

HOME DISCIPLESHIP CATECHISM

51 BIBLICAL DOCTRINES
DEFINED AND EXPLAINED
TO ASSIST PARENTS IN THE
TRAINING OF CHILDREN



ANDY MANNING

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By Andy Manning

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INTRODUCTION

There is nothing more important than the discipleship of children, and the best person for the job is the parent. It is with these two convictions that I have written the *Home Discipleship Catechism*.

As a parent, your most important responsibility is to disciple your kids. What does the word “disciple” mean? The first Christians were called disciples. A disciple is a devoted follower of Jesus. The job of a Christian parent is to help your children become fully-devoted followers of Jesus Christ. To not only lead them to believe in Jesus, but to equip them to serve God effectively for the rest of their lives. You must be sure that secondary pursuits, such as academics and athletics, do not supersede the ultimate pursuit – the pursuit of God. It is easy for parents to become so preoccupied with their child’s temporal success and happiness that they neglect the things that are infinitely more important – spiritual success and happiness. What good is it for a child to become a brain surgeon, a rocket scientist, or a successful entrepreneur if they live without God and spend eternity in hell? Do not misunderstand your calling as a Christian parent. Your most important role is to “train up a child in the way he should go (Pr 22:6, KJV).” To “bring them up in the training and instruction of the Lord (Eph 6:4).”

It is also essential that *parents* disciple their kids. As a pastor, I am a big believer in the importance of the church, but the church can only do so much. For kids to become strong, lifetime followers of Jesus, parents must disciple them at home, all during the week. Ephesians 6:4 says, “Fathers, don’t stir up anger in your children, but bring them up in the training and instruction of the Lord.”¹ Notice who is given the responsibility of discipleship. The church’s job is to assist parents as they disciple their kids at home. It was never meant to be the church. The church’s job is to help parents, not replace them. For your kids to grow up strong in Christ, you must do your part. You must do the hard work of sitting down with your kids several days a week for a structured,

organized, and consistent time of Bible-training. At my house, we call this “Bible Time.” Three nights a week, right after supper, I sit down with my kids for Bible Time. We pray, sing a praise song, and then I teach them the Bible, theology, apologetics, Christian virtues, spiritual disciplines, etc. It may be a new concept to many, but this is Biblical parenthood. Deuteronomy 6:6-7 says, “These words that I am giving you today are to be in your heart. Repeat them to your children. Talk about them when you sit in your house and when you walk along the road, when you lie down and when you get up.”

So how do you get started with the discipleship of your children? How do you disciple your kids at home? A good place to start is with the *Home Discipleship Catechism*. This resource was designed specifically to be used by parents in the discipleship of their children in the home. As you teach your kids to memorize the answers to these questions, and then use the curriculum to help them understand the answers, your children develop a strong Biblical foundation. This resource will help you teach your kids the core doctrines of the Bible.

What is a catechism? For many people, the word “catechism” brings to mind Roman Catholicism. However, Protestants have been using catechisms to teach children for hundreds of years. A catechism is a teaching method using questions and answers to teach a body of knowledge. Voddie Baucham wrote, “Ultimately, catechism is a means of teaching Christian doctrine in a concise, repetitive manner.”² In the words of the leader of the Protestant Reformation, Martin Luther, “In the catechism, we have a very exact, direct, and short way to the whole Christian religion.” Zacharias Ursinus, the primary author of the Heidelberg Catechism wrote, “The system of catechizing... includes short, simple, and plain exposition and rehearsal of the Christian doctrine, deduced from the writings of the apostles and prophets, and arranged in the form of questions and answers, adapted to the capacity and comprehension of the ignorant and unlearned; or it is a brief summary of the doctrine of the prophets and apostles, communicated orally to such as are unlearned, which they again are required to repeat.”³

What age should parents begin catechizing their kids? It depends on the readiness of the child. That could be age two, three, or four. In the catechism below, a part of each answer is underlined. This is a shorter answer that can be used for younger children. Some of the concepts and questions will be more difficult for younger children to fully comprehend. They can still memorize the answers. When this is the case, do your best to explain, and over time they will be able to understand more and more.

The *Home Discipleship Catechism* is unlike any other resource you might use to disciple your kids. It is not meant to be covered once and then set aside for the next resource. It

is to be the core, foundational curriculum for training up your children. This resource covers all of the most important doctrines and concepts of the Bible and Christian living. By learning this curriculum, your children will have a strong foundation that will support them for the remainder of their lives.

Allow me to share how I have used the catechism for years with my own children. As I already mentioned, I have Bible Time with my kids three nights a week – Monday, Tuesday, and Thursday. Each night, before the lesson, we review about ten questions from the catechism. I ask the questions, and they recite the answers aloud. Then we move on with singing and the lesson. On Monday night, the lesson is always one of the chapters from this curriculum, including the “Questions for Discussion.” The rest of the week, after we review the catechism questions, we use another resource for the lesson, such as a Bible storybook or simply a Scripture reading. After doing this for several years, my children know all of the questions by heart. By reading a chapter each week of this curriculum, we cover all of the most important doctrines and concepts in the Bible on a continual basis.

This resource has two sections. The first part of the resource is the Catechism – the fifty-one questions of the *Home Discipleship Catechism*. The second part is the Curriculum – 51 short chapters explaining each question of the catechism.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

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HOME DISCIPLESHIP CATECHISM

51 Biblical Doctrines Defined

Question 1: What is the Holy Bible?

Answer: The Bible is God's revelation of Himself to man. It has God for its author, salvation for its end, and truth, without any mixture of error, for its matter.⁴

Question 2: Why can we trust the Bible?

Answer: God is the Author of the Bible, and He does not lie.

Question 3: Who is God?

Answer: God is the Creator and Ruler of the universe. There is one God in three persons: The Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit.

Question 4: Where did we come from?

Answer: God created people, both male and female, in His own image to glorify Him. But because of the fall we are inclined to sin.

Question 5: How can we glorify God?

Answer: By loving Him and obeying His commands.⁵

Question 6: What are the first four of the Ten Commandments?

Answer: Do not have other gods besides Me. Do not make an idol for yourself. Do not misuse the name of the LORD your God. Remember the Sabbath day, to keep it holy.⁶

Question 7: What are the last six of the Ten Commandments?

Answer: Honor your father and your mother. Do not murder. Do not commit adultery. Do not steal. Do not give false testimony. Do not covet.

Question 8: What is the Great Commandment?

Answer: Love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, with all your mind, and with all your strength, and love your neighbor as yourself.

Question 9: What is sin?

Answer: Sin is any failure to obey God's commandments, either by commission or omission.

Question 10: What is the punishment for sin?

Answer: The punishment for sin is hell, the place of eternal torment.

Question 11: Is there any way to be saved from the punishment for sin?

Answer: Yes. We must repent of our sins and have faith in Jesus Christ.

Question 12: What is faith in Jesus Christ?

Answer: Faith in Jesus Christ is relying on Him alone for salvation.

Question 13: What is repentance?

Answer: Repentance is turning away from sin and turning to Jesus Christ in obedience.

Question 14: Must we do good works in order to be saved?

Answer: No. Salvation is by grace through faith.

Question 15: What is the purpose of good works?

Answer: We do good works out of love for God, to love our neighbor, and for our own joy.

Question 16: Why should God let you into heaven?

Answer: Because I trust in Jesus Christ as my Lord and Savior.

Question 17: What is regeneration?

Answer: When God saves us, He gives us a new heart with the desire and power to please Him.

Question 18: What is justification?

Answer: When God saves us, He declares us legally righteous in His sight.

Question 19: What is sanctification?

Answer: When God saves us, the Holy Spirit begins the lifelong process of growing us more and more like Jesus Christ.

Question 20: What is glorification?

Answer: When Jesus Christ comes back He will give us new, eternal bodies completely free from sin.

Question 21: Can we lose our salvation?

Answer: No. Since we are not saved by good works, we cannot lose our salvation by failing to be good.

Question 22: Is Jesus Christ the only way to God?

Answer: Yes. There is salvation in no one else.

Question 23: Who is Jesus Christ?

Answer: Jesus Christ is the sinless, eternal Son of God, coequal with the Father, the only mediator between God and humanity.

Question 24: How do we know that Jesus rose from the grave?

Answer: The first Christians died for their faith in the resurrection, and no one dies for a lie.

Question 25: Where is Christ now?

Answer: After His resurrection, Jesus Christ ascended to the Father's right hand in heaven to prepare a place for us.

Question 26: What happens after death?

Answer: Christians will live forever in Heaven with God, and unbelievers will exist forever in Hell.

Question 27: When is Christ coming back?

Answer: At an unknown time, Jesus Christ will come back as judge.

Question 28: Who is the Holy Spirit?

Answer: The Holy Spirit is God, coequal with the Father, living inside believers.

Question 29: What is the Apostles' Creed?

Answer: The Apostles' Creed is an ancient summary of right belief: "We believe in God the Father Almighty, Maker of heaven and earth, and in Jesus Christ His only Son our Lord, Who was conceived by the Holy Spirit, born of the virgin Mary, suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, died, and was buried. The third day He rose again from the dead. He ascended into heaven, and is seated at the right hand of God the Father Almighty. From there He will come to judge the living and the dead. We believe in the Holy Spirit, the holy catholic church, the communion of the saints, the forgiveness of sins, the resurrection of the body, and the life everlasting."

Question 30: What is prayer?

Answer: Prayer is talking to God in Jesus' name through adoration, confession, thanksgiving, and supplication.

Question 31: What is the Lord's Prayer?

Answer: Our Father which art in heaven, Hallowed be thy name. Thy kingdom come, Thy will be done in earth, as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread. And forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors. And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil: For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, forever. Amen.⁷

Question 32: What are the ordinances?

Answer: Jesus Christ commanded the church to observe baptism and the Lord's Supper.

Question 33: What is Baptism?

Answer: Baptism is the immersion of the new believer in water, symbolizing the death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus Christ.

Question 34: What is the Lord's Supper?

Answer: The Lord's Supper is a regularly observed memorial of the death of Jesus Christ for our sins.

Question 35: What is the church?

Answer: The church is a community of believers devoted to worship, fellowship, discipleship, service, and evangelism.

Question 36: Why do we participate in church?

Answer: We participate in church so that God can care for us, and so that we can contribute to the church.

Question 37: What is the Great Commission?

Answer: The Great Commission is the central mission of every Christian and every church, to go and make disciples of all the nations.

Question 38: What is the gospel?

Answer: God created us for Himself, but our sins separate us from Him. Jesus Christ paid for our sins and rose again. We can be saved if we repent and have faith in Jesus Christ.

Question 39: How do we know that evolution is not true?

Answer: God created everything in six days, according to its kind.

Question 40: What is the cosmological argument for God's existence?⁸

Answer: Something cannot come from nothing.

Question 41: What is the teleological argument for God's existence?

Answer: Design is proof of a designer.

Question 42: What is the Moral Law argument for God's existence?

Answer: The moral law in our hearts proves the existence of a Moral Law Giver.

Question 43: What is our comfort in adversity?

Answer: Nothing can happen to us unless God allows it, and He will use it for our good and His glory.

Question 44: What is the fruit of the Spirit?

Answer: Love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control.

Question 45: How do we glorify God with our bodies?

Answer: We glorify God with sexual purity, sobriety, healthy diet, and regular exercise.

Question 46: How do we glorify God with our money?

Answer: Our money belongs to God. We should tithe, help the needy, and wisely manage and enjoy it.

Question 47: Why is abortion wrong?

Answer: Murder is wrong, and abortion is murder.

Question 48: What is sex?

Answer: God made sex for marriage for the purpose of procreation, intimacy, and enjoyment.

Question 49: What is marriage?

Answer: Marriage is the union of one man and one woman for a lifetime.

Question 50: What is God's command to parents?

Answer: Children are a gift from the Lord, and parents should teach their kids to be fully devoted to Jesus Christ.

Question 51: What is the Christian's role in civil government?

Answer: We should be civically engaged to ensure that the government protects the God-given rights of its citizens.

COMMENTARY

51 Biblical Doctrines Explained

QUESTION 1: WHAT IS THE HOLY BIBLE?

The Bible is God's revelation of Himself to man. It has God for its author, salvation for its end, and truth, without any mixture of error, for its matter.

We all have questions. Big questions. Where did we come from? Why are we here? What happens after death? Why is there so much evil and suffering in the world, and what is the solution? Where do we find the answers to life's big questions? The Bible. Not only does God exist, but He wants you to know Him, and to have a personal relationship with Him. That's why God gave us the Bible - to teach us all about Him. In the Bible God answers all of our most important questions. It teaches us what to believe, how to behave, and how to be happy and successful.

The Bible is inspired by God. That means that God is the Author of the Bible. The Bible was written by men, but God gave them the words to write so that when you read the Bible, you are reading the very words of God Himself. 2 Timothy 3:16 says that "all" Scripture is inspired. That means that every single word in the Bible is God's Word. Since the Bible is God's Word, then you should read and study it. God knows everything about everything. If you want to know God, how to go to heaven, and how to be wise and happy, then who better to teach you than God Himself? The Bible has been called our Basic Instructions Before Leaving Earth (B.I.B.L.E.). It is God's love-letter written to us. You should want to know all that God has written to you.

The Bible is also inerrant. That means that it is without error. God does not lie (Num 23:19). Since He is the author of the Bible, every word is true. The Bible does not affirm anything that is false. Since the Bible is God's Word, and because it is completely true, then you can trust it. You can believe everything the Bible says – about creation, about history, about heaven and hell, about salvation, about God, and about marriage and family. To not believe the Bible is to not believe God.

Since the Bible is God's Word, then you should obey it. God is the Creator and Ruler of the universe. He is in charge of everyone and everything. His word is authoritative. It is law. As you read the Bible, you should keep your eyes open for God's commands, and then quickly obey. It is not enough to know what the Bible says. You must apply it to your life. To disobey the Bible is to disobey God.

Not only should you trust and obey the Bible, but you should trust and obey the Bible above all else. The Bible is the only book given to us by God. All other books are the words of people; therefore, you must compare everything you read and hear to the Bible. When something contradicts the Bible, it is a lie, and you must not believe it. When someone tells you to disobey the Bible, even if it is the government, you must not listen (Acts 5:29).

The Bible says Satan is on a mission to destroy you and to prevent you from enjoying God and His plan for your life (Jn 10:10; Eph 6:10-12; 1 Pet 5:8-9). Satan is smarter and more powerful than you. How can you ever resist him? God has given you armor – the belt of truth, the breastplate of righteousness, the sandals of the gospel, the shield of faith, and the helmet of salvation. But God hasn't just given you armor for defense; He has also given you a weapon to defeat the enemy. It's called the sword of the Spirit, which is the Word of God, the Bible. With the Bible you can be, do, and enjoy all that God has planned for you.

Questions for Discussion:

1. What is the Bible (in your own words)?
2. What's your favorite Bible story?
3. Who wrote the Bible?
4. What should we do with the Bible?
5. What should we do if we learn something that goes against the Bible? Why?

For Further Study:

1. The Character of the Bible: Psalm 19:7-11

2. The Benefits of the Bible: Joshua 1:7-8; Psalm 1:1-3; Psalm 19:7-11; 2 Timothy 3:16-17
3. The Inspiration of Scripture: 2 Timothy 3:16-17
4. How to Treat the Bible: Deuteronomy 6:6-9; Joshua 1:7-8; Psalm 1:2; Psalm 119; James 1:22

Fun Facts:

The Bible has 66 books. Just remember the numbers 3 and 9. There are 39 books in the Old Testament. $3 \times 9 = 27$. There are 27 books in the New Testament.

QUESTION 2: WHY CAN WE TRUST THE BIBLE?

God is the author of the Bible, and He does not lie.

Why do we believe that God is the Author of the Bible? First, this is what the Bible claims about itself. The Old Testament authors refer to their writings as the Word of God over 2,000 times. 2 Timothy 3:16 says that all Scripture is inspired by God. This is why we believe in the verbal, plenary inspiration of Scripture. “Verbal” means “word.” “Plenary” means “full.” Together this means that the entire Bible, from Genesis to Revelation, is inspired by God, even the very words. The doctrine of the verbal, plenary inspiration of Scripture means that every part of the whole Bible is inspired by God.

Jesus believed the Old Testament was God’s Word. He said that He came to fulfill and not to abolish the Old Testament (Mt 5:17). He said that the entire Old Testament was about Him (Lk 24:25-27; Jn 5:39). Jesus said that the Old Testament must be obeyed (Mt 5:18-19). He often referred to Old Testament people and events as historically accurate (Mt 5:12; 12:40; 24:37). When Jesus had theological discussions, He used the Old Testament as His authority (Mt 19:1-6). Jesus quoted the Old Testament to resist temptation (Mt 4:1-11). He even quoted the Old Testament as He was dying on the cross (Mt 27:46). If Jesus trusted the Bible, then we can, too.

The New Testament also claims to be God’s Word. In 2 Peter 3:16, Peter puts Paul’s writings on the same level as the Old Testament, calling them “Scripture”. In 1 Timothy

5:18, Paul quotes the Gospel of Luke (10:7) and calls it Scripture. In 1 Corinthians 14:37, Paul claims that his writings are from God. It should not be surprising that Jesus' disciples wrote Scripture. Jesus promised His disciples that after His departure He would send them the Holy Spirit who would remind them of everything He taught them and would guide them into all the truth (Jn 14:26; 16:13).

There are other reasons to trust the Bible. The Bible is historically accurate. No historical or archeological discoveries have disproved the Bible; instead, each new discovery affirms the Bible's reliability. As well, the Bible contains many prophecies that were fulfilled hundreds of years later. The Old Testament alone contains 300 prophecies about the coming Messiah that were all fulfilled in Jesus Christ. For example, the prophet, Micah, named Bethlehem as the birthplace of the Messiah 700 years before Christ was born in the manger (Micah 5:2).

The Bible passes the tests used by archeologists to determine the accuracy of an ancient text. It passes the Internal Test because it does not contradict itself. It passes the External Test because it does not contradict other documents from that time. And it passes the Bibliographical Test because we have many ancient manuscripts of the Bible that were copied not long after the originals, allowing us to ensure that changes were not made over time. We only have seven ancient copies of the works of Plato, and the oldest was copied 1,200 years after the original. But we have 24,000 ancient copies of the New Testament, and several of them were made only 50-100 years after the originals, making the New Testament far more reliable than the works of Plato. In fact, we have an entire New Testament manuscript that goes back to 300 years after the original was written.

There are many reasons to trust in the Bible more than any other ancient book. If someone does not believe in the Bible, it is not because the Bible is not trustworthy, but because acknowledging its truth would make them morally accountable to its Author.

Questions for Discussion

1. Why can we trust the Bible?
2. What would you say to someone who claims that the Bible is full of contradictions and errors?
3. Can you think of any other reason to trust the Bible that was not mentioned in this lesson?
4. Why do some people disbelieve the Bible?
5. Is there any part of the Bible that is hard for you to believe? Explain.

For Further Study:

1. God is the Author of the Bible: 2 Timothy 3:16; 2 Peter 1:20-21
2. The Bible can be trusted: Psalm 12:6; Psalm 19:7-11; Proverbs 30:5
3. God does not lie: Titus 1:2; Hebrews 6:18

Fun Facts:

The Old Testament has 39 books, 929 chapters, 23,214 verses, and 593,493 words. The New Testament has 27 books, 260 chapters, 7,959 verses, and 181,253 words.⁹

QUESTION 3: WHO IS GOD?

God is the Creator and Ruler of the universe. There is one God in three persons: The Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit.

The Bible says there is only one God. All other so-called gods are false gods that do not exist. The Bible also teaches that God is three: The Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. This is called the doctrine (teaching) of the Trinity. The Bible says there is one God in three co-eternal, co-equal persons. Co-eternal means each person of the Trinity has always existed. Co-equal means each person of the Trinity is as powerful and good as the others. Each person within the Trinity is distinct. The Father is not the Son; the Son is not the Holy Spirit; and the Spirit is not the Father. There is one God, and He exists in three persons. This is clearly taught in Scripture, even though the word "Trinity" is not used in the Bible. Jesus said to baptize new believers in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit (Mt 28:19). At Christ's baptism, all three persons of the Godhead were present – the Son in the water, the Spirit descending like a dove, and the Father speaking from heaven (Mt 3:16-17).

The Bible tells us all we need to know about God. God is the creator of everything and everyone (Gen 1:1). God is a spirit without a physical body (Jn 4:24). God is invisible, so we can't see Him (Col 1:15). God is sovereign, in charge and in control of everything, so nothing can happen to us unless God allows it (Is 14:24; Rom 8:28). God is eternal, so He was not created, and there was never a time when He did not exist (Ps 90:2). God is omnipotent, with the power to do anything He wants to do (Gen 1:1). God showed His unlimited power by creating the universe from nothing, by flooding the entire earth in the days of Noah, by parting the Red Sea for the Israelites, by causing the sun to stand

still in the days of Joshua, and by raising Jesus from the dead. God is omnipresent, so He is everywhere at the same time, and wherever you go He is there with you (Ps 139:8-10). God is omniscient, possessing all knowledge (Ps 139:1-6, 11-12). He knows the past, the present, and the future. He knew you before you were born, He knows what you are doing right now, and He knows your future. God even knows the number of hairs on your head (Lk 12:7). He knows the answer to all your questions, and the solutions to all your problems. He has all the wisdom you will ever need (Is 28:29). Since God is in control and in charge of everything, it is comforting to know that He is holy (1 Pt 1:15-16). He does not sin, and He will never use His power for evil. It is also comforting to know that God is fair and righteous, so He will never mistreat you (Ps 5:4; 9:7-8).

Perhaps the best thing about God is that He is good (Ps 107:1). He is love, and will always treat you in a loving way (1 Jn 4:8). This is why you can trust that when God commands you to do something, or allows you to suffer, it is what is best for you. God supplies all your needs (Phil 4:19), and even more, He gives you a good life (Ps 34; 103:5; Jn 10:10; Jn 1:17). It is God who heals you when you are sick (Ps 103:3), protects and rescues you from danger (Ps 27:1; 103:4), is patient with you when you fail, forgives your sins (Ps 103:3, 8; 1 Jn 1:9), guides you along the best path for your life (Ps 25:9-12), gives you strength for all of life's challenges (Ps 18:32-40; Phil 4:13), comforts you in your trials (2 Cor 1:3-5), and hears and answers your prayers (1 Pt 3:12). And in spite of your sins, God sent His Son, Jesus, to die for you so that you could be forgiven and saved (Jn 3:16). For Christians, God is more than a deity to worship and serve; He is our heavenly Father (Rm 8:15).

Questions for Discussion:

1. What do the following words mean: Omnipotent? Omnipresent? Omniscient? Sovereign?
2. What is the doctrine of the Trinity? How can God be one and three at the same time?
3. What's so great about God?
4. What is it about God that makes you love and praise Him?
5. What is it about God that makes you want to serve Him?

For Further Study:

1. There is only one God: Deuteronomy 6:4; 1 Chronicles 17:20; Isaiah 43:10
2. God is the Creator of everything: Genesis 1:1; Is 45:18; Acts 17:24-26
3. God is eternal: Psalm 90:2; Isaiah 40:28

4. God is in charge of everything (sovereign): 2 Chron 20:6; Psalm 135:6; Isaiah 14:24
5. God knows everything (omniscient): Psalm 139:2-6; Proverbs 5:21; Isaiah 40:28
6. God is everywhere (omnipresent): 2 Chronicles 6:18; Psalm 139:7-12; Acts 17:24; Acts 17:27
7. God can do anything (omnipotent): Jeremiah 32:17; Isaiah 40:28
8. God is three-in-one (Trinity): Matthew 3:16-17; Matthew 28:19

Fun Facts:

There are “Christian” groups who deny the doctrine of the Trinity, but they are considered to be cults that are outside the bounds of orthodoxy (right belief), such as United Pentecostals, Apostolics, Mormons, and Jehovah’s Witnesses.

QUESTION 4: WHERE DID WE COME FROM?

God created people, both male and female, in His own image to glorify Him. But because of the fall we are inclined to sin.

You are not an accident. You are not here by chance. You are not even here because your parents decided to have children. You are the product of divine decision and intention. God created you, just as he created every human being. You are not the product of evolution. Your ancestors are not monkeys. Your ancient ancestors are Noah and his wife, and before them, Adam and Eve, the very first human beings. God made you. Genesis 2:7 says, "Then the Lord God formed the man out of the dust from the ground and breathed the breath of life into his nostrils, and the man became a living being." After creating the heavens and the earth, the plants and the animals, on the sixth day of creation God made people.

God created human beings as either male or female, man or woman, boy or girl. Genesis 1:27 says, "So God created man in His own image; he created him in the image of God; He created them male and female." There are only two genders, male and female. Your gender is fixed, not fluid. You cannot change your gender, nor can you choose your gender. Your gender was chosen for you by God before you were conceived. Your gender is not determined by how you feel, but by how God made you - either male or female - and it coincides with your biological sex.

God created people in His image. This means that people are created to reflect God's moral character. This is your purpose in life – to display God's goodness and greatness through your life. This is called glorifying God. 1 Corinthians 10:31 says, "So, whether you eat or drink, or whatever you do, do everything for the glory of God."

Since human beings are the only one of God's Creation that are made in His image, this means that people are different from animals and plants. God made mankind to be in charge of Creation, to care for Creation, and make use of the world's resources. All of Creation is to be used for man's benefit, but you must be sure that you don't waste or destroy creation. Genesis 1:28 says, "God blessed them, and God said to them, 'Be fruitful, multiply, fill the earth, and subdue it. Rule the fish of the sea, the birds of the sky, and every creature that crawls on the earth.'"

