man’s attitude concerning his relationship with his Creator. Someone has counted some seventy-six names for God found in the Bible. All of them express something of God’s attributes. All of them support the idea that we serve a God who is our Loving Father.

There are many other names used for God in the Bible. Some of these seem a bit unusual, such as, Jealous. God commanded “for you shall worship no other god, for the Lord, whose name is Jealous, is a jealous God” (Exodus 34:14). Below you will find a few other names used for God.

- ◆ El Sali – “God, My Rock” (2 Samuel 22:47)
- ◆ El Shaddai – “Almighty God” (Genesis 17:1)
- ◆ Elohe Tishuathi – “God of My Salvation” (Psalm 51:14)
- ◆ Elohei Mikkarov – “God Who is Near” (Jeremiah 23:23)
- ◆ Elohim Chayim – “The Living God” (Joshua 3:10)
- ◆ Elohim Kedoshim – “Holy God” (Joshua 24:19)
- ◆ Elohim Ozer Li – “God My Helper” (Psalm 54:4)
- ◆ Elohim Shophtim Ba-arets – “God that Judges in the Earth” (Psalm 58:11)
- ◆ Elohim Tsebaoth – “God of Hosts” (Psalm 80:7)
- ◆ Ehyeh asher Ehyeh – “The Eternal, All-Sufficient God” (Exodus 3:14)
- ◆ Jehovah El Elyon – “The LORD, the Most High God” (Genesis 14:22)
- ◆ Jehovah Elohim – “The LORD God” (Genesis 2:4)

- ◆ Jehovah Elohim Tsaba – “LORD God of Hosts” (Psalm 59:5)
- ◆ Jehovah Goelekh – “The LORD Thy Redeemer” (Isaiah 60:16)
- ◆ Jehovah Hashopet – “The LORD the Judge” (Judges 11:27)
- ◆ Jehovah Mauzzi – “The LORD My Fortress” (Jeremiah 16:19)
- ◆ Jehovah Ha-Melech – “The LORD the King” (Psalm 98:6)
- ◆ Jehovah Moshiekh – “The LORD Your Savior” (Isaiah 49:26)
- ◆ Jehovah Roi – “The LORD My Shepherd” (Psalm 23:1)
- ◆ Jehovah Sal’l – “The LORD My Rock” (Psalm 18:2)
- ◆ Jehovah Tsaba – “LORD of Hosts” (1 Samuel 17:45)
- ◆ Kadosh – “The Holy One” (Isaiah 40:25)
- ◆ Everlasting Father (Isaiah 9:6)
- ◆ Holy One of Israel (Isaiah 41:14)
- ◆ I Am (Exodus 3:14);
- ◆ Redeemer (Isaiah 41:14), (Job 19:25)
- ◆ Refiner (Malachi 3:2)
- ◆ Refuge (Isaiah 25:4)
- ◆ Righteousness (Jeremiah 23:6)
- ◆ Adonai – “Master Over All” (Deuteronomy 3:24)
- ◆ El Bethel – “The God of the House of God” (Genesis 35:7)
- ◆ El Elohe Yisrael – “The Mighty God of Israel” (Genesis 33:20)
- ◆ El Elyon – “The Most High God” (Daniel 3:26)
- ◆ El Hakabodh – “The God of Glory” (Psalm 29:3)

Our God is so great and mighty that there can never be enough names to describe Him. And any name will not do. Any name given is must reflect His true nature and character. The Muslims have a set of beads they use to help count the names of Allah. There are said to be ninety-nine names of Allah which are known to man. The one hundredth name no one knows but the camel. Last I heard he wasn’t talking. It is interesting to note that not one of these names imply that Allah is a father or that he is love.

It matters a great deal how and why God’s children reference Him. It matters little why Kenzie had named me “MeeMee.” However, only she can call me “MiMi.” If anyone else calls me “MiMei” - well, I am just going to have to hit them with my purse.

Questions:

1. What did Hagar call God and why?
2. What does *Jehovahjirah* mean?
3. What did God provide Abraham?
4. When Amalek attacked the Israelites in the wilderness, what did Joshua, Moses, Aaron and Hur do?

5. What does *Jehovahnissi* mean?
6. Why did God send the Midianites against Israel? Who did he select to deliver them from the Midianites?
7. What does *Jehovahshalom* mean?
8. What does *Yahweh Rohi* mean?
9. How many names do the Muslims have for Allah? Who alone knows the hundredth name?

Using the scripture reference or a Bible Dictionary give the meaning of the names of God below.

10. Jehovah Metsudhathi (Psalm 18:2)
11. Jehovah Nissi (Exodus 17:15)
12. Jehovah Shalom (Judges 6:24)
13. Jehovah Mekaddishkem (Exodus 31:13)
14. Jehovah Gibbor Milchamah (Psalm 24:8)
15. Jehovah El Gemuwal (Jeremiah 51:56)
16. Esh Oklah (Deuteronomy 4:24)
17. Elohim Bashamayim (Joshua 2:11)
18. Elohim Chaseddi (Psalm 59:10)

19. El Simchath Gili (Psalm 43:4)

Application & Discussion:

1. How would you go about explain to someone that it really does matter what name is used in reference to God?

2. What name for Him do you most often use and why?

Homework: Make a complete list of Bible names for God and using it pray a prayer of praise to God.

“God Does Not Really Care About Me”

A Frenchman incurred the displeasure of Napoleon and was put into a dungeon. He seemed to be forsaken by his friends and forgotten by everyone in the outside world. In loneliness and despair he took a stone and scratched on the wall of his cell, “nobody cares.” One day a green shoot came through the cracks in the stones on the floor of the dungeon and began to reach up toward the light in the tiny window at the top of the cell. The prisoner kept part of the water brought to him each day by the jailer and poured it on the blade of green. It grew until at last it became a plant with a beautiful blue flower. As the petals opened in full blossom, the solitary captive crossed out the words previously written on the wall and above them scratched, “God cares”.

Peter reveals this is a divine aspect of God’s nature. *“Therefore humble yourselves under the mighty hand of God, that He may exalt you in due time, casting all your care upon Him, for He cares for you.”* (1 Peter 5:7). “Cast” means “to throw” and “cares” is actually “anxieties”. Thus, God wants us to throw all our anxieties upon Him because of His concern for us for us. Faith and humble submission allows us to cast off the anxieties of life onto God who really does have anxiety for us. Does God care? Yes He cares.

Since the height and depth of God’s care for us is so great several metaphors are employed to help explain the manner of His care.

In What Manner Does God Care?

- **As an Eagle Bearing You up**

God cares for us *“As an eagle stirs up its nest, Hovers over its young, spreading out its wings, taking them up, carrying them on its wings”* (Deut. 32:11).

Ornithologists assure us that the eagle, like many other birds that are strong on the wing, can fly more swiftly against a wind than in a gentle breeze. Life is full of the winds of anxiety, but with the wings of eagles we are borne through these. God is the source of this lift when troubles are weighing us down.

- **As a Mother Comforting**

God cares for us *“As one whom his mother comforts, so I will comfort you; and you shall be comforted in Jerusalem.”* (Isaiah 66:13).

God plays the part of a mother. An old Jewish proverb claims: “God could not be everywhere, so He made mothers”. In contrast, the Bible assures us that an omnipresent God can be there anytime, anywhere, and for anyone, even the least of us. Does a mother with several children ever forget the smallest infant. No she cares for it most of all.

In a New Orleans cemetery is a monument which has created much interest. It represents a ship in the mist of a storm-tossed sea; a mother and child clinging together on the vessel. On the base is an inscription saying they were drowned on July 4, 1900. They were sole survivors of a large estate, and the question was under whose name should the estate be administered the name of the mother or the daughter. The Court decided it should be in the name of the daughter. Reckoning that the mother drowned first because the mother would hold her in a place of safety to the end. While we were yet drowning in our sins and facing spiritual death, God sent Christ to die on the cross for our sins (Rom. 5:8).

- **As a Father Pitying You**

The condition for God’s care is our reverent fear. Not the fear of a slave of his master, but the fear of a child toward a good father. *“As a father pities his children, so the LORD pities those who fear*

Him" (Psalm 103:13)

Jesus appeals to God's care for us as a father who answers His children's pleas (prayers) with goodness not evil. *"Or what man is there among you who, if his son asks for bread, will give him a stone? Or if he asks for a fish, will he give him a serpent? If you then, being evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your Father who is in heaven give good things to those who ask Him!"* (Matthew 7:9-11).

- **As a Shepherd Seeking You**

"As a shepherd seeks out his flock on the day he is among his scattered sheep, so will I seek out My sheep and deliver them from all the places where they were scattered on a cloudy and dark day." (Ezekiel 34:12).

The Camden, Maine, *Herald* ran two photos on the same page: one of the Camden's board of councilmen and town manager; the other of a flock of sheep. Unintentionally the captions were reversed. Under the picture of the sheep the caption identified them, left to right, as town officials; the one under the photo of the town fathers grouped around a table read. "The Sheep Fold - naive and vulnerable, they huddle for security against the uncertainties of the outside world."

Isaiah proclaims that *"we like sheep have gone astray."* Man is like sheep in need of the guiding care of a shepherd. In the Parable of the lost sheep, the shepherd went in search of the lost lamb, leaving the 99 (Matthew 18:10-14). Jesus is viewed as the caring Shepherd in Jn. 10. Truly, *"The Lord is my shepherd"* (Psalm 23:1).

- **As a Hen Gathering You Together**

As Jesus was condemning the Pharisees He gave a strong warning. He knew the future of Jerusalem and longed to gather them from the impending doom. Therefore, in His compassion He cried out, *"O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, the one who kills the prophets and stones those who are sent to her! How often I wanted to gather your children together, as a hen gathers her chicks under her wings, but you were not willing!"* (Matthew 23:37).

The hen has four different calls for her brood: one when twilight begins to darken toward night; another when she has come across some food; another for danger, when the chicken hawk is hovering in the air, and yet another of general desire.

God cares for us as an uplifting eagle, giving father, comforting mother, guiding shepherd, and protective hen. Note, that within all of these descriptions of how much God cares for us this care is prerequisite upon us having a relationship with Him as his children who fear and follow Him.

How Does God Demonstrate His Care?

- ◆ **God Counts The Steps Of Our Feet**

Jim Clark and Roger Burgess began walking side by side at 8 a.m. Saturday and covered 116.5 miles in the 24 hours ending at 8 a.m. Sunday. No they did not do this to get to church. At 2.5 feet per step and 2,112 steps per mile that equals 246,048 steps. Did you ever lose something and want to recount your steps? God counts them so that you will not be lost. *"For now You number my steps, but do not watch over my sin"* (Job 14:16). When a baby learns to walk, a parent counts the number of steps the child makes. They do not count the number of times the babe fell. God does not overlook our sin, but as a loving Father enjoys our success. All the more reason to be careful how and where you walk. No matter where you go, God knows where you have been every step of the way.

- ◆ **God Bottles The Tears From Our Eyes**

Not only does God count our steps, He bottles our tears. *"You number my wanderings; put my tears into Your bottle; are they not in Your book?"* (Ps. 56:8). Tear bottles, called lachrymotories, were used among the ancients for collecting the tears of mourners. These bottles were then placed in the tombs of the deceased. They were made of glass, pottery, agate, sardonyx, etc. There will be no tears in heaven God will stop counting them for all death and sorrow and pain will be gone. Today, others at times will overlook our grief and tears, but God never does. No tear from God's children will go unnoticed.

◆ **God Holds In His Hand Our Right Hand**

A little girl was walking home with her father one night. As they trudged along in the darkness she said, "Take my hand. I can take only a little of yours, but you can take my whole hand." God has promised, *"For I, the LORD your God, will hold your right hand, saying to you, 'Fear not, I will help you.'"* (Is. 43:13). The right hand was the hand of favor. This fact gave the Psalmist great comfort, *"Nevertheless I am continually with You; you hold me by my right hand."* (Ps. 73:23). As a parents cares enough to hold a young child by the hand while crossing a busy street, so there is a heavenly hand to hold your hand as you cross safely the busy streets of life.

Consider the words of the hymn "Jesus, Hold My Hand":

"As I travel thru this pilgrim land
There is a Friend who walks with me,
Leads me safely thru the sinking sand,
It is the Christ of Calvary;
This would be my prayer, dear Lord, each day
To help me do the best I can,
For I need Thy light to guide me day and night,
Blessed Jesus, hold my hand.

◆ **God Writes Down The Thoughts Of Our Hearts**

Did you ever want a record of your thoughts and ideas? Oh now many are lost forever because we did not write them down. God has heard every thought and written them down. *"Then those who feared the LORD spoke to one another, and the LORD listened and heard them; so a book of remembrance was written before Him for those who fear the LORD and who meditate on His name."* (Mal. 3:16). Psychologists say that 10,000 thoughts go through the human mind in one day. That is 3,500,000 a year. That's a lot of writing. Remember the cute little things your children would say while they were growing up. Would it not be a joy to have recorded these? God cares for us enough He has recorded even our every thought. The sobering side of this is to be careful what you think, one day we will be called into account for each thought, word and deed (Eccl. 12:14; 2 Cor. 5:10-11).

◆ **God Numbers The Hairs Upon Our Head**

To demonstrate how much God cares for us Jesus told His disciples, *"But the very hairs of your head are all numbered."* (Mt. 10:30). Some years ago, a German scientists counted the hairs on different human heads. He found that they vary in number, depending seemingly on the color. Thus, there are more on a head with black hair than red, on brown than black, on blond than brown. The black-haired woman has about 110,000 hairs on her head, and a blonde around 140,000. Now this does not prove that God loves blondes more than black and brown headed folks or even bald men. Although every morning these days there is a lot less hair for God to count on my head. Consider that the average woman with a thick head of hair will lose up to 100 hairs a day. This means that in order for God to keep an accurate count of the hairs upon our heads he would have to recount them every day. Does anyone love you enough to count the hairs of your head even once? Have you ever heard the romantic proclaim his love by say, "Oh, how I love thee let me count the hairs upon thy head".

The men who built the pyramids worshiped loathsome insects and animals. The Phoenicians, who invented letters, chained the images of their gods to their altars, that they might not abandon them. The cultured men of Rome made important plans by guidance derived from the entrails of sheep or the flight of birds. Truly, the man made gods of the ancients did not care like the true and only God of heaven cares for us.

The ultimate act demonstrating the depth of God's care for us is when God sent His only Son to die for our sins. Pliny relates a story of the setting up of an obelisk. The stone was to stand ninety-nine feet in height; 20,000 workmen were to pull at the rope and to work the hoisting apparatus. There was

great responsibility and risk in the operation. The king resorted to a singular expedient to insure the best attention and skill from the engineer. He ordered the engineer's own son to be bound to the apex, so that his heart as well as his head should be under the sternest tension. God did not set up this world full of men and send His Son to the cross for our sins only to neglect us.

Questions:

1. According to First Peter what are we to do with our cares and why?
2. How can God be like an eagle with our cares?
3. How is God like a mother to us?
4. How is God like a father to us?
5. How are we like sheep in need of a Shepherd?
6. To what did Jesus compare His care for Jerusalem?
7. True False God notices our falls, but counts our steps.
8. What are lachrymatories?
9. Which of our hands is God said to hold? Why this hand?
10. Where does God record our thoughts?
11. Why would it be so challenging to number the hairs upon the head of a person? What does this demonstrate to us about God's care?

Application & Discussion:

1. What is the ultimate example where God demonstrated His care for mankind. Why is this so?

2. When are you most likely to feel like no one cares? How can you use the knowledge of God's care to encourage you?

Homework: When you think no one cares this week remember God cares.

“The Church of Christ was Founded by Alexander Campbell”

Much can be learned about the use of this name “Campbellite” from the Session Records of Pleasant Ridge Presbyterian Church of Southwestern Ohio. It was during the decade of the 1830s that the “Campbellites” were the most troublesome to them. Cincinnati, near which Pleasant Ridge was located, saw a New Testament church established in 1828. Consider the following quotes from their records:

- *“Friday August 10, 1832...Satisfactory information was received by Session that Martha Alcorn, a member of this church, had joined a Church known to us by the name of Campbelites therefore it was resolved that her name should be stricken off these records which was accordingly done.*
- *“Sabbath Sept. 2nd, 1832...Session being acquainted with the circumstances of Eunis Swift joining the Cambelite Baptist, ordered that her name should be stricken of these records.*
- *“Pleasant Ridge, August 16th, 1833...Mary Dill, a member of this Church, had joined the Cambelite Society in Carthage and after a deliberate consideration of the case, the Session were unanimously of the opinion that her name should be stricken off these records.*

By 1852 Southwestern Ohio had sixty New Testament churches with more than 5,000 members.

The term “Campbellite” is taken from a father and son who had a great influence upon many Churches of Christ in the early 1800's. Thomas and Alexander Campbell were originally associated with the Presbyterian Church of Scotland. It was the father, Thomas who first began to move away from denominationalism. His desire was to leave the creeds and doctrines of men to get back to the Bible. He wrote, “We shall speak where the Bible speaks, we shall be silent where the Bible is silent.”

The son, Alexander, was born in 1788 and educated at the University of Glasgow. The young Campbell joined his father in America in Sept. 29, 1809. On June 12, 1812, Alexander and seven other members of his family (including his father) were baptized in Buffalo Creek by Matthias Luce, a Baptist Minister. The purpose of this baptism was for the remission of their sins. In 1830, the Mahoning Baptist Association of which the Campbell's were members, was dissolved because they found that the Bible authorizes no such associations other than the church.

The Campbell's had a great influence upon what has become known as the Restoration Movement. Some have therefore attributed the establishment of the “Church of Christ/Disciples of Christ to the Campbells. Often they would call members of the church: Campbellites.

As late as 1923 the *Kansas City Star* carried an article, “When the ‘Campbellites’ First Came to Missouri”. The article states: “...the converts came to be known as ‘Campbellites,’ though that appellation has always been distasteful to their leaders”. A good reason exists for this distaste among members of the Church of Christ. Please consider the following reasons I am not a “Campbellite”.

I'm Not a Disciple of Campbell

Personally I have read very little of either Thomas or Alexander Campbell's writings. I am not a follower/learner/student of Campbell. However, I am a disciple (follower/learner/student) of the Lord Jesus Christ. First of all, I preach that which I preach for the simple reason that it is found in the New Testament, and not because it may be found in the writings of Alexander Campbell *“And whatever*

you do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through Him" (Col. 3:17). Additionally, my stand for unity in Christ does not make me a "Campbellite", Jesus and the apostles taught it first. *"Now I plead with you, brethren, by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that you all speak the same thing, and that there be no divisions among you, but that you be perfectly joined together in the same mind and in the same judgment."* (I Cor. 1:10; also see Jn. 17:19-2). Furthermore, I believe that the doctrines and commandments of men should be rejected, but this does not make me a "Campbellite." Jesus and the apostles taught the same thing, *"Hypocrites! Well did Isaiah prophesy about you, saying: 'These people draw near to Me with their mouth, and honor Me with their lips, but their heart is far from Me. And in vain they worship Me, teaching as doctrines the commandments of men.'"* (Mt. 15:7-9). Finally, I teach that hearing, believing, repenting, confessing and being baptized are conditions for membership in the church of Christ. This too does not make me a "Campbellite." These scriptural terms of pardon were laid down by Jesus and the apostles (Rom. 10:17; Mk. 16:16; Acts 2:38; Rom. 10:9,10).

A disciple adheres to the teachings of his master. However, on several key issues I strongly disagree with Alexander Campbell.

Campbell's view on located preachers is also contrary to the teaching of the New Testament. He contended for a distinction between preaching and teaching. Evangelists, he argued, were to serve "abroad" in the world, while a plurality of local elders were to serve "at home" in the congregation. (Christian System, p. 79). Campbell's view was a hindrance in that it prevented a "settled ministry" of able preachers to work with local churches.

Contrary to my understanding of the scriptures Campbell believed in Conventions. *"I am of opinion that a convention or general meeting, of the churches of the Reformation, is a very great desideratum. Nay, I will further say, that it is all important to the cause of reformation. I am also of opinion that Cincinnati is the proper place for holding such a convention"*. (Millennial Harbinger, 1849, p. 476).

The Missionary Society was formed in 1845 and began to function. Campbell as its first president. *"The establishment of this society marked the climax of years of intense effort on the part of Alexander Campbell to urge the brotherhood to found some kind of a general organization through which the entire brotherhood could cooperate to evangelize the world."* (Earl West, The Search For The Ancient Order, vol. 1, p. 166).

This too is an unscriptural arrangement for the carrying out of the local congregation's duty in evangelism.

I Was Not Baptized in His Name

In Corinth some were calling themselves by Paul's name instead of Christ's, so he asked, *"Now I say this, that each of you says, 'I am of Paul,' or 'I am of Apollos,' or 'I am of Cephas,' or 'I am of Christ.' Is Christ divided? Was Paul crucified for you? Or were you baptized in the name of Paul?"* (1 Cor. 1:12,13). Likewise, I know of no one who has been baptized in the name or authority of Campbell. However, like myself, I know of many who have been baptized in the name of Christ (Acts 2:38).

Campbell Did Not Die for me

To these same brethren at Corinth Paul further inquired as to whether he had died for them. The obvious answer is: NO! Christ died for our sins (I Cor. 15:3). Thus, we should wear His name and none other.

Campbell's Name Is Divisive

Just as Paul condemned the use of divisive names by the brethren in Corinth so Campbell's name would be a cause of religious division among men. Many other great scholars have expressed their agreement with Paul. Dr. Albert Barnes: *"Should not, and will not, all these divisions be merged into*

the high and holy name, 'Christian?'" Henry Ward Beecher: At the communion table: "Let me speak the language of heaven and call you simply 'Christians.'" Campbell himself would not want me to wear his name: "Abandon all party names and take the name of 'Christian'". In the days of the Reformation, those who held the views championed by Martin Luther were dubbed "Lutherans" by their enemies. Later, they accepted this name as their denominational designation. We like the disciples at Antioch call ourselves "Christians", never "Campbellites" (Ac.11:26).

Salvation Is Not in His Name

There is only one name by which salvation can be found and that is the name of Christ. *"Nor is there salvation in any other, for there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved" (Acts 4:12).*

Campbell Is Not Old Enough to Have Established the Church of Christ

Consider the following facts about the churches of Christ in America in relation to the birth of Campbell and also his arrival in America.

- ▶ When Barton W. Stone established local churches of Christ in Kentucky in 1804, Campbell was just 16.
- ▶ When Abner Jones and 20 Baptist congregations turned to the New Testament in 1802 Campbell was just 14.
- ▶ In 1793, when James O'Kelly split with the Methodist and started churches of Christ, Campbell was only 5 years old.
- ▶ In the early 1790's when Abner Jones and Elias Smith started their work in New Hampshire and Vermont, Campbell was only 3 or 4.
- ▶ A historical marker at Revere Mass., a northeast suburb of Boston which says: (1710) Church of Christ in Rumney Marsh. Erected in 1710. Thomas Cheever, the first settled minister. Died Dec. 27, 1749 aged 91 years. Massachusetts Bay Colony, Tercentenary Commission. This was 78 years before Campbell was born.
- ▶ Each of the five originated independently of the others between 1790 and 1810 in different parts of the country.
- ▶ John Glas was born in Fifeshire, Scotland in Oct. 1695, the son of several generations of Presbyterian preachers. Educated at St. Andrews and Edinburgh universities, in the early 1720s he was minister of the Presbyterian church in Dundee. By the end of that decade, however, he had been expelled from the church because of his insistence on acting only on Bible authority. He preached and established independent churches until age 78 and his work was known and respected by American restorers. His tombstone read:

JOHN GLAS
Minister of the Congregational Church in this place,
Died 2nd November 1773,
Aged 78 years.
He long survived
KATHARINE BLACK,
His beloved wife,
And all his Children, Fifteen in number,
Many of whom arrived at mature age;
And Nine lie here beside their Parents.
His Character in the
Churches of CHRIST is well known
And will outlive all monumental inscriptions.

Clearly, neither Alexander or even his father Thomas Campbell could have started the churches of Christ in America or another place. The Church of Christ originated 1800 years before the Restoration movement with Christ as its founder on the day of Pentecost at Jerusalem in 30 A.D. Paul indicated to the brethren at Rome that he and they knew of these churches. *"Salute one another with a holy kiss, the churches of Christ salute you"* (Romans 16:16).

Questions:

1. How did the term "Campbellite" originate?
2. When and where was Alexander Campbell born? When did he come to America?
3. Why are true New Testament Christians not Campbellites?
4. What false doctrines did Alexander Campbell adhere to?
5. In whose name should one be baptized?
6. How are man-made religious names divisive?
7. Was Alexander Campbell old enough to have started the churches of Christ in America? Explain.
8. What is the oldest known church of Christ in America? How many years was this before Campbell was born and before he arrived in America?
9. A church of Christ was known to have existed in England in 1669. How many years was this before Alexander Campbell was born?
10. In what year and where was the first church of Christ according to the New Testament?

Application & Discussion:

1. Do you think the church of Christ or the New Testament church has been in existence since the first century? Explain why?

2. If you were to go to an island where there was no New Testament church and establish one? Could it be said that you created or start the church? If not you, who? Would it be logical and scriptural for others to call the disciples of these churches after you name?

Homework: Make a study the history of the New Testament church from the end of the first century to the arrival of Alexander Campbell in America.

“One Church is as Good as Another”

Quite a few men and women claim that "one church is as good as another". However, practically everyone is repulsed by at least one or two practices being performed in the name of religion. Some strongly disapprove of the Jehovah's Witnesses view of Christ. Others would have nothing to do with the Christian Scientists, Mormons, or Pentecostal groups and their "miracles". Still others reject the formality of Episcopalians and Presbyterians, the traditions of Catholicism, etc. The mere fact that over 760 churches (all claiming allegiance to Jesus Christ) exist in America proves that nearly everyone dislikes something about some church. Thus, no one really believes one is as good as another.

Those who hold that one church is as good as another are not consistent in their belief. Some will argue: "It doesn't matter what you believe so long as you are sincere." However, this sincerity is just as applicable to the Jew who affirms that Jesus was an illegitimate child who lied about who He was, performed no miracles, and did not raise from the dead. With such an argument sincerity would be made the only condition of salvation. Other well meaning individuals will argue that "there are good people in all churches". True, but that can be said of Hindus, Moslems, and among the several atheist organizations that exist.

Another argument goes like this: "There are many roads that lead to heaven." If there is no standard or spiritual map to determine which roads lead to heaven then naturally all roads do lead to heaven. What about the roads of Buddhism, Shintoism, and atheism? Do these roads equally lead to heaven? Jesus never taught nor believed that all roads lead to heaven. He said, *"Enter by the narrow gate; for the gate is wide, and the way is broad that leads to destruction, and many are those who enter by it. For the gate is small, and the way is narrow that leads to life, and few are those who find it"* (Matt. 7:13,14).