Being created in God's image also means that human beings are infinitely more valuable than plants and animals. You must not injure or disrespect people in any way. Instead, God commands you to love your neighbor as yourself. Matthew 6:26 says, "Consider the birds of the sky: They don't sow or reap or gather into barns, yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Aren't you worth more than they?"

Although human beings were created to glorify God, because of the Fall we are inclined to sin. The Fall is the name of the terrible event when Adam and Eve broke God's command, causing sin to corrupt the entire world and to infect every human being. Rather than desiring to please God, your natural desire is to please yourself, even if it means sinning against God. As a result, the image of God in man is broken and hard to see. But when you are saved through faith in Jesus Christ, the Holy Spirit begins the process of transforming you so that you may once again reflect God's image and glorify Him in all that you say and do.

Questions for Discussion:

1. Who made you, and why?
2. How many genders are there?
3. What does it mean to be made in the image of God?
4. What is the difference between people and the rest of creation?
5. What is wrong with mankind?

For Further Study:

1. God created man and woman: Genesis 2:7; Genesis 2:21-22
2. People are created in God's image: Genesis 1:26-27; Genesis 9:5-6
3. There are only two genders: Genesis 1:27; Genesis 2:24

4. God wants us to glorify Him: 1 Corinthians 10:31
5. The story of the Fall: Genesis 3
6. All people are very sinful: Genesis 6:5; Genesis 6:12; Psalm 14:2-3; Isaiah 53:6; Romans 3:9-23

Fun Facts:

Theologians often refer to the image of God by its Latin equivalent, the *imago Dei*.

QUESTION 5: HOW CAN WE GLORIFY GOD?

By loving Him and obeying His commands.

People are created in the image of God, and therefore the ultimate purpose of mankind is to reflect God's image. This is what it means to glorify God. To glorify God is to display the goodness and greatness of God through your life.

1 Corinthians 10:31 says, "So, whether you eat or drink, or whatever you do, do everything for the glory of God." You must seek to glorify God in everything that you do - in your speech, your thoughts, your attitude, your actions, the way you treat people, your finances, your schoolwork, and even in your free time.

Ephesians 5:1 says, "Therefore, be imitators of God, as dearly loved children." Consider some of God's attributes. God is holy, loving, generous, merciful, compassionate, faithful, and honest. To glorify God is to imitate His attributes in order to show the world what He is like. The better you imitate God's character, the better you will glorify Him.

Colossians 3:17 (NLT) says, "And whatever you do or say, do it as a representative of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks through Him to God the Father."¹⁰ Christ is in heaven, and God is invisible. How can the world discover what God is like? They can read the Bible; however, a visible image would be very helpful. That's what it means to glorify

God. You are Christ's representative. Your mission is to represent God in whatever you say or do. In everything you say, say what God would say, the way God would say it. In everything you do, do what God would do, the way He would do it. Your life should be a picture of God's goodness and greatness so that other people can discover what God is like and praise Him.

One way to glorify God is by loving Him. This is the greatest commandment of all. Mark 12:30 says, "Love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, with all your mind, and with all your strength." To love God is to feel strong affection and admiration for Him, to walk in a close relationship with Him, and to aim to please Him in all that you do. God did not create you to be His slave, but to be His child, and to love Him and enjoy a relationship with Him. The more you love God, the more He is glorified by you.

Another important way to glorify God is by obeying His commands. Deuteronomy 6:17 says, "Carefully observe the commands of the Lord your God, the decrees and statutes he has commanded you." All of God's commands are like tools to help you build a life that glorifies God. When you obey God, you glorify Him. When you disobey God, you do not glorify Him. It is very important to diligently study God's word so that you can discover God's commands, and to carefully obey God's commands so that you can glorify Him.

The Bible says that all of us have sinned and fallen short of the glory of God (Rm 3:23). Nobody but Jesus has perfectly glorified God. But Jesus Christ paid for our sins on the cross so that we could be forgiven and be reconciled to God, and through the power of the Holy Spirit we can overcome sin and grow to glorify God more and more.

Questions for Discussion:

1. What does it mean to glorify God?
2. What did you do to glorify God today?
3. What did you do today that did not glorify God?
4. How does loving God help you to glorify Him?
5. How does obeying God help you to glorify Him?

For Further Study:

1. Glorifying God: Psalm 44:8; Acts 12:23; 1 Corinthians 6:19-20; 1 Corinthians 10:31
2. Loving God: Deuteronomy 6:4-5; Matthew 22:37-40; Mark 12:29-31
3. Glorify God by obeying Him: John 14:15; John 14:21; 1 John 5:3

Fun Facts:

The Bible was written by more than 40 authors over a period of about 1,500 years. The Old Testament was originally written in Hebrew, and the New Testament in Greek.

QUESTION 6: WHAT ARE THE FIRST FOUR OF THE TEN COMMANDMENTS?

Do not have other gods besides Me. Do not make an idol for yourself. Do not misuse the name of the LORD your God. Remember the Sabbath day, to keep it holy.

The giving of the Ten Commandments is an amazing story. Three months after delivering the Israelites from slavery in Egypt, the Israelites arrived at Mount Sinai. When God descended on the top of the mountain, there was thunder and lightning, the mountain was covered in smoke because the Lord descended on it in fire, and there was the sound of a very loud trumpet that caused the people to shudder. The mountain shook violently. As the people stood at the base of the mountain, Moses climbed to the top. Then God gave him the Ten Commandments. He spoke so that all the people could hear, and God wrote the commandments on two stone tablets with His own finger.

God gave us the Ten Commandments for three reasons. First, to show us the best way to live. The Ten Commandments are a summary of all of God's commands in Scripture. They teach us how to love God, how to love one another, and how to live life to the fullest. Second, the Ten Commandments restrain sin in society. A nation cannot survive unless people are responsible for themselves and respectful of one another. The Ten Commandments instruct society in how to live, and serve as a warning that there is

a God who will hold us accountable for our actions. Third, the Ten Commandments show us our sin and need for a Savior. When we compare our lives to the Ten Commandments, it becomes obvious that we are sinful and are unable to save ourselves. This should motivate us to reach out for God's mercy poured out through Jesus Christ.

The Ten Commandments can be divided into two tables – commandments 1-4, and 5-10. Commandments 1-4 teach us how to love God, and commandments 5-10 teach us how to love one another. The first commandment, “Do not have other gods besides Me,” teaches us that there is only one God, and we must only worship Him. You must not allow anything or anyone to take God's place in your heart. You must love God with your entire being. The second commandment, “Do not make an idol for yourself,” teaches us that we must not use created images and statues of God in our worship. As well, you must not worship your own idea of God; rather you must worship God as He has revealed Himself in Scripture. The third commandment, “Do not misuse the name of the LORD your God,” teaches us to honor God's name. Only use God's name with the utmost respect, and do not commit sin in the name of God. The fourth commandment, “Remember the Sabbath day, to keep it holy,” is the only one of the Ten Commandments that is no longer binding upon Christians today. The Jews were forbidden to do any work on the Sabbath (Saturday), and instead to spend the day in rest and worship, but the New Testament releases Christians from the Sabbath law (see Col 2:16-17). However, when God created the world in six days and rested on the seventh, He was revealing and exemplifying the wisest way to live. Every week you need to take one day off for rest. Although we don't have to worship on Saturdays (the day of the Jewish Sabbath), Christians are still commanded to meet regularly with other believers in the church for worship. Weekly rest and worship are essential to be happy, healthy, and holy.

Questions for Discussion:

1. When, where, and how were the Ten Commandments given?
2. Why did God give us the Ten Commandments?
3. What is the meaning of the first and second commandments?
4. What is the meaning of the third and fourth commandments?
5. Why don't we keep the Sabbath anymore?

For Further Study:

1. The first giving of the Ten Commandments: Exodus 20:1-17
2. The second giving of the Ten Commandments: Deuteronomy 5:6-21
3. The punishment for worshipping other gods: Deuteronomy 17:2-4

4. God's anger against idolatry: Numbers 25:1-9
5. The misuse of God's name: Exodus 22:28; Leviticus 19:12; Leviticus 24:10-23
6. The Sabbath is no longer binding on Christians: Romans 14:5-6; Colossians 2:16-17; Hebrews 10:25

Fun Facts:

The Ten Commandments are also called the "Decalogue," meaning "ten words" in Greek. The Hebrew words for the "Ten Commandments" literally mean the "ten words." The term "Ten Commandments" is only found three times in the Bible: Exodus 34:28; Deuteronomy 4:13; and Deuteronomy 10:4.

QUESTION 7: WHAT ARE THE LAST SIX OF THE TEN COMMANDMENTS?

Honor your father and your mother. Do not murder. Do not commit adultery. Do not steal.
Do not give false testimony. Do not covet.

Commandments 5-10 teach us how to love one another, beginning with our parents. The fifth commandment tells us to honor our parents. To honor is to treat someone like they are very valuable and important, and that is true of your parents. Your parents take care of you, love you unconditionally, and teach you the Bible.

How should you honor your parents? Remember the word H.O.N.O.R. H - Help them as they get older. O - Obey them right away with a good attitude. N - Never hold a grudge against them. Forgive them when they sin against you. O - Open up your life to them. Talk to them often. Spend time with them. Visit them. Invite them to your house. Let them enjoy their grandchildren. Share special occasions and holidays with them. R - Respect them with your words and actions. You must always respond to your parents with "Yes sir" and "Yes ma'am". Never raise your voice at your parents. Never say anything mean to them. And you must never say anything hurtful about them.

The sixth commandment prohibits murder. There are times when killing is allowed. Soldiers may kill in war; the police may kill as they fight crime; and anyone may kill in self-defense. To murder is to intentionally kill a human being without just cause. Since God is the giver of life, only He has the right to take a life. Every human being is created in the image of God and is infinitely valuable to God. Therefore, you must not only avoid murder, you must also avoid injuring people and hating people, because these can lead to murder. Instead, you must do everything you can to preserve life, including your own.

The seventh commandment prohibits adultery. To commit adultery is to have sexual relations outside of marriage. This includes extramarital sex, as well as pre-marital sex. God created sex only for the context of marriage between one man and one woman. You keep this command by striving for sexual purity in every way – with your actions, your thoughts, and your eyes. To avoid adultery, you also must strive to be fully pleasing to your spouse so that they are in no way tempted to go astray.

The eighth commandment prohibits stealing. To steal is to take what does not belong to you. There is no excuse for stealing. It does not matter if the other person has more than enough. It does not matter if they won't miss it. It does not matter how badly you need it. You must do what is right and trust God to meet your needs. To fully keep this command, you must not merely avoid stealing, but also be respectful of the property of others, and be generous to those who do not have enough.

The ninth commandment prohibits false testimony. False testimony includes any kind of lying, dishonesty, and deceitfulness. God always tells the truth, and He created you to reflect His image by being a truth-teller. It is never okay to tell a lie. Tell the truth and trust God with the consequences.

The tenth commandment prohibits covetousness. Covetousness is sinful desire. You covet when you desire the wrong things, or the right things for the wrong reasons, or when you desire things too much. To covet is to be dissatisfied with what God has given you. It is to rely on the things of this world for happiness rather than God. Instead, you must always be thankful and content with what God has given you, realizing that happiness comes from knowing God and not from gaining the things of this world.

Questions for Discussion:

1. What is the difference between the first table and the second table in the Ten Commandments?
2. How can you honor your parents?

3. What does it mean to avoid murder and adultery?
4. What does it mean to avoid stealing and false testimony?
5. What does it mean to avoid covetousness?

For Further Study:

1. The Ten Commandments: Exodus 20:1-17
2. Honor your parents: Ephesians 6:1-3; Colossians 3:20
3. Do not murder: Genesis 9:6; Matthew 5:21-22
4. Do not commit adultery: Proverbs 6:32; Matthew 5:28; Hebrews 13:4
5. Do not steal: Ephesians 4:28; Romans 13:9
6. Do not lie: Proverbs 6:16-19; Proverbs 12:22; Proverbs 19:9; Ephesians 4:25; Colossians 3:9-10
7. Do not covet: Exodus 20:17; 1 Timothy 6:6-10

Fun Facts:

The Ten Commandments were given about thirteen centuries before Christ, making them over 3,000 years old (written circa 1446-1227 B.C.). The Ten Commandments are the only part of the Law of Moses spoken by God's audible voice, written on the stone tablets, by the finger of God, and stored in the Ark of the Covenant.

QUESTION 8: WHAT IS THE GREAT COMMANDMENT?

Love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, with all your mind, and with all your strength, and love your neighbor as yourself.

There are 613 commands in the Law of Moses. When Jesus was asked which command was the most important of all, His answer was to love God with your entire being, and to love your neighbor as yourself. This is called the Great Commandment. It is also a summary of the Ten Commandments. The Ten Commandments are all about loving God and loving people. In fact, the Great Commandment is a summary of the entire Christian life. How can you be a successful, fully-devoted Christian? Keep growing in love for God and people.

What does it mean to love God?

1. To love God is to adore Him, to have deep, passionate affection for Him, and to desire Him more than anything else in the world.
2. To love God is to praise Him. If you truly adore God and have deep, passionate affection for Him, you can't hold it in. True love comes out in your words and songs.
3. To love God is to thank Him. You must thank God in everything (1 Thess 5:18). After all, every good gift comes from Him (James 1:17).

4. To love God is to talk to Him. When you love someone, you want to spend as much time with them in conversation as possible.
5. To love God is to obey Him. Praise songs, financial donations, and good deeds don't mean anything to God if you are not obedient.
6. To love God is to put Him first. You must not allow anything or anyone – even your family and closest friends – to prevent you from full devotion to Jesus Christ. You must even be willing to give up your own comfort, safety, and even your life for Jesus Christ. To love God is to be willing to face the fiery furnace and the lion's den for Him.
7. To love God is to serve Him. You must devote your life to accomplishing God's mission in the world, that of seeking and saving the lost.

What does it mean to love God with all your heart, soul, mind, and strength? To love God with all your *heart* is to love Him with your thoughts and attitudes, not merely your outward actions. To love God with all your *soul* is to love God with every arena of your life, every part of your existence – your entire being. This means you must love God with your sexuality, your thoughts, your words, your money, your school, your entertainment, your sports, and anything else you do. To love God with all your *mind* is to love Him with all your understanding. If your understanding of God is wrong, then your love for Him will be wrong. You must devote yourself to studying God's Word so that you can know God as well as possible. To love God with all your *strength* is to love Him with all your energy. God does not want casual, easy-going, laid-back, relaxed love. He wants radical, sold out, fully-devoted, all-in love. It is to do your best to love God. Work your hardest at loving God.

The second part of the Great Commandment is to love your neighbor as yourself. If you want to show God love, then you must love your neighbor. What is love? To love someone is to do what is best for them, not what makes them feel good; it is to meet their needs, not their wants. How much are you to love your neighbor? As much as you love yourself. How can you know how to love people? You should treat people the way you would want to be treated (Lk 6:31). Who is your neighbor? Your neighbor includes every human being that you encounter – even your enemies.

Questions for Discussion:

1. How many commandments are in the Law of Moses?
2. Of all God's laws, which is the greatest? Why?
3. What does it mean to love God?
4. What does it mean to love God with all your heart, soul, mind, and strength?
5. What does it mean to love your neighbor?

For Further Study:

1. The Great Commandment: Deuteronomy 6:4-9; Matthew 22:34-40; Mark 12:28-31; Luke 10:27
2. Love for God: Matthew 6:24; John 14:21; 1 John 4:19; 1 John 5:3
3. Love for neighbor: John 15:12-14; 1 Corinthians 13:1-7; Galatians 5:22-23; 1 John 4:7-8

Fun Facts:

The Jewish leaders during the time of Christ believed that there were 613 laws in the Old Testament. 365 positive commands – one for every day of the year; and 248 negative commands – one for every bone and major organ in the human body.¹¹

QUESTION 9: WHAT IS SIN?

Sin is any failure to obey God's commandments, either by commission or omission.

God deserves your complete obedience. He is your Creator, Savior, and Judge. Failing to obey God's commands is called sin. There are two kinds of sins. Sins of commission are when you do what God restricts, such as lying or stealing. Sins of omission are when you fail to do what God requires, such as keeping the Sabbath, and honoring your parents.

Sin is self-worship. It is worshiping yourself by placing your own will above God's. Therefore, all sin is a violation of the first commandment, "Do not have other gods besides Me (Ex 20:3)."

Sin is trying to find happiness apart from God and outside His will. It is seeking happiness in Creation rather than in the Creator. Therefore, all sin is a failure to take delight in the Lord (Ps 37:4).

Why should we avoid sin? First, sin makes you unhappy. Sin may gratify, but it does not satisfy. The Bible is clear that true joy is found in an obedient relationship with God (Ps 1:1-2). Second, sin hurts you. Sin is not your friend. When you choose to sin, you choose to suffer. Sin promises pleasure, but it delivers pain. You don't actually break God's commandments, you break yourself against them. God is love, and therefore His will for you is the best way to live (1 Jn 4:8; 5:3). The best life is the obedient life.¹² When God says, "Don't," He means "Don't hurt yourself." Third, you should avoid sin because it hinders your prayers. God has many blessings to give you through prayer

(Mt 7:7), but He does not answer the prayers of the wicked (James 5:16). Fourth, you should avoid sin because it leads to God's discipline. Like any good father, God is not permissive; He disciplines His children when they do what is wrong (Pr 3:11-12). Fifth, you should avoid sin to please God. If you love God, then you want to do those things that make Him happy and avoid those things that displease Him. Don't be mistaken. God hates sin (Ps 11:5). Sin makes God deeply sad (Gen 6:5-6). Sin is a big deal. It is so bad that the punishment for sin is hell, and the price to save us was the death of God's own Son. Sixth, you should avoid sin because it destroys your relationship with God. The happiest place to live is in intimate fellowship with God, but sin destroys that intimacy (Ps 16:11; Ps 15:1-5). Seventh, you should avoid sin because deliberate, prolonged sin is a sign of spiritual death. It is a sign that you are not truly saved. True salvation does not make us sinless, but it makes us sin less and feel worse (1 Jn 2:3-4). Eighth, you should avoid sin because it hurts the ones you love. Eve's sin hurt Adam, and Adam's sin hurt the entire human race. Sin, even private sin, is never personal. It is always social and will always have a negative impact on the people you care about the most. Ninth, you should avoid sin to be an effective witness (Mt 5:13). Nobody listens to a hypocrite.

How can you overcome sin? First, you must be born again. In salvation, Christ breaks the power of sin and Satan and gives us the desire and power to walk in obedience (Ez 36:26-27; 2 Cor 5:17; Phil 2:13). Second, you must make a firm commitment to avoid sin and live for God (Rm 6:12-13). Third, you must meditate on Scripture (Jn 8:32). You give in to temptation because you believe lies - "just this once won't hurt," "nobody will know," "it's no big deal," "I deserve this," "you only live once." You must counter those lies by focusing on the truth of God's Word (Ps 119:11). Fourth, you must abide in Christ (Jn 15:5). As you stay close to Him, He will empower you to overcome sin. Fifth, you must be willing to do whatever it takes to overcome sin (Mt 5:29-30). Sin can only be defeated by declaring all-out war against it.

Questions for Discussion:

1. What is sin?
2. Why should we avoid sin?
3. How can we overcome sin?
4. What do we do if we sin?
5. What is the worst sin?

For Further Study:

1. All have sinned: Romans 3:9-23; 1 John 1:10
2. The punishment for sin: Romans 6:23

3. The prohibition against sin: Romans 6:12-13
4. What to do when you sin: 1 John 1:9
5. The cure for sin: 1 John 2:1-2
6. A pattern of deliberate sin is a sign that a person may not be saved: 1 John 2:3-6

Fun Facts:

The oldest person in the Bible was a man called Methuselah, Noah's grandfather. He lived almost 1,000 years – 969 to be exact (see Genesis 5:27)!

QUESTION 10: WHAT IS THE PUNISHMENT FOR SIN?

The punishment for sin is hell, the place of eternal torment.

How much does God hate sin? Enough to punish sinners for eternity in hell. Is hell for real? Absolutely. The words of Jesus are found in 1,830 verses in the Bible, and thirteen percent of those deal with hell. The Greek word for hell is *Gehenna*. It is used twelve times in the New Testament, and eleven of those are from Jesus Himself. Hell is all too real.

What is hell like? It is a place of "outer darkness (Mt 8:11-12)." There is "weeping and gnashing of teeth (Mt 8:11-12)." It is an "unquenchable fire (Mk 9:43-44)," and an "eternal fire (Mt 18:8; 25:41)." It is a "blazing furnace (Mt 13:42)." It is described as a place where "the worm does not die (Mk 9:43-44)." It is called the "lake of fire." The devil and his demons will be there (Mt 25:41). Those who go there will be "tormented day and night forever and ever (Rev 20:10)." We can conclude from the Bible that hell is the most horrible place imaginable. It is a place of non-stop, indescribable physical and emotional suffering. And it is eternal. Once a person goes to hell, there is no escape, and no second chance (Heb 9:27). Once in hell, always in hell. There is no death in hell, only constant torment for all eternity.

How could a loving God send people to hell? God is an infinite God, and therefore the punishment for sinning against Him must be infinite. It would be unjust for God to

allow sin to go unpunished. But it is important to understand that God doesn't want anyone to go to hell (1 Tim 2:3-4; 2 Peter 3:9). God wants everyone to be saved. In a way, God doesn't send anyone to hell. God has made a way for everyone to be saved through faith in Jesus Christ (John 3:16-18). As well, God did not originally create hell for human beings; it was created as a place of punishment for the devil and his demons (Mt 25:41). The only people who go to hell are those who refuse to repent of their sins and trust in Jesus Christ as Savior and Lord.

Because hell is real, there are two things you must do. First, you must make sure that you do not go to hell. You can avoid hell by admitting your sin, believing in Jesus who died and rose again, and calling on Jesus to save you (Rm 10:13). Second, you must help as many people as possible to avoid hell by sharing the gospel of Jesus Christ with them. This is called evangelism, and it is one of the most important things you can do with your life. Without Christ, people will spend eternity in hell. You know the solution to the problem of hell, and you must not keep it to yourself. You must rescue as many as you can.

Is it rude to tell people that they will go to hell if they do not turn to Jesus Christ? Not at all, as long as you speak the truth in love (Eph 4:15). Would it be rude for a doctor to tell a patient that they have a deadly disease so that they can seek the proper treatment before it is too late? No. It is an act of love to share information with someone that could save their life. Telling people about the reality of hell and how to find salvation is not only life-saving information, but eternity-saving information. It is the most loving thing you could do for someone.

Questions for Discussion:

1. What is hell like?
2. How long will hell last?
3. Do you believe that hell is real? Explain.
4. Is it rude to tell people about hell? Explain.
5. How could a loving God send people to hell?

For Further Study:

1. The pain of hell: Matthew 13:42; Luke 16:23-24; Revelation 14:10
2. The eternity of hell: Matthew 18:8; Matthew 25:46; Mark 9:43; Mark 9:48; 2 Thessalonians 1:9; Revelation 14:10-11
3. The fire of hell: Matthew 5:22; Matthew 13:41-42; Matthew 18:8; Luke 16:23-24; 2 Thessalonians 1:8; Jude 7, 17
4. The darkness of hell: Matthew 8:12; 2 Peter 2:17

5. The reason hell was created: Matthew 25:41
6. Who is hell for? Matthew 25:41; 2 Thessalonians 1:8; Revelation 14:10-11; Revelation 20:10; Revelation 20:15; Revelation 21:8
7. God does not want anyone to suffer in hell: Lamentations 3:33; Ezekiel 33:11; 1 Timothy 2:4; 2 Peter 3:9-

Fun Facts:

The most popular Greek word in the New Testament for hell is *Gehenna*. The word comes from the name of a place just south of Jerusalem called the Valley of Hinnom, or in Hebrew, *Ge Hinnom*. In ancient Israel, it was a place of idol worship and child sacrifice. Later King Josiah led the nation back to God and turned the valley into a trash heap where all the refuse of Jerusalem, including the bodies of dead animals and criminals were thrown to rot and burn. The valley was always on fire and it became a breeding ground for worms. It smelled horrible!

QUESTION 11: IS THERE ANY WAY TO BE SAVED FROM THE PUNISHMENT FOR SIN?

Yes. We must repent of our sins and have faith in Jesus Christ.

We already learned that the punishment for sin is hell (see Question 10). Since we are all sinners, hell is what we all deserve (Rm 3:23; 6:23). However, God loves us so much that He has provided a way for us to be saved.

What is the way to salvation? Most people think it is a life of good works. This can be called the "Performance Plan". According to the Performance Plan, when you stand before the judgment seat of Christ, He will compare your good deeds to your bad deeds, and as long as you have more good than bad, you will be saved and go to heaven. In other words, as long as your performance is good enough, then you will be saved. However, there are several problems with the Performance Plan. First, it is unbiblical. The Bible does not command us or tell us that it is possible to earn our way to heaven by good works. In fact, the Bible very clearly says that good works cannot save us (Eph 2:8-9; Titus 3:4-5). Second, the Performance Plan is unclear. How can you ever know if you have been good enough? How can you know for certain that your good deeds outweigh your bad deeds? The best you can do is hope for the best, but this would lead to a life of fear and worry, and the Bible tells us that those are two things that God doesn't want us to do (2 Tim 1:7; Phil 4:6). As well, the Bible says that God

wants us to know for sure that we are saved (1 Jn 5:13). A third problem with the Performance Plan is that it is unjust. Sin incurs the wrath of God. Doing good deeds does not make up for sin; they are simply your duty. No matter how many good deeds you do, your sin still needs to be punished. A just God cannot ignore sin. The Performance Plan leads to hell.