One final inconsistent argument is: "I can't believe that so many people will go to hell." This concept leads to the doctrine of universalism, which states that all souls will eventually find salvation in the grace of God no matter how righteous or wicked they may have been or which church they belonged to. Yet, when asked if wicked men like Judas or Hitler will be given a place in heaven most will deny them this "universal grace" of God. Furthermore, such a doctrine is contrary to God's revelation which tells of souls burning in Hell (Lk. 16:19-31; Mk. 9:43,45,47). Worst of all, if this is true, then God sent Jesus Christ to suffer and bleed on the cross in vain.

Honestly ask yourself the following questions. Was Jim Jones' church of Jonestown in South America where over 900 people were forced to drink cyanide laced kool-aid out of an old bath tub as good as the church where you can drink the water of life which Christ gives (John 4 & 6)?

Is a Gay Synagogue or People's Church Community of the Love of Christ as good as one teaching one man for one woman? The church of the New Testament never advocated homosexuality!

Is an "X-rated" church just as good as Christ's church? An Associated Press article out of Dallas said, "Some churches have hell, fire, and brimstone ...The First Unitarian Church of Richardson has a stripper. Diana King danced for the congregation last Sunday. When she was through, there was nothing left but . . . the congregation's imagination. The tall blonde stripper said she 'would like to do a sermon using the exotic dance, and members of the congregation could join me if they liked.'" The reporter goes on to say that "the church's 200 adult members and their children watched in fascinated silence as Diana removed her clothing and did the same dance she performs nightly at a Dallas night spot". Mr. Bill Nichols, "Pastor" of the suburban Dallas church said, "I have not had one complaint. I feel like exotic dancing is a part of life. It fit very well into our service." Billy Graham said, "bad religion is a particularly evil thing. Misguided religion is worse than no religion at all" (Houston Post, Dec. 10, 1964).

Was David Koresh's church with its sexual immorality, murdering, and mass suicide as good as the church which teaches moral purity and is pro-life?

Is a church which advocates the right of a woman and her doctor to terminate an unwanted, unborn baby as good as a church which believes in the sanctity of life?

Is a man-made church or denomination purchased by the mere sweat and money of mere men as good as the church purchased with the blood of Christ (Ac. 20:28)? Is there anything as valuable as the blood of Christ?

Is a church founded by a sinful man as good as a church founded by sinless Son of God?

Is a church built by mere mortals as good as the church Christ built (Matt. 16:18)?

Is a church promised by the prophets and Jesus as good as one promoted by mere men?

What if a preacher said that one bride is as good as another? What if one said that concerning your marriage? Did Jacob feel that way when he married Leah instead of Rachael? The church is the bride of Christ (Eph. 5:32). Shall we insult Him by saying that one church (bride) is as good as another. Furthermore, ponder the point that Christ is not a bigamist. He has only one bride.

The Scriptures Teach One Church is Not as Good as Another

It will be surprising to a lot of people that the Bible never teaches that one church is as good as another. As a matter of fact it teaches just the opposite. One church is not as good as another.

The seven churches of Asia were not as equally good. The church at Ephesus had left her *"first love"* (Rev. 2:4). Pergamos had members who held to *"the doctrine of the Nicolaitans"* which the Lord said, *"I hate"* (2:15). Thyatira permitted *"that woman Jezebel, which calleth herself a prophetess, to teach and to seduce my servants to commit fornication, and to eat things sacrificed to idols."* Sardis was condemned as being dead (3:1). Because of lukewarmness Jesus threatened to remove Laodicea's candlestick (3:15-17). However, please note that not a word was expressed against the churches of Smyrna and Philadelphia (2:8-11; 3:7-13). Thus, the New Testament teaches that one church of Christ is not as good as another. Moreover then, how could a man-made church be as good as a church like Smyrna or Philadelphia?

Furthermore, the Scriptures teach that one Christian is not as good as another. Some are carnal (I Cor. 3:1) and others are spiritual (Gal. 6:1). Some are kind and forgiving and edifying to one another. Others *"bite and devour one another."* Is a church composed of people who *"bite and devour one another"* (Gal. 5:15), as good as one *"knit together in love"* (Col. 2:2)?

Choosing the Right Standard

So, if one church is not as good as another, what is the standard by which to determine which church is acceptable to God? 1) The standard in measuring a church's acceptability is not a subjective one. If one church is not as good as another then there must be a standard to determine which church is and which is not as good as God wants it to be. That standard can be an objective standard, that is - a standard which is true regardless of who accepts and who rejects it or how they feel about it. On the other hand, that standard may be subjective: every man is a law unto himself. A mere subjective objection has validity solely for the one making the objection; it can never be imposed on anyone else. Thus, another's subjective evaluation would be as valid as yours. Examples: friendliness of a church, attractiveness of a church, proximity of the building, abundance of recreational activities, ability of the preacher to present an interesting message, the number of celebrities which are brought in to entertain them. Although some of these come into consideration in selecting a congregation to attend, these details have nothing to do with whether or not the given religion is pleasing or displeasing to God. Any reason, other than the Word of God, for choosing one church above another is subjective.

If we wish to prove a church is pleasing to God we must use an objective standard. The Word of God is that standard. I may feel a church is okay. I may like that church and the people in it. Yet this

does not prove anything about how God feels or thinks about the church. If we want His feelings and thinking concerning a church, we will have to consult His Word.

2) A particular denomination may not serve as a standard. Denominations often use each other as standards. Like those at Corinth, they compare themselves with themselves. *"For we are not bold to class or compare ourselves with some of those who commend themselves; but when they measure themselves by themselves, and compare themselves with themselves, they are without understanding"* (2 Cor. 10:12). Consider for example, if one man says he is as good as another man then he is using his life as a standard and not Christ's life. Does it prove that he is as good as he ought to be? When a man sets his watch by another man's watch which is wrong, than no matter how well his runs it will still be wrong. Thus, if one church claims to be just as good as another than *"they are not wise."* They are using a false standard, it does not mean they are as good as they ought to be.

3) A local congregation is not the standard in determining whether one church is as good as another. No local church is a standard, at best it is a product of the standard representing what a real local church ought to be. No local church is perfect. For a denomination to point to a local church of Christ and point out its failures will not invalidate the standard. No local church today began on Pentecost. One can join a local church, but he cannot join the church universal. God adds him to is (Acts 2:47). Comparing a denomination to a local church is unfair and misleading for it is not the universal church and is comparing apples with oranges.

4) God's Word is the standard by which we can accurately determine if one church is as good as it ought to be. When asked why a certain person would never attend or be a member of a homosexual church or a polygamy practicing church they will claim: "The practice of this church is contrary to the Word of God." This remark presupposes that there is a standard by which a given church must be measured and has correctly identified it as the Word of God. All shall be judged by this standard on Judgment Day. Jesus said, *"He who rejects Me, and does not receive My sayings, has one who judges him; the word I spoke is what will judge him at the last day"* (Jn. 12:48).

This objective standard must be applied completely and uniformly. We are not left to pick and choose what portions of the standard are applicable and what portions are not. For example, to say that one church should practice the Lord's Supper and another does not, is an inconsistent use of the standard. If the Bible is the standard and if one church is as good as another than they all must meet up equally to that standard. If you find so much as one church to which you object on some Biblical basis, you have given up the belief that "one church is as good as another"

Differences That Make a Difference

Many differing religions exist in America. The reason for so many differing denominations is that they all believe their particular beliefs are better than others. They have developed creed books which outline what they do believe on various subjects. All the preachers and most of the members of a particular denomination must adhere to its creed. It is the beliefs in these creeds that cause religious division, not the teachings of Christ. You may be wondering, "Are not all these creeds based upon the Bible?" Mostly, yet they do contain many beliefs that were thought up by mere men. This is where the difference lies.

1) It makes a difference what a church believes. Disbelief in the Gospel message will result in damnation (Mk. 16:15,16). According to Jesus if they walk in another way, if they believe another truth, and if they pursue another life they will be led to damnation. *"I am the way the truth, and the life, no one comes to the Father but through me"* (John 14:6). Belief in the truth is essential to freedom from sin (Jn. 8:32). Belief in the wrong thing will lead to being accursed of God. Paul warned the churches of Galatia, *"but even though we, or an angel from heaven, should preach to you a gospel contrary to that which we have preached to you, let him be accursed"* (Gal. 1:8,9). Just being sincere is not good enough, because we are saved not by the mere act of believing, but by what we believe.

2) It makes a difference what plan of salvation they obey. Jesus died for all men, but not all men

will meet the conditions for receiving His grace. The conditions are: First, they must believe (Mk. 16:16). *"You see that a man is justified by works, and not by faith alone"* (James 2:24). Next, they must repent (Ac. 2:38). *"Then Peter said the them, "Repent, and let every one of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins; and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit".* The third step is confession of their belief in Jesus as the Son of God. Paul wrote, *"that if you confess with your mouth Jesus as Lord, and believe in your heart that God raised Him from the dead, you shall be saved; for with the heart man believes, resulting in righteousness, and with the mouth he confesses, resulting in salvation"* (Rom. 10:9,10). Finally, one must be baptized to be saved (I Pet. 3:21). *"He that believes and is baptized shall be saved, he that does not believe, shall be condemned"* (Mark 16:16).

Any church which teaches the wrong conditions of pardon is not as good as the one that teaches the truth. Many pervert the plain teachings of Jesus in Mark 16:16. The Atheist teaches: He that believeth and is baptized shall not be saved. Universalist's doctrine would render it: Every man shall be saved whether or not he believes and is baptized. The Calvinist: He that is predestined to be saved shall believe and be baptized. Catholicism's rendition would be: He that is baptized (infant baptism) shall be saved and later believe. A Baptist would represent it as: He that believeth is saved and should be baptized. All need to heed the warning not to take away or add to God's Word (Rev. 22:18,19).

3) It makes a difference how they worship God. God has always demanded that He be worshiped according to His revealed will. Through out the Bible many men and women have been condemned by God because they worshipped Him according to their will not His Will. For example, Nadab and Abihu were two priest who offered incense with strange fire and were consumed by fire from heaven (Lev. 10:1-3). Also, Paul condemned the worship of the Corinthians because they were abusing the Lord's Supper (I Cor. 11:17-34).

In order to worship according to the Will of God, worship must be rendered in spirit and truth. *"But an hour is coming, and now is, when the true worshipers shall worship the Father in spirit and truth; for such people the Father seeks to be His worshipers. God is spirit; and those who worship Him must worship in spirit and truth"* (John 4:23,24). Any worship based upon man's will is vain and will be rejected by God, as He rejected the self-willed worship of the Pharisees (Mt. 15:7-9).

Conclusion

It is amazing that people who argue that one church is as good as another will inevitably pick one started by men to the rejection of the church of Christ. They select one following a human creed and not the church following only the Bible. They choose the church of their choice instead of Christ's choice, and they select one with a human name and reject one with a divine name?

No, one church is not as good as another. If we were merely speaking of man-made churches we could correctly say that one denomination is as good as another. But no denomination is as good as the Church of Christ (Rom. 16:16). The difference is that one is humanly devised and the other is divinely revealed.

The purpose of this lesson is not to plead with men to leave one denomination to become a member of another denomination. It is simply calling upon men of every denomination to depart from their denominations and become a part of the Lord's church.

Questions:

1. Did Jesus believe that all roads lead to Heaven? Explain.
2. What happened to Jim Jones' church in South America in the late seventies?

3. What happened at Branch Dividian compound in Waco?
4. Is a church built by mere mortals as good as the church Christ built (Matt. 16:18)? Explain.
5. Is a man-made church or denomination purchased by the mere sweat and money of mere men as good as the church purchased with the blood of Christ (Ac. 20:28)? Explain.
6. What are some subjective standards used by people when choosing a church?
7. What is the correct standard in choosing a church?
8. Do all churches teach the same Gospel, plan of salvation, organization? Explain.
9. What makes a true worshiper in God's eyes?
10. What are the various views on Mark 16:16?

Application & Discussion:

1. What is the creed book of the New Testament Church? Does any denomination have a better creed? Explain.
2. Why is it that no one really believes that one church is as good as another?

Homework: Explain to someone why the church of Christ of the New Testament is so different.

“What is Right and Wrong is Determined by the Individual”

From where does the concept of right and wrong arise? Why are some things “right” and other things “wrong?” Ethics deals with what is morally right and wrong. Morality is concerned with establishing and disseminating principles of right and wrong in conduct or behavior. Simply put, ethics states what one “ought” and “ought not” do. The Bible has much to say about ethics, morality, goodness, and truth. But first, man has tried to discover morality apart from Him. Who determines what is morally right or wrong?

- **Morality is NOT Determined by the Individual**

The Greek philosopher, Protagoras, claimed “man is the measure of all things.” According to the “New Age” movement every individual is god. As god he can look from within and decide what is right or wrong.

Jeremiah wrote, *“O LORD, I know the way of man is not in himself; it is not in man who walks to direct his own steps”* (Jer 10:23). And Solomon wrote, *“there is a way that seems right to a man, but its end is the way of death”* (Pr 16:25). If every man did his own thing, anarchy and chaos would prevail over society. No one could be accused of a crime and no one would have a right to object to the behavior of another.

- **Morality is NOT Determined by Power**

What if right or wrong was determined by certain powerful individuals? The Greek philosopher, Thrasymachus, said, “justice is the interest of stronger party.” Right makes right. This could be political, military, religious or financial power. Thus, the rules for right and wrong are determined by the “golden rule:” he who has the gold makes the rules. However, it has been said that “power corrupts and absolute power corrupts absolutely.” Nero and other tyrants of history have shown that those with great power can propagate great evil.

- **Morality is NOT Determined by Humanity**

The next view not only takes the job of the moralist out of the hands of the every individual and powerful individuals, it puts it in the hands of all men in general. Now mankind is the measure of all things.

Yet humanity as a whole or in part has never been able to determine what is right or wrong. Only if majority rule were enforced could this methodology work. When that happens the issue of the source of morality is back in the hands of a few powerful individuals.

- **Morality is NOT Determined by Culture**

Societal traditions have been used as the determining factors of what is considered morally right or wrong. Samuel Butler said, “morality is the custom of one’s country: cannibalism is moral in a cannibal country.” At the war crimes trial in Nuremburg, Germany, Hitler’s henchmen argued that they had broken no laws. Germany’s own legal system, they contended, permitted the elimination of those who impeded the advance of the Third Reich. Adolph Eichmann protested before his execution, “I had to obey the laws of war and my flag”.

Robert H. Jackson, chief counsel for the U.S. in the Nuremberg Trials, was forced to appeal to permanent values, “a law beyond the law.” That law is the moral code of God found in the Bible. Furthermore, to let culture determine morality is to say that the majority rules when it comes to morals.

Augustine aptly wrote, "right is right even if no one is doing it; wrong is wrong even if everyone is doing it."

- **Morality is NOT Determined by the Times**

The Greek philosopher Heraclitus maintained that "no one ever steps into the same river twice, for fresh waters are ever upon him." Times are always changing. Some will argue against a moral standard they consider archaic by demanding that everyone needs to step into the twenty-first century. "There probably cannot ever be any absolutely correct or proper rules of morality, since people and conditions change over the years and what is 'right' today may be 'wrong' tomorrow. Sane ethics are relativistic and situational" (Albert Ellis, *The Humanist*, Sept/Oct, 79, 18.)

Can a book over 1900 years old be relevant for the 21st century? Is Biblical morality out of date? God is the author of the Bible and Jesus is the Truth and the Word. God and Jesus do not change (Heb. 7:12; 13:8). An unchanging, all-knowing God can make laws for all the ages. Times have changed greatly in the scientific community. However, the law of gravity is immutable or changeless. It keeps things grounded to the earth's surface. God's moral laws are equally immutable.

- **Morality is NOT Determined by What Feels Good**

Hemingway believed, "what is moral is what you feel good after, and what is immoral is what you feel bad after." According to modern man, "if it feels good, do it." This is the old Epicurean philosophy of hedonism. Corliss Lamont explains this view in modern terms, "for Humanism no human acts are good or bad in or of themselves. Whether an act is good or bad is to be judged by its consequences for the individual and society...He bows down to no alleged supreme moral authority either past or present" (Lamont, 235).

However, not everything that brings pain is evil. Giving immunization shots to children causes pain yet is for their good. Conversely, not everything that brings pleasure is good. This is especially true when comparing the temporary pleasure of sin with eternal glory. *"By faith Moses, ...choosing rather to suffer affliction with the people of God than to enjoy the passing pleasures of sin, esteeming the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures in Egypt; for he looked to the reward"* (Heb. 11:25-26). The artist formerly known as "Prince" said it well, "hard to say what's right when all I wanna do is wrong."

- **Morality is NOT Determined by Moderation**

Some believe man cannot control his passions and desires for what makes him feel good, thus some believe all things are acceptable in moderation. This is what Aristotle called the "golden mean." He "believed that temperance is the mean between indulgence and insensibility. And pride is the moderate course between vanity and humility. Likewise, courage is the halfway point between fear and aggression" (Geisler, Norman L., *Christians Ethics*, 19).

Not everything can be practiced in moderation. For example, how can anyone accept murder, rape, adultery, stealing so long as it is done in moderation. Who gets to determine what is moderate and when an action becomes immoderate? Some virtues are not meant to be done in moderation. Paul commanded the Christians of Corinth to *"be steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, knowing that your labor is not in vain in the Lord"* (1 Cor. 15:58). God's children are not to practice moderation when it comes to love. *"In sincere love of the brethren, love one another fervently with a pure heart"* (1 Pet. 1:22).

- **Morality is NOT Determined by Situations**

Joseph Fletcher's book *Situation Ethics - The New Morality* claims that morality is determined by the current situation. He told *Time Magazine*, "as to sexual morality, the traditional rules are giving way to 'situation ethics' - meaning that nothing is inherently right or wrong, but must be judged in context on the spur of the moment" (TIME, Apr 22, '66, 42). "Is adultery wrong?" Fletcher says, "one can only respond, 'I don't know. Maybe. Give me a case. Describe a real situation.'" According to the *Humanist Manifesto II*, humanists "affirm that moral values derive their source from human experience. Ethics is autonomous and situational, needing no theological or ideological sanction. Ethics stems from human need and interest. This view makes every man the standard according to his situation (Jer. 10:23; Prov.

16:25).

- **Morality is NOT Determined by Love**

Fletcher even spoke before the Southern Baptist Convention, "I am prepared to argue that the Christian obligation calls for lies and adultery and fornication and theft and promise-breaking and killing sometime, depending on the situation. The normative in Christian decision-making is loving concern rather than law" ("Morality Gap Shoot-Out", Christianity today, Apr. 10, 1970, p. 647).

Love cannot be the lone factor in determining right from wrong, because men will be lovers of self (2 Tim. 3:2); lovers of money (1 Tim. 6:10); lovers of the world (1 Jn. 2:15); lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God (2 Tim. 3:4) and *"the love of many will grow cold"* (Mt. 24:12). Love does have a great deal to do with right or wrong, but only when love has the right object and does the right thing. Jesus explained that the essence of all law is love for God and fellow-man (Matthew 22:36-40). Yet, Jesus said, *"If anyone loves Me, he will keep My word"* (Jn. 14:23). *"God is love"* (1 Jn. 4:16) and therefore He alone has the right to define what is love and what is the loving thing to do. *"For this is the love of God, that we keep His commandments. And His commandments are not burdensome"* (1 Jn. 5:3). Paul said, *"love is the fulfilling of the law"* (Rom. 13:10).

- **Morality IS Determined by God**

God created man. He made man in His own image. He lovingly created rules with man's best interest in mind. His moral laws for us cannot be improved or replaced. *"For My thoughts are not your thoughts, Nor are your ways My ways," says the Lord. 'For as the heavens are higher than the earth, So are My ways higher than your ways, And My thoughts than your thoughts'"* (Is. 55:8,9). What is wrong has nothing to do with God not wanting us to be happy, but for us to rejoice in this life and have eternal joy in the next. What is good is not good simply because He said so, but it is only good because God is good. Love is good because *"God is love."* Honesty is always the best policy because God never lies. His moral code is knowable (Jn. 8:32) and absolute (Jn. 14:6; Pr. 3:5-7). He gives us lists of what is evil and therefore must be repented of and avoided or else forfeit eternal life (Gal. 5:19-21; Rev. 21:8). He listed virtues that must be practiced (Gal. 2:22,23). It is by His law that all will be judged (Jn. 12:48).

Questions:

1. Give a definition of "moral ethics"?
2. Why is man not the standard for morality?
3. Why are powerful men/women not the source of morality?
4. Why does not the whole of humanity have the ability to determine what is right and what is wrong?
5. How did the Nazis use culture to defend their ethical choice during World War 2?

6. How can the Bible which is 1900 years old still be relevant in this postmodern era?
7. Why are feelings an untrustworthy guide to what is right and wrong?
8. At what point do murder and adultery become morally right when practiced in moderation?
9. What is Situation Ethics?
10. What is love as defined by the Bible?
11. Why is God the only one who can determine for us what is right and what is wrong?

Application & Discussion:

1. Give some Biblical and current day examples of how feelings cannot be trusted to guide us in choosing what is right or wrong?
2. Why is our conscience not a reliable guide in morality apart from the Bible?
2. Read Matthew 12:1-5. Is it just to use situation ethics to justify David in eating the showbread? Explain.

Homework: Examine your life this week to see if you are using any of the false standards for justifying your beliefs and actions.

“Just Being Sincere in One’s Faith Is Good Enough”

A young mother was traveling west to meet up with her husband. They were to start a new life out west. She repeatedly warned the brakeman not to forget her as he called out each stop. After all, her stop was a very small station and she was the only passenger disembarking. As the steam engine struggled through the blizzard, it came to a stop. A sincere, well-meaning older couple awoke the woman and informed her that this was her stop. She quickly bundled up the baby and left the train. Forty-five minutes later the brakeman came to warn the young mother that her stop was coming up. It was too late. She already had stepped off the train to her death. The train had stopped for a quick mechanic repair in the middle of the blizzard. Later, the woman’s body was found frozen as she had curled up to shield her baby who survived.

The older couple was not malicious but sincere. They meant her no harm. They only wanted to help. The young woman believed them. She sincerely thought it was her stop. Nevertheless, sincerity killed the young mother.

The Necessity of Sincerity

Sincerity is a virtuous trait. A sincere person is free from deceit, pretense, or hypocrisy. He possess honesty of mind and is genuine in character.

On the other hand, insincerity is wrong. The Pharisees were condemned by Jesus for their insincere actions of alms giving, prayer and fasting. They appeared outwardly to men to be genuine in their devotions but only wanted the praise of men instead of pleasing God (Matt. 6:1-8). They would teach others to do one thing and they would hypocritically practice another (Matt. 23:3). Jesus warned sincere followers of these insincere hypocrites that if they were to follow these blind leaders both would end up in the ditch (Matt. 15:14). God not only sees a man’s outward conduct and communication but judges the content of his heart.

To be saved from our sins men must be sincere in their hearts before God. God must be approached by those with a sincere heart (Gal. 5:6) and from a sincere heart (Rom. 6:17; Eph. 6:6). *“Let us draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience and our bodies washed with pure water”* (Heb. 10:22). Only those who sincerely believe, honestly confess Jesus as the Son of God, genuinely repent, and are baptized will be saved (Mark 16:16; Rom. 10:9,10; Acts 2:38). After baptism the Christian will live a life of faithfulness. As Paul instructed the Philippians *“that you may approve the things that are excellent, that you may be sincere and without offense till the day of Christ,”* (Phil. 1:10).

Sincerity Alone is Not Enough

Although sincerity is essential to salvation in Christ and obtaining eternal life, sincerity alone will not save anyone. Sincerity alone does not save or bring rewards in every day life. A gun goes off and kills another. A man sincerely claims, “I didn’t know it was loaded.” Yet the gun still fired a bullet and the man shot is still dead. Sincerity did not save him. A teenager steps up to the booth to purchase a movie ticket. He sincerely felt he had enough money, but his seven dollars will not cover the eight dollar ticket

no matter how sincere. A quarterback throws the ball to an opposing team member. He sincerely meant it for one of his receivers. The referee still calls the touchdown and hence game for the other team. The quarterback's sincerity did not save the game. Sincere doctors and nurses who cut off the wrong leg or give the wrong medicine are not given a free pass by the courts or their patients no matter how sincere they may have been. Just being sincere in belief will not save you from making mistakes and suffering the consequences.

When it comes to religion many will argue that **"it doesn't matter what you believe so long as you are sincere."** Those who sincerely believe this are honestly mistaken. As is seen the story of the young prophet sent by God to condemn the false religion developed by King Jeroboam. When God gave ten of the twelve tribes of Judah to King Jeroboam he feared that he would lose his kingdom when the Jews went up to Jerusalem to worship at the Temple. So, he changed the priesthood from the tribe of Levi to just any tribe. He changed the days of the feasts. He changed the location of the place of worship to Dan and Bethel. And he added golden calves through which people could worship Jehovah. The young prophet was given not only the mission of pronouncing God's condemnation on Jeroboam's digressions, he was told to return by another way and not to stop in the northern kingdom of Israel to either eat or drink. On his way back, the young prophet met an older prophet who lied to him saying, *"I also am a prophet as thou art; and an angel spake unto me by the word of Jehovah, saying, Bring him back with thee into thy house, that he may eat bread and drink water. But he lied unto him"* (1 Kings 13:18,KJV). As the young prophet continued on his way home, a lion slew him. He sincerely believed the older prophet, but that was not enough to save him.

If sincerity in one's beliefs is good enough, than all sincere beliefs are good enough. A sincere belief in the Koran is driving some people to murder innocent civilians. Are the Muslims good enough before God and the rest of the world? A sincere belief in the evils of abortion does not justify violence against abortion doctors. Or does a sincere belief in abortion change the fact that it is still murder? A sincere belief that the world is flat does not make it so. What about Moonies, Hare Krishna, Jehovah Witnesses, Buddhists or even atheists who are sincere in their beliefs? Their sincerity does not change the fact that Jesus claimed, *"I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through Me"* (John 14:6) *"Therefore I said to you that you will die in your sins; for if you do not believe that I am He, you will die in your sins"* (John 8:24).

Still others trying to justify their unscriptural forms of worship will claim **"it doesn't matter how you worship so long as you are sincere."** Hundreds of prophets of the god Baal found out that sincerity alone does not justify one's worship. Jehovah's prophet Elijah had challenged the prophets of Baal to a show down on Mount Carmel. Each side was to take a bull, make an altar, and call upon their god. Which ever god answered with fire to consume the sacrifice was the true God. The prophets of Baal went first. They *"called on the name of Baal from morning even till noon, saying, 'O Baal, hear us!' But there was not voice; no one answered. They leaped about he altar which they had made....So they cried aloud, and cut themselves, as was their custom, with knives and lances, until the blood gushed out of them...But there was no voice; no one answered, no one paid attention"* (1 Kings 18:26,28,29). They must have been very sincere. Yet that did not change the fact that only Elijah was able to invoke a response from Jehovah who sent fire from heaven to consume the sacrifice. All these false prophets were put to death by Elijah regardless of how sincere they may have been.