God's plan of salvation was to send His Son into the world to perfectly fulfill the law, and then to die for our sins, in our place, as our substitute (Jn 3:16), and then to rise from the grave on the third day. Now, when you repent of your sins and place your faith in Jesus Christ, God forgives your sins and gives you the promise of eternal life. This can be called the "Faith Plan". Rather than trusting in your good deeds, you must trust in the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ as the way to salvation.

Jesus was qualified to die for our sins for several reasons. First, Jesus was perfect. He never sinned by breaking God's commands, or by failing to do every good work. If Jesus had any sin, He would have had to be punished for His own sin; but because He was perfect, He could die for the sins of others. Second, Jesus was qualified to die for our sins because He was fully human. When Jesus came to earth, He took on a human body, without which He could not have been killed. Third, Jesus was qualified to die for our sins because He was fully God. As God, He was able to die not merely for the sins of one person, but for the sins of the entire world. Moreover, because He was God, death could not defeat Him. He was able to rise from the grave in order to give us eternal life.

Good deeds cannot save you. Only the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ can save you. And to receive the gift of salvation you must turn from your sins and have faith in Jesus Christ. You can be saved today if you admit your sin, believe in the death and resurrection of Christ, and call on Jesus to be your Lord and Savior.

Questions for Discussion:

1. What is the punishment for sin?
2. Who deserves the punishment for sin?
3. How can we be saved from the punishment for sin?
4. What is wrong with the Performance Plan?
5. What is the Faith Plan of salvation?

For Further Study:

1. Salvation is by grace, not works: Ephesians 2:8-9; Titus 3:4-5
2. Salvation is by faith: John 3:16; Acts 16:31; Ephesians 2:8-9

3. Salvation is through Christ: John 3:16; Romans 5:1; Romans 5:8; 2 Corinthians 5:21; Titus 2:14

Fun Facts:

Some Christians believe that God chooses in advance (elects; predestines) who will be saved and who will go to hell, and this has nothing to do with the individual. This view is called "Calvinism", named after the theologian John Calvin (1509-1564). But if salvation is not based on man's choice to believe in Jesus, then why does the Bible repeatedly say that salvation is by faith, command people to believe, and say that those who do not believe are condemned (John 3:18)? Other Christians believe that God chooses in advance who will be saved based on His foreknowledge of who will put their faith in Christ (see Romans 8:29-30; 1 Peter 1:1-2). This view is called "Arminianism", named after the theologian Jacobus Arminius (1560-1609).

QUESTION 12: WHAT IS FAITH IN JESUS CHRIST?

Faith in Jesus Christ is relying on Him alone for salvation.

You already learned that the way to be saved from the punishment for sin is to repent of your sins and have faith in Jesus Christ (see Question 11). But what is faith in Jesus Christ? Faith in Jesus Christ involves two things. First, the meaning of faith. Second, the object of faith.

What is the meaning of faith? The word “faith” is sometimes called “belief” or “trust.” It means to rely upon, or depend upon. To have faith in Jesus Christ doesn’t just mean agreeing with certain facts about Him. That is certainly part of it, but there is more. Even the demons believe the right facts about Jesus Christ, but they are not saved (James 2:19). It is possible to believe in someone and hate them at the same time. Simply agreeing that Jesus is who He claimed to be is not saving faith. Faith means personally relying upon Jesus for salvation.

Imagine a chair. To have faith in the chair is more than simply believing that the chair exists, or that it is strong enough to hold your weight. To have faith is to actually sit in the chair, trusting in, relying upon, and depending on the chair to hold you up. To have faith means to trust in, rely upon, and depend upon Jesus Christ for salvation. It is to believe that through Him you have reconciliation with God and the promise of eternal life.

At the same time, to have faith in Jesus Christ means that you no longer have faith in anything else to save you. To have faith in the chair means that you are relying on the chair to hold you up, and not your own strength. Faith in Christ means that you no longer trust in good deeds, or in religious rituals, or in any other god to save you from sin and hell.

How can you know if your faith in Jesus Christ is real? First, by answering an important question: Why should God let you into heaven? If your answer is that Jesus saved you by His death and resurrection, then your faith is real. However, if your answer is that God should let you into heaven because you are not bad, and you try to be good, then you don't have real faith. Your faith is in your own good deeds rather than in the Savior.

Second, you can know that your faith is real by looking at your behavior. If you have real faith, then that means that God has saved you and given you a new heart with the desire and power to please Him. It doesn't mean that you are sinless, but that you are making progress in obedience. If God has saved you, then you should notice a change in yourself. You should notice that your desire is to please God, and that you don't want to sin. At the same time, you should see yourself trying to change; not to earn your way to heaven, but to please God.

The second thing that faith involves is the object of your faith. You can have all the faith in the world, but if your faith is not in the right object, then you will still go to hell. For example, you can believe that a tree is your god, but that doesn't change the true nature of the tree. It is still a tree, and it can't help you, no matter how much you believe in it. For faith to be genuine, it must have the right object.

What is the right object of faith? What is it that you must have faith in to be saved? You must have faith in Jesus Christ – that He is God's Son, He died on the cross to pay for your sins, and that He rose again on the third day. You must believe that the story of Jesus is not just a fairy tale. It is a true story. You must believe that Jesus' death really did purchase salvation for all those who believe in Him; that He really did rise from grave; and that He really is coming back again.

Questions for Discussion:

1. What is the meaning of faith?
2. What are some wrong definitions of faith?
3. What is the object of our faith?
4. How can you tell if your faith is genuine?

5. Do you have faith in Jesus Christ as your Lord and Savior?

For Further Study:

1. Salvation is by faith: John 3:16-18; Acts 16:31; Romans 4:4-5; Romans 5:1; Galatians 5:4-6; Ephesians 2:8-9

Fun Facts:

The word "Bible" comes from the Greek word *biblia*, which means "books."

QUESTION 13: WHAT IS REPENTANCE?

Repentance is turning away from sin and turning to Jesus Christ in obedience.

To be saved from the punishment for sin you must have faith in Jesus Christ, and you must also repent. Repentance is not a good deed that earns your salvation. It is a decision to hand over the steering wheel of your life to Jesus. It is a commitment to place Jesus in charge and to do His will no matter the cost.

Repentance and faith are two sides of the same coin. Repentance requires faith. Faith means trusting in Jesus for salvation rather than trusting in your own good works. Repentance means trusting in Jesus to lead you in this life rather than trusting in yourself (Prov 3:5-6). Faith is accepting Christ as your Savior and Redeemer. Repentance is accepting Christ as your Lord and King.

Some people believe that conversion does not require repentance; that one only needs to believe. However, the Bible clearly says that salvation requires repentance. Jesus preached repentance. In Mark 1:15 He said, "Repent of your sins and believe the Good News (NLT)!"

There are other reasons we know that conversion requires both faith and repentance. When you turn to Christ for salvation, you are seeking the forgiveness of your sins. It is impossible to genuinely seek and receive forgiveness without being sorry for your sins

and making a commitment to stop. It is extremely evil to ask God to forgive you and at the same time refuse to give up the very sins that require His forgiveness.

Remember that salvation is not just about going to heaven; it is about being reconciled to God. It is about a renewed and restored relationship with God who was previously offended, extremely angry, and ready to punish you for your sins. Salvation is about renewing your friendship with God. There is no way that you can come to God for forgiveness and friendship if you refuse to give up the things that offend and anger Him. You must assure God of your sincere desire and intention to turn away from sin and to Jesus Christ in obedience.

Finally, salvation is not merely God saving you *from* something, but also *to* something. God doesn't merely save you from hell, but to a life of obedience to Himself. If you only turn to God to be rescued from hell, but not to be rescued from your sinful lifestyle, then you have missed the point of salvation.

The word "repent" literally means, "to change your mind". Repentance involves changing your mind about sin and God. You used to sin all you wanted; now you are dedicated to pleasing God. Repentance also means, "to turn". Repentance is not just about stopping certain behaviors. It means turning away from sin and turning to Jesus Christ in obedience.

Repentance involves four steps. 1) *Admit* your behavior is sinful. 2) *Apologize* to God for your sin. 3) *Abandon* your sin. 4) *Administer* restitution if possible.

Repentance is not a promise to never sin again. You will continue to struggle with sin until you go to heaven. Instead, repentance is a commitment to do your best to turn from sin and to live for God from this day forward. It is the transfer of your allegiance from sin and self to God.

Since repentance is required for salvation, if you are not committed to turning from sin and to doing God's will, then you are not saved.

Questions for Discussion:

1. What is repentance?
2. What are the four "As" of repentance?
3. How are repentance and faith connected?
4. Can you be saved if you have faith but refuse to repent?
5. How do we know that conversion involves both faith and repentance?

For Further Study:

1. Salvation requires repentance: Mark 1:15; Mark 6:12; Luke 13:3-5; Luke 24:47; Acts 2:38; Acts 3:19; Acts 17:30; Acts 20:21
2. Jesus preached the necessity of repentance: Mark 1:15; Luke 13:3-5; Luke 24:47

Fun Facts:

“The New Testament word for Repentance is *metanoia*, which means changing one’s way of life. In ancient times, *metanoia* meant leaving behind an inferior way of life and pursuing an enlightened path.”¹³

QUESTION 14: MUST WE DO GOOD WORKS TO BE SAVED?

No. Salvation is by grace through faith.

The Bible is very clear that salvation is by grace. That means it is a gift. What is a gift? A gift is free. It is not something that you pay for or earn in any way. It is totally unmerited. When your parents give you gifts for your birthday, it is not because you earned them by doing chores, or by being good. Your parents give you gifts because they love you. Salvation is the same. God does not save you because you earned it, but because He loves you.

The Bible is also very clear that salvation is by faith. You don't receive salvation by going to church, or by taking communion, or by being baptized. You receive the gift of salvation by trusting in Jesus Christ as Savior and King.

It is impossible to earn salvation by doing good works because it is impossible to be good enough. How good do you need to be to go to heaven? Perfect (Mt 5:48). And no one is perfect. The Bible says that there are only two ways to get to heaven. One, you must be perfect. Or two, you must be forgiven. Since the only perfect person who ever lived was Jesus, then you must seek forgiveness. God's forgiveness is a free gift to those who repent and believe the gospel of Jesus Christ.

Many people believe that after death we will stand before God to be judged, and He will weigh our good deeds against our bad deeds. If the good outweigh the bad, then God will let us into heaven. If not, then we will be cast into hell. But that is not how salvation works. Sin cannot be atoned for by doing good deeds; it can only be atoned for by the death penalty. And since God, the person you have sinned against, is eternal, the penalty must be eternal. Even if you only sin once and then do good deeds for the rest of your life, your one sin must still be punished with eternal death.

Suppose a murderer was arrested and convicted by a jury, and the judge says to him, "Do you have anything to say?" The murderer replies, "Your honor, I admit that I committed murder. But other than that one bad deed, I have spent my entire life being a good person. I have always given a tithe to my church, and I regularly do good deeds for family, friends, and even strangers." Since the murderer has done more good than bad, would it be just and fair for the judge to let him go free? Absolutely not. Nor would it be just and fair for God to let you go free and not punish you for your sins.

God is love, but He is also holy and just. He hates sin, and He must punish it. To overlook and ignore sin would violate His character. But because God is love, He provided a way of salvation. He sent His Son, Jesus Christ, to die in our place, for our sins, as our substitute, and then He rose again. Now, anyone who repents and has faith in Jesus Christ can be forgiven, reconciled to God, and receive eternal life. In this way, God's love and justice are both displayed and satisfied. The way to salvation is not to do good works, but to trust in the good work that Jesus Christ has done for you on the cross. Good works are an important part of the Christian life, but they are not the way to salvation. Salvation can only be obtained if you recognize that no matter how good you behave, you still deserve hell apart from God's grace through Jesus Christ.

Questions for Discussion:

1. What are some examples of good works?
2. Must we do good works to be saved? Explain.
3. Will God still send you to hell if your good deeds outweigh your bad deeds? Explain.
4. What are the only two ways to get to heaven?
5. Would it be just and fair for God to overlook and ignore our sin? Explain.

For Further Study:

1. Salvation is not by works: Romans 3:20; Romans 3:28; Ephesians 2:8-9; Titus 3:3-7

Fun Facts:

Mormons, Jehovah's Witnesses, and Muslims are examples of people who believe in salvation through good works. Mormons believe that salvation is only available to those who obey the Mormon teachings of faith, baptism, endowments, celestial marriage, and tithing. Jehovah's Witnesses believe that to be saved one must be baptized by immersion, be in active association with the Jehovah's Witnesses Denomination, have righteous conduct, and have absolute loyalty to Jehovah. Muslims believe that everything we do is recorded by angels. During our lives there are always two angels with us, one on our right shoulder recording our good deeds, and the other on our left shoulder recording our sins. When we die and stand before Allah (the Muslim god) to be judged, all of our deeds will be read aloud. Allah will weigh our good deeds and our bad deeds, and if our good deeds are greater than our bad deeds, then he will give us paradise.¹⁴

QUESTION 15: WHAT IS THE PURPOSE OF GOOD WORKS?

We do good works out of love for God, to love our neighbor, and for our own joy.

Think of good works as acts of love to God or to your neighbor. Salvation is by grace through faith, and not by works. It is not a reward for the good things we have done; instead, it is a gift to those who repent of sin and have faith in Jesus Christ.

So, what is the purpose of doing good works if you don't need them to go to heaven? Why fight against temptation? Why not enjoy sinful pleasures? Why give your money to the church and the needy rather than spend it all on yourself? Why be good if being good is not necessary for salvation? Even though we are not saved by good works, there are several important reasons to live a life devoted to good works.

First, the purpose of good works is to express your love to God. To be a Christian is to love God. This is the greatest of all the commandments. How do you express love for God? By obeying His commands, and by treating other people with love, mercy, and generosity. If you are not devoted to good works, then you don't love God. And if you do not love God, then you are not saved. Good works are a way to express your gratitude to God for His saving work in your life.

Second, the purpose of good works is to express your love for others. The second most important command in the Bible is to love your neighbor as yourself. Christians are to

be known for their love. And this is the reason to do good works. Good works are loving, while sin is unloving. You must avoid sin because it is harmful to yourself, and your friends and family.

Third, the purpose of good works is for your own joy. God's commands are not meant to ruin your life and keep you from having fun and being happy. In fact, the opposite is true. The purpose of God's commands is to help you get the most enjoyment out of life. When you live a life of good works unto God and others, it will give your life meaning, and fill your heart with joy and fulfillment. Remember the words of Jesus in Acts 20:35, "It is more blessed to give than to receive."

Fourth, the purpose of good works is to enhance your witness. God has called you to be His witness, telling people the gospel of Jesus Christ so they can be saved if they want to. But lost people will not listen to Christians who are mean and sinful and hypocritical. To win a hearing with the lost you must earn their respect and trust. Before lost people will listen to your message, they must believe that you are an authentic believer, and they must see that Christ is making a positive difference in your life. Do good works so that your life attracts people to Christ rather than pushes them away.

Fifth, good works confirm your salvation. The Bible says that those who are truly saved will gradually grow in love for God and others. Therefore, while good works do not save you, they are evidence that you have been saved. You are not saved by good works, but you are saved to do good works. Salvation turns you into a do-gooder. But if good works are absent from your life, then you have reason to doubt your salvation. Do not do good works to be saved, but because you are saved.

Questions for Discussion:

1. What are good works?
2. If good works are not necessary for salvation, then why not just live a life of sin and selfishness?
3. What are the different reasons for doing good works?
4. Do you see in yourself the desire to please God, or are you careless about pleasing God? Explain.
5. Do you see in yourself the desire to be kind and loving to others, or are you careless about others? Explain.

For Further Study:

1. God is good: 1 Chronicles 16:34

2. Good works enhance evangelism: Matthew 5:16; 1 Peter 2:12; 1 Peter 2:15
3. Good works are commanded: Amos 5:14-15; 2 Corinthians 9:8; 1 Timothy 6:18; Titus 2:14; Titus 3:1; Titus 3:8
4. Rewards for good works: Amos 5:14-15; Galatians 6:9; 1 Timothy 6:18-19
5. How to grow in good works: Galatians 6:2-3; 2 Timothy 2:21; 2 Timothy 3:16-17; Hebrews 10:24-25

Fun Facts:

While we are called to do good to everyone, the Bible says that we should focus especially on doing good to other Christians, and to people with urgent needs (Galatians 6:10; Titus 3:14).

QUESTION 16: WHY SHOULD GOD LET YOU INTO HEAVEN?

Because I trust in Jesus Christ as my Lord and Savior.

This question just might be the most important question of all. How you answer this question reveals your understanding of the gospel, and therefore it reveals whether you are headed for heaven or hell. There are five common answers to this question. The first four are wrong. Only the last one is right.

First, some people answer that heaven does not exist. They might say, “God won’t let me into heaven because there is no heaven.” But this is not true. Heaven does exist. Jesus said that heaven is real, and He would know because He came from heaven (Jn 6:38). Before His death Jesus said that He was going back to heaven to prepare a place for us, and that one day He would come back to take us to heaven with Him (Jn 14:2-3). We can trust the words of Jesus because He rose from the grave.

Second, some people answer that God would let them into heaven because hell does not exist. But this is also not true. The Bible is very clear about the existence of hell. Jesus spoke about hell more often than heaven. The Bible is clear that hell is a place of weeping (Lk 13:28), wailing (Mt 13:42), gnashing of teeth (Lk 13:28), and darkness (Mt 8:12).

Third, some people answer that God would let them into heaven because everyone gets to go to heaven. "Surely," they might say, "a loving God would not send anyone to a horrible place like hell." But the Bible says that people do go to hell. In fact, Jesus said that more people go to hell than to heaven, and that those who go to hell go there for all eternity (Mt 7:13-14; 25:46).

Fourth, some people answer that God would let them into heaven because they are good. Ultimately these people believe that doctrine is irrelevant; what you believe is not important, as long as you are a good person. But the Bible is very clear that no one is good (Rom 3:10-23). Not only are we not good enough, we are not good at all. We are sinners who deserve God's eternal wrath. This is why salvation cannot be earned by doing good works. We are so bad that we could never do enough good deeds to earn our way to heaven (Titus 3:4-8).

The fifth and correct answer should sound something like this: "God will let me into heaven because I have put my faith in Jesus Christ as my Lord and Savior." Salvation is not by works, but by trusting in the good work that Christ has done on your behalf – His death on the cross, in your place, for your sins. The fact that you cannot save yourself is the whole reason that Jesus Christ came to earth (Lk 19:10). He came to rescue you by dying on the cross as a propitiation (substitute) for your sins, fully satisfying God's wrath against you. So now, when you repent of your sins and turn to Jesus Christ, believing that He is who He says He is, and that He did what He said He did, God will forgive your sins and give you eternal life. Salvation is a free gift paid for by the blood of Jesus Christ and given to all those who admit their unworthiness and put their faith in Christ (Rm 3:27-28; Eph 2:8-9).

Questions for Discussion:

1. What is one wrong answer to the question, "Why should God let you into heaven?"
2. Do heaven and hell exist? How do you know?
3. What is the right answer to this question?
4. Why is this question so important?
5. Why should God let you into heaven?

For Further Study:

1. Salvation is by faith: John 3:16-18; Acts 16:31; Romans 4:4-5; Romans 5:1; Galatians 5:4-6; Ephesians 2:8-9
2. Salvation is not by good works: Romans 3:20; Romans 3:28; Ephesians 2:8-9; Titus 3:3-7

Fun Facts:

The entire Bible has been translated into 532 languages, and it has been partially translated into 2,883 languages.¹⁵

QUESTION 17: WHAT IS REGENERATION?

When God saves us, He gives us a new heart with the desire and power to please Him.

When you put your faith in Jesus Christ as Savior and Lord, God doesn't merely reserve a place for you in heaven. He changes you into a different person. This immediate, one-time change is called regeneration. To understand regeneration, it is necessary to understand your spiritual condition before salvation.

Before salvation you were wicked and corrupt (Gen 6:5, 12). Your every inclination was nothing but evil all the time. Your heart was deceitful and incurable (Jer 17:9). You were under the power of Satan (Acts 26:18; Eph. 2:2). You did not understand or seek God (Rom 3:11). You were ruled and enslaved by sin (Rom. 6:6, 17-20). You were incapable of pleasing God (Rom 8:8-9). You were alienated and hostile to God in your mind and actions (Col 1:21). Before salvation you lived for your own pleasure and purposes rather than for God (Eph 2:3). And you couldn't help it, because you were enslaved to sin and Satan.

But when God saved you, He radically changed you. He regenerated you. You experienced the new birth; a radical new beginning. That's why Jesus described salvation as being born again, or being born of the Spirit (John 3:3, 5). This new birth resulted in a changed life. You became a new creation; a brand-new creature (2 Cor 5:17).

What kind of change occurs with regeneration? The Old Testament prophets looked forward to the coming of the Messiah, when He would give people new hearts. The prophet Ezekiel foretold of a day when God would give His people a new heart and a new spirit. He would remove their heart of stone and replace it with a heart of flesh. This new heart would be obedient to God (Ez. 36:26-27). The prophet Jeremiah spoke of the coming new birth as a heart that will always fear God and never turn away (Jer. 32:39-40). This is what happens when you get saved. God gives you a new heart that has both the desire and the power to please Him (Phil. 2:13). You love God, and you hate sin (1 Jn. 3:9).

Titus 3:5 says, “He saved us – not by works of righteousness that we had done, but according to His mercy – through the washing of regeneration and renewal by the Holy Spirit.” This verse reveals three truths about regeneration. First, it is a “washing,” because through regeneration you are washed of the desire to sin and disobey God. Second, it is a “renewal,” because through regeneration you get a new heart, begin a new life, and become a new person with the desire and power to please God. Third, regeneration is described as a work of the Holy Spirit. Each person in the Trinity plays a role in your salvation. The Father loved you and sent His Son to pay for your sins. The Son of God died for your sins, rose again, and baptized you with the Holy Spirit (placing the Spirit inside you). And the indwelling Holy Spirit regenerated you, giving you new life and a new heart.

Because you have been regenerated, you love God and want to grow as a Christian, becoming more obedient and productive in your Christian life. As well, you will never turn away from God and reject Christ. Your heart has experienced such a change that you would never abandon the faith.

Although regeneration radically changes you, it does not perfect you. It changes your desires, your affections, and your aptitudes. You still have much growing to do, but because you have been regenerated, you are now able to grow (2 Pet. 1:3).

Questions for Discussion:

1. What is regeneration?
2. Why do we need to be regenerated?
3. When does regeneration occur in the life of a believer?
4. How many times does regeneration happen to a believer?
5. How do you know if you have been regenerated?

For Further Study:

1. The universal wickedness of mankind: Genesis 6:3, 5, 12; Jeremiah 17:9; Romans 3:11, 23; Ephesians 2:2-3; Colossians 1:21
2. The Old Testament prophecies about regeneration: Jeremiah 32:39-40; Ezekiel 36:26-27
3. Jesus' teaching on regeneration: John 3:3, 5
4. What happens in regeneration? Acts 26:18; Romans 6:17-18; 2 Corinthians 5:17; Philippians 2:13; Titus 3:5; 2 Peter 1:3; 1 John 3:9

Fun Facts:

Calvinism and Arminianism (see Question 11, Fun Facts) disagree about when regeneration takes place. According to Calvinism, regeneration occurs before conversion, giving people the ability to repent and believe in the gospel. In other words, God saves a person before they decide to repent and believe. According to Arminianism, the ability to repent and believe is indeed by the grace of God, but a person is not regenerated (saved) until after they repent and believe.

QUESTION 18: WHAT IS JUSTIFICATION?

When God saves us, He declares us legally righteous in His sight.

Have you ever been involved in an unfair trade? Maybe someone tricked you into giving them something of great value in exchange for something that is worthless. Believe it or not, when you put your faith in Jesus Christ and became a Christian, you benefitted from the most unfair trade in history. Some call it the Great Exchange. God punished Christ for your sins, and He rewarded you for Christ's righteousness. This is also called imputation, which means to count for or against. When you put your faith in Christ and became a Christian, God counted your sins against Christ and punished Him on the cross, and God counted Christ's perfect righteousness as yours and gave you the gifts of forgiveness, adoption, and eternal life.

The big word for this Great Exchange is justification. Imagine a court of law in which you are on trial for murder. You have confessed to the crime, and the just penalty is execution. But just before judge declares you guilty, someone steps forward. It is your father, and he says to the judge, "Your honor, my child is guilty and deserves to be punished, but with your permission, I would like offer my life in exchange for the life of my child. Please punish me and set my child free." After a long pause the judge says, "So be it. Father, I declare you guilty to be put to death. Child, I declare you not guilty; you may go free." This imaginary scenario is similar to the Biblical concept of justification. You are a sinner and you deserve punishment. God is a just judge and

must carry out your punishment. But Jesus Christ offered His life in exchange for yours. So God declared Christ to be guilty and punished Him on the cross for your sins. And God declared you not guilty and set you free. More than that, God declared you to be righteous, rewarding you for the perfect obedience of Christ.

The Bible says that you are justified by faith. God does not declare you righteous when you do enough good works, but when you put your faith in the atoning work of Jesus Christ on your behalf (Gal. 2:16).

Justification does not mean that you are morally righteous; you are still a sinner and must strive to grow in righteousness for the rest of your life. Instead, justification means that God declares you *legally* righteous and will treat you as a beloved son rather than as an enemy (1 Jn. 1:8-10).

Justification does not mean that God will not punish you when you sin against Him. As your Heavenly Father, He will discipline you when you make bad choices; but His discipline is out of love, and the purpose is to correct and grow you. Instead, justification means that no matter what, God will not punish you with hell when you die, but will reward you with heaven with Him forever (Heb. 12:5-6; Rom. 8:1).

Justification is only possible because of the death of Christ (Rom. 5:9). If Christ would not have taken your punishment, then God could not have declared you legally righteous.

When Jesus Christ died on the cross for you, you received everything, and in exchange He received the worst form of punishment and torture known to mankind. That may seem like a bad trade to you, but God doesn't make bad trades. It was worth it to God because in exchange He received you. This is how much God loves you (Rom. 5:8).

Questions for Discussion:

1. Imagine the scenario above. You are about to be sentenced to death for committing murder, and then someone steps forward and offers to pay for your crime. How would that make you feel about that person? How would you treat that person?
2. What is justification?
3. Why is justification called the Great Exchange?
4. What does imputation mean with regard to justification?
5. What is the difference between being legally righteous and morally righteous?

For Further Study:

1. Justification is not by works: Galatians 2:16
2. Justification is by faith in Jesus Christ: Romans 3:26; Romans 5:1; Galatians 2:16
3. Justification is free through Jesus Christ: Romans 3:24
4. Justification is made available by the death and resurrection of Christ: Romans 4:25; Romans 5:9
5. Justification results in peace with God: Romans 5:1
6. Justification results in salvation from God's wrath: Romans 5:9
7. Justification results in no condemnation for those in Christ Jesus: Romans 8:1.
8. Justification is made possible by the substitutionary atonement of Christ: 2 Corinthians 5:21

Fun Facts:

One way to remember what it means to be justified is that God treats me "just-as-if-I'd" never sinned. Theologian Wayne Grudem describes justification like this: "When someone responds to God's call in repentance and faith, God responds to that faith by thinking of that person's sins as forgiven and by thinking of Christ's righteousness as belonging to that person. At that very moment, God also declares that person to be righteous in His sight."¹⁶

QUESTION 19: WHAT IS SANCTIFICATION?

When God saves us, the Holy Spirit begins the lifelong process of growing us more and more like Jesus Christ.

Newborn babies are adorable. Even though they have dirty diapers, throw up after eating, cry when they want something or are unhappy, cost a lot of money, and require a lot of work, there is nothing cuter than a little baby. But we expect little babies to grow and mature. We expect that at some point they will start feeding themselves, and wearing big boy underpants, and sleeping through the night, and dressing themselves, and learning to talk, and behaving with good manners. It is not cute when a five-year old still acts like an infant, or when a teenager still acts like a five-year old, or when an adult still acts like a teenager. We are expected to grow and mature.

The same is true of your spiritual life. When you first get saved, you are a spiritual baby. Your character, and conduct, and convictions are very immature. You are not very Christlike. And even though God loves you just the way you are, He expects you to grow. In fact, He demands that you grow up in Christ (Eph 4:15; 2 Pet 3:18).

This process of spiritual growth is called sanctification. Sanctification means set apart from sin and set apart for God. This is how God wants you to keep growing – more and more set apart from sin, and more and more intimate with God and useful for His

glory. In a nutshell, sanctification is all about becoming more and more like Jesus Christ (2 Cor 3:18).

Sanctification is a past, present, and future work of God in your life. In the past, you were set apart for God the moment you became a Christian (Heb. 10:10). The word “sanctify” means the same thing as “holy,” so when you became a Christian you became a “saint” in Christ Jesus, or a holy one – one who is set apart for God (Phil 1:1).

In the present you are being sanctified by the Holy Spirit (2 Cor. 3:18). Sanctification is a partnership between the indwelling Holy Spirit and you (Phil 2:12-13). As you *work out* your salvation by striving to grow, the Holy Spirit *works in* you, giving you both the desire and the power to grow. Some of the ways that you can strive to grow are by studying, learning, meditating on, and applying the Bible to your life (Jn 17:17; Rom 12:2; 1 Pet 2:2); by offering every part of yourself to God as a slave to righteousness (Rom 6:19; Rom 12:1); by praying for sanctification (Jn 17:17; 1 Thess 5:23); by pursuing a close walk with God (Jn 15:5); and by being active in church (Eph 4:16).

In the future, you will be completely sanctified (set apart from sin and for God) when Jesus comes back and gives you a new body that is like His, completely free from sin (Phil 3:20-21; 1 Jn 3:2)

Sanctification begins the moment God saves you (Heb 10:10), and it continues until you die and go to heaven. You will never be completely without sin in this life (1 Jn 1:8-9). That means you must keep striving to grow every day, becoming more and more like Jesus until the day you die and go to heaven. Bible teacher Howard Hendricks said it well. “Sanctification is the life of Jesus Christ produced in the believer by the Holy Spirit through the Word of God invading every area of human existence in response to obedient faith.”

Questions for Discussion:

1. What is sanctification?
2. Why is sanctification important?
3. Who accomplishes sanctification?
4. How is sanctification both past, present, and future?
5. What types of things can you do to work out your salvation and become more sanctified?

For Further Study:

1. Jesus prayed for our sanctification: John 17:17

2. Sanctification requires learning and applying the Bible to your life: John 17:17
3. Sanctification requires offering yourself as a slave to righteousness: Romans 6:19
4. Sanctification is God's will: 1 Thessalonians 4:3
5. Sanctification means separation from sin: 1 Thessalonians 4:3; 5:23
6. God wants us to pursue complete sanctification in all arenas of life: 1 Thessalonians 5:23
7. We must pray for sanctification: 1 Thessalonians 5:23
8. Sanctification is available through the death of Christ: Hebrews 10:10

Fun Facts:

The *Holman Christian Standard Bible* defines "sanctify" as "set apart for special use."¹⁷ It goes on to say, "The believer participates with the Spirit in a process of transformation that continues until glorification. The goal of sanctification is progressive conformity to the image of Christ."¹⁸

QUESTION 20: WHAT IS GLORIFICATION?

When Jesus Christ comes back He will give us new, eternal bodies completely free from sin.

Life as it is was not always like this, and it will not always be this way. When God first created mankind – Adam and Eve – sin was only a possibility. Because they were free to obey or disobey, sin was possible, but it was not yet actual. Therefore, everything on earth was in a perfect state of peace, rhythm, and harmony, including our bodies. Before the Fall there was no sin, no suffering, no death, no sadness, no sickness, no fighting, no divorce, no betrayal, and no war. Adam and Eve had a perfect relationship with each other and with their Heavenly Father. Life was perfect.

Then sin made its entrance into the world when the devil, in the form of a snake, tempted Eve to eat the forbidden fruit. At that moment everything changed for the worse. The whole universe came under the curse of sin. With sin came sickness, sadness, suffering, and death.

But that's not the end of the story. God sent His Son to die on the cross for our sins and to rise again. Now, when you become a Christian, God begins the process of restoring what was lost in the Garden of Eden – to cleanse you of sin and enable you to be holy, happy, and live in harmony with God and man. The more you grow as a Christian, the more you can experience what God intended for you in the beginning. Unfortunately, there is no way for us to completely erase the effects of sin in our lives. We will

continue to struggle with the curse of sin until we die and go to heaven, or until Jesus comes back.

But when Jesus comes back, He will give us new, eternal bodies completely free from sin, and He will renew all of creation, restoring it to its original purpose. This is the final work of our salvation called glorification, or the resurrection.

How does the Bible describe what our glorified bodies will be like? They will be like Christ's resurrected body (Phil. 3:20-21; 1 Jn. 3:2). They will be similar to our earthly bodies. When Christ rose from the grave, His body was similar to the way it was before His death. The disciples could touch Him and see Him (Lk. 24:39). He had flesh and bones, unlike a ghost (Lk. 24:39). He ate food (Lk. 24:41-43). At the same time, our resurrected bodies will be very different from our present bodies. They will be immortal and will never taste death (1 Cor. 15:53). They will be sinless (1 Cor. 15:43). They will be powerful (1 Cor. 15:43). They will be painless (Rev. 21:4). They will no longer suffer from hunger and thirst (Rev. 7:16). We won't have to worry about getting hot or sunburned (Rev. 7:16). Our new bodies will be glorious (1 Cor. 15:43; Phil. 3:21). Theologian Wayne Grudem describes our glorified bodies like this: "These new bodies will be imperishable, that is, they will not wear out, grow old, or ever be subject to sickness or disease. They will show no sign of aging but will instead be completely healthy and strong forever. The new bodies will be what God originally designed them to be: far more beautiful and attractive than anything we might imagine in this age. Those who are raised with Christ will forever live in bodies that have all the excellent qualities God created us to have."¹⁹

Questions for Discussion:

1. What is glorification?
2. Why is glorification necessary?
3. When will our glorification take place?
4. What will our glorified bodies be like?
5. What do you most look forward to about your glorified body?

For Further Study:

1. The glorification is also referred to as the "resurrection of the dead": 1 Corinthians 15:42-42
2. What will our glorified bodies be like? 1 Corinthians 15:42-43; Philippians 3:20-21; 1 John 3:2-3
3. When will it occur? John 6:39-40; 1 Corinthians 15:51-53; Philippians 1:6; Philippians 3:20-21; 1 John 3:2-3

4. How will it occur? 1 Corinthians 15:51-53
5. Christ will transform our bodies: Philippians 3:20-21

Fun Facts:

What is the difference between regeneration, justification, sanctification, and glorification? Regeneration is deliverance from the *power* of sin, and therefore the ability to please God. Justification is deliverance from the *penalty* of sin. Sanctification is deliverance from the *prevalence* of sin as we gradually become more and more like Christ. And glorification is deliverance from the *presence* of sin, because there will be no sin in heaven.

QUESTION 21: CAN WE LOSE OUR SALVATION?

No. Since we are not saved by good works, we cannot lose our salvation by failing to be good.

One thing will never change. You will always be your parents' child. You may run away from home, your parents may abandon you, your parents may get a divorce, your parents may die, you may do things that anger your parents, but you will still be your parents' child. Your mom will always be your mom, and your dad will always be your dad. Nothing can change that. In the same way, when God saves you, you become a child of God (Jn 1:12). God adopts you into His family, and nothing can change that. You may sin, make God angry, have doubts, drop out of church, or do all sorts of things that disappoint God, but once you are adopted into God's family, you will always be a child of God.

You cannot lose your salvation. Once saved, always saved. This is called the doctrine of eternal security, because if you are truly saved, then your eternity is secure. It is also called the doctrine of the perseverance of the saints. A saint is another word for a Christian. If you are truly a saint, truly a Christian, then you will persevere in Christ. You will remain a Christian until you die and go to heaven. You will not fall away.

Think back to when you were saved. How did you receive your salvation? It was not by earning it with good deeds. You were saved by grace through faith (Eph 2:8-9). If salvation is not received through good works, then why would good works be the way

to keep your salvation? If God saved you in spite of your sins, then why would God disown you when you commit a sin? Our salvation is accomplished by God from start to finish. Our only part is to receive salvation by faith and repentance. Once you have turned to Jesus Christ in faith and repentance, then you cannot lose your salvation.

Jesus said in John 6:37, "Everyone the Father gives me will come to me, and the one who comes to me I will never cast out." This verse teaches two important truths. First, if you are saved, then you will keep coming to Jesus. You may sin and backslide at times, but you will keep coming back to Jesus. You will never abandon the faith; you will never deny Christ. If someone claimed to be a Christian at one time and then later denies Jesus Christ, then they did not lose their salvation; instead, they were never saved in the first place. The second truth in this verse is that if you are a Christian then Jesus will never cast you out. No matter what happens, no matter how big you fail, Jesus will never cast you out.

Since you cannot lose your salvation, the most important issue is to make sure that you are truly saved. How can you tell if you are saved? There are several indicators that a person is genuinely saved. First, you seek to imitate and serve Jesus (Jn 10:27; 1 Jn 2:5-6). Second, you believe and diligently work to obey God's word (Jn 8:31; 1 Jn 2:3-4). Third, you understand and believe the gospel of Jesus Christ (Jn 3:16; 1 Jn 2:23). Fourth, you love God and others (Gal 5:22-23; 1 Jn 3:14). These actions are not what save you (except for number three), but they are evidence that you are saved.

If you ever fear that you have lost your salvation, it is because your focus is on your sins rather than on Christ's death for your sins. Turn your eyes away from yourself and place them back on Jesus and His sacrifice for you.

Questions for Discussion:

1. Why can't we lose our salvation?
2. How does the doctrine of adoption - God has adopted you as His child - confirm that you cannot lose your salvation?
3. How does the doctrine of salvation by grace through faith confirm that you cannot lose your salvation?
4. Do you ever worry about losing your salvation?
5. How can you tell if you are genuinely saved?

For Further Study:

1. Christ promises that we cannot lose our salvation: John 6:37-40; John 10:28-29
2. If a person falls away, then they were never saved in the first place: John 8:31

3. Christians will not be condemned: Romans 8:1
4. Nothing can separate us from God's love: Romans 8:31-39
5. Passages that are used to argue against eternal security: Hebrews 6:4-6; 2 Peter 2:20-22

Fun Facts:

Not all Christians believe in eternal security. Baptists and Presbyterians, for example, believe in eternal security. Other groups, such as Methodists, Pentecostals, and Charismatics, believe that you can lose your salvation.

QUESTION 22: IS JESUS CHRIST THE ONLY WAY TO GOD?

Yes. There is salvation in no one else.

The Bible tells the story of Naaman, the commander of the army of Aram, a nation near Israel. Naaman had leprosy (a horrible skin disease), and when he heard that the prophet Elisha might be able to heal him, he traveled to Israel to visit Elisha. Elisha was glad to help. He gave Naaman simple instructions to dip himself in the Jordan River seven times, and he would be healed. At first, Naaman was unconvinced, and he was angry. He thought that Elisha's instructions were silly, and he refused to follow them. Fortunately for Naaman, his friends convinced him to at least give it a try. Sure enough, after he followed Elisha's instructions, Naaman was healed.

Just as Naaman was angry with Elisha's instructions for getting healed, many people today get angry with the Bible's instructions for how to be saved and go to heaven. Rather than being thankful that God offers a clear and free path to eternal life, many people get angry and offended by the Bible's exclusivity - its claim that Jesus is the only way to be saved. How sad!

Many people today believe that there are many paths to God and eternal life. But as Christians we know this is not true for several reasons. First, the Bible makes it very clear that Jesus is the only way. Jesus said, "I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me (John 14:6)." The apostle Peter made the same

point. "There is salvation in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given to people by which we must be saved (Acts 4:12)." The apostle Paul agreed. "For there is one God and one mediator between God and humanity, the man Christ Jesus (1 Timothy 2:5)." Even the apostle John was clear on this point. "And this is the testimony: God has given us eternal life, and this life is in his Son. The one who has the Son has life. The one who does not have the Son of God does not have life (1 John 5:11-12)." There's no way to get around it. The Bible is clear that Jesus is the only way to heaven.

Second, if Jesus is not the only way to heaven, His death was pointless. Crucifixion was an extremely painful experience. Jesus had to take on human flesh, be rejected by men, be falsely accused, beaten, mocked, scorned, scourged with a whip, nailed to a wooden cross through his hands and feet, and then hang there for hours until He suffocated, and His heart stopped beating. Crucifixion is perhaps the worst way to die. But if there are many paths to God, if Jesus is not the only way, then Jesus died for nothing. His death was unnecessary.

Third, if Jesus is not the only way to heaven, then why did He command His followers to evangelize the world? Why did He command His followers to risk their lives in order to preach to people all around the world who have never heard the gospel? Why should you and I witness to our family and friends if they do not need Jesus for salvation? Why should the pastor at church stand up and preach the gospel every Sunday if people do not need to hear about Jesus?

Jesus is the only way to heaven. That means you need to be sure that your faith is in Jesus, and that you worship and serve only Him. As well, since Jesus is the only way to heaven, then we must urgently share the gospel with everyone we can so that they can believe and be saved.

Questions for Discussion:

1. Why do you believe that Jesus is the only way to heaven?
2. How would you respond to people who say that it is unloving and arrogant to claim that Jesus is the only way to heaven?
3. How would you respond to people who say that it doesn't matter what you believe as long as you are a good person?
4. How would you respond to people who say that all religions are basically the same?
5. Since Jesus is the only way to heaven, what should we do about it?

For Further Study:

1. Jesus is the only way to heaven: John 14:6; Acts 4:12; 1 Timothy 2:5; 1 John 5:11-12

Fun Facts:

The doctrine that Jesus is the only way to heaven is sometimes called the doctrine of exclusivity. The idea that Jesus is not the only way, but that there are many paths to heaven is called religious pluralism. Almost 80 percent of Americans believe that there is more than one way to heaven, including 91 percent of Roman Catholics.²⁰ 69 percent of Evangelical Protestants believe that a good person who is of a different religious faith will still go to heaven.²¹

QUESTION 23: WHO IS JESUS CHRIST?

Jesus Christ is the sinless, eternal Son of God, coequal with the Father, the only mediator between God and humanity.

What person has made the biggest, most positive impact on the world in all of history? If your answer is Jesus Christ, then you are correct. Even though everyone does not believe that Jesus is God, it is hard to disagree with the positive, significant impact that He has made on the world.

What do we know about Jesus Christ? Let's begin with His name. The angel Gabriel told His parents, Mary and Joseph, to call Him Jesus, which means "the Lord saves," because Jesus would save His people from their sins (Mt 1:21). Jesus is called "Christ", which means Messiah, or anointed one, because Jesus is the Messiah - the Divine King - promised in the Old Testament.

Jesus had a miraculous birth. He was born of a virgin. While His mother was still a virgin, still unmarried, God enabled her to become pregnant with Jesus. Joseph was Jesus' earthly father, but Jesus had no biological father. His father is God (Mt 1:23).

Jesus is eternal. Our existence began the moment we were conceived in our mother's womb, but Jesus existed before He was conceived. There was never a time that Jesus did not exist (Jn 1:1-2). One way we know that Jesus is eternal is that the Bible says He

is the Creator of all things, which means He existed before the universe (Jn 1:1-3; Col 1:15-17).

Jesus is God. In John 8:58 Jesus said, "Truly I tell you, before Abraham was, I am." Jesus claimed to predate Abraham, who lived hundreds of years prior to Christ, and He referred to Himself as "I am," which is the same name God called Himself in the Old Testament when He spoke to Moses from the burning bush (Ex 3:13-15). In John 10:30 Jesus said, "I and the Father are one." The Jews knew that Jesus was claiming to be God because they picked up stones to kill Him. His followers also taught that He was God (Jn 1:1; Rm 9:5; Col 1:15; 2:9; Heb 1:3; 1 Pet 1:1). Because Jesus is God, His death was able to pay for the sins of the whole world, and He had the power to rise from the dead.

Jesus is human. He was not a human before He came to earth, but when He came to earth He took on human flesh. In this way He is both fully God and fully man (Jn 1:14; Phil 2:7; 1 Tim 2:5). This is important because only by becoming fully human could Jesus die for our sins.

Jesus is the Son of God (Mt 3:17; Mt 17:5). While He is God, He is specifically the Son of God. This is because the God of the Bible is triune - one God in three persons; God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit.

Jesus is sinless. He never sinned; not even once (Jn 1:14; Heb 7:26, 28; 1 Pet 2:22; 1 Jn 2:1; 3:5). For this reason He did not need to be punished for His own sins, but was qualified to die for the sins of others.

Jesus is our teacher. Through His amazing sermons (i.e. Mt 5-7) and His perfect example, Jesus teaches us what to believe and how to live. This is why the Bible tells us to obey His commandments and to imitate Him (Mt 28:19-20; Jn 14:15; 1 Jn 2:6).

Jesus is the Savior. The primary reason Jesus came to earth and took on human flesh was to save us from our sins by dying in our place on the cross (Mt 1:21; Mk 10:45; Lk 19:10).

Jesus is our Lord. Often in the New Testament Jesus is referred to as our "Lord" (Acts 10:36; 11:17). This word has a double meaning. On the one hand, it is another affirmation that Jesus is God, because "Lord" is the Greek translation for "Yahweh," the primary name for God in the Old Testament (Ex 6:2-3). Also, "Lord" means master, reminding us to place every part of our lives under Christ's control (Lk 9:23).

Questions for Discussion:

1. Who is Jesus Christ?
2. What makes Jesus special?
3. How do you feel about Jesus Christ?
4. What does the world need to know about Jesus?
5. How can you help others learn about Jesus?

For Further Study:

1. The nature of Jesus Christ: John 1:1-18; Philippians 2:5-11; Colossians 1:15-20; Hebrews 1:1-4
2. Christ's mission: Matthew 1:21; Mark 10:45; Luke 19:10; 1 John 3:8
3. Christ's deity: John 1:1; John 8:58-59; John 10:30-33; John 14:8-9; Romans 9:5; Titus 2:13

Fun Facts:

The name "Jesus" occurs 700 times in the Gospels and Acts, and around 70 times in the New Testament epistles. The title "Christ" occurs 60 times in the Gospels and Acts, and around 240 times in the rest of the New Testament.²² Jesus is given over 100 titles in the Bible, including the Alpha and Omega (Revelation 1:8), the Chief Cornerstone (Ephesians 2:20), the Chief Shepherd (1 Peter 5:4), and the Author of Life (Acts 3:15).

QUESTION 24: HOW DO WE KNOW THAT JESUS ROSE FROM THE GRAVE?

The first Christians died for their faith in the resurrection, and no one dies for a lie.

Some people do not believe in God; they are called atheists. They claim that there is no evidence for the existence of God. But what if a man claimed to be God, predicted He would die and rise again on the third day, and then actually did it? That would prove that he is not a liar, or out of his mind, but who he claimed to be – God. This is exactly the case with Jesus Christ. Jesus claimed to be God and predicted He would die and rise again (Mt 16:21; Mk 8:31). He even predicted the kind of death He would die, as well as when He would rise again (Mt 20:17-19). Sure enough, He was betrayed by His disciple, Judas, condemned by the Jewish leaders, and then crucified by the Romans on Friday (we call this day Good Friday). Then on the third day, Sunday morning, Jesus rose from the grave (we call this day Easter). By rising from the grave Jesus proved that He is who He claimed to be – the divine Son of God and Savior of the world.

The resurrection of Jesus Christ is one of the most important doctrines in the Bible, because if Jesus rose from the grave, then He is who He claimed to be. It means that everything Jesus taught is true! There is a God; the Bible is His word; Jesus is His Son; heaven and hell are real; and the only way to heaven is through faith in Jesus Christ. In

short, the resurrection of Jesus Christ, if it is true, is the most important evidence for the truthfulness of Christianity.

So how do we know that Jesus rose from the grave? First, we know that Jesus rose from the grave because the first Christians died for their faith in the resurrection, and no one dies for a lie. The first Christians did not merely claim that Jesus rose again, but that they saw the risen Christ with their own eyes. Anyone can make up a silly story and tell a lie. Muslims believe lies about Muhammed, Allah, and the Koran, and they are willing to die for their beliefs. The difference is that they sincerely believe those lies. However, no one dies for something they know to be false. When their life is on the line, they will almost always admit that they were lying to get out of dying. But the first Christians, hundreds of them, claimed to see Jesus alive after His death, and they were willing to die for this claim, just as many of them did. They were so convinced that they had seen the risen Christ that they were willing to lose their lives.

Second, there were many eyewitnesses to the resurrection. The Bible tells of at least twelve post-resurrection appearances, and that Jesus was seen by more than five hundred people. Not just a few, but hundreds of people saw Jesus alive with their own eyes. It has already been established that they were not lying, because no one dies for a lie. Some argue that the eyewitnesses could have been hallucinating, but hallucinations only happen to individuals, not groups. Two people never share the same hallucination.

Third, we know the tomb was empty. How do we know? The disciples of Jesus claimed His tomb was empty, and if it wasn't, then the Jewish and Roman leaders would have gone to the tomb, retrieved the body of Christ, and paraded it in the streets for all to see.

Billy Graham wrote, "There is more evidence that Jesus rose from the dead than there is that Julius Caesar ever lived, or that Alexander the Great died at the age of 33."²³ Jesus did rise from the grave. And by doing so He proved that everything He said is true. He is Savior, King of kings, Lord of lords, and worthy of all our worship.

Questions for Discussion:

1. What is the resurrection of Jesus Christ?
2. How many eyewitnesses saw the risen Christ?
3. How do we know that Jesus rose from the grave?
4. How do we know that the disciples were not hallucinating?
5. Why is it important whether or not Jesus rose from the grave?

For Further Study:

1. The tomb was closely guarded: Matthew 27:62-66
2. The burial of Christ: Matthew 27:57-61; Mark 15:42-47; Luke 23:50-56; John 19:38-42
3. The resurrection story: Matthew 28:1-15; Mark 16:1-13; Luke 24:1-49; John 20:1-29
4. Jesus predicted His resurrection: Luke 24:6-7
5. Christ claimed to be the resurrection: John 11:25-26
6. The early Christians believed in and preached the resurrection: Acts 3:15; 4:33; 13:28-37
7. The eyewitnesses of the resurrection: 1 Corinthians 15:3-8
8. Salvation is made possible through the resurrection: 1 Peter 1:3

Fun Facts:

Jesus was buried by two men: A rich man named Joseph of Arimathea, and a man named Nicodemus (John 19:38-42). The first person to see the resurrected Christ was Mary Magdalene (John 20:11-16).

QUESTION 25: WHERE IS CHRIST NOW?

After His resurrection, Jesus Christ ascended to the Father's right hand in heaven to prepare a place for us.