Sincerity alone is not enough for acceptable worship. God wants true worshipers. Jesus said, *"the true worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and truth; for the Father is seeking such to worship Him. God is Spirit, and those who worship Him must worship in spirit and truth"* (John 4:23,24).

If sincerity is all that is important in acceptable worship, instead of the truth, then all forms of worship are acceptable. Muslim worship with sacrifice and throwing stones at the devil are acceptable. The Hindus worship of millions of gods and animals are acceptable. Worshiping ancestors by the Japanese is acceptable. The prayer wheels of Buddhists are acceptable. Even the Unitarian Universalist Church of Richardson, Texas has acceptable worship when they called in a stripper to preform her routine before two hundred men, women and children who were gathered for worship. However sincere

the worship may be Jesus still claims that God is accepting only those true worshipers who worship in truth.

With over a thousand different denominations to choose from many defend everyone's right to chose the church of their choice because "it does not matter which church you attend as long as you are sincere." Jesus never taught that. He threatened five of the seven churches of Asia with the removal of their candlestick if they did not repent (Rev. 2 and 3). What about being a sincere member of a church like David Koresh's in Waco, Texas? Or Jim Jones' church which moved to South America and over nine hundred sincere members died after being told to drink poisoned Kool-Aid out of a bath tub? If sincerity is all that is necessary in choosing a church, why did the Son of God come down from Heaven to build and purchase His church with His own blood (Matt. 16:18; Acts 20:28)?

How Sincere People Respond to the Truth

Some will argue that even if a person's religion or beliefs are wrong, what really matters is their sincerity. Is it enough to be sincere? What happens when a truly sincere person comes face to face with the truth? How they respond will prove whether they were truly sincere or not.

■ **Not By Choosing Feelings Over Fact**

Many base their beliefs and practice upon their sincerity. In turn their sincerity is founded upon their feelings. They feel this is right or that is wrong.

However, feelings do not always coincide with the facts. A terminally ill cancer or heart patient may claim they have never felt better in their life. No one would question their feelings or sincerity. Yet, a few minutes later their life may end in death. Their sincere feelings did not change the fact that they were still dying. Neither sincerity or feelings can determine truth or change the facts. Just because something may feel right does not make it right.

Consider for a moment that you just received word that a dear loved one had just been killed in a tragic car accident. You are overwhelmed with feelings of pain, loss and regret. For the next hour everything you think, say or do is tainted by those powerful and genuine feelings. Then all of the sudden the loved one walks in alive. How do you respond? "You cannot be alive! I sincerely felt you were dead?" No rational person would deny the evidence of life just because their feelings had been so sincere and so strong. Instead of forcing the facts to conform to their feelings, they would change their feelings based on the truth. This in no way is saying that their previous feelings were not heart-felt or sincere. Truly, sincere people will change their feelings to conform to the facts.

Saul of Tarsus sincerely felt that he was doing the right thing by persecuting Christians. He had been doing so in good conscience since the day he held the coats for those who stoned Stephen to death (Acts 23:1; 24:16). However, he was faced with a life changing fact on the road to Damascus. Jesus Christ who had been crucified appeared to him. Being a sincere man he changed his feelings and his actions to conform to the truth. As a result, he became Paul the apostle of Christ Jesus. He was sincere, but he was wrong.

■ **By Being Saved According to the Truth**

Paul felt that he was saved as a pharisee. Reflecting on his former life he called himself "*chief of sinners*" (1 Tim 1:13-15). Realizing his sincerity could not save him, he asked the Lord whar he needed to do to be saved. The Lord sent him to Damascus to wait. A Christian by the name of Ananias was sent to tell him, "*And now why are you waiting? Arise and be baptized, and wash away your sins, calling on the name of the Lord*" (Acts 22:16).

Like Paul, many sincere people today sincerely feel that they are saved. Other examples of people who were sincere in their religion, yet were not saved, can be found in the New Testament. The treasurer of Ethiopia was so devout as to travel perhaps a thousand miles by chariot to worship. Who can doubt this man's sincerity? Philip was not sent to disparage his sincerity, but to teach him the truth about salvation. On that very road leading from Jerusalem to Gaza Philip baptized the Ethiopian who

sincerely obeyed the truth (Acts 8:26-40). Cornelius was another sincere and religious man. He was a worshiper of God and a devout man. However, he was told by an angel to sent for Peter in Joppa to *"hear words whereby thou and all thy house shall be saved"* (Acts 10:1 -11:18). After hearing the preaching of the Gospel this sincere man was baptized with his household.

Sincerely practicing a religion does not save anyone. Sincere religious men and women who hear the truth and accept it in faith will be saved.

■ **By Seeking the Truth**

Insincere people evade the truth, close their eyes and ears to the facts, and spurn correction (2 Thess. 2:10-12). Many lies are being accepted in the religious world today by both sincere and insincere people.

First, what is truth? Jesus said that the Word of God is truth (John 17:17). When Moses was to build a Tabernacle he did so according to the Word of God. *"For He said, 'See that you make all things according to the pattern shown you on the mountain'"* (Heb. 8:5). He did not seek the opinions of others or consider his own feelings about the Tabernacle. He built it exactly as he was instructed. If he ever had any doubts as to its construction all he had to do was to consult God's Word.

Honestly sincere people will search the scriptures daily to find out if the truth is being preached to them (Acts 17:11). They will *"not believe every spirit, but test the spirits, whether they are of God; because many false prophets have gone out into the world"* (1 Jn. 4:1). And they will *"Test all things; hold fast what is good. Abstain from every form of evil."* (1 Thess. 5:21,22).

■ **By Changing To Conform to the Truth**

In our post-modern world, truth is not seen as an objective standard derived for a Divinely inspired book. Instead, truth is relative. As illustrated in the following story, truth means different things to different people. According to an ancient Hindu story six blind men were brought to examine an elephant. The first man touching the elephant's side declared, "it's like a wall." The second man touching the elephant's tusk proclaimed that the elephant is "like a spear." The next man touched the trunk and declared, "an elephant is like a snake." The fourth man said "an elephant is like a tree" as he embraced its leg. "An elephant is like a fan" claimed the man who took hold of the elephant's ear. The final blind man having grabbed hold of the elephant's tail asserted, "an elephant is like a rope."

This story does not teach that all truth is relative. Everyone knows that this animal is an elephant. The six blind men could see that the whole truth revealed a creature that was like all these things but was none of them. Only the willfully blind cannot see the truth even when it is standing in front of them as big as an elephant.

When a honestly, sincere person is faced with the truth he will do one of two things: 1) He will change and accept the truth in all honesty and sincerity or 2) He will reject the truth and therefore cease to be honest and sincere. Sincere people can be honestly mistaken, but when they are face with the truth they will either stop being mistaken or they will stop being honest.

The Bible is filled with examples of those who changed after they discovered the truth. An Christian couple by the name of Aquila and Priscilla met a powerful preacher named Apollos. He *"was mighty in the scriptures...had been instructed in the way of the Lord; and being fervent in spirit, he spoke and taught accurately the things of the Lord"* (Acts 18:24,25a). Sounds like the perfect sincere preacher? However, *"he knew only the baptism of John"* (18:25b). When Aquila and Priscilla *"explained to him the way of God more accurately"* he continued preaching, but this time, according to the truth (18:26-28).

In the very next chapter of Acts Paul finds twelve disciples of Apollos who had only been baptized with the baptism of John. He teaches the truth about John the Baptist's baptism and *"when they heard this, they were baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus"* (Acts 19:5). When sincere men learn they have been taught wrong they will change their lives to conform to the truth. Insincere men and women will try to change the truth to conform to their lives.

Sincerity in religion is not only necessary - it is commanded. However, sincerity alone is not enough. Being sincere will not save anyone or earn someone a place in heaven. Paul wrote, *"For by grace you have been saved through faith, and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God,"* (Eph. 2:8).

Genuine sincerity is truth loving. The truth is found in the Word of God. Pick it up and with a sincere heart read it and obey it today.

Questions:

1. Why is sincerity a virtue?
2. How were the Pharisees a prime example of insincerity?
3. What role does sincerity play in personal salvation?
4. Give some examples for day to day life showing sincerity alone is not enough?
5. Was the young prophet sent to King Jereboam sincere in his belief in the words of the old prophet? Why did God kill the young prophet with a lion?
6. Were the priests of Baal who faced off against Elijah at Mount Carmel sincere? Why were they killed?
7. How does John 4:23,24 negate worshiping God by sincerity alone?
8. Have you ever sincerely thought you are going to die? Where these feelings sincere?
9. Saul of Tarsus sincerely persecuted Christians? Why did Jesus appear to him on the road to Damascus and why did God send the preacher Ananias to him?
10. Can one feel saved while being lost in sin? Explain.
11. Is Truth subjective and based on feelings or is it objective and based on facts and a definite standard?

12. List some sincere people in the Bible who were wrong and changed when faced with the Truth.

Application & Discussion:

1. Sincere belief in the Book of Mormon as the Word from God.
2. What happens when a truly sincere person comes face to face with the truth?

Homework: Examine your sincerity of faith with the Truth from the Word of God.

“Naming Names is Naughty”

Are you hesitant to name a well-known TV evangelist as a false prophet? Should it be pointed out that Joel Osteen is preaching a different Gospel when he proclaims the Health/Wealth gospel? How about calling Benny Hinn fake healer instead of a faith healer? Would it be fair to compare Billy Graham's plan of salvation with that which is truly taught in the New Testament? Or expose the unscripturalness of the “once saved, always saved” teachings of John MacArthur? Is it scriptural to identify false teachers by name? Is there a proper time and place for identifying a false teacher or practice? Is it wrong to name a denomination and refute their false doctrine? Is it wrong to mark and identify a heretic or a sower of discord among brethren? Is it wrong to call people names such as “false prophet”?

The New Testament is filled with examples of those godly prophets and apostles who would point out the error of specific individuals. John the Baptist accused Herod of adultery (Matt. 14:4). Of course, he lost his head in the process. This does not prove him to be wrong just brave. On the day of Pentecost the Apostles accused the Jews of murdering God's Son. *“Therefore let all the house of Israel know assuredly that God has made this Jesus, whom you crucified, both Lord and Christ”* (Acts 2:36). Imagine getting up and accusing your audience of murder - murdering the very Son of God. Elymas (or Bar-Jesus) a magician opposed Paul and wanted to turn the proconsul, Sergius Paulus, away from the truth, Paul called Elymas names. God then blinded Elymas! Paul accused Peter of hypocrisy (Gal. 2:11). In fact Paul was in a habit of mentioning by name those whom he opposed and/or called upon to correct their behavior. He mentions Euodia and Sythyche (Philippians 4:2-3); Phygellus and Hermogenes (2 Tim. 1:15); Hymenaeus and Philetus (2 Tim. 2:17); Demas (2 Tim. 4:10); Alexander the coppersmith (2 Tim. 4:14); etc. The apostle John mentions *“Diotrephes, who loves to have the preeminence among them, does not receive us”* (3 John 9-10). Nehemiah names Tobiah and Sanballat, and the prophetess Noadiah (Neh. 6:14).

A man-made rule of our day is not to name the denominations or attack them or their false doctrines. However, Jesus condemned the worship of the Samaritans in John 4:22: *“You worship what you do not know; we know what we worship, for salvation is of the Jews.”* He often warned of the Pharisees and Sadducees in His teachings. *“Take heed and beware of the leaven of the Pharisees and the Sadducees”* (Matthew 16:6). Baptist, Methodist, Pentecostal, Catholic, Lutheran, Mormon, Jehovah's Witness, etc. are names that people wear voluntarily. If they are confident in their denominational membership, they should no more be offended than I would for being called a “Christian.”

Identifying false teachings by name is as old as the Old Testament which mentioned the kings who followed *“the sin of Jeroboam.”* The apostle John mentions that he hates *“the deeds of the Nicolaitans”* and *“the doctrine of the Nicolaitans”* (Revelation 2:6,15). The early church fathers actually memorialized heretics by naming their heresies after them. If the mention of a particular doctrine is offensive to someone then they need to repent.

Believe or not, when it came to name calling, Jesus was one of the many offenders found in the Bible. He labeled false teachers *“wolves.”* Of King Herod He said, *“Go, tell that fox, ‘Behold, I cast out demons and perform cures today and tomorrow, and the third day I shall be perfected’”* (Luke 13:32). He didn't hide Herod's evil character, but publicly exposed it to others. Jesus also pointed out that the Pharisees were a *“hypocrites,” “blind guides”* and *“vipers”* (Matt. 23:33). Paul called Elymas the *“child of the Devil”* (Acts 13:10). Paul also told the church at Philippi to *“beware of dogs, beware of evil workers, beware of the mutilation!”* (Phil. 3:2) when speaking of the Judaizing teachers.

Why do some so strongly object to naming names or calling names? Some quote Matthew 7:1

believing we are not allowed by Jesus to judge anyone. However, the context is about not judging with hypocritical judgment. In fact, the context requires a disciple to judge the speck in his brother's eye. Jesus commands us to use proper just judgment. *"Do not judge according to appearance, but judge with righteous judgment"* (John 7:24). Furthermore if it is universally wrong to judge it is wrong for them to judge us for judging others.