After Jesus rose from the grave, He spent forty days with His followers teaching them, encouraging them, and preparing them to carry on His mission (Acts 1:3). Then Jesus met with them on the Mount of Olives and gave them the Great Commission. He said, "But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come on you, and you will be My witnesses in Jerusalem, in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth (Acts 1:8)." After He said this, Jesus ascended into heaven. The followers of Jesus watched as He was taken up above the clouds until He disappeared from their sight. Where did Jesus go? Two angels suddenly appeared and explained, "This same Jesus...has been taken from you into heaven (Acts 1:11)."

Have you ever wondered what Jesus is doing in heaven? The Bible tells us. First, when Jesus ascended into heaven He sat down at the right hand of God (Eph 1:20). A king's right hand represents his authority. Sitting at the Father's right hand means that Jesus has all the authority of God the Father. He is the head of the church (Col 1:18); and one day every knee will bow at the name of Jesus, and every tongue will confess that He is Lord (Phil 2:9-11).

Second, Jesus is praying for us (Rom 8:34). He is praying for our spiritual growth; for us to make wise choices; for us to serve Him with effectiveness; for us to overcome sin and temptation; and for us to have joy and peace when we face challenges.

Third, Jesus is preparing a place for us in heaven. On the night before Christ's death, He encouraged His disciples with these words in John 14:1-3: "Don't let your heart be troubled. Believe in God; believe also in Me. In my Father's house are many rooms; if not, I would have told you. I am going away to prepare a place for you. If I go away and prepare a place for you, I will come again and take you to Myself, so that where I am you may be also."

But that's not all that Jesus is doing in heaven. He is also baptizing new believers with the Holy Spirit (Mt 3:11). The moment you become a Christian, Jesus places the Holy Spirit within you forever. Jesus is living in you through the Holy Spirit, giving you the strength to live for Him (Rom 8:9-11; Phil 4:13; Col 1:27-29). This means that even though Jesus is in heaven, through the Holy Spirit He is always with you (Mt 28:20).

Finally, Jesus is in heaven, waiting for God to place His enemies, the devil and his angels, under His feet, so that nothing in heaven or on earth is living contrary to His will (Mt 22:44). This will happen when Jesus returns and all His enemies are thrown into the lake of fire (Rev 20:10, 15).

Think about how blessed we are. Jesus is in heaven right now, controlling all things for our good, listening to our prayers, and praying for us. He is preparing a place for us so that one day we can be with Him forever in paradise. And through the Holy Spirit, He is within each one of us, giving us the strength we need to live for His glory. As followers of Jesus, we have nothing to be worried about, and everything to be thankful for.

Questions for Discussion:

1. What happened after Jesus rose from the grave?
2. What is the ascension?
3. Where is Jesus now?
4. What is Jesus doing right now?
5. What does it mean that Jesus is seated at God's right hand?

For Further Study:

1. Christ baptizes believers with the Holy Spirit. Matthew 3:11

2. Jesus spent forty days with His disciples between the time of His resurrection and ascension: Acts 1:30
3. Jesus is preparing a place for us: John 14:1-3
4. The ascension of Christ: Acts 1:6-11
5. Jesus is interceding for us in heaven: Romans 8:34
6. Jesus is at the right hand of God: Romans 8:34; Ephesians 1:20

Fun Facts:

Bible scholars estimate that Jesus began His ministry at the age of 30, and died at the age of 33. He was born before the death of Herod the Great in 4 B.C., placing Christ's birth somewhere between 6-4 B.C.

QUESTION 26: WHAT HAPPENS AFTER DEATH?

Christians will live forever in Heaven with God, and unbelievers will exist forever in Hell.

Until Jesus comes back, death will be a reality for both Christians and non-Christians. Only two people in all of history never tasted death – Enoch (Gen 5:21-24; Heb 11:5) and Elijah (2 Ki 2:1, 11). For everyone else, death is something we must face.

What happens to a person after death? In our discussion of glorification (Question 20) we learned that when Jesus comes back, Christians will be given new, eternal bodies completely free from sin. But what happens if you die many years before the return of Christ? What happens to you between the time of your death, and the time of Christ's second coming? This time is referred to as the intermediate state (intermediate means in-between). The Bible teaches that when you die, your dead body remains on earth, but your spirit wakes up immediately in the presence of Christ.

The apostle Paul made this very clear in two different passages. In Philippians 1:21 Paul wrote, "For me, to live is Christ and to die is gain." Why would death be a good thing? He explained in verses 22-23. "Now if I live on in the flesh, this means fruitful work for me; and I don't know which one I should choose. I am torn between the two. I long to depart and be with Christ – which is far better." At the time of this writing, Paul was in jail for serving God, and he knew that execution was a very real possibility. His point was that he wasn't sure if he was going to live or die. Both had their

advantages. If he went on living, then he could continue to serve God. But if he died, he could be with Christ. Since being with Christ is far better than being on earth, Paul saw that death would be his gain. Death would be a promotion!

The second passage is 2 Corinthians 5:6-8. Paul wrote, "So we are always confident and know that while we are at home in the body we are away from the Lord. For we walk by faith, not by sight. In fact, we are confident, and we would prefer to be away from the body and at home with the Lord." Paul said that as long as we are alive on earth, we are away from Christ, because Jesus is physically in heaven. But when we die, we will be with Christ.

From these two passages we can make five conclusions about the intermediate state. First, when we die we will be with Christ. Second, we will be with Christ immediately after death. Third, we will experience the intermediate state in our spirit, but not our body. Fourth, we will be awake and aware of what is going on. Fifth, the intermediate state will be better than life on earth, because we are going to be with Christ. Therefore, for Christians, death is nothing to be afraid of. Death has lost its sting (1 Cor 15:55). It is gain. Christians will go to heaven, or what the Bible calls Paradise (Lk 23:43), or Abraham's bosom (Lk 16:22).

But what about unbelievers? Unfortunately, after they die unbelievers will wake up immediately in a hell-like place called Hades. This is not the same as hell, or the lake of fire – the final destination of unbelievers after the return of Christ – but it will be a similar experience. Hades is described as a place of agony and torment in flames (Lk 16:22-24).

Instead of wasting our energy worrying about death, let us focus all of our efforts on making sure that we are saved, and on sharing the gospel with as many people as possible.

Questions for Discussion:

1. Are you afraid to die? Explain.
2. What happens to Christians when they die?
3. What happens to non-Christians when they die?
4. Is death a good thing or a bad thing for Christians?
5. Since we know what happens after death, what should we do about it?

For Further Study:

1. Jesus' description of the intermediate state: Luke 16:19-31

2. Believers will be with Christ immediately after death: Philippians 1:21-26; 2 Corinthians 5:6-8

Fun Facts:

The false teaching that hell is not eternal and that unbelievers eventually cease to exist is called annihilationism. The false teaching that in the end, everyone will be saved and go to heaven is called universalism. According to this view, regardless of a person's beliefs or behaviors, in the end they will go to heaven.

QUESTION 27: WHEN IS CHRIST COMING BACK?

At an unknown time, Jesus Christ will come back as judge.

Do you remember what happened when Jesus ascended to heaven? As He disappeared above the clouds, two angels suddenly appeared and stood by them saying, "Men of Galilee, why do you stand looking up into heaven? This same Jesus, who has been taken from you into heaven, will come in the same way that you have seen Him going into heaven (Acts 1:11)." The angels promised that one day Jesus would return!

We can be certain that Christ will return. Three different words are used in the Bible to refer to Christ's second coming: His revealing (1 Cor 1:7-8); His appearing (2 Thess 2:8); and His coming (Jas 5:7). But the Bible does not say when His return will occur. Mysteriously, the Bible says that the angels and even Christ Himself do not know the timing of His return. Only the Father knows (Mt 24:36).

But the Bible does say that two events will signal that Christ's return is near: The rise of the antichrist, and the great apostasy. The antichrist will be a man who will be used by Satan to deceive the masses into worshiping him and rejecting Christ (2 Thess 2:1-12). The great apostasy is the term used to describe the large number of people, even some professing Christians, who will follow the antichrist. After the antichrist and the apostasy Christ will return.

What will happen when Jesus comes back? The Bible speaks of five events that will occur when Jesus returns. First, the rapture. Christians will rise to meet with Christ in the air as He is descending (1 Thess 4:15-17). The purpose of the rapture is not to take us away from the earth, but to meet Christ in the air and descend with Him to the earth.

Second, the resurrection. When Christ comes back, He will give believers their new, glorified bodies (Phil 3:20-21). The resurrection may even happen when we meet Christ in the air.

Third, the final victory. When Christ returns He will destroy His enemies. Jesus will defeat both the antichrist and the devil and his angels (2 Thess 2:9; Rev 20:7-10).

Fourth, the final judgment. When Christ comes back He will judge the living and the dead – those who are still alive, and those who had previously died (Mt 16:27; Mt 25:31-34, 41, 46). Believers will receive their eternal rewards, and unbelievers will be thrown into the lake of fire with Satan.

Fifth, the new heavens and earth. When Christ returns He will create a new heavens and earth where we will live with Him forever (2 Pet 3:10-13; Rev 21:1).

While it is difficult to interpret Bible verses that speak of the return of Christ and the last things, all Christians agree on these essentials: Christ will come back at an unknown time; Christians will be given their resurrected, glorified bodies; Christ will defeat His enemies and judge the living and the death; believers will spend eternity with Christ in the new heavens and earth, and unbelievers will spend eternity in the lake of fire with Satan and his angels.

There is nothing to be afraid of regarding the return of Christ if you are a Christian. The important thing is to be sure that you are saved (Phil 2:12), store up heavenly treasure by doing good (Mt 6:20), and witness to as many people as possible (Mt 28:18-20).

Questions for Discussion:

1. When is Jesus coming back?
2. Who knows when Christ is coming back?
3. What needs to happen before Christ comes back?
4. What will happen when Jesus returns?
5. What should we do while waiting for Christ to return?

For Further Study:

1. Christ will return: Matthew 16:27; Acts 1:11; Philippians 3:20-21
2. Christ will return to judge everyone: Matthew 16:27; Matthew 25:31-46
3. No one knows when Christ will return: Matthew 24:36; 2 Peter 3:10-13
4. We are to wait eagerly for Christ's return: 1 Corinthians 1:7-8; Philippians 3:20-21
5. Christ's return is referred to as the "revelation": 1 Corinthians 1:7-8
6. Christ's return is called "the day of our Lord Jesus Christ": 1 Corinthians 1:7-8
7. When Christ returns He will give believers their glorified bodies: Philippians 3:20-21
8. The rapture: 1 Thessalonians 4:15-17
9. The apostasy and antichrist: 2 Thessalonians 2:1-12; Revelation 20:7-10
10. We must be patient until the Lord's coming: James 5:7
11. When Christ returns, He will create a new heavens and earth: 2 Peter 3:10-13; Revelation 21:1

Fun Facts:

The study of the end times is called eschatology. It comes from the Greek word *eschatos*, which means "last."

Question 28: Who is the Holy Spirit?

The Holy Spirit is God, coequal with the Father, living inside believers.

The Bible teaches the triune nature of God. There is one God in three persons, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. The Father is God, the Son is God, and the Holy Spirit is God. These three are coequal and coeternal. They are one God, but they are distinct from each other. The Father is not the Son or the Holy Spirit; the Holy Spirit is not the Father or the Son; yet the Holy Spirit is God (Acts 5:3-4).

Before Jesus ascended into heaven, the Holy Spirit did not live inside all believers. Instead, at different times He would come upon certain individuals to empower them for special acts of service, such as prophets, kings, and judges. But before Jesus died, He promised that He would not leave us as orphans, but that He would send the Holy Spirit, also called the Helper and the Spirit of truth, to be with us forever. Jesus said the Holy Spirit would dwell with us and be in us (Jn 14:15-18).

After Jesus rose from the grave, He told His disciples to remain in Jerusalem and wait for the Holy Spirit (Acts 1:4-5). Not long after Jesus ascended into heaven, when all the disciples were gathered together in one place on the day of Pentecost (an annual Jewish holiday), the Holy Spirit came upon all the believers. It was an unmistakable event. There was a sound like a mighty rushing wind. Flames of fire appeared and rested on each of them. And they were all given the ability to speak in tongues, or other

languages that they had never learned. What were they saying? Because of the festival of Pentecost, there were Jews in the city from all over the world who spoke many different languages. They could each hear the disciples preaching the gospel in their own language! Over 3,000 people accepted Christ that day.

Since the day of Pentecost, the Holy Spirit indwells every Christian the moment they accept Christ and get saved (Rm 8:9). If you are a Christian, the Holy Spirit lives inside of you. This is called the baptism with the Holy Spirit (Acts 1:5). It is a one-time experience at the moment of salvation for every believer. From that point on, the Holy Spirit never leaves you.

What does the Holy Spirit do inside you? He leads you to the truth (Jn 14:16-17). He teaches you everything and reminds you of everything Jesus said (Jn 14:26). He teaches you about Jesus (Jn 15:26). He convicts you of your sin, of God's righteousness, and of the coming judgment (Jn 16:8). He guides you into all truth (Jn 16:12). He empowers you for ministry by giving you spiritual gifts (1 Cor 12). He gives you the desire and the power to please God (Phil 2:13). He transforms you to become like Christ (Gal 5:22-23). He gives you boldness and courage to witness about Christ (Acts 4:31). He helps you to pray when you don't know what to pray for (Rom 8:26-27).

Even though the Holy Spirit lives in you, it is possible for a Christian to miss out on the blessings of the Holy Spirit. This is why the Bible commands us to be filled with the Holy Spirit (Eph 5:18). This means to let the Holy Spirit take control of your life. The Holy Spirit lives in you, but you will only experience His power if you allow Him to be in charge of you. You must allow Him to be president, not just resident. When you allow the Holy Spirit to control you, He will fill you with His power and enable you to enjoy and serve God to the fullest.

Questions for Discussion:

1. Who is the Holy Spirit?
2. What is the baptism with the Holy Spirit?
3. Where is the Holy Spirit?
4. What does the Holy Spirit do inside the believer?
5. How can you be filled with the Holy Spirit?

For Further Study:

1. Jesus promised to send the Holy Spirit: John 14:15-18, 25-26; 16:7
2. The Holy Spirit is a counselor: John 14:16, 26; 16:7
3. The Holy Spirit teaches us and reminds us of Christ's words: John 14:26

4. The Holy Spirit testifies about Jesus: John 15:26
5. The Holy Spirit convicts the world about sin, righteousness, and judgment: John 16:7-14
6. The Holy Spirit guides us into all the truth: John 16:13
7. The Holy Spirit glorifies Jesus: John 16:13-14
8. The Holy Spirit lives in all believers: Romans 8:9-11; 1 Corinthians 3:16; 6:19-20
9. The Holy Spirit gives all believers spiritual gifts: 1 Corinthians 12:7-13
10. The Holy Spirit works in us to make us more like Christ: Galatians 5:22-23
11. We are commanded to be filled with the Holy Spirit: Ephesians 5:18

Fun Facts:

Originally the Bible was not divided into chapters and verses. It was not until A.D. 1227 that chapters were developed by Stephen Langton, the Archbishop of Canterbury. In A.D. 1448 the Jewish Rabbi Nathan divided the Old Testament into verses. And in A.D. 1555 Robert Estienne (a.k.a. Stephanus) divided the New Testament into verses.

QUESTION 29: WHAT IS THE APOSTLES' CREED?

The Apostles' Creed is an ancient summary of right belief: "We believe in God the Father Almighty, Maker of heaven and earth, and in Jesus Christ His only Son our Lord, Who was conceived by the Holy Spirit, born of the virgin Mary, suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, died, and was buried. The third day He rose again from the dead. He ascended into heaven, and is seated at the right hand of God the Father Almighty. From there He will come to judge the living and the dead. We believe in the Holy Spirit, the holy catholic church, the communion of the saints, the forgiveness of sins, the resurrection of the body, and the life everlasting."²⁴

Sometime between the third and fourth centuries A.D., just a few hundred years after the time that Christ walked the earth, Christians wrote down a short statement of faith that summarized the essential beliefs of Christianity. It is known as the Apostles' Creed. There are several important things to notice.

First, the word "believe" is used twice, reminding us that salvation is by faith. Ephesians 2:8-9 says, "For you are saved by grace through faith, and this is not from yourselves; it is God's gift – not from works, so that no one can boast." It is by believing in the gospel of Jesus Christ that we become Christians and receive salvation.

Second, the creed mentions each member of the Trinity: God the Father Almighty, Jesus Christ His only Son our Lord; and the Holy Spirit. To believe the creed is to acknowledge the triune nature of God – that there is one God in three persons.

Third, the creed affirms the truth of the supernatural. Miracles such as the virgin birth, the resurrection of Jesus Christ, and the ascension are not myths; we believe that they really happened.

Fourth, the creed affirms the importance of the church. The word “catholic” means universal. The “holy catholic church” does not refer to the Roman Catholic Church. It refers to all true Christians throughout the world who together make up the universal church. Our faith is not individualistic; it can only be faithfully lived and fully experienced as we join a local church and participate in the body of Christ. When we join a local church, we receive the benefits of being a member of the universal church.

Fifth, the communion of the saints refers not to the Lord’s Supper, but to the fact that all Christians share in a common salvation. All Christians throughout history – past, present, and future – have in common the same Lord and Savior, the same new birth, the same forgiveness of sins, the same gift of eternal life, the same Holy Spirit, the same resurrection of the body, and the same eternal home.

Sixth, the creed mentions the most important truths of the Bible: The triune nature of God; creation; the incarnation of Christ; the crucifixion; the resurrection; the ascension; Christ’s exaltation; the second coming; the final judgment; the church; the resurrection of the body; and eternal life.

Seventh, the creed implies an important truth without stating it outright. We know the truths of the creed because they are recorded for us in Scripture. To believe the creed is to believe that the Bible is the inspired, inerrant word of God.

Questions for Discussion:

1. What is the Apostles’ Creed?
2. Why is the Apostles’ Creed important?
3. What is “the holy catholic church”?
4. How does the Apostles’ Creed affirm the doctrine of the Trinity?
5. How does the Apostles’ Creed affirm the inspiration of Scripture?

For Further Study:

1. The gospel in a nutshell: John 3:16
2. The basics of Christianity explained: 1 Corinthians 15:3-8

Fun Facts:

Everyone in the world spoke the same language until the Tower of Babel, when God confused their language, causing people to scatter throughout the whole world (see Genesis 11).

QUESTION 30: WHAT IS PRAYER?

Prayer is talking to God in Jesus' name through adoration, confession, thanksgiving, and supplication.

God wants to be your provider, protector, guide, comforter, and healer. He wants to do miracles in your life. But God has chosen to work through prayer. Scripture is clear: Ask and you will receive; don't ask and you will not receive (Jas 4:2).

God has done amazing things in answer to prayer. He answered the prayer of Abraham's servant to find just the right wife for Isaac (Gen 24). He answered Moses' prayer to heal his sister, Miriam, of leprosy (Num 12). He answered Joshua's prayer to make the sun stand still so that he could have more time to defeat his enemies (Josh 10). He answered Gideon's prayer to reveal His will with absolute clarity (Judges 6:36-40). He answered Hannah's prayer to have a child of her own (1 Sam 1). He answered the prayer of Elijah to raise a dead child back to life (1 Ki 17:22). He also answered Elijah's prayer that it would not rain, and it did not rain for three and a half years. Then God answered his prayer for it to rain (Jas 5:17-18).

How can you pray effectively?

1. Pray reverently: Don't just ask for things. Begin by praising and thanking God (Ps 150).

2. Pray righteously: Before making your requests, be sure that you confess and repent of your sins (Ps 16:18).
3. Pray correctly: When you pray, be sure to pray in Jesus' name. In that way you are approaching God through Christ's atoning work on your behalf (Jn 14:13-14).
4. Pray biblically: Do your best to pray according to God's will (1 Jn 5:14-15).
5. Pray broadly: Pray for yourself, but also pray for others. Each day pray for someone different - your family, your church, your lost friends, missionaries, etc. (Eph 6:18-19).
6. Pray specifically: Don't pray with lazy, impatient generalities. Be specific and tell God exactly what you want (Phil 4:6).
7. Pray persistently: Don't just pray for something once. Pray until God says yes or no (Mt 7:7-12).
8. Pray audaciously: How big is your God? Pray prayers that reflect the size, power, and greatness of God. Nothing is impossible, so pray for the impossible (Josh 10:12-14).
9. Pray privately: Get alone with God each day for some one-on-one time with your heavenly Father (Mt 6:5-6).
10. Pray corporately: Something special happens when God's people join together in prayer for the same thing (Mt 18:19-20; Acts 4:23-31).
11. Pray humbly: Recognize that you are not in charge, and you don't know what is best. Tell God what you want, but surrender to His will (Lk 22:42).
12. Pray fervently: Bring your requests to God with intense passion (Acts 12:5; Jas 5:16).
13. Pray politically: Pray for our political leaders, like the governor, congressmen, and the president (1 Tim 2:1-2).
14. Pray simply: Prayer is just a conversation between father and child. There's no need for fancy words or repetitive chants (Mt 6:7-8).
15. Pray sincerely: Don't pray in public just to get others to admire you (Mt 6:5-6).
16. Pray early: Talk to God each morning before you talk to anyone else (Mk 1:35).
17. Pray believingly: Believe with all your heart that God hears, God cares, God is able, and God will always answer (Mt 21:22).
18. Pray constantly: Carry on a conversation with God all day long through everything that you do (1 Thess 5:17).

As you consistently pray like this, not only will you experience God's awesome power working through you, but God will also give you inner peace as you face trials (Phil 4:6-7).

Questions for Discussion

1. What is prayer?

2. How can you pray effectively?
3. Has God ever answered your prayers?
4. Why doesn't God always answer prayers?
5. What do you need to do to get better at prayer?

For Further Study:

1. The Lord's Prayer: Matthew 6:5-7
2. God's promise to answer prayer: Matthew 7:7-11; 21:22; Mark 11:22-25; Luke 11:9-13; John 14:12-14
3. Jesus spent much time alone in prayer: Mark 1:35
4. Don't give up on prayer: Luke 18:1-8
5. We must pray with a righteous heart: John 9:31; John 15:7
6. The command to pray: Ephesians 6:18; Colossians 4:2
7. When to pray: Ephesians 6:18; 1 Thessalonians 5:17
8. Prayer helps us overcome worry: Philippians 4:6-7
9. We must pray according to God's will: 1 John 5:14-15

Fun Facts:

The first time the entire Bible was translated into English was in A.D. 1382 by John Wycliffe, translating from the Latin Vulgate – the Latin translation of the Bible created by Jerome in A.D. 400. Wycliffe's Bible was outlawed by the Roman Catholic Church, and he was declared a heretic after his death. The first time the New Testament was translated into English from the original Greek manuscripts was in A.D. 1526, by William Tyndale. For this crime Tyndale was arrested and executed ten years later.

QUESTION 31: WHAT IS THE LORD'S PRAYER?

Our Father which art in heaven, Hallowed be thy name. Thy kingdom come, Thy will be done in earth, as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread. And forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors. And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil: For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, forever. Amen.

The passage of Scripture known as the Lord's Prayer could more accurately be called the Disciple's Prayer. The disciples asked Jesus how to pray, and He taught them with this prayer (Mt 6:9-13; Lk 11:1-4).

The Lord's Prayer might also be called the Model Prayer. It is not meant to be chanted word for word as if the particular words have magical power. And it is not meant to be recited over and over again, as if the number of repetitions make God more inclined to show mercy. The purpose of the prayer is to teach Christ-followers how to pray.

First, pray for God's name to be honored as holy. To honor God's name is to honor God – to set Him apart as most important in your life. Pray that you and others would grow to honor and glorify God more and more.

Second, pray for God's kingdom to come. The kingdom of God is the reign of God. It is a spiritual kingdom that exists wherever God is in charge. When Jesus returns

everything in heaven and on earth will submit to His authority. Pray for yourself and everyone else to live more and more under God's authority.

Third, pray for God's will to be done. God's will is what God wants. Pray that God would have His way in your life and in the world (Lk 22:42).

Fourth, pray for your daily bread – your needs. Cast your cares and concerns upon the Lord (1 Pet 5:17). Do you need help with school? Are you sick? Are you worried about something? Is there something you really need? Tell God what you need (Phil 4:6).

Fifth, ask God for forgiveness. Confess (admit, apologize, and repent) your sins to God, and ask for His forgiveness. If you are sincere, God will forgive you every time (1 Jn 1:9). Remember that God will not answer your prayers if you have unconfessed sin in your life (Ps 16:18).

Sixth, forgive those who have sinned against you. God will not forgive your sins and answer your prayers unless you forgive others (Mt 6:14-15).

Seventh, pray for God to keep you away from temptation. These are situations when you are enticed to disobey God, such as adversity, loneliness, depression, peer pressure, or a lack of accountability. The easiest way to overcome temptation is to avoid it altogether. That's what this prayer is about.

Eighth, pray for God to deliver you from the evil one. The evil one is Satan, the devil. He is prowling around like a roaring lion, looking for someone to devour (1 Pet 5:8; Eph 6:11). This is a prayer for God to empower you to overcome the temptations that you must endure. God will not keep you away from all temptation, but He will strengthen you to overcome all temptation (1 Cor 10:12-13).

Questions for Discussion:

1. What are some incorrect uses of the Lord's prayer?
2. What does "Hallowed be Thy name" mean?
3. What does "Thy kingdom come" mean?
4. What does "Give us this day our daily bread" mean?
5. What does "forgive us our debts" mean?

For Further Study:

1. The Lord's Prayer in Matthew: Matthew 6:9-15
2. The Lord's Prayer in Luke: Luke 11:1-4

Fun Facts:

Over 100 million copies of the Bible are sold each year.²⁵ Nearly 8 out of 10 Americans believe that the Bible is either the literal word of God or is inspired by God. Less than 1 out of 10 Americans read the Bible daily.²⁶

QUESTION 32: WHAT ARE THE ORDINANCES?

Jesus Christ commanded the church to observe baptism and the Lord's Supper.

Don't be afraid of the word "ordinance." An ordinance is a sacred ceremony instituted by Jesus to be observed by the church. Some people, such as Roman Catholics, prefer the term "sacraments." Ordinances are simply orders given by Jesus, but they are different from His other commands because they are ceremonial in nature.

Christians disagree as to the meaning of the ordinances. Roman Catholics, for example, view the sacraments as the means of grace. It is through the sacraments that God saves and empowers the believer. Other Christians, such as Baptists, believe that the ordinances are signs, or visible symbols of the grace that God has already given to the believer through faith.

Roman Catholics believe that there are seven sacraments.

1. Baptism. Through baptism a person receives initial justification, or admission to the faith.
2. Penance (also called Confession, or Reconciliation). When a Christian commits a mortal sin (deliberately and knowingly disobeying God's will), they lose their salvation. To be restored to God, the Christian must confess his sins to a priest, who will usually assign acts of penance, such as reciting specific prayers or making restitution.

3. The Eucharist (also called Holy Communion, or Mass). Through the bread and wine of the Lord's Supper, the benefits of Christ's sacrifice are applied to the believer.
4. Confirmation. Usually at the age of 13 for children, or immediately after conversion for adults, the believer receives the indwelling Holy Spirit to empower them to live the Christian life.
5. Matrimony (also called Marriage). Through the wedding ceremony the couple are given grace for a flourishing marriage and home life.
6. Holy Orders (also called Ordination). In an Ordination ceremony new bishops, priests, and deacons are given spiritual power for effective service through the laying on of hands.
7. The Anointing of the Sick. A sick believer is given strength and comfort. As the means of grace, salvation and spiritual power cannot be received apart from the sacraments. And since the sacraments require the ministry of a priest, a believer cannot receive salvation and spiritual power without being connected to the Roman Catholic Church.

Many Protestants, such as Baptists, believe that both salvation and spiritual strength are received by grace through faith rather than ritual and ceremony. As well, Protestants believe in the doctrine of the priesthood of the believer, which means that every Christian has equal and direct access to God through Jesus Christ, not requiring the intercession of a priest. Many Protestants, such as Baptists, believe that there are only two ordinances: Baptism and the Lord's Supper.

Jesus said in Matthew 28:19, "Go, therefore, and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit." Jesus commanded the church to observe baptism every time a person becomes a new believer. Baptism is a one-time event which should follow a person's decision to accept Christ as Savior and Lord.

Luke 22:19-20 says, "And He took bread, gave thanks, broke it, gave it to them, and said, 'This is My body, which is given for you. Do this in remembrance of Me.' In the same way He also took the cup after supper and said, 'This cup is the new covenant in My blood, which is poured out for you.'" Jesus commanded the church to observe the Lord's Supper on a regular basis, so churches typically have it weekly, monthly, or quarterly.

While the ordinances are important, we do not observe them to receive salvation or spiritual strength. We observe them out of obedience. The sacraments do not save us, but they can be very helpful experiences in the life of the Christian. Do not put your faith in the ordinances, but do not neglect them either.

Questions for Discussion:

1. What is the difference between a sacrament and an ordinance?
2. What are the seven sacraments of the Roman Catholic church?
3. What are the two Protestant ordinances?
4. What does the word "ordinance" mean?
5. Why do we observe the ordinances?

For Further Study:

1. The command to baptize: Matthew 28:19
2. The command to observe the Lord's Supper: Luke 22:19-20

Fun Facts:

The Bible is divided into two major sections, the Old Testament and the New Testament. The word "testament" means "covenant," which is a solemn agreement or contract. The Old Testament is about the covenant that God made with Abraham, promising to make him into a great nation, and to bless the world through him. The New Testament is about God's covenant with all mankind through the person and work of Jesus Christ, Abraham's descendant.

QUESTION 33: WHAT IS BAPTISM?

Baptism is the immersion of the new believer in water, symbolizing the death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus Christ.

Baptism is an act of obedience. It is one of the two official ordinances, or orders, given to the church, along with the Lord's Supper. The last words of Jesus in the Gospel of Matthew are, "Go, therefore, and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit (Mt 28:19)." Baptism is not optional.

Baptism is an act of imitation. Christians are called to imitate Jesus Christ in His character and conduct (1 Jn 2:6). One of the ways to do this is to be baptized. Mark 1:9 says, "In those days Jesus came from Nazareth in Galilee and was baptized in the Jordan by John."

Baptism is not salvific. While baptism is imperative for all Christians, it is not what saves us from our sins. The Bible is very clear that we are saved by repenting of our sins and putting our faith in Jesus, not through good works or religious rituals (Mk 1:15; Jn 3:16; Acts 2:38). Remember the thief on the cross who put his faith in Jesus right before he died. He did not have a chance to get baptized, yet Jesus said to him, "Truly I tell you, today you will be with me in paradise (Lk 23:43)."

Baptism is a symbol. Even though baptism is not salvific, it is required of all Christians because it is an important symbol. First, baptism symbolizes the death, burial, and resurrection of Christ – the object of our faith. Going under the water symbolizes Christ’s death and burial, while coming out of the water symbolizes Christ’s resurrection. Second, baptism symbolizes salvation – dying to your old life and beginning a new life in Christ. Third, baptism is an outward symbol of your inner commitment to Christ. Christianity is very personal, but it is not private. We are commanded to identify with other Christians in the church, and baptism is the way we publicly announce that we have decided to follow Jesus, moving from seeker to believer (Heb 10:24-25).

Think of baptism as the Christian’s wedding ring. If a woman puts on a wedding ring, that doesn’t mean she is married, and when she takes her wedding ring off, that doesn’t mean she is not married. A wedding ring is simply an outward symbol of a woman’s inner commitment to her husband. In the same way, getting baptized doesn’t mean that you are a Christian, and not being baptized does not mean that you are not a Christian. It is an outward symbol of a Christian’s inner commitment to Christ – a public demonstration of your new association with Jesus.²⁷

Baptism is only for believers. There are no infants baptized in the Bible. Any time a person was baptized in the Bible, it was after they had decided to follow Jesus. For example, Acts 8 tells the story of Peter leading a eunuch to believe in Christ. Then the Bible says that “both Phillip and the eunuch went down into the water, and he baptized him (Acts 8:38).”

Finally, baptism is only by immersion, or by dipping someone under the water. The Greek word for “baptize” in the Bible means “to immerse,” not to splash or sprinkle. The same Greek word was used of dyeing cloth, which required dipping the material completely under the water. Think of it like this. If you just want a little bit of Jesus, then all you need is a sprinkle. But if you want all of Jesus, then you need to be completely immersed.

Questions for Discussion:

1. Do we need to be baptized? Why?
2. At what age should a person be baptized?
3. Is baptism salvific? Explain.
4. What does baptism mean?
5. How is baptism like a wedding ring?

For Further Study:

1. The baptism of Jesus: Mark 1:9-11
2. Christ's command to baptize new believers: Matthew 28:19-20
3. New believers are to be baptized in the name of the Father, the Son, and The Holy Spirit: Matthew 28:19-20
4. Baptism follows faith: Acts 8:34-39
5. What baptism symbolizes: Romans 6:1-4

Fun Facts:

The word "Christian" is only found three times in the Bible (Acts 11:26; Acts 26:28; 1 Peter 4:16). More often Christians are referred to as believers, saints, disciples, and brothers and sisters (Acts 2:44; Eph 1:1; Acts 14:21-22; Acts 1:15-16).

QUESTION 34: WHAT IS THE LORD'S SUPPER?

The Lord's Supper is a regularly observed memorial of the death of Jesus Christ for our sins.

On the night before Jesus died, He shared a last supper with the twelve apostles. Jesus took two traditional elements of the Jewish Passover meal – unleavened bread and wine – and gave new meaning to them. He took the Passover, which was a memorial of Israel's deliverance from Egypt, and turned it into the Lord's Supper, a memorial of our deliverance from sin through the death of Christ.

Mark 1:23-24 says, "As they were eating, He took bread, blessed and broke it, gave it to them, and said, 'Take it; this is My body.' Then He took a cup, and after giving thanks, He gave it to them, and so they all drank from it. He said to them, 'This is My blood that establishes the covenant; it is shed for many.'"

The Lord's Supper is a command. Jesus told His disciples, "Do this in remembrance of Me (Lk 22:19)." He did not specify how often, just that we should observe the Lord's Supper. Some churches do it weekly, while other churches do it monthly, or even once a quarter. The important thing is to be obedient. Every Christian must regularly observe the Lord's Supper.

The Lord's Supper is a memorial. The purpose is to remember the death of Christ for our sins, and to thank Him for all the blessings that are ours as a result. That is why Jesus said in Luke 22:19, "Do this in remembrance of Me."

The Lord's Supper is not salvific. While the observance of the Lord's Supper is a very special occasion, it does not save us from our sins. The death and resurrection of Christ are what save us from our sins, and we receive the gift of salvation not through a ritual, but through repentance and faith in Jesus Christ (Mk 1:15). The Bible never instructs believers to observe the Lord's Supper to receive salvation. Jesus clearly taught that it was a memorial (Lk 22:19).

Roman Catholics believe in transubstantiation, that the bread and wine miraculously become the actual body and blood of Christ, even though they don't look or taste like it. The bread and wine are no longer bread and wine; they actually and physically become Christ's body and blood. But the Bible does not teach this. Remember that Jesus called the Lord's Supper a memorial (Lk 22:19). Christ wants to be remembered, not eaten. He wants us to contemplate His sacrifice, not consume His body. When Jesus said, "This is My body," and "This is my blood," He was using symbolic language, something that He did often. For example, when He called Himself the "bread of life," the "light of the world," the "door of the sheep," the "good shepherd," and the "true vine," He did not mean that He was actually those things. Those are symbols to help us understand His saving work.

The Lord's Supper must be observed with reverence (1 Cor 11:27-32). Before partaking of the meal, you must first examine your heart for any unconfessed sin, and then confess it to the Lord. He will forgive you, but if you observe the Lord's Supper with sin in your heart, then you may come under the discipline of the Lord (1 Jn 1:9).

The Lord's Supper is a visible sermon. Each time the church observes the Lord's Supper, it proclaims the Lord's death as a witness to all who are present (1 Cor 11:26).

Questions for Discussion:

1. What is the purpose of the Lord's Supper?
2. Does the Lord's Supper save us from our sins? Explain.
3. What is transubstantiation? Why don't we believe in it?
4. What does it mean to observe the Lord's Supper with reverence?
5. How can you get the most out of observing the Lord's Supper?

For Further Study:

1. The Lord's Supper in Matthew: Matthew 26:26-30
2. The Lord's Supper in Mark: Mark 14:22-26
3. The Lord's Supper in Luke: Luke 22:14-20
4. The Lord's Supper is a memorial: Luke 22:19
5. Paul's explanation of the Lord's Supper: 1 Corinthians 11:23-32
6. The Lord's Supper must be observed with a pure heart: 1 Corinthians 11:27-32

Fun Facts:

The very first Lord's Supper was Christ's last supper with His disciples. It occurred on Thursday night, the day before His crucifixion, in an upstairs room in Jerusalem. Jesus and His disciples were sharing the Passover Feast together, which was an annual Jewish festival memorializing God's deliverance of the Jews from Egypt. Scholars have a good idea of the seating arrangement of the last supper. The common table in that time was shaped like a three-sided rectangle, called a triclinium. The middle was open for serving and entertainment. People would lie down on their left side, propping themselves up on their left elbow, and eat with their right hand. The seating arrangement was typically from left to right, the most significant to the least significant. The host, Jesus, probably sat on the second seat on the left. His assistant, or "right-hand-man," probably on his right. Scholars believe this was the apostle John, because at one point he leaned back against Jesus to ask him the identity of the betrayer (Jn 12:23). On the left side of the host usually sat the guest of honor. Scholars believe this was Judas Iscariot, who betrayed Jesus, because he was the only one sitting close enough to dip his hand with Jesus in the bowl (Mt 26:23).

QUESTION 35: WHAT IS THE CHURCH?

The church is a community of believers devoted to worship, fellowship, discipleship, service, and evangelism.

The word “church” can refer to two things. First, the church can refer to all true Christians around the world and throughout history, sometimes called the “universal church”, or the “catholic church”, or the “Church” with a capital “C”. When you become a Christian, the Holy Spirit baptizes you into the universal church (1 Cor 12:13). Second, the church can refer to a group of believers who gather regularly to accomplish Christ’s mission. This is usually referred to as the “local church,” such as the local churches in Ephesus, Philippi, Colossae, or Crete in the Bible. While every true Christian is a member of the universal church, the only way to contribute to the mission of the church and experience all of its benefits is to join a local church.

A church must have several features to be a true Biblical Christian church. First, it must have the preaching of the Word of God, and the Gospel in particular (Acts 2:42). Second, it must observe the ordinances of baptism and the Lord’s Supper (Mt 28:19; Acts 2:42). Third, it must practice church discipline (Mt 18:15-17). If a church member is living in sin, they must be confronted with the need for repentance; and if they refuse to repent, they must not be allowed to participate in the church until they turn back to God. Fourth, the church must have biblically qualified leadership, sometimes called pastors, or elders, or overseers (1 Tim 3:1-13; Titus 1:5-9).

The church has five basic functions. First, the church is devoted to worship. It gathers regularly to preach the word, observe the ordinances, pray, give tithes and offerings, and sing praises to God. Second, the church is devoted to fellowship. Believers gather in smaller groups to support and encourage one another in the Christian life. Third, the church is devoted to discipleship. The church's aim is to help believers become fully devoted to Jesus Christ. Fourth, the church is devoted to service (or ministry). Believers meet each other's needs, and often find ways to meet needs in the community at large. Finally, the church is devoted to evangelism. The church strives to reach the lost, both in its own community and around the world by sending and supporting missionaries.

The local church is very important to God. It is God's "Plan A" for accomplishing His mission on earth. The Bible calls it the bride of Christ (Eph. 5:25-27), the body of Christ (1 Cor 12:27), the family of God (Gal 6:10; 1 Tim 3:15), the temple of God (Eph 2:19-22), and the pillar and foundation of the truth (1 Tim 3:15). Each of these terms help us better understand God's plan for the church. As the bride of Christ, the church loves, supports, and submits to Christ. As the body of Christ, the church acts as the physical representation of Christ on earth, carrying out His work, and each believer has a role to play. As the family of God, the church loves and cares for one another, and every member is important. As the temple of God, the church gathers for worship. And as the pillar and foundation of the truth, the church proclaims God's word to the world, and guards the truth from contamination.

Because of the church's central role in God's work on earth, every Christian must be actively involved in the church, both contributing to its health and protecting its unity.

Questions for Discussion:

1. What is the church?
2. What are the four features of a true Biblical Christian church?
3. What are the five functions of the church?
4. What are the different terms the Bible uses to describe the church, and how do they help us understand God's plan for the church?
5. What is the difference between the universal church, and the local church?

For Further Study:

1. The first church: Acts 2:42-47; Acts 4:32-35
2. The mission of the church: Matthew 28:19-20
3. Church leadership: Ephesians 4:11-16

4. Every member is a minister: Ephesians 4:11-16; 1 Corinthians 12:12-31
5. Christ's love for the church: Ephesians 5:25-27

Fun Facts:

The tallest person in the Bible was a Philistine warrior named Goliath. He was nine and a half feet tall (1 Samuel 17:4). Even though he was big, he was defeated by a godly young man named David with only a sling shot and one stone (1 Samuel 17:48-50).

QUESTION 36: WHY DO WE PARTICIPATE IN CHURCH?

We participate in church so that God can care for us, and so that we can contribute to the church.

Being active in church takes a lot of our resources. We attend, serve, give, and sometimes have to put up with difficult people. Why do we invest so much of ourselves in the church? Is it really worth it? Absolutely!

First, we are called to imitate Jesus, and Jesus is committed to the church. The Bible says that Jesus is building the church (Mt 16:18), He is the head of the church (Eph 5:22), and He is the Savior of the church (Eph 5:22). The Bible also says that Jesus loves the church, He gave himself for the church (Eph 5:25), He provides for the church (Eph 5:29), and He cares for the church (Eph 5:29). If we are going to imitate Jesus, then we must participate in church.

Second, we must participate in church to serve the cause of Christ. We are called to serve Jesus (Rm 12:11). Since the church is the body of Christ, then we must serve the church, and we must serve the world through the church. Jesus is on a mission to seek and save the lost, and the church is His primary method for accomplishing His mission (Lk 19:10; Mt 28:19-20). The mission of Jesus is too big to accomplish alone; we must work together as a church.

Third, the Bible gives several commands that can only be obeyed by participating in church. For example, we are commanded to protect the unity of the church (Eph 4:3), to submit to church leadership (Heb 13:17), to gather regularly with the church (Heb 10:24-25), to practice church discipline (Mt 18:15-17), and to minister to one another in the church (Gal 6:1-2). These commands can only be obeyed if we participate in church.

A fourth reason we participate in church is because the church needs each of us. Just as our bodies have many parts, and each part has an important function, the church has many members, and each member has an important role. The body functions at the highest level when each body part is healthy and operating at full capacity. The same goes for the church. When one part of the body is dysfunctional, then the rest of the body suffers and is less effective. The moment a person becomes a Christian, they also become a member of the body of Christ (1 Cor 12:27). And Christ gives each person spiritual gifts (empowerments for ministry) to use in the church (1 Cor 12:7). The church will only be at its best when each person in the church is doing their part (Eph 4:16).

Finally, we participate in church because we need it. Christianity is a team sport. Our opponent is not one, but many – the devil and his legions of demons. If we are going to be victorious, we must draw from the resources of the church. We are not strong enough to do it alone. We need love and honor from the church (Rm 12:10); we need the church to share with us in our needs (Rm 12:13; Gal 6:2); to rejoice and to weep with us (Rm 12:15); to teach and admonish us (Col 3:16); to watch out for us, motivate us to love and good works, and encourage us (Heb 10:24-25). In short, without the church we cannot be all that God wants us to be. To neglect the church is both disobedient and self-destructive. There is no such thing as a perfect church, but we are much better off with the church than without it.

Questions for Discussion:

1. Why do we participate in church?
2. Church participation takes a lot of time and energy. Is it worth it?
3. Why does the church need us?
4. Why do we need the church?
5. Is it a sin to neglect church participation? Explain.

For Further Study:

1. Spiritual gifts: Romans 12:3-8; 1 Corinthians 12:1-31; Ephesians 4:7-16
2. How church members should treat one another: Romans 12:9-16; Ephesians 4:1-6; Philippians 2:1-5

Fun Facts:

The Bible has a talking donkey! God enabled a female donkey to speak to a man named Balaam in Numbers 22:28. "Then the Lord opened the donkey's mouth, and she asked Balaam, 'What have I done to you that you have beaten me these three times?'"

QUESTION 37: WHAT IS THE GREAT COMMISSION?

The Great Commission is the central mission of every Christian and every church, to go and make disciples of all the nations.

Right before Christ ascended to heaven, He gave His disciples their marching orders. Matthew 28:18-20 says, "Jesus came near and said to them, 'All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth. Go, therefore, and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe everything I have commanded you. And remember, I am with you always, to the end of the age.'"

The Great Commission can be broken down into four tasks. The first task is evangelism, which is the task of sharing the gospel of Jesus Christ with people far from God so that they can accept it if they want to (Acts 8:4). The second task is discipleship, which is the task of teaching believers to obey all of Christ's commands (Col 3:16). The third task is church building, which is the task of starting new churches and helping existing churches flourish (Eph 4:16). The fourth task is missions, which is the task of taking the gospel to places where little to no Christian witness exists (Rm 15:20).

The Great Commission is the central mission of every church. The church is not a social club. It does not merely exist to serve its members. And it does not get to define its own mission. The purpose of the church has been clearly laid out for us by Christ – to

make disciples. If the church does other things, they must take a back seat to the Great Commission. The church does not exist to meet all the needs of the community. It exists to meet the most important need of the community – its need for salvation. The health of a church is not measured by its attendance, money, or buildings. It is measured by its faithfulness in pursuing the Great Commission.

The Great Commission also identifies the central mission of every Christian. You are not here by accident. You do not have the freedom or responsibility to define your own purpose in life. Every Christian has been drafted into the army of God, and our mission is clear – to make disciples of all the nations. The Great Commission is not merely the mission of the church. It is not merely the mission of pastors and missionaries. It is the central calling of every Christian. Our individual assignments may vary, but all Christians must devote their lives to the Great Commission. Whether your vocation is to be a dentist, carpenter, airplane designer, author, or mother, you are called to use your talents and resources to contribute to the Great Commission.

There are many ways to contribute to the Great Commission. You can witness to your friends (Acts 1:8). You can teach your kids about God (Mk 10:13; Eph 6:4). You can volunteer in church (Eph 4:16). You can be a pastor or leader in the church (1 Tm 3:1). You can be a missionary and devote your life to reaching unreached people groups (Rm 15:20). You can donate your money to support the church and missionaries (Gal 6:6; Phil 4:15-16). You can pray for your church family and missionaries (Rm 10:1; Rm 15:30-31; Eph 6:18-19). You can allow the church to use your home for ministry (Rm 12:13; Rm 16:3-5). You can serve the needs of others in the church (Acts 9:36-39). Whatever you do to contribute, remember the words of 1 Corinthians 15:58; “Be steadfast, immovable, always excelling in the Lord’s work.”

Questions for Discussion:

1. What is the Great Commission?
2. What are the four tasks of the Great Commission?
3. How does the Great Commission relate to individual Christians?
4. Why is the Great Commission important?
5. How can you contribute to the Great Commission?

For Further Study:

1. The Great Commission in Matthew: Matthew 28:18-20
2. The Great Commission in Mark: Mark 16:15, 20
3. The Great Commission in Luke: Luke 24:47-48
4. The Great Commission in John: John 20:21

5. The Great Commission in Acts: Acts 1:8

Fun Facts:

The longest verse in the Bible is Esther 8:9. The shortest verse is John 11:35 (“Jesus wept”). The longest chapter is Psalm 119. The shortest chapter is Psalm 117. The longest book is Psalms. The shortest book is 3 John. The longest sentence in the Bible (KJV) is found in Luke 3:23-38, the genealogy of Jesus - 467 words.

QUESTION 38: WHAT IS THE GOSPEL?

God created us for Himself, but our sins separate us from Him. Jesus Christ paid for our sins and rose again. We can be saved if we repent and have faith in Jesus Christ.

The word “Gospel” means good news. It is the message of salvation through faith in the person and work of Jesus Christ. For people to be saved, they must hear and believe the Gospel (Rm 1:16; Rm 10:14-17). It is called the Good News because it is the best news the world has ever heard. Through faith in Jesus Christ, we can be forgiven of our sins, reconciled to God, adopted into His family, receive the gift of the Holy Spirit, and go to heaven for eternity when we die. No other message comes close to the Gospel.

It is important for every Christian to know the Gospel for two reasons. First, you must understand the Gospel to be saved (Rm 1:16). You cannot believe in something that you don’t know or understand. Second, you must understand the Gospel to be an effective witness for Jesus Christ (Acts 1:8). To reach others for Christ, you must be able to explain the Gospel so that people can hear, understand, and believe.

The Gospel can be broken down into four words: God, sin, Jesus, and you. First, **GOD** created you for an intimate relationship with Him. This is why the most important commandment is to love God (Mk 12:29-30). Second, you **SINNED** against God, and this separates you from God and destines you for an eternity in hell (Is 59:2). No one is without sin, and therefore no one deserves to go to heaven (Rm 3:23; 6:23). Third, God

loves you, so He sent His Son, **JESUS CHRIST**, to die in your place, for your sins (Jn 3:16). Fourth, **YOU** can be saved from sin and receive eternal life if you repent of your sins and believe in Jesus Christ (Mk 1:15; Jn 3:16).

Another way to understand the Gospel is with the words “Do” and “Done.” All other world religions are based on “Do” – what you must do to please God in order to earn your way to heaven. This can be called the Performance Plan, because the focus is on your performance being good enough to earn your entrance into heaven. On the other hand, Christianity is based on “Done” – what Jesus Christ has done for us so that we can be saved and go to heaven. This can be called the Grace Plan, because the focus is on what Christ has done for us, even though we don’t deserve it. People who follow the Performance Plan are trusting in themselves – what they must do for Jesus. They may even believe in Jesus, but they are not trusting in Jesus. Their trust is in themselves. People who follow the Grace Plan are trusting in Christ and what He has done for them.

It is important to remember that the Gospel is only good news if you understand and believe the bad news. The bad news is that all of us have sinned and deserve to go to hell, and we cannot save ourselves. We cannot do enough good deeds to make up for our sins. No matter how much good we do, our sins still need to be punished, and the punishment for sinning against a holy, infinite God, is infinite, eternal hell. If you understand and believe the bad news, then the Gospel truly is good news – the best news! Even though we deserve hell, God sent His Son to rescue us. All we need to do to receive salvation is to repent of our sins and believe that Jesus is God’s only provision for our sins.

Questions for Discussion:

1. Why is it important to know the Gospel?
2. What are the four words that summarize the Gospel?
3. What makes the Gospel “good news”?
4. What is the difference between “Do” and “Done”?
5. What is the difference between the Performance Plan and the Grace Plan?