Others will point out that since no one is an apostle today, they cannot name names. But Paul commands us to imitate his behavior and to follow his examples. *"Imitate me, just as I also imitate Christ"* (1 Cor. 11:1). *"Brethren, join in following my example, and note those who so walk, as you have us for a pattern"* (Phil. 3:17). *"The things which you learned and received and heard and saw in me, these do, and the God of peace will be with you"* (Phil. 4:9).

Another objection to naming names and exposing false teaching is the sincerity of the false teachers' motive. They will say such things as: "He is not a false teacher because he is honest in his inaccurate teaching" or "but look at all the good he does." There are four possible situations in regard to teaching the truth. 1) Preaching the truth in love (Phil. 1: 17, Eph. 4: 15). 2) Preaching the truth with insincere motives (Phil. 1: 15, 18). 3) Teach false doctrine with a sincere heart (Acts 18: 24-28). 4) Teaching falsehood to purposefully deceive and/or defraud others (Eph. 4: 14, 2 Pet. 2: 3, 10, 12, 15, 18, 19).

While it is true that some have sincere motives and Jesus alone can read the hearts of men, we still have a obligation to expose the unfruitful works of darkness (Eph. 5:11). A man can have a good heart and be honestly mistaken. But when he is faced with the truth he will either cease to be mistaken or cease to be honest.

Is naming names and publically exposing error too mean and unloving? Will it do nothing but "run people off"? If so, Jesus and Paul were unloving and mean. Is it loving to the flock, if a shepherd remains silent and permits them to be stolen by thieves or ripped apart by wolves? Jesus said, *"I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd gives His life for the sheep. But a hireling, he who is not the shepherd, one who does not own the sheep, sees the wolf coming and leaves the sheep and flees; and the wolf catches the sheep and scatters them. The hireling flees because he is a hireling and does not care about the sheep"* (John 10:11-13). Remember in the Old Testament a false prophet was not only publically exposed but executed in public (Deut. 13:5).

"All of us are wrong about something." Yes, we all need to learn. Even the Bereans checked up on Paul's teaching. *"These were more fair-minded than those in Thessalonica, in that they received the word with all readiness, and searched the Scriptures daily to find out whether these things were so"* (Acts 17:11).

What are the benefits of naming names and publically exposing the false teachers and their doctrines? First, is the need for others to be aware of the danger. *"Beware of false prophets, who come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly they are ravenous wolves"* (Matthew 7:15). *"Beloved, do not believe every spirit, but test the spirits, whether they are of God; because many false prophets have gone out into the world"* (1 Jn. 4:1). To be forewarned is to be forearmed. Just as a weatherman forewarns in his forecast of a tornado or hurricane. Second, it gives us a chance to *"speak the truth."* (Eph. 4:15). John Calvin once said, "A dog barks when his master is attacked. I would be a coward if I saw that God's truth is attacked and yet would remain silent." Next, we are given a opportunity to speak the truth *"in love."* Nothing shows another love like taking the time and rescuing them from danger. Further, it exposes the darkness with the light. *"And have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness, but rather expose them"* (Eph. 5:11). Fifth, by naming names it helps to identify those who should be avoided. *"Now I urge you, brethren, note those who cause divisions and offenses, contrary to the doctrine which you learned, and avoid them"* (Rom. 16:17). The Greek word for *"note"* means to "mark" or "scope out" or "take aim at." We don't just want to hear that "some medicine" has deathly side effects. No, we want to know the specific name of the product, so we can avoid it. Finally, to name names is to *"both to exhort and convict those who contradict"* (Titus 1:9).

There is no virtue in trying to be nicer than Jesus or more polite than Paul. Instead, be like Jesus

and be like Paul. Speak the truth in love and expose error.

Questions:

1. Whose marriage did John the Baptist proclaim as unlawful?
2. Who did Paul condemn publically and blind?
3. Who condemned Diotrephes in a letter and why?
4. Who did Peter accuse of killing the Son of God during a sermon? Why was this a necessary part of the sermon?
5. List those religious sects which Jesus called out by name and condemned during his public ministry?
6. List the false doctrines which are condemned by name in the Bible.
7. Why did Jesus call Herod a fox?
8. What names did Jesus call the Pharisees? Why?
9. Why do some so strongly object to naming names or calling names?
10. Does the lack of apostles today preclude name calling? Explain.
11. How can name calling be the loving thing to do?

12. What are the benefits of naming names and publically exposing the false teachers and their doctrines?

Application & Discussion:

1. Could it be a sin not to name names or identify false teachings or unscriptural worship or dangerous religions? Explain.

2. What should be our motives in naming names?

Homework: Make a list of false doctrines and false teachers and pray that these are exposed and the Truth prevails.

“Christians Do Not Have Enemies”

The story has been told of a truck driver traveling cross-country dropping by at a truck stop for some food. Shortly after he received his meal three large rough looking bikers came in and sat down beside him. At first they began to verbally assault him. He just ignored them while he ate his meal. When one of them grabbed a handful of his fries and began to eat them, he uttered not a word. He continued to be passive when another one spit into his coffee. Finally, the biggest, boldest biker took the trucker's ball cap and dumped his banana pudding in it and replaced it on the truckers head. The trucker just got up walked calmly to the counter and paid his ticket, left a nice tip for the waitress, and left for the parking lot. The bikers had a good laugh for several minutes. When the waitress scolded them for their meanness toward that poor hard working man, they replied, “Well, he wasn't much of a man was he?” She said, “what kind of man he was I do not know, but one thing is for sure he is a lousy truck driver. He just ran over three motorcycles when he drove his big rig out of here!”

It is a natural and very human reaction to get revenge on our enemies. Strong emotions tempt men to carnal reactions against those who hurt, cheat, rob, belittle, etc. them. When the fleshly-minded man becomes a Christian he is transformed into the mind of Christ. Peter put it this way, *“for to this you were called, because Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example, that you should follow His steps: ‘Who committed no sin, Nor was deceit found in His mouth’; who, when He was reviled, did not revile in return; when He suffered, He did not threaten, but committed Himself to Him who judges righteously”* (1 Peter 2:21-23). Although Jesus did not give in to temptation, to retaliate, some of His disciples obviously had a problem with their response toward Jesus' enemies. Jesus called James and John *“the sons of thunder”* because they wanted to call down fire on the Samaritans for their reaction to Jesus (Lk. 9:51-56). On the night in which Jesus was betrayed Peter pulled out a sword and cutoff Malchus' ear which merited a stern rebuke from Jesus (Jn. 18:10).

Christians Will Have Enemies

It is an honor to have friends. It is complimentary to have enemies as friends. It is no compliment to say that a Christian lived so many years and never had an enemy. Theodore Roosevelt said a man who has no enemies is a man who does nothing. The Bible assumes that Christians will have enemies. Jesus pointed out that the world's hatred of Him would naturally result in the hatred of His disciples. *“If the world hates you, you know that it hated Me before it hated you. If you were of the world, the world would love its own. Yet because you are not of the world, but I chose you out of the world, therefore the world hates you. Remember the word that I said to you, ‘A servant is not greater than his master.’ If they persecuted Me, they will also persecute you”* (John 15:18-20). Some of these new found enemies of those with a new found faith will come from their own family. Jesus said, *“for I have come to ‘set a man against his father, a daughter against her mother, and a daughter-in-law against her mother-in-law’”* (Matt. 10:35). Some Christians have been known to brag about their lack of enemies. Somehow as a disciple of Christ they have avoided collecting enemies. To these Jesus would say, *“woe to you when all men speak well of you, for so did their fathers to the false prophets”* (Luke 6:26). In fact, Paul states that Christians will have enemies. *“Yes, and all who desire to live godly in Christ Jesus will suffer persecution”* (2 Tim. 3:12). Note that the apostle does not merely suggest that Christians might have enemies, but that they will have them.

As sons of God, Christians inherit the enemies of God as their enemies. These are those who

are carnal-minded and are opposed to those who are spiritually-minded. *"Because the carnal mind is enmity against God; for it is not subject to the law of God, nor indeed can be"* (Rom. 8:7). *"They are enemies of the cross of Christ...who set their mind on earthly things"* (Phil. 3:18,19). Our duty as Christians is to *"have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness, but rather expose them"* (Eph. 5:11). Any attempt by a New Testament Christian to maintain a relationship with God and the world at the same time is doomed to failure and is seen as spiritual adultery by God. *"Adulterers and adulteresses! Do you not know that friendship with the world is enmity with God? Whoever therefore wants to be a friend of the world makes himself an enemy of God"* (James 4:4). God is the Christian's "Abba"; Jesus is the "Advocate", but Satan is the adversary of all saints and only seeks their destruction (1 Peter 5:8).

So if you are a Christian and you find that you do not have any enemies, you are not the type of godly disciple described in the pages of the New Testament. A saint without enemies is an oxymoron. If you are walking a godly in Christ Jesus you will have enemies. If you are not blessed with any enemies in our life, you need to stop what you are doing right now and go out and get some.

Why Christians Have Enemies

Why is it so important that Christians have enemies? As noted in 2 Timothy 3:12 having enemies is the natural result of living godly. Therefore, having enemies is an honor in that it shows a saint is living right. Having enemies of God and of the cross as our enemies manifests that we are like Christ. It also may demonstrate the effectiveness of the Christian's light shining in the darkness, his words of truth exposing the false doctrines, and his rebuking of wickedness in the world. Enmity is a natural response received by those who reprove. *"Do not correct a scoffer, lest he hate you; Rebuke a wise man, and he will love you"* (Prov. 9:8). Paul asked the saints of Galatia, *"have I therefore become your enemy because I tell you the truth?"* (Gal. 4:16). Stepping on peoples' toes with the truth has never been a fast and easy means of making friends. King Ahab of Israel spoke these words about the prophet of God, Micaiah, to Jehoshaphat, the king of Judah, *"there is still one man, Micaiah the son of Imlah, by whom we may inquire of the Lord; but I hate him, because he does not prophesy good concerning me, but evil."* And Jehoshaphat said, *'Let not the king say such things!'"* (1 Kings 22:8). Let all Christians have enemies because they walk in the light not the darkness; speak the truth in love; and expose the errors of men.

How to React To Evil From Enemies?

How does a Christian react to the evil and meanness leveled against them by the enemies of God. First, he needs to pray for God's protection. The Psalms are filled with such requests:

"Hear my voice, O God, in my meditation; Preserve my life from fear of the enemy" (Ps. 64:1).

"Deliver me from my enemies, O my God; Defend me from those who rise up against me" (Ps. 59:1).

"For You have been a shelter for me, A strong tower from the enemy" (Ps. 61:3).

"He delivers me from my enemies. You also lift me up above those who rise against me; You have delivered me from the violent man" (Ps. 18:48).

Let us always remember that God is stronger than our enemies and can care for us in spite of them.

The Christian's response to persecution must not be the knee-jerk reaction of retaliation. Unlike Hollywood's portrayal of heros in the movies, *"through God we will do valiantly, for it is He who shall tread down our enemies"* (Psalm 60:12). The modern movies extol revenge in many of the Rambo-type movies. Many inner city youths die in gang wars for the purpose of avenging their "honor." But Paul teaches the saints, *"beloved, do not avenge yourselves, but rather give place to wrath; for it is written,*

'Vengeance is Mine, I will repay'" (Romans 12:19).

Longfellow once wrote, "If we would read the secret history of our enemies we would find in each man's life sorrow enough to disarm all hostility." Although some Christians do not resort to retaliation upon their enemies, they have been known to rejoice in the pain and sufferings of their enemies. Some almost relishing the fact that some hapless jerk will burn eternally in hell. The Bible warns the saints not to rejoice in the down fall of the sinners who abuse them. *"Do not rejoice when your enemy falls, And do not let your heart be glad when he stumbles"* (Proverbs 24:17). In defending himself, Job said, *"If I have rejoiced at the destruction of him who hated me, Or lifted myself up when evil found him"* (Job 31:29).

Those who are enemies of the Almighty God are fools. Therefore, the Christian needs to rise above the foolishness of his enemies. *"You, through Your commandments, make me wiser than my enemies; For they are ever with me"* (Psalm 119:98).

How Christians are to Treat Their Enemies

In the sermon on the mount (Matt. 5:43-47) Jesus gives detailed instructions on how Christians should treat their enemies. During His day the common attitude among the leading rabbis was *"you shall love your neighbor and hate your enemy"* (5:43). This was a clear misrepresentation Leviticus 19:18 which reads, *"you shall not take vengeance, nor bear any grudge against the children of your people, but you shall love your neighbor as yourself: I am the Lord."* Note how the Jews had subtracted *"as yourself"* and added *"hate your enemy."* They had a self-righteous standard which was not good enough for the righteousness needed by those who wished to be a part of Christ's Kingdom of Heaven.