For Further Study:

1. The Gospel must be preached: Mark 13:10
2. We must devote our lives to proclaiming the Gospel: Acts 20:24
3. We must not be ashamed of the Gospel: Romans 1:16
4. The Gospel is salvation for everyone who believes: Romans 1:16; Ephesians 1:13
5. The Holy Spirit is given to those who believe the Gospel: Ephesians 1:13

Fun Facts:

According to Wycliffe Bible Translators (2017), the entire Bible has been translated into over 600 languages.

QUESTION 39: HOW DO WE KNOW THAT EVOLUTION IS NOT TRUE?

God created everything in six days, according to its kind.

The theory of evolution was popularized by Charles Darwin, a scientist who lived in the nineteenth century. According to his theory, all animals evolved over millions of years from lower, less complex life forms. This conflicts with the Bible, which teaches that God created every animal in six days, according to its kind.

The word “evolution” means gradual change over time. Everyone believes in microevolution, or adaptation, which refers to changes within a kind. Over time animals adjust to their environment. For example, over time dogs in colder weather might develop longer, thicker hair, whereas dogs living in a warmer climate might develop thinner, shorter hair. People have even learned how to speed up this process through artificial breeding. But the important thing to note is that with microevolution, or adaptation, there is no change in kind. Dogs evolve into different-looking dogs, but they never evolve into, say, small horses. That would be a change in kind.

And that leads us to the type of evolution that Darwin imagined – macroevolution. Macroevolution is the theory that, given enough time, eventually an animal will continue to change until it turns into a completely different kind of animal. A fish, for example, may turn into a lizard, and a lizard into a snake, and a snake into a bird. But there are some major problems with macroevolution (also called Darwinian evolution).

First, the Bible clearly teaches creation, not evolution, and the Bible is true. The Bible claims to be inspired by God – all of it – even its account of creation. And according to the book of Genesis, God didn’t create one organism from which all other animals evolved over millions of years. Instead, the Bible teaches that God created each animal according to its kind in six days.

Second, Darwinian evolution has never been observed. We can observe the process of microevolution. Through artificial breeding we can even initiate it and speed it up. But again, dogs always remain dogs. Monkeys always remain monkeys. People always remain people. No one has ever observed Darwinian evolution – one kind of animal changing into a different kind of animal. The excuse often given is that it happens too slowly to be observed – over millions of years. In other words, it cannot be proven or disproven. It must be accepted by faith. But that doesn't sound like science; that sounds more like religion. That's exactly the problem with Darwinian evolution. It is not science. Science is based on tests that are repeatable and observable. Since evolution cannot be observed, it is not science but a religion based on science-fiction.

A third problem with Darwinian evolution is that there are no transitional fossils. The Oxford Dictionary says that a fossil is the remains or impression of a plant or animal hardened in rock. If evolution were true, then scientists would find transitional fossils that show animals changing over time. In fact, Darwin said that if transitional fossils were not found, it would disprove his theory. Since Darwin's time, hundreds of thousands of fossils have been discovered, but none are transitional fossils. This proves that evolution is not true.

There is no reason to doubt what the Bible says about Creation. Genesis 1:1 says, "In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth."

Questions for Discussion:

1. Who is Charles Darwin?
2. What is the theory of evolution?
3. What is the difference between micro and macroevolution?
4. What are some of the problems with Darwinian evolution?
5. How does Darwinian evolution contradict the Bible?

For Further Study:

1. The Creation story: Genesis 1-2
2. God is the Creator: Nehemiah 9:6
3. The New Testament affirms God as the Creator: Acts 14:15

Fun Facts:

Charles Darwin's famous book on evolution is now known as *The Origin of Species*, published in 1859. He began the work in 1839 and completed it by 1844, but then he waited fifteen years before publishing it. The actual title of the book is *On the Origin of*

Species by Means of Natural Selection, or the Preservation of Favoured Races in the Struggle for Life. Darwin was formerly a theology student who planned for a career in the ministry. His wife was an evangelical Christian. Apparently, he lost his faith because he could not reconcile the existence of God with his theory of evolution.²⁸ In 2013 Pew Research found that six in ten Americans believe in evolution.

QUESTION 40: WHAT IS THE COSMOLOGICAL ARGUMENT FOR GOD'S EXISTENCE?

Something cannot come from nothing.

There are good reasons to believe in God. One reason is called the cosmological argument. The word "cosmos" refers to the world. Just by looking at the world around us, it is obvious that God exists. In short, the cosmological argument says that something cannot come from nothing. This is just common sense. Things don't just magically appear. Something had to cause them to appear. Something cannot create itself. Since there is something rather than nothing, there had to be someone who created everything. The Bible says that this Someone is God. Genesis 1:1 says, "In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth."

Another way to explain the cosmological argument is like this. Everything that has a beginning has a cause. The universe has a beginning. Therefore, the universe has a cause. That Cause is God.

Everything within nature has a beginning. This includes plants, animals, people, planets, stars, and even the tiniest components in nature such as cells, atoms, molecules, protons, neutrons, and electrons. Everything in nature has a beginning. Nothing in nature is eternal. Nothing natural has existed forever. And nothing natural created

itself. So where did the natural realm come from? Someone outside of nature, or supernatural, must have created it. This is what the Bible teaches about God.

It would not be true to say that everything has a cause, or that everything has a beginning. For the universe to exist, there had to be something that existed before the universe. As well, for the universe to exist, there had to be something eternal, something without a beginning, something that was not created, an uncaused cause, a first mover. This is what the Bible teaches about God. God is not part of the natural realm; He created the natural realm. God is outside of space, time, and matter. He has no cause, no beginning, no birth, no origin. He is eternal. The Bible says in Psalm 90:2, "Before the mountains were born, before you gave birth to the earth and the world, from eternity to eternity, you are God."

Some people argue that the universe itself is eternal, and therefore it has no creator. But modern science has proven that the universe has a beginning. Others claim that the universe was caused by a giant explosion out of which came space, time, matter, and everything that exists. This is called the Big Bang Theory. The problem with the Big Bang is that something had to cause it. An explosion cannot come from nothing, because nothing cannot explode (or do anything else, for that matter). If the universe was caused by the Big Bang, then what caused the Big Bang? The problem of origins still exists. For the Big Bang to occur, something had to exist before the Big Bang; something had to cause the Big Bang; something all-powerful, all-knowing, and eternal. In other words, if the universe was caused by the Big Bang, then it is because God spoke and "Bang!" He created the universe.

The cosmological argument is a big problem for atheists. Without the existence of God, nothing else could exist, including atheists.

Questions for Discussion:

1. What does the word "cosmos" mean?
2. What is the cosmological argument?
3. What is the Big Bang Theory? Does it conflict with the Bible?
4. Scientists have discovered that the universe is not eternal. How does this support the existence of God?
5. How could you use this argument when you are witnessing to someone?

For Further Study:

1. God created the heavens and the earth: Genesis 1:1; Psalm 33:6-9
2. God created the earth to be inhabited: Isaiah 45:18

Fun Facts:

75% of Americans identify as Christian²⁹, and 90% of Americans believe in God.³⁰

QUESTION 41: WHAT IS THE TELEOLOGICAL ARGUMENT FOR GOD'S EXISTENCE?

Design is proof of a designer.

Another reason that we can have confidence in the existence of God is called the teleological argument. The word "teleos" mean purpose, or goal. It means that if something has a goal, or a purpose, then an intelligent being must have given it that goal or purpose. This is the design argument, or the argument from intelligent design. If something has intelligent design, then it must have an intelligent designer. When you look at creation, from the universe to the complexity of human DNA, there is much evidence of intelligent design. There is much evidence of creation having a purpose or a goal. Therefore, there must be an intelligent designer. This Bible calls this intelligent designer "God."

Have you heard of Mount Rushmore? It is a mountain in South Dakota on which there is a huge sculpture of four American presidents: Washington, Jefferson, Roosevelt, and Lincoln. Have you ever been to the Grand Canyon? It is a huge "hole in the ground" in Arizona. Both Mount Rushmore and the Grand Canyon are very impressive, attracting many sight-seers every year, but there is a very clear difference between the two. The Grand Canyon is the product of natural processes like wind, rain, and erosion, and it is equally clear that Mount Rushmore is the product of intelligent design. No one in their

right mind would look at Mount Rushmore and conclude that it is the result of time, chance, and natural processes. In the same way, our universe shows clear signs of intelligent design – signs that should make it abundantly clear that the universe is not the product of time and chance.

For example, there are many factors that must be just right for a planet to support life. It must be in a spiral galaxy; it must be in the right place in the galaxy, with the right kind of star, and at the right distance from the star; it must have surrounding planets for protection from comets; and it must have the right size moon, at the right distance. As it turns out, planet Earth fits all these criteria, and after decades of searching, scientists haven't found life anywhere else in the universe. Is it more likely that all these factors are just right by chance, or by intelligent design? It would take more faith to believe in chance than in intelligent design.

Finally, consider a simple children's book, with a story and colorful pictures. It is obvious that a children's book is the product of intelligent design and not time, plus chance, plus natural processes. Now consider human DNA, which is infinitely more complex than a children's book. DNA is the instruction book for life. It tells your cells how to grow and function. It determines whether you will be tall or short, and have brown or green eyes. Your DNA instruction book is found in every cell of your body. It has forty-six chapters, each between 45 and 250 million letters long. The DNA in one of your cells is 3.2 billion letters long, and your body has a million, million cells. If your DNA was laid out end for end it would stretch to the sun and back a number of times. If it is obvious that a simple children's book is the product of intelligent design, then it should be abundantly more obvious that DNA, and therefore human beings, have been created by an intelligent designer.

Discussion Questions:

1. What does the word "teleos" mean?
2. What is the teleological argument for God's existence, in your own words?
3. How does Mount Rushmore help to explain the teleological argument?
4. How does the fact that planet earth can support life prove the existence of God?
5. How does human DNA help to explain the teleological argument?

For Further Study:

1. The existence of God can be seen through nature: Psalm 19:1-6; Romans 1:18-20

Fun Facts:

Over 100 million copies of the Bible are sold each year.³¹ The Bible is the best-selling book of all time, selling more than 5 billion copies.³²

QUESTION 42: WHAT IS THE MORAL LAW ARGUMENT FOR GOD'S EXISTENCE?

The moral law in our hearts proves the existence of a Moral Law Giver.

It is obvious that all people share a common moral awareness. Regardless of race, culture, or time period, with rare exceptions, people have always believed that behaviors like lying, stealing, rape, adultery, and murder are wrong. People have always valued kindness over cruelty, loyalty over betrayal, justice over injustice, and courage over cowardice.

Any honest observer would have to admit that morality is both objective, universal, and absolute. It is objective because morality is not determined by one's opinion or feelings. It is universal because it applies to all people, regardless of race, culture, or religion. And it is absolute because it applies to all circumstances, regardless of a person's intentions or the result produced by the behavior. Some claim that morality is relative, but their reaction to moral evil betrays them. They may claim that morality is relative but watch how they respond when they are a victim of dishonesty, theft, unfairness, or violence. Suddenly they find certain behaviors to be wrong – objectively, universally, and absolutely.

Some attribute this moral awareness to the process of evolution; that humans have a moral sense based on what is best for their own survival that has evolved over time. But this moral awareness is not shared by the animal kingdom, where animals are ruled by instinct and appetite. As well, human beings often make moral choices that cause personal pain and even death, and often to the benefit of others, even complete strangers. Evolution does not explain this.

Where does this moral awareness within human beings come from? The moral sense shared by all human beings is proof that there is a moral law, and therefore a Moral Law Giver. The Bible teaches that human beings are moral creatures because they are made in the image of a moral God. God is not amoral. He is holy, just, truthful, faithful, kind, gracious, merciful, and loving. Since we are made in His image, we instinctively know the difference between right and wrong. The Bible says in Romans 2:15 (NLT), "They demonstrate that God's law is written in their hearts, for their own conscience and thoughts either accuse them or tell them they are doing right." The apostle Paul is saying that when people who have never heard God's law, such as the Ten Commandments, agree with the law and follow the law, it proves that God's moral law is written on their hearts. The moral law in our hearts proves the existence of God, the Moral Law Giver.

Some atheists react to evil and suffering by claiming that if the God of the Bible existed, then He would not allow such evil things to happen. However, this reaction is a moral judgment that evil exists, and that any God who would allow such atrocities is evil. But this just proves the existence of God, not the opposite. When a person concedes that evil exists, then good exists. And if good and evil exist, then there must be an objective moral standard by which to discern good and evil. This is called the moral law. If the moral law exists, then it follows that there must be a Moral Law Giver. The existence of evil and suffering in the world are hard to understand, but they do not disprove the existence of God. In fact, evil and suffering prove that God exists, for without God we would not be able to recognize evil and suffering for what they are.

Questions for Discussion:

1. What is morality?
2. Is morality absolute, or relative?
3. How does the existence of morality prove the existence of God?
4. Is morality simply the result of evolution? Explain.
5. How does the existence of evil and suffering prove the existence of God?

For Further Study:

1. God's moral law has been written on the human heart: Romans 2:14-15

Fun Facts:

In 1631 the producers of the King James Bible were fined 300 pounds by the Archbishop Laud. That amount is the equivalent of a lifetime's salary today. What happened? They accidentally left a word out of the Bible. It was only one word, but it was an important word. It was the third word in the fourteenth verse of Exodus 20 - the word "not" in "Thou shalt NOT commit adultery."

QUESTION 43: WHAT IS OUR COMFORT IN ADVERSITY?

Nothing can happen to us unless God allows it, and He will use it for our good and His glory.

Some Christians mistakenly believe that if you are obedient to God and have enough faith then God will keep you from all harm; you will always be healthy, wealthy, and prosperous. Nothing could be further from the truth. Jesus said in John 6:33, "You will have suffering in this world." 2 Timothy 3:12 says, "In fact, all who want to live a godly life in Christ Jesus will be persecuted." All the heroes of the faith experienced tremendous adversity. Job "was a man of complete integrity, who feared God and turned away from evil," yet in one day all ten of his children were killed, all his livestock were stolen, and all but four of his servants were taken from him. The apostle Paul, a dedicated Christian missionary, faced many hardships. He was whipped, stoned, jailed, and ultimately killed. Obviously, living as a faithful Christian doesn't guarantee a problem-free life. If anything, it makes life harder.

Still, having a relationship with God does provide a lot of comfort when we face hardship. First, the Bible teaches us to expect problems rather than a life of ease. If you expect problems, then you will be more prepared for them. You won't be shocked and discouraged when bad things happen, and you won't be tempted to believe that the existence of problems disproves the existence of God.

Second, since we know that all the heroes of the faith experienced great adversity, then we know that problems are not a sign of God's displeasure. When we are living in sin, God may indeed discipline us to move us to repentance, but not all trouble is a punishment for sin. Adversity doesn't mean that God is mad at you.

Third, we can know that no matter what we go through, we will not be alone. Jesus never promised to get us out of trouble, but He did promise to get into trouble with us. He said in Matthew 28:20, "And remember, I am with you always, to the end of the age." As Christians, the Holy Spirit lives within us. Jesus told His disciples in John 14:16-17, "And I will ask the Father, and He will give you another Counselor to be with you forever. He is the Spirit of truth." Jesus called the Holy Spirit the Paraclete, a Greek word that means comforter, or encourager. The Holy Spirit encourages and comforts us in times of adversity. The Bible also refers to God as the God of all comfort. 2 Corinthians 1:3-4 says, "He comforts us in all our affliction."

Fourth, we can find comfort in adversity by remembering God's attributes. He is all-knowing and omnipresent, so He knows about our suffering. He is in control of everything, so nothing can happen to us unless He allows it. He is good and loving, which means that if God allows you to suffer, then He will use it for your good – to make you more useful, to grow you, or to move you to repentance. The Bible promises this, in fact. Romans 8:28 says, "We know that all things work together for the good of those who love God, who are called according to His purpose."

Finally, we can find comfort in times of adversity by remembering that no suffering will last forever. Eventually our suffering will go away, either in this life, or when we die and go to heaven, where we will live in perfect peace and joy with God for all eternity. Romans 8:18 says, "For I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worth comparing with the glory that is going to be revealed to us."

Questions for Discussion:

1. If you are obedient and have enough faith, will God protect you from problems? Explain.
2. Give some examples of people in the Bible who suffered. What can we learn about adversity from their example?
3. How does a relationship with God benefit us in times of adversity?
4. How can we find comfort in times of adversity?
5. Why does God allow bad things to happen to good people?

For Further Study:

1. We have the Holy Spirit to strengthen us: John 14:16-17
2. Christians are not immune from suffering: John 16:33; 2 Timothy 3:12
3. God will use our trials for our good: Romans 8:28
4. God will comfort us in our trials: 2 Corinthians 1:3-4
5. God uses suffering to grow us: Hebrew 12:5-7, 11

Fun Facts:

The longest word in the bible is Mahershalalhashbaz, the name of the prophet Isaiah's son (Isaiah 8:3).³³

QUESTION 44: WHAT IS THE FRUIT OF THE SPIRIT?

Love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control.

When God saves you, His goal is to help you become more like Jesus. But to grow more like Jesus, you must know what Jesus is like. One passage of Scripture that provides a helpful summary of the character of Christ is Galatians 5:22-23. "But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control." This passage lists nine Christlike virtues to cultivate.³⁴ They are called the fruit of the Spirit because God's Spirit within you is working on your character so that your life reflects these virtues more and more. To cultivate the fruit of the Spirit, you must cooperate with the Spirit. He is working on you, but only as you work with Him will you grow in Christ. The first thing you need to do to grow is to understand the meaning of each fruit.

Love is doing what is best for others, not what makes them feel good. It is meeting their needs, not their wants. Jesus explained how to show love. He said to love your neighbor as yourself, to treat others the way you want to be treated, and even to love your enemies. And He said that the greatest act of love is to lay down your life for others.

Joy is choosing a cheerful, positive attitude in all circumstances because of your relationship with God. Joy is different than happiness, which is the feeling you get

when life goes your way. But when your circumstances change for the worse, the happiness disappears. Joy sticks around through good times and bad. It is a cheerful frame of mind that enables a tea kettle to sing even though it's in hot water up to its nose.

Peace is working hard to get along with others. Sometimes getting along is hard. But a peaceful person works at it. Peace also involves being a peacemaker, working hard to help others get along with each other. Jesus was the greatest peacemaker. By His death on the cross He made peace between God and humanity.

Patience is being slow to anger. It is not always a sin to be angry, but we are often angry for the wrong reasons, or we express anger in the wrong way. Patience requires forgiveness, being kind to those who hurt us. We must make allowance for the faults of others, not demanding absolute perfection, but giving them room to fail, and time to grow.

Kindness is only using words that help others. The words you use can either build up or tear down. They can either help or hurt. They can encourage or discourage. They can comfort or corrupt. A kind person sticks to words of edification – words that build up and help. Curse words, dirty jokes, cut-downs, insults, complaints, criticisms, and arguments are off-limits for Christians.

Goodness is always doing good works and acts of charity. It includes sharing your time, money and resources to help the needy, comfort the afflicted, and relieve the pain of the suffering. No matter the time, place, or circumstances, always be aware of opportunities, and be ready to help.

Faithfulness is keeping your word. A faithful person does not need to make promises. When you say you will do something, do it. When you say you will be there, be there. When you say you will help out, help out. Even if you don't promise, it is a lie when you fail to keep your word. To be faithful is to be dependable, reliable, and trustworthy.

Gentleness is staying calm and kind, even when you are angry. People are going to make you angry, hurt you, frustrate you, and aggravate you. And while you cannot control how people treat you, you can control your response. Wrongs against you are not an excuse to commit wrongs against others. When others mistreat you, God wants you to respond with gentleness, staying calm and kind, in word and deed, even when you are angry.

Self-control is doing what is right, even when you don't feel like it. Waking up on time, brushing your teeth, eating healthy, exercising, doing homework – we don't always feel like doing what we should do. And sometimes the things we feel like doing are not what we should do. That's why you need self-control. Self-control is self-mastery. It is the ability to make yourself do what you should do regardless of how you are feeling at the time.

The more you grow in the fruit of the Spirit, the more God will use you for His glory, and the happier you will be.

Questions for Discussion:

1. Why are these nine virtues called the “fruit of the Spirit”?
2. Which of the fruits of the Spirit is the most important?
3. Which of the fruits of the Spirit are you the strongest at?
4. Which of the fruits of the Spirit are you the weakest at?
5. What are the benefits of mastering the fruit of the Spirit?

For Further Study:

1. The fruit of the Spirit: Galatians 5:22-23
2. We must become like Jesus: Romans 8:28; 1 John 2:6
3. Love: Matthew 22:39; Luke 6:31; 1 John 3:16
4. Joy: Philippians 3:1; 4:4; 1 Thessalonians 5:16
5. Peace: Proverbs 20:3; Matthew 5:9; Romans 5:1; Romans 12:18; Colossians 3:15
6. Patience: Ephesians 4:26; Colossians 3:8; Colossians 3:12-13; James 1:19
7. Kindness: Proverbs 12:18; Proverbs 16:24; Ephesians 4:29; Colossians 3:12; James 1:19; 1 Peter 3:10
8. Goodness: Galatians 6:10; 1 Timothy 2:9-10; 1 Timothy 6:18; Titus 2:14; Titus 3:1; Titus 3:8; Hebrews 10:24-25
9. Faithfulness: Matthew 5:33-37; Colossians 3:9
10. Gentleness: 2 Corinthians 10:1; Ephesians 4:2; Philippians 4:5; Colossians 3:12; 1 Timothy 6:11
11. Self-control: 1 Corinthians 9:24-27; 1 Thessalonians 4:4; 1 Thessalonians 5:6-8

Fun Facts:

The Bible contains 66 books of various kinds. The Old Testament contains 17 historical books, such as Exodus and Joshua; 5 poetical books, such as Psalms and Proverbs; and 17 prophetic books, such as Isaiah and Jeremiah. The New Testament contains the 4

gospels – Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John; the book of Acts; 21 epistles (i.e. letters); and the book of Revelation.

QUESTION 45: HOW DO WE GLORIFY GOD WITH OUR BODIES?

We glorify God with sexual purity, sobriety, healthy diet, and regular exercise.

To glorify God means to display God's greatness through the way that you live. So how do you glorify God with your body? By using your body to serve others. God wants you to use your body to tell people about Jesus, and to help people who are in pain and in need. When you use your body to serve others, you display God's great love for mankind.

But if you don't take care of your body, then you can't take care of others. If you are not strong, then you can't help the weak with their burdens. If you are unhealthy, then you can't work hard and earn money to provide for your family, give to the church, or share with the needy. The healthier and stronger you are, the better you can serve God and others. To glorify God with your body you must keep it healthy and strong with a healthy diet and plenty of exercise. In other words, only put good things in your body, and keep your muscles strong.

Another way to glorify God with your body is with sexual purity (1 Cor 6:13, 18). Sex is one of God's inventions. It is meant to display His greatness. When you use sex as God intended - only in marriage - it creates children, and it helps married couples grow

closer together. But when you sin by having sex outside of marriage, it leads to divorce, single-parent homes, and sexually-transmitted diseases. This does not glorify God. To glorify God with your body you must save sex for marriage.

There's one more important way to glorify God with your body. It's called sobriety. It means to stay away from drugs and alcohol. Some drugs can be good because they help us feel better when we are sick or in pain. These drugs are called medicine. But other drugs are bad. They are not used to help people overcome sickness, but for fun and pleasure. These drugs are illegal, and they are very bad for your health. Taking these drugs is like drinking a soda with deadly poison in it. It might taste good, but it is also destroying you. You can glorify God with your body by only taking drugs for medicinal purposes, and only if they are prescribed by your doctor.

You must also avoid alcohol abuse. Alcohol includes drinks like wine and beer. While the Bible does not say that it is a sin to drink alcohol, it does command us to avoid getting drunk (Eph 5:18). But the easiest way to avoid getting drunk is to avoid alcohol altogether.

What's so bad about alcohol and drugs? They are not bad just because they are unhealthy, but because when you are under the influence of alcohol and drugs you lose full control of your mind and body. You will say and do things to harm yourself and others. You cannot be at your best for God. You cannot be prepared for temptation, or prayer, or ready to serve and protect others. And when you abuse drugs and alcohol, others can easily take advantage of you and hurt you.

1 Corinthians 6:19-20 says, "Don't you know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit Who is in you, Whom you have from God? You are not your own, for you were bought at a price. So glorify God with your body." Your body belongs to God. He made it. He earned it by dying for you on the cross. And now He lives in you! So don't misuse your body. Use it to glorify God. Not only will He be happy, but so will you!

Questions for Discussion:

1. Are you taking care of your body? Explain. (If not, how do you need to change?)
2. The Bible does not say anything about smoking cigarettes or dipping. Does that mean it is okay to smoke and dip? Explain.
3. How does sexual sin (having sex outside of marriage) dishonor God?
4. What's so dangerous about drugs and alcohol?
5. What should you do if someone offers you drugs or alcohol?

For Further Study:

1. The dangers of alcohol: Proverbs 20:1; Proverbs 31:4-5
2. Our bodies belong to God: 1 Corinthians 6:13; 1 Corinthians 6:18-20
3. We must glorify God with what we eat and drink: 1 Corinthians 10:31
4. It is a sin to get drunk: Ephesians 5:18

Fun Facts:

The first Bible to use numbered verses was the Geneva Bible, published in 1560, fifty-one years before the King James Version. It was the Bible used by William Shakespeare, John Bunyan (author of *The Pilgrim's Progress*), as well as the Pilgrims who took it with them to America on the Mayflower.^{35,36}

QUESTION 46: HOW DO WE GLORIFY GOD WITH OUR MONEY?

Our money belongs to God. We should tithe, help the needy, and wisely manage and enjoy it.

God is the Creator, and therefore everything in the world belongs to Him (Ps. 24:1). This includes you. Christ bought you when He paid for your sins, and now you belong to Him – and that includes your money (1 Cor. 6:19-20). You may have worked hard to earn your money, but God gave you the strength and intelligence. Without Him, you would have nothing. If He wanted to, He could take everything from you.

Since your money belongs to God, you must glorify Him with your money. You must use your money according to His commands, and for His purposes, and spend it in a way that is pleasing to Him. That means you must not steal money, or use your money to hurt people, or spend your money on sin.

One of the things that God commands you to do with your money is to tithe. To tithe is to take the first ten percent of the money that you earn and give it to your church to fund God's work. If you are obedient to tithe, God promises to bless you (Malachi 3:10-12).

God also wants you to use your money to help those in need (Pr. 14:31; 1 Timothy 6:17-20). When you see someone in need, especially someone in your church, ask God if He wants you to use your money to help them. And once again, if you will share with those in need, God promises to bless you (Ps. 112:5; Pr. 11:24-25; Mt 6:19-21).

While God wants you to tithe and help the needy, He also wants you to enjoy your money (1 Tim. 6:17). However, be careful that you don't make it your goal to get rich, because this leads to all sorts of problems (1 Tim. 6:6-10). Learn to be content, realizing that happiness doesn't come from riches, but from having a rich relationship with God and others.

To honor God with your money – to tithe, help the needy, and enjoy it – you must learn to wisely manage it. If you are foolish with your money, then you will not be able to tithe and help the needy, and you might not even be able to provide for your family's basic needs.

To be a wise money manager, you must be careful to do five things:

1. Save up for emergencies. Unexpected expenses are to be expected.
2. Save up for retirement. Start planning now for the time when you are too old to work for a living.
3. Avoid debt. Use cash rather than credit. If you can't afford to pay for it with cash, then save up for it, or go without it.
4. Pay for the things you need before you buy the things you want. Having lots of fun things without the money to purchase food, shelter, and medicine is no fun at all.
5. In order to do the four things above, you must create a monthly budget and carefully track your spending. A budget is a written plan for how you are going to spend your money before you spend it. By carefully following your budget you can make sure that you don't waste your money and that you have plenty of money to do all that God requires of you.

Questions for Discussion:

1. What is the most amount of money you ever had? How did you spend it?
2. Who does your money belong to? Explain.
3. What are the different ways to honor God with your money?
4. Why is it wrong to want to get rich?
5. Why is it important to wisely manage your money?

For Further Study:

1. All money belongs to God: Psalm 24:1
2. Honor God with your money: Proverbs 3:9-10
3. Tithing: Malachi 3:10-12
4. The dangers of money: 1 Timothy 6:6-10
5. What to do with extra money: 1 Timothy 6:17-19
6. Saving money: Proverbs 6:6-11

Fun Facts:

The Bible has a lot to say about money. Sixteen out of Jesus' thirty-eight parables are about money. Jesus spoke about money more than heaven, hell, faith, and prayer combined. Fifteen percent of Jesus' words were about money. One out of every ten verses in the gospels deals with money and possessions. There are more promises in the Bible related to money and giving than any other topic.

QUESTION 47: WHY IS ABORTION WRONG?

Murder is wrong, and abortion is murder.

The Bible is very clear in the Ten Commandments that murder is wrong. Why? Human beings are the only creatures made in the image of God. God uniquely made people to reflect His character, to care for His creation, and to have a relationship with Him. Therefore, human beings are infinitely valuable, regardless of their age, size, location, intelligence, race, sex, or religion. To God, every person is priceless. God is the only one who has the right to kill a human being because He created human beings and gave them life in the first place. Therefore, murder is wrong.

Abortion is wrong because it is the murder of an unborn child. A child doesn't become a child at birth; it becomes a child the moment it is conceived. Therefore, killing an unborn child is the same as killing a two-year-old child. It is murder! In America, since the Supreme Court decision on *Roe v. Wade* in 1973, a mother can ask a doctor to reach into her womb and kill her unborn child for any reason, during all nine months of pregnancy. As a result, between 1973-2015 there were more than 57 million abortions in America. This is a tragedy.

What should Christians do about abortion? First, do not have an abortion or encourage anyone else to have an abortion. Remember, even in the case of rape and incest, an unborn child is a human being of infinite value. You may not want the child, but the

child is wanted – by God, and by the many married couples who are looking to adopt a child of their own. Also consider the fact that God has an amazing plan for each unborn child – perhaps to discover the cure for a deadly disease, or to become a missionary or preacher of the gospel, or to create an invention that will benefit the entire world. Every unborn child has limitless potential.

Second, get involved in politics and vote for pro-life politicians. The reason that so many unborn children are murdered in America is because Americans voted for politicians who made the decision to legalize abortion. Abortion can once again become illegal in America if Christians will become active in politics and vote only for strong, pro-life candidates who will stand up for the unborn. Every opportunity to vote is an opportunity to protect the unborn.

Third, consider contributing to a crisis pregnancy center. Crisis pregnancy centers focus on encouraging pregnant women with at-risk pregnancies to decide to keep their babies. One way they do this is with the use of ultrasound technology, which allows the mother to get a glimpse of her unborn child living inside her. When a woman seeking an abortion sees an ultrasound, she decides to keep the baby up to 90% of the time.

Fourth, you can pray. Pray for God to help us elect pro-life politicians, and to give them the wisdom and courage to defend the unborn. Pray for God to use Christians to change the hearts and minds of all Americans so that they come to affirm the sanctity of human life.

The one thing that Christians cannot do is to be inactive. We must speak up for those who cannot speak for themselves and defend those who cannot defend themselves. Proverbs 31:8-9 says, “Speak up for those who have no voice, for the justice of all who are dispossessed. Speak up, judge righteously, and defend the cause of the oppressed and needy.”

Questions for Discussion:

1. What is abortion and why is it wrong?
2. Why do some people, even some who identify as Christians, believe that abortion should be legal?
3. What should you do if you get pregnant but are not ready to be a mother?
4. What can Christians do to put an end to Abortion in America?
5. Do you have to wait until you turn 18 years old to get involved in politics? Explain.

For Further Study:

1. Murder is wrong: Exodus 20:13
2. The Bible's position on the unborn: Psalm 139:13-16
3. We must protect the unborn: Proverbs 31:8-9

Fun Facts:

Unborn babies grow at a rapid pace. At conception the child has its own unique DNA code. Sixteen days after conception, the heart begins to beat. At five weeks, the cerebral cortex starts to form. At forty days, brain waves can be detected. At six weeks, the heart chambers converge. At seven weeks, the fingers and toes grow distinct. At eight weeks all the organs are functioning. At nine weeks an unborn baby has distinct fingerprints. At ten weeks the baby can feel pain. At twelve weeks the baby can smile.

QUESTION 48: WHAT IS SEX?

God made sex for marriage for the purpose of procreation, intimacy, and enjoyment.

Fire is a good thing. It can be used for many good purposes such as cooking, light, warmth, to keep dangerous animals away from a camp, and even for enjoyment. Everyone loves to sit around a nice campfire. Fire is a good thing, as long you keep it in the fireplace. If the fire gets out of the fireplace it can burn down homes, destroy forests, and even kill people.

Sex is like fire. It is a good thing because it is a God-thing. God created it. But God created sex only for the context of marriage. If we save sex for marriage, then it is one of God's good gifts to us. When you take sex out of marriage it becomes destructive. It leads to diseases, unplanned pregnancies, broken hearts, and broken homes.

So why did God create sex? God created sex for procreation – to make new babies. For intimacy – to help husbands and wives grow closer together. And for enjoyment – for husbands and wives to have fun together.

The Bible is clear that sex is only for marriage. It is something only a husband and wife should share with each other. Jesus said, "'Haven't you read,' he replied, 'that He who created them in the beginning made them male and female,' and He also said, 'For this reason a man will leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and the two will become one flesh? So they are no longer two, but one flesh. Therefore, what God has joined together, let no one separate (Matthew 19:4-6).'" First a man and woman are

“joined” together in marriage. Only then do they “become one flesh,” a reference to sexual relations.

Therefore, the Bible forbids sex outside of marriage. When a married person has sex outside of marriage, the Bible calls it adultery. When an unmarried person has sex outside of marriage, the Bible calls it sexual immorality (or fornication). Adultery and sexual immorality are very serious sins that can be dangerous to you and to others. This is why the Bible says in 1 Corinthians 6:18, “Flee sexual immorality! Every other sin a person commits is outside the body, but the person who is sexually immoral sins against his own body.” When you commit a sexual sin, you are not only hurting others, you are seriously hurting yourself.

It is important for Christians to commit to sexual purity. If you are single, then you should make a very serious commitment to God to remain sexually pure until you get married. This means saving any and all sexual activity for marriage. And when you get married you should make a commitment to God and to your spouse to save all sexual activity for your marriage.

Because we are sinful and live in a very sinful world, it is possible that you will commit a sexual sin. What then? Remember that God still loves you the same. You will not lose your salvation, but you will lose fellowship with God. You must go to God in prayer, admit your sin, apologize, recommit to obedience, and ask for forgiveness. And God will forgive you every time. 1 John 1:9 says, “If we confess our sins, he is faithful and righteous to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.”

Questions for Discussion:

1. What is sex for?
2. Who is sex for?
3. What should you do about sex if you are single?
4. What should you do about sex if you are married?
5. How can you make sure that you don't fall into sexual sin?

For Further Study:

1. Sexual sin defined: Exodus 20:14; Exodus 22:16; Leviticus 18; Matthew 5:28; Hebrews 13:4
2. The Old Testament punishment for adultery: Deuteronomy 22:22
3. Marriage must come before sex: Matthew 19:4-6
4. Sexual sin is grounds for divorce: Matthew 19:9
5. The reason for avoiding sexual sin: 1 Corinthians 6:13, 18-20

6. The seriousness of sexual sin: Ephesians 5:3-5
7. Sexual purity commanded: 1 Thessalonians 4:3-7; Hebrews 13:4

Fun Facts:

Jesus was not an only child. He had four brothers and at least two sisters (Matthew 13:55-56; Mark 6:3).

QUESTION 49: WHAT IS MARRIAGE?

Marriage is the union of one man and one woman for a lifetime.

When God created the very first man, he said that it was not good for him to be alone (Genesis 2:18). God knew that Adam would need a friend, a partner to help him with life's challenges, and a mate so that more people could be created. So God made the first woman, Eve, and gave her to Adam to be his wife. It was the very first marriage.

Marriage is one of God's greatest gifts to mankind. Proverbs 18:22 says, "A man who finds a wife finds a good thing and obtains favor from the Lord." Through marriage you experience the closest friendship in life, you get to enjoy God's gift of sex, you get to build your own family, and you get someone with whom you can share life's ups and downs.

God is the maker of marriage, and He has some very specific instructions about it in the Bible. If you want a healthy, lasting marriage, then you must follow God's instructions. In Matthew 19:1-6, Jesus taught several important principles. He said that marriage is the union of a man and a woman, not two men or two women. He said that marriage is the union of one man and one woman, not one man with multiple wives. He said that marriage is the most important relationship, even more important than your relationship with your parents. He said that divorce is not an option. When you get married, God wants you to stay committed to one another until one of you dies. Jesus

also made it clear that He only wants you to have sex with your spouse. This is so important that it is one of the Ten Commandments (Exodus 20:14).

You can also find many of God's instructions about marriage in the letters of the apostle Paul, especially in Ephesians 5:22-33. Paul wrote that God has different roles for the husband and the wife. The husband is to be the head, or the leader of his wife and family. He is called to love and lead his wife, and the wife is called to submit and support her husband. Paul wrote that God created marriage to give the world a picture of the gospel of Jesus Christ. The husband's love is to be a picture of Christ's love for the church. And the wife's submission is to be a picture of the church's submission to Christ.

Marriage should be one of the best things that ever happens to you. But for your marriage to be great, you must do two things. First, you must marry the right person. Pray for wisdom in choosing the right person. Who is the right person? Don't marry someone just because they are rich, or handsome, or beautiful. Marry someone who is fully-devoted to Jesus and has mature Christian character. Marry someone who supports you in what God is calling you to do with your life. Marry someone who wants as many children as you want. And marry someone who has the approval of your parents. Second, you must make a commitment to God and to your spouse that divorce is not an option. When you know that there is no way out, you will be motivated to keep working on your marriage until it becomes the marriage of your dreams.

Questions for Discussion:

1. What is marriage?
2. Why did God make marriage?
3. Do you look forward to marriage? Explain.
4. What do you need to do to have a happy, lasting marriage?
5. What are some of God's instructions about marriage?

For Further Study:

1. The first marriage: Genesis 2:15-25
2. Marriage is a good thing: Proverbs 18:22
3. Jesus' teaching on marriage: Matthew 19:1-6
4. How to make marriage work: Ephesians 5:22-33; Colossians 3:18-19; 1 Peter 3:1-7

Fun Facts:

Marriage is good for you! Studies show that married people are happier³⁷, richer³⁸, and healthier³⁹ than unmarried people.

QUESTION 50: WHAT IS GOD'S COMMAND TO PARENTS?

Children are a gift from the Lord, and parents should teach their kids to be fully devoted to Jesus Christ.

Like marriage, having children is one of God's greatest blessings to mankind. Your children will fill your life with joy and significance, be your closest friends, and care for you as you grow old. The Bible says that children are a gift from God, and the more you have the better (Psalm 127:3-5).

Raising your kids just might be the most important thing that you do in your lifetime. Your children belong to God, they are priceless human beings, and God has temporarily placed them in your care so that you will raise them to love and serve Him. That is the primary goal of parenthood; not to help them succeed financially, academically, or athletically, but to help them succeed spiritually. Everything else is secondary.

How can you lead your children to become fully-devoted followers of Jesus Christ? First, you must teach them about God. To be clear, *you* must teach them (Ephesians 6:4; Deuteronomy 6:4-9). Starting as early as possible, you must sit down with your children several times a week to teach them about God.

Second, you must set a good example. You must be the kind of Christian that you want your kids to be. You must set the example in your speech, in your conduct, in your

love, in faith, and in purity (1 Timothy 4:12). Remember that actions speak louder than words.

Third, you must take your children to church. God created us in such a way that we need to be participating members of a church in order to be spiritually healthy. If church is not a priority in your family, then God will not be a priority in your family. For your children to be lifelong followers of Jesus, they must be plugged into church. Your job as a parent is to exemplify commitment to church, and to help your kids establish the habit of church participation from an early age. Teach them to attend weekly, to tithe, to volunteer, and to get along with others in the church. Do not make the common mistake of allowing secondary things like sports, hunting, and fishing to keep your family from church.

Fourth, you must discipline your children. To train your kids to live in a way that is pleasing to God, you must do more than tell them how to behave and set a positive example. You must also apply discipline. There are two ways you must discipline your child. First, you must rebuke them when they misbehave by pointing out their sin and explaining the right way to behave. Do this without raising your voice or insulting them. Second, you must apply the rod. In cases of extreme disobedience and disrespect, you must spank your children. Never spank out of anger, always explain why the spanking is necessary, and follow up spanking by reaffirming your love and commitment to your child. There are many people who say that spanking and correcting a child is unloving. Do not be deceived. Trust in God. He made your children, He knows what they need, and His word is clear that discipline is an act of love.

Fifth, you must protect your children from ungodly influences. Consider homeschool or Christian school rather than public school. In public school your kids will be taught things that contradict God's Word, and they will be influenced by teachers and classmates who do not love God. Carefully screen what your kids read, watch, hear, and the friends they spend time with. The goal is not to insulate your kids from the world, but to protect them from ungodly influences that are too difficult for them to resist.

Questions for Discussion:

1. Are you looking forward to being a parent? Explain.
2. How many kids do you want? Explain.
3. What does it mean to be a good parent?
4. What is a parent's primary responsibility?

5. What do you need to do to lead your kids to become fully-devoted followers of Christ?

For Further Study:

1. Parents must teach their children to love God: Deuteronomy 6:4-9; Proverbs 22:6; Ephesians 6:1-4
2. Children are a gift from God: Psalm 127:3-5
3. Parents must spank their children: Proverbs 13:24; Proverbs 22:15; Proverbs 23:13-14
4. Parents must discipline their children: Proverbs 19:18
5. Parents must not frustrate their children: Ephesians 6:4; Colossians 3:21
6. Parents must teach their kids to behave: 1 Timothy 3:4-5, 12; Titus 1:6

Fun Facts:

The most expensive book in the world is *The Bay Psalm Book*, the first book published in America. It was an English translation of the book of Psalms by the Puritans printed in 1640 in Cambridge Massachusetts, just twenty years after the Pilgrims arrived at Plymouth. In 2013 it sold for more than \$14 million.⁴⁰

QUESTION 51: WHAT IS THE CHRISTIAN'S ROLE IN CIVIL GOVERNMENT?

We should be civically engaged to ensure that the government protects the God-given rights of its citizens.

The Bible teaches that God created three institutions for the benefit of mankind. Marriage, the church, and the government. The government includes police officers, the armed forces, judges, and politicians like the president of the United States. Christians should not be anti-government because God instituted the government for our benefit (Rm 13:1-7).

Why did God decide that government is necessary for human flourishing? Because human beings are sinful. Without the government to restrain evil, people would devour each another, and the strong would dominate the weak. Even with a strong police force, crime still exists. Imagine what it would be like if the police disappeared. The government exists to create and enforce laws that prevent people from injuring one another so that they can live in peace.

But it is also the sinfulness of human beings that warns us against a government that is too powerful. Because of their sin, people do not make good rulers. They tend to abuse power. As the government grows in power, it can become the primary cause of

injustice in society. While the government is necessary, it is also necessary that the government has limited powers.

In the history of the world, the United States has come the closest to developing a system of government that respects these two realities. The government is seen as a force for good, but also capable of great harm if its power goes unchecked. The founders of our nation recognized the truth that all people are created by God. This means that all people are equal, and therefore no man has the right to rule over another without his consent. The founders believed that God created people with certain rights that no one, not even the government, should violate. These include the right to life, liberty, the pursuit of happiness, private property, religious liberty, and the freedom of speech. The founders sought to create a system of government that would be strong enough to protect people from violating each other's rights, but not strong enough to become the violator of human rights.

The founders created several safeguards (or checks and balances) to prevent the government from violating human rights. The first was the written Constitution, which is the supreme law of our nation which must be followed not only by citizens, but by government officials as well. The Constitution tells the government what it must do, and what it must not do. Second, the founders divided the government into three equal branches to keep each other from becoming too powerful – the Executive Branch (the President), the Legislative branch (Congress), and the Judicial branch (the Supreme Court). Third, government leaders are elected (or chosen) by the citizens. This is called democracy. Fourth, government leaders have term limits so they can only serve for so long before they must be reelected by the people. The founders were so passionate about keeping the government in check that one of the rights protected in the constitution is the right to bear arms (or own guns) so that citizens can protect themselves from the government if it abuses its power.

Christians should be the best citizens. We should obey the law, stay informed, vote, respect and pray for our leaders, pay our taxes, and consider whether God is calling us to serve in some way. We must do our part to ensure that the government does what God intended it to do – no less, and no more.

Questions for Discussion:

1. What is the government?
2. Would it be better if there was no government and no laws? Explain.
3. Wouldn't it be better if the government had absolute power? Explain.
4. How do you think our government could improve?
5. What is the Christian's role in civil government?

For Further Study

1. Christians have a dual citizenship: Matthew 22:21
2. The Christian's obligations to the government: Romans 13:1-7; Titus 3:1
3. How to pray for the government: 1 Timothy 2:1-3
4. The purpose of government: 1 Peter 2:13-17

Fun Facts:

America is a Christian nation. The Declaration of Independence mentions God four times. The first freedom protected by the Constitution of the United States is religious liberty. The national motto is "In God We Trust." The Pledge of Allegiance says that we are "one nation under God." When the President of the United States takes the oath of office, he places his left hand on the Bible and ends the oath with the prayer, "So help me God." Congress begins every session with prayer. The Supreme Court begins every session with the prayer, "God save the United States and this honorable court."

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² Voddie Baucham Jr., *Family Shepherds*, (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2011), p. 64.

³ Ibid.

⁴ Parts of this answer are taken from "The Baptist Faith and Message," the official doctrinal statement of the Southern Baptist Convention. The entire document can be read online at www.sbc.net.

⁵ The answer to Question 5 is adapted from the fourth question of the "Catechism for Young Children," a catechism written for children based on the Westminster Shorter Catechism. The "Catechism for Young Children" as well as the "Westminster Shorter Catechism" can be read online at www.reformed.org.

⁶ The wording of the Ten Commandments is based on Exodus 20 in the the Christian Standard Bible. Copyright © 2017 by Holman Bible Publishers. Used by permission. Christian Standard Bible®, and CSB® are federally registered trademarks of Holman Bible Publishers, all rights reserved.

⁷ For the Lord's Prayer I have chosen to use the King James Version, because this is the version most people are familiar with, and the version that is recited in most corporate settings.

⁸ Questions 40-42 deal with the three most powerful and most important arguments for the existence of God. These answers are very brief, but they introduce children to apologetics, and they capture the heart of each argument in a nutshell.

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- ⁹ Merrill F. Unger, *Unger's Bible Handbook* (Chicago, IL: Moddy Press, 1966), p. 895.
- ¹⁰ Scripture quotations marked NLT are taken from the Holy Bible, New Living Translation, copyright © 1996, 2004, 2015 by Tyndale House Foundation. Used by permission of Tyndale House Publishers, Inc., Carol Stream, Illinois 60188. All rights reserved.
- ¹¹ Wikipedia.org, "613 Commandments".
- ¹² "The best life is the obedient life." This important phrase was coined by my wife. She repeats it countless times each week to our children.
- ¹³ Jeff Myers, *The Secret Battle of Ideas About God: Overcoming the Outbreak of Five Fatal Worldviews* (Colorado Springs, CO: David C Cook, 2017), p. 193.
- ¹⁴ Nabeel Qureshi, *Seeking Allah, Finding Jesus: A Devout Muslim Encounters Christianity* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2014), p. 96.
- ¹⁵ Chilton, Bruce, et al., *The Cambridge Companion to the Bible* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2007).
- ¹⁶ Wayne Grudem, *Christian Beliefs: Twenty Basics Every Christian Should Know* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2005), p. 95.
- ¹⁷ Holman Christian Standard Bible. See the footnote on John 17:17.
- ¹⁸ Holman Christian Standard Bible. See the Bullet Note, "saint(s)/sanctification/sancity/sanctified."
- ¹⁹ Wayne Grudem, *Christian Beliefs: Twenty Basics Every Christian Should Know* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2005), Chapter 16.
- ²⁰ Newsweek/Beliefnet National Poll. Cited by Alex McFarland, *The 10 Most Common Objections to Christianity* (Bloomington, MN: Bethany House Publishers), p. 147.
- ²¹ Ibid.
- ²² Merrill F. Unger, *Unger's Bible Handbook* (Chicago, IL: Moddy Press, 1966), p. 895.
- ²³ Billy Graham, "Evidence of Jesus," <https://billygraham.org/devotion/evidence-of-jesus/>.
- ²⁴ This version of the Apostles' Creed comes from Wayne Grudem's book, *Systematic Theology* (Grand Rapids, MI: 1994), p. 1169. In the footnote Grudem adds, "I have not included the phrase 'he descended into hell,' because it is not attested in the earliest versions of the Apostles' Creed, and because of the doctrinal difficulties associated with it."
- ²⁵ Davis, Kenneth C., *Don't Know Much About the Bible: Everything You Need to Know about the Good Book but Never Learned* (New York City, NY: HarperCollins).
- ²⁶ "American Bible Reading Statistics Reveal Who is Studying the Good Book and Why." HuffingtonPost.com. March 13, 2014.
- ²⁷ I heard this statement about baptism in a sermon by Andy Stanley, pastor of North Point Community Church, Alpharetta GA.
- ²⁸ Bayard Talor, "What is Evoluion?", *HCSB Apologetics Study Bible for Students*, p. 15.
- ²⁹ Gallup: <https://news.gallup.com/poll/180347/three-quarters-americans-identify-christian.aspx>
- ³⁰ Gallup: <https://news.gallup.com/poll/147887/americans-continue-believe-god.aspx>
- ³¹ Kenneth C. Davis, *Don't Know Much About the Bible: Everything You Need to Know about the Good Book but Never Learned* (New York, NY: Eagle Brook, 1998).

³² John Riches, *The Bible: A Very Short Introduction* (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 2000.)

³³ "Bible Statistics." Statistic Brain. 2016. Accessed: April 29, 2016.

<http://www.statisticbrain.com/bibles-printed/>

³⁴ The word "virtue" is not used much anymore, but it is a good word. It means moral excellence.

³⁵ Bruce Chilton, et al, *The Cambridge Companion to the Bible* (New York, NY: Cambridge University Press, 1997).

³⁶ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Geneva_Bible

³⁷ Pew Research, 2010: <http://www.pewsocialtrends.org/2006/02/13/are-we-happy-yet/>

³⁸ National Bureau of Economic Research, 2012:

https://www.nytimes.com/2015/02/08/fashion/weddings/falling-marriage-rates-reveal-economic-fault-lines.html?_r=0

³⁹ Institute For Family Studies, 2017: <https://www.dailywire.com/news/14235/study-married-men-are-happier-aaron-bandler>

⁴⁰ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Bay_Psalms_Book