After exposing the Pharisees' self-righteousness Jesus identifies His righteous standard. *"But I say to you, love your enemies, bless those who curse you, do good to those who hate you, and pray for those who spitefully use you and persecute you"* (Matt. 5:44). First, disciples of Christ must love their enemies. Christians indeed are to hate the sin while loving the sinner. He is to hate *"every false way"* (Ps. 119:104). The way of the world is to wait until someone proves themselves worthy of our love. Note that God through His grace does not do so, but instead loves man while he is in his sin (John 3:16; Romans 5:6-8). Jesus did not say *"live and let live"*, but to love them. Next, Jesus desires His followers to bless those who curse them. It takes some self-control to respond to hateful words with blessings. The world loves a good burning come-back from a clever, sharp-tongued adversary. God loves those who build each other up with edifying words. Third, Jesus demands His servants to do good to those who hate them. Paul put it this way, *"therefore if he is thirsty, give him a drink; For in so doing you will heap coals of fire on his head. Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good"* (Romans 12:20,21). Once a Christian lady owned two prized chickens that got out. Her grouchy neighbor caught the hens, wrung their necks, and threw them back over the fence. The Christian prepared two chicken pies out of her dead chickens. When she handed him the chicken pot pie to her mean neighbor, she apologized to him. But the man was absolutely speechless! The chicken pie and apology filled him with a burning sense of shame and he apologized to her for reacting so harshly. An old Yiddish Proverb says: *"Better that my enemy should see good in me than I should see evil in him."* This is how David dealt with King Saul who in a rage of envy desired to killed David. As a result of seeing the goodness of David toward him, Saul said to David, *"you are more righteous than I; for you have rewarded me with good, whereas I have rewarded you with evil"* (1 Samuel 24:17). Abraham Lincoln had no shortage of enemies. An associate once asked him, *"Why do you try to make friends of your enemies? You should try to destroy them."* *"Am I not destroying my enemies"* Lincoln gently replied, *"when I make them my friends?"*

Finally, Christ commands Christians to pray for those who are their persecutors. Jesus isn't talking about us praying for our enemy to get run over by a truck. Your prayers for your enemies can actually serve as a tool to keep you from being destroyed by bitterness and anger. Your prayers can lead to their change of heart through the providence of God. While being crucified on the cross Jesus said, *"Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they do"* (Luke 23:34). Stephen also exemplified this

attitude as the Pharisees were stoning him to death. *"Then he knelt down and cried out with a loud voice, 'Lord, do not charge them with this sin.' And when he had said this, he fell asleep"* (Acts 7:60).

After giving His disciples four ways on the proper way to treat their enemies Jesus encourages them with three ways they will be rewarded for being good to their enemies. First, by treating our enemies the way God treated us while we were still at enmity with Him we manifest our sonship. *"That you may be sons of your Father in heaven; for He makes His sun rise on the evil and on the good, and sends rain on the just and on the unjust"* (5:45). If we are to be sons of God, we are to emulate the Father. God does not deal with the wicked hatefully. It is true that nations fight their enemies. They do not pray for them and bless them. No constitution of any government ever made these ideas a part of its defense plan. The Ninevites were enemies of the Israelites. Jonah despised the Ninevites. He had the most successful case of evangelism in all the Bible and yet Jonah could not stand it. Initially, he fled from his prophetic mission because he knew God would forgive them (Jonah 4:2). Second, as sons of God we will exceed the best of the rest of mankind. *"For if you love those who love you, what reward have you? Do not even the tax collectors do the same? And if you greet your brethren only, what do you do more than others? Do not even the tax collectors do so?"* (Matt. 5:46,47). Finally, nothing makes us more like God than loving enemies. *"Therefore you shall be perfect, just as your Father in heaven is perfect"* (Matt. 5:48). In striving for perfection love those who hate you. *"He who does not love does not know God, for God is love"* (1 John 4:8).

As sinners we were once estranged from God and at enmity with Him. He sent His Son to die in order to reconcile us to Him (Rom. 6-8). *"For if when we were enemies we were reconciled to God through the death of His Son, much more, having been reconciled, we shall be saved by His life"* (Rom. 5:10). This was accomplished the day we obeyed the Gospel and were baptized into Christ. As friends of God through the blood of Christ we no longer need to fear the fiery vengeance awaiting the enemies of God who do not obey the Gospel (2 Thess. 1:7-10).

Questions:

1. Do you think it is a natural and very human reaction by those who are worldly minded to get revenge on our enemies? Explain.
2. Give examples of Jesus' disciples who sought revenge.
3. Did Jesus retaliate those who abused and hurt Him? Explain.
4. Is it a virtue, or something for a Christian to glory in to claim he has no enemies? Explain.
5. Who are often the enemies of God's people and why do they hate them?
6. Why is it so important that Christians have enemies?

7. In regard to our enemies, how should we pray?
8. How does modern media demonstrate how a "hero" is to deal with their enemies?
9. To whom should Christians leave vengeance? Why?
10. How did the Jews of Jesus' day mis-interpret Leviticus 19:18?
11. What should a Christian hate? Should he to hate his enemy?
12. How can we show kindness to our enemies?
13. How did David treat King Saul when his royal father-in-law was hunting him down to kill him?
14. What three rewards did Jesus say awaits the Christian who loves his enemies?

Application & Discussion:

1. How can praying for your enemies every day help your heart, attitude and relationship with them and God?
2. You were once an enemy of God. How did God deal with you as an enemy? What did it take to change the relationship to friendship?

Homework: If you are not blessed with any enemies in your life, you need to stop what you are doing right now and go out and get some. If you do have enemies, love them!

“I am Just a Victim of Circumstance”

In episodes of the *Three Stooges* when "Curly" falls victim to his own folly, he was often heard to complain, "I'm a victim of circumstance." Most of us at one time or another have had a victim mentality. I know I have. Since all of us have been a victim from time to time, it makes sense. However, there seems to be a trend to promote the victim mentality as part of defending our rights. This has resulted in a twisted view of right and wrong. A parent's child gets into a fight at school. The parents will argue it wasn't their child's fault. But it's because the teacher wasn't watching the room, and the other kid had it coming. If you do not get the promotion, it is because your boss was out to get you. When the leadership of the church rebukes a sinning saint, they are mean and unfriendly. Even criminals who victimize others often engage in victim thinking, believing themselves to be moral and engaging in crime only as a reaction to an immoral world. Others claim to be victims of authorities who unfairly singling them out for persecution.

The victim mentality presents itself in a pattern of thought and behavior. First, someone was mistreated by another or something bad happened. It was not the victim's fault. An injustice has been committed. The victim naturally longs for sympathy. They become focused on themselves and complain to others. As a victim there comes a sense of powerlessness. This is blamed on others. However, it does not stop there. Over time this attitude can result in an acquired personality trait. This is when their perceived identity is that of a victim. This is how they portray themselves to others. Their life is marked by being victimized by the negative actions of others. At this point the victim mentality is self-destructive. They determine who they are and what they have a right to do based upon this perception. Soon the victim becomes the victimizer.

What are the causes and results of this mind-set?

Symptoms of Victim Mentality

■ **Seeing Oneself as a Victim**

From the very beginning of sin, Satan convinced Eve to see herself as a victim. He told her that God said, *"You will not surely die. For God knows that in the day you eat of it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil"* (Gen. 3: 4-5). King Saul saw himself as a victim of the people when He failed to destroy all the animals of the Amalekites (1 Sam. 15). Countless other illustrations from the Bible can be found.

In contrast Paul never allowed himself to see himself as a victim. Look how he outlines the many times he was victimized while preaching the Gospel. *"From the Jews five times I received forty stripes minus one. Three times I was beaten with rods; once I was stoned; three times I was shipwrecked; a night and a day I have been in the deep; in journeys often, in perils of waters, in perils of robbers, in perils of my own countrymen, in perils of the Gentiles, in perils in the city, in perils in the wilderness, in perils in the sea, in perils among false brethren"* (2 Cor. 11:24-26).

■ **Self-centered**

Like the total melt down of the toddler who has a little boo-boo received as a result of a mean sibling, those who have the victim mentality become overly focused on their own pain and problems. They will exaggerate their own problems and pain to the point they will trivialize the suffering of others. As a result they become self-centered and show a lack of empathy.

Why would people want to be viewed or view themselves as victims? It puts the attention on

them. They are then allowed to focus on their pain and suffering without the pain of taking notice of the world's sorrows. Jonah was like this when God took away his shade plant and sent a hot east wind. Jonah was such a victim, he wanted to just die. *"Then God said to Jonah, 'Is it right for you to be angry about the plant?' And he said, 'It is right for me to be angry, even to death!' But the Lord said, 'You have had pity on the plant for which you have not labored, nor made it grow, which came up in a night and perished in a night. And should I not pity Nineveh, that great city, in which are more than one hundred and twenty thousand persons who cannot discern between their right hand and their left—and much livestock?'"* (Jonah 4:9-11).

■ **Seeking Sympathy**

Jonah was seeking pity on himself. He had a strong need for recognition of his plight. All the while he was overlooking the suffering of innocent animals and children. Victims do need an appropriate and balanced affirmation or validation from others. However, many times it turns into a pity party.

■ **Securing Allies**

The victim mentality goes beyond having the attention of others but retaining others as allies against those who have caused the pain or problem. It creates warring sides as in the two brothers who sought out Jesus to resolve a problem over the family inheritance. *"Then one from the crowd said to Him, 'Teacher, tell my brother to divide the inheritance with me.' But He said to him, 'Man, who made Me a judge or an arbitrator over you?'"* (Luke 12:13,14). Jesus' friend Martha sought His intervention with her sister Mary who was not helping her with showing hospitality. *"Martha was distracted with much serving, and she approached Him and said, 'Lord, do You not care that my sister has left me to serve alone? Therefore tell her to help me'"* (Luke 10:40). Again Jesus would not take a side but focused Martha's attention on Mary's good choice in putting Bible Study over serving tables.

■ **Sense of Helplessness**

The Philistines had come out to attack Israel. Saul was there with his men and he is waiting for the Samuel to get there. Samuel is going to offer the sacrifices and enquire of the Lord. But Saul gets impatient. The king goes ahead and offers the sacrifice and then Samuel shows up. *"What have you done?" asked Samuel. Saul replied, 'When I saw that the men were scattering, and that you did not come at the set time, and that the Philistines were assembling at Mikdash, I thought, 'Now the Philistines will come down against me at Gilgal, and I have not sought the LORD's favor.' So I felt compelled to offer the burnt offering"* (1 Samuel 13:11-12).

Instead of taking personal responsibility it is easier for some to evade it by claiming they were in a hopeless and helpless situation. The world is against them and how can they fight the world. They seldom improve their situation, because it is futile since they are powerless.

■ **Significant Amount of Complaining**

Those suffering with a victim mentality are very apt at complaining. They focus on the negative. Often they are predicting gloom and doom. Their misfortunes are often exaggerated. Nothing is ever good enough. They will over use terms like "always" and "never."

The Israelites are a premium example of this attitude as they marched through the wilderness. *"And the people complained against Moses, saying, 'What shall we drink?'"* (Exodus 15:24). *"And the people thirsted there for water, and the people complained against Moses, and said, 'Why is it you have brought us up out of Egypt, to kill us and our children and our livestock with thirst?'"* (Exodus 17:3). *"And all the children of Israel complained against Moses and Aaron, and the whole congregation said to them, 'If only we had died'"* (Numbers 14:2).

■ **Shifting Blame**

A strategy often utilized by those with a victim mind-set is the blame game. This is where one blames their mistakes or problems on others. It was first invented by Adam and Eve. *"Well, Lord, it's this woman. She's the one to blame."* Then the woman said about the serpent, *"He's the one to blame."* Adam blames his wife, Eve blames the serpent, but notice what Adam says in verse Genesis 3:12, *"The woman you gave to be with me."* Who is Adam really blaming here? Adam is blaming God. This is why no one can ever win at playing the Blame Game.

Ask yourself, do you like being a victim? Do you often play the blame game and evade responsibility? Do you complain too much, have a sense of hopelessness, seek sympathy and allies, focus on your pain and problems to the neglect of empathy for others and see yourself as a victim?

How can there be victory over the victim mentality?

◆ Take Responsibility

Those who see themselves primarily as a victim in this life often will fail to take responsibility for improving their situation. After all, they are the powerless victim. The world is against them. It is everyone else's fault.

No matter what another person does to you, you are responsible for your response. *"But let each one" examine his own work, and then he will have rejoicing in himself alone, and not in another. For each one shall bear his own load"* (Gal. 6:4-5). The other person will be responsible before God for their sins, and you will answer to God for yours. *"So then each of us shall give account of himself to God"* (Romans 14:12). *"For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, that each one may receive the things done in the body, according to what he has done, whether good or bad"* (2 Corinthians 5:10).

◆ Count Your Blessings

Being a perpetual victim sucks the joy right out of life. Instead of having a pity party, victims need to be grateful for what they do have in life by counting their blessings. *"In everything give thanks: for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus concerning you"* (1 Thessalonians 5:18). Not all of life is bad, so look for the good. You have your health and not a fatal disease. You have safety to worship without facing persecution. If not, you can still be thankful no matter our earthly circumstances (Col 2:6-7). *"Be anxious for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known to God; and the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus"* (Philippians 4:6-7).

◆ Look to Jesus

Just how did Jesus deal with the victim mentality? Jesus came across a sick man who appeared to have a victim mentality. *"When Jesus saw him lying there, and knew that he already had been in that condition a long time, He said to him, 'Do you want to be made well?'"* (John 5:6). The man was clearly a victim and he no doubt would want to be cured. *"The sick man answered Him, 'Sir, I have no man to put me into the pool when the water is stirred up; but while I am coming, another steps down before me'"* (John 5:7). Notice the man did not answer the question Jesus had asked. But Jesus heals the man. And later runs into him at the Temple and warns, *"See, you have been made well. Sin no more, lest a worse thing come upon you"* (John 5:14). Jesus healed the sinner who was not to become a victim to sin again.

Jesus could have but did not develop a victim mentality. He was sinless. Jesus was clearly a victimized of others. *"For to this you were called, because Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example, that you should follow His steps: 'Who committed no sin, Nor was deceit found in His mouth' who, when He was reviled, did not revile in return; when He suffered, He did not threaten, but committed Himself to Him who judges righteously"* (1 Peter 2:21-23).

So instead seeing ourselves as a victim, see yourself as a fellow sufferer with Jesus. Paul wrote, *"I now rejoice in my sufferings for you, and fill up in my flesh what is lacking in the afflictions of Christ, for the sake of His body, which is the church"* (Col. 1:24).

◆ Forgive

As the ultimate victim of humanity, Jesus while being crucified said, *"Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they do."* (Luke 23:34). Jesus was not ignoring sin. After all He was dying for their sins. We are not to just forgive while overlooking sins against us or others or God. Jesus commanded, *"take heed to yourselves. If your brother sins against you, rebuke him; and if he repents, forgive him."* (Luke 17:3). He requires His disciples to love their enemies (Matt 5:44). At the same time they are to hate sin and rebuke the sinner by calling them to repentance. Catherine Ponder wrote, "When you hold resentment toward another, you are bound to that person or condition by an emotional link that is stronger

than steel. Forgiveness is the only way to dissolve that link and get free.”

◆ **Help Others**

When throwing yourself a little pity party are you really helping yourself? For certain, you are not helping others. Consider Joseph who was victimized by his brothers and sold into slavery. He was falsely accused by the wife of Potiphar. He was cast into prison. Later he was forgotten by a fellow prisoner whom he helped. When he had the position in the Egyptian government which would have given him the power to hurt his brothers for hurting him, he choose to forgive and help them. *“But Joseph said to them, ‘Don’t be afraid. Am I in the place of God? You intended to harm me, but God intended it for good to accomplish what is now being done, the saving of many lives. So then, don’t be afraid. I will provide for you and your children.’” And he reassured them and spoke kindly to them*” (Genesis 50:19-21).

Paul was victimized by the very people he was trying to help with the Good News. He turned victimhood into victory by using his prison time to promote the Gospel. *“But I want you to know, brethren, that the things which happened to me have actually turned out for the furtherance of the gospel”* (Philippians 1:12). Paul learned that the discomfited can take the comfort they received from God and comfort others. *“Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of mercies and God of all comfort, who comforts us in all our tribulation, that we may be able to comfort those who are in any trouble, with the comfort with which we ourselves are comforted by God”* (2 Corinthians 1:3-4).

◆ **Seek God’s Grace and Strength**

Instead of focusing on the pain and problems of life which made you a victim, focus on the pain and problems your sins have brought you in life. See yourself as a victim of your own sins and you will seek God’s Grace. Paul recognized the depth of his sin and the need of God’s mercy. *“For I am the least of the apostles, who am not worthy to be called an apostle, because I persecuted the church of God”* (1 Cor. 15:9). *“This is a faithful saying and worthy of all acceptance, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners, of whom I am chief. However, for this reason I obtained mercy, that in me first Jesus Christ might show all longsuffering, as a pattern to those who are going to believe on Him for everlasting life”* (1 Tim. 1:15,16). *“For I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us”* (Rom. 8:18). *“I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me”* (Phil. 4:13).

In Christ, by the grace of God, the Christian should see himself as the victor not a victim. *“Yet in all these things we are more than conquerors through Him who loved us. For I am persuaded that neither death nor life, nor angels nor principalities nor powers, nor things present nor things to come, nor height nor depth, nor any other created thing, shall be able to separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord”* (Rom. 8:37-39).

◆ **Accept Reality**

My reality and your’s is that we are sinners living in a sinful world. Life is not fair. Bad things will happen to innocent people. You will be used and abused. You will be tested and tried. You will be lied about. You will work hard and still lose your job. You will love and be hated in return. You cannot change what happened to you as a child. Look what happened to the innocent Son of God. Job said, *“Shall we indeed accept good from God, and shall we not accept adversity?”* (Job 2:10).

Holocaust survivor Viktor Frankl wrote, “Everything can be taken from a man but one thing: the last of the human freedoms – to choose one’s attitude in any given set of circumstances, to choose one’s own way.” You will be a victim. But you can choose whether or not you are going to have a victim mentality. You are the one who can determine how you see yourself: a victim or a victor.

The Gospel message and the victim mentality are in opposition to each other. The victim mentality blinds us to the responsibility for our sins and need for a Savior. The Gospel views us a sinners, calls for repentance and points out the need for a Savior.

Questions:

1. What is the "victim mentality"?
2. Give examples of it from our current culture?
3. What is the difference between being victimized and seeing yourself as a victim? In 2 Corinthians 11:24-26 is Paul merely complaining about being a victim?
4. Why would people want to be viewed or view themselves as victims?
5. Why do those who see themselves as victims seek allies?
6. How does the victim mentality created a sense of helplessness?
7. What did the Israelites do when they saw themselves as victims of their circumstances while journeying through the Wilderness?
8. Why did Adam and Eve play the Blame Game in the Garden of Eden after they sinned?
9. Ultimately why is it necessary to take personal responsibility instead of just being a victim?
10. How does counting one's blessing help stave off the victim mentality?
11. Just how did Jesus help a sick man deal with the victim mentality?

12. How does forgiveness help in overcoming the victim mentality?

13. How did Job keep from falling into the victim mentality?

Application & Discussion:

1. List the various ways Jesus was victimized through out his short life. What helped him from giving into victim hood?

2. How do we often become victims of our own doing? What should be the proper Biblical reactions to those times?

Homework: When you start to feel like a helpless victim in life, remember to turn to God for victory over victim hood.

“You Only Live Once”

In 2011 a song called “The Motto” by Drake proclaimed, “YOLO, you only live once. The battle cry of a generation.” It reminds us of a poem by Robert Herrick poem: “To the Virgins, to Make Much of time”

Gather ye rose-buds while ye may.
Old Time is still a-flying
And this same flower that smiles today
Tomorrow will be dying.

So, one should pick that flower while it’s blooming. Soon it will shrivel up and die. Who wants a bouquet of dead flowers?

The acronym Y.O.L.O. stands for “You Only Live Once”. It has been used to justify a multitude of behaviors. “You only live once, so lick the bowl.” Maybe you’ve used this phrase to justify eating Nutella out of the jar or riding a roller coaster with fifteen loops

In the Old and New Testaments this concept is summed up with “Eat, Drink and Be Merry for tomorrow we die.” As is seen in Jesus’ parable of the foolish farmer who was blessed with a bumper crop. Instead of thinking about his soul this fool thought only of his future pleasures on earth enjoying his blessings. He planned, *“I will say to my soul, ‘Soul, you have many goods laid up for many years; take your ease; eat, drink, and be merry’”* (Luke 12:19). Solomon in his pursuit to investigate the profit and purpose of life observed, *“I looked on all the works that my hands had done and on the labor in which I had toiled; and indeed all was vanity and grasping for the wind. There was no profit under the sun”* (Ecclesiastes 2:11). In his quest for answers Solomon tried everything, including fame, money, enlightenment, sexual pleasure, fun experiences, comedy, alcohol, accomplishments, etc. In the end, he found all men end up six feet under a tombstone listing the dates of the day he was born and the day he died with a dash representing his life in the middle. This left the wise and wealthy king frustrated and disillusioned. In Ecclesiastes 8:14-15 he listed a recommendation based on what his investigation had discovered so far. *“There is a vanity which occurs on earth, that there are just men to whom it happens according to the work of the wicked; again, there are wicked men to whom it happens according to the work of the righteous. I said that this also is vanity. So I commended enjoyment, because a man has nothing better under the sun than to eat, drink, and be merry; for this will remain with him in his labor all the days of his life which God gives him under the sun.”*

Is this all there is? If this life is all there is, then anything we want to do or say is justifiable. *“But instead, joy and gladness, slaying oxen and killing sheep, eating meat and drinking wine: ‘Let us eat and drink, for tomorrow we die!’”* (Is. 22:13). Paul offered this view as being logical, if there was no resurrection of the dead and this life is all there is. *“If the dead do not rise, ‘Let us eat and drink, for tomorrow we die!’”* (1 Corinthians 15:32b).

Is this the view that God is really promoting through the prophets and apostles in the Bible? “You only live once” or “eat, drink and be merry for tomorrow we die” sounds more like what someone would say to justify doing something foolish, like, a diabetic eating their second box of a dozen Krispy Kreme donuts.

There is a positive side to the saying. It does encourage some to take the risk, go on the trip, speak up, do the thing - because, you only live once. Tomorrow is not guaranteed, so one should take

advantage of the time and opportunities.

You Only Live Once So...

■ **Do What Makes You Happy**

Some use this catch phrase, because they believe that living life is all about being happy. If you only live once, you might as well do whatever you want that makes you happy. They believe they deserve happiness and that it is their right to be happy. Some will go so far as to preach that God just wants them to be happy. Others justify doing what they want, so long as no one gets hurt. This is a hedonistic view of life.

■ **Complete Your Bucket List**

A bucket list is a set of activities one desires to accomplish in their life before they “kick the bucket.” It might include such things as: bungee jumping; sky diving, etc. Some of the things on the list cause one to think these folks must have some kind of death wish. Remember, no bucket list will ever compare to the joys of Heaven in Eternal life.

■ **Die Without Regrets**

Once a man went into a tattoo parlor to have the phrase “No Regrets” permanently written in ink across his arm. The artist misspelled the tattoo. So he had to live with “No regrets” and one big regret. This mind-set does not want to miss out on any fun, life might have to offer them. Life is short, so they need to just do it while they have the chance. The last thing they want on their tombstone is “Played it safe.” However, only sociopaths have no regrets. Many will have regrets on Judgment Day, because they failed to repent and serve God.

■ **Don't Let anyone Judge You**

Have you ever heard the foolish remark “only God can judge me” coming from someone in defense of their behavior? Since they only live once, they can sin all they want and no one better say a word about it. Why is it that those who say “only God can judge me” usually live as if they will never face God in judgment.

If You Only Live Once...

▶ **Remember You Will Die**

Since it is true we only live once, perhaps we should value and wisely use the time we have preparing for eternity. Nobody gets out of this world alive. *“So teach us to number our days, that we may gain a heart of wisdom”* (Psalm 90:12). God helps us to remember, we will have a funeral. After we die, it will be too late to change our minds.

▶ **Remember After Death is the Judgment**

There is one appointment that all will keep. *“And as it is appointed for men to die once, but after this the judgment, so Christ was offered once to bear the sins of many. To those who eagerly wait for Him He will appear a second time, apart from sin, for salvation”* (Hebrews 9:27-28). Every person has the responsibility and freedom of will to choose their course in life, but this appointment with death and judgment needs to be factored into every decision. *“Walk in the ways of your heart, and in the sight of your eyes; but now that for all these God will bring you into judgment”* (Eccl. 11:9).

▶ **Remember Your Creator in the Days of Your Youth**

Akin to YOLO is the phrase: “You’re Only Young Once.” So go ahead and do the things you want to before you are too old to enjoy them. Drugs are fun and work is dumb. However, wisdom weighs all the factors. Solomon wrote to his son, *“My son, hear the instruction of your father, and do not forsake the law of your mother; for they will be a graceful ornament on your head, and chains about your neck”* (Prov. 1:8-9). He later wrote, *“Remember now your Creator in the days of your youth, before the difficult days come, and the years draw near when you say, ‘I have no pleasure in them’* (Eccl. 12:1).

▶ **Don't Die Twice**

There is such a thing as the “second death.” In the Revelation John warns, “*But the cowardly, unbelieving, abominable, murderers, sexually immoral, sorcerers, idolaters, and all liars shall have their part in the lake which burns with fire and brimstone, which is the second death*” (Rev. 21:8). Live once, die twice. Live twice, die once. Ensure you will live after you die.

► **Die to Self**

To avoid dying twice, let self die daily. Jesus said, “*If anyone desires to come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily, and follow Me*” (Luke 9:23). C.S. Lewis put it this way, “Die before you die. There is no chance after.” Paul wrote, “*I have been crucified with Christ; it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me; and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself for me*” (Galatians 2:20).

► **You Will Miss Out on Eternal Life**

People want to leave a legacy and obtain a sort of immortality as they live on in the work they leave behind. Therefore, they want to seize the day (*carpe diem* in Latin). This is great, so long as they are striving to use each day to seize eternity. Paul wrote, “*Brethren, I do not count myself to have apprehended; but one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind and reaching forward to those things which are ahead, I press toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus.*” (Philippians 3:13-14). Why would you choose “You Only Live Once” when “You Could Live Forever”?

“You only live once” has been proven to be a lie by the resurrection of Jesus Christ. He died to give all men that chance to live forever and never die again.

Questions:

1. What does YOLO stand for?
2. What was the Rich Farmers view of life which resulted in God calling him a fool (Luke 12:15ff)?
3. According to Solomon's investigation of the vanity of life what was his conclusion in Ecclesiastes 8:14-15?
4. True False If there is no resurrection from the dead man might as well just eat and drink, for tomorrow we die!
5. Is being happy the ultimate goal in life? Explain.
6. True False Those who say “only God can judge me” usually live as if they will never face God in judgment.
7. What is the mortality rate in Texas?

8. What should the youth do with their life since they only live once?
9. What is the second death?
10. What is dying to self?
11. Compare the average life span and compare it to eternity?

Application & Discussion:

1. Since you can live forever through Christ, list the various things you should have on your Bucket List for this life.
2. Compare "You Only Live Once" with "You Can Live Twice". How does being born again and the second death change one's view of "You Only Live Once"?

Homework: Live every day of your life in view of eternal life.