

**Basics of Christianity**  
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## Lesson 1 - Who is God?

**Homework – Did people memorize the books of the Bible for class? Feel free to recite them out loud!**

That is probably the biggest question one can ask...can it be answered in a 50 minute discussion?

Goal – Impossible to sum up everything in the Bible about God. Instead, this discussion is to give the class tools to understand who God is and what God is up to.

*Do any of you wonder if actually ever had a physical mother or father?*

*Why not?*

- If you have met them - You either met them so you know they exist or
- If you haven't met them - You know enough about the way life works to assume they exist (or existed) even though you never met them.

We assume people know they have or had parents. Scripture assumes God exists. Why? Because the people doing the writing experienced him. So they aren't asking God for proof. Let's put it another way – The Bible never stops and says, "Here is a logical explanation for the existence of God." Here is why: If you experienced what they experienced you wouldn't need a complicated explanation of God's existence you would just say, "I knew for sure God was real when I saw the Red Sea part in front of me and I walked through it." That doesn't mean the Bible has nothing to say about God's existence it just means they weren't asking if God is real.

*Who would you say God is?*

*What is he like?*

*If someone asked you to describe your best friend how would you go about describing them?*

- You might talk about what they look like – Sorry, God is invisible (1 Tim 1:17)
- Their career - What they have done/accomplished/employment
- Their interests – the things they talk about

*How do you sum up God?*

You answer that question in a similar way to how you describe other people because God is a personal being. He moves and acts and speaks, etc. So you start asking other questions of God to find out who God is:

- *What business is God in?*
- *What has he done?*
- *What has he said?*

**Revelation** - We can only know as much about God as God reveals himself to us. That is called divine revelation. God reveals certain things about himself to us through His Words and His Actions. We find both recorded in the Bible.

So if you want to find out who God is you have to go to scripture to get the majority of your information.

**(We will have a class later on evidence about God that comes from outside the Bible)**

### **Metaphors in scripture for God**

One way God describes himself is through metaphors we can understand Him.

**God as King or Lord** – this is the most common image for God in scripture

1. King - Psalm 44:4
  - a. *We don't have kings in America today but what kinds of attributes would we expect from God as our king?*
  - b. *What would a king expect from his people?*
  - c. **Rev 4:10-11** – In heaven, God's people lay down their crowns to the true king and worship
    - i. *What does it say God's people will do with their crowns in heaven? Why?*
    - ii. *What does that teach us about God?*
    - iii. *What does that teach us about ourselves?*
2. Lord – means “master”, someone who has authority over you. When we say Jesus or God is Lord that is not their last name! Lord is saying they are in charge and we serve them and them alone
  - a. God - Deut 6:13-18
  - b. Jesus – Matt 9:38
  - c. **Application** - *Do we really let God call the shots in our lives or are we still trying to maintain control of things ourselves?*

**God as Father** – this is the most common image for God in scripture.

1. **Luke 15:11-32** - Prodigal Son
2. **1 John 3:1** – God is our Father and we are his children
3. *What does God as our Father tell us about what God has done for us? – Given us life/created us*
4. *What does it say about his concern for all people?*
5. *How does it give us identity as God's children?*
6. *Why might the Father image be hard for people who had a tough relationship or no relationship with their own father?*

**God as our Shepherd** – These people were herders. They were around animals all the time and understood this type of imagery.

1. Psalm 23:1, Ezek 34:11-16 – God will shepherd his people
2. *When you read about God as your shepherd what do you learn about God's relationship with you?*
3. God leads us. God guides us. God provides for us.

### **Application:**

*Which metaphor that God has used about himself is most helpful to you?*

*Do you have any images of God in your head that make him see distant or angry? How might some of these images help you see God in a better light?*

*Another word used to describe God in the Bible is patient...why is that important and how might God's patience make you more willing to hand him more of your burdens?*

**Homework**

1 - If you didn't memorize the books of the Bible keep working on it!

2 - Read Psalm 23 and Ezekiel 34 this week to see what a loving and kind leader God is to his people

## Lesson 2 – Who is Jesus?

### Name:

- Jesus Christ = Jesus (Joshua – God saves) + Christ (anointed or messiah). It means Jesus the messiah.
- Matthew 1:1
- Acts 5:42 – Jesus the Christ. Started out a confession “Jesus who is the Christ” and was later shortened to Jesus Christ.

### How do we know about who Jesus is?

**Non-Christian writings** - This is an important group of writings because one can say that if all we have are the scriptures of course they will say Jesus was a real guy who did miracles

- Pagan sources:
  - Pliny – writes about the attempts to get Christians to deny Christ as divine and the punishments they inflicted on Christians in order to get them to confess Caesar instead
  - Tacitus – Writes that Jesus was a real man who was arrested and tried by Pilate and who was given the sentence of capital punishment
  - Suetonius – writes about why Jews were expelled from Rome by Claudius in 49, that their leader was a name named Chrestus (Christ)
- Jewish sources:
  - Josephus – writes about Jesus the messiah and his miracles. He also writes about James as the brother of Jesus.

While the Non-Christian writings don't give us a ton of specifics they do show that no one doubted that Jesus was a real man who was crucified under Pilate.

**Christian writings** – The New Testament

### Fulfillment of prophesy

There are dozens and dozens of specific prophesies that Jesus fulfilled in his lifetime. These cover everything from where he would be born to how he would die. *What is the chance that one man would fulfill all of these before he was 35...some of them completely out of his control?*

### Jesus' divinity:

**John 1:1-3** tells us that Jesus was involved in creation at the very beginning. Look back at **Genesis 1:26** gives us a clue that Christ was involved in creation. *What word in that verse gives us a clue about that?*

- *Why is it significant that Jesus was divine?*

**John 8:54ff & 10:22-33**

### Jesus' humanity:

**John 1:14** tells us that the creator became the created. We call that the “incarnation” where the Word/Jesus took on flesh and lived among mankind. This verse literally says Jesus pitched his tent or tabernacled with his people...reminds us of Exodus where they had a tabernacle where God dwelled with his people.

- *What makes this even more significant than God living in the tabernacle in the wilderness back in Exodus as a great cloud or pillar of fire?*

**Hebrews 4:15-16** – *What does this verse tell us about Jesus’ humanity?*

*How is it helpful to us to know that Jesus has been through all the things we go through?*

*What does that teach us about God?*

### **Jesus’ birth:**

Jesus birth fulfilled prophesy:

- So many prophesied fulfilled in his birth
- Born of a virgin (Isa 7:14 & Matt 1:21-23)
- Born in the place prophesied, Bethlehem (Micah 5:1-2 & Matt 2:6)
- Prophesied that they would flee to Egypt after Jesus birth (Hos 11:1 & Matt 2:15)

*Why is it significant that even his birth fulfilled prophesies?*

- Someone might set out to live their life in a way that fulfills certain prophesies but you can’t purposely do that with your own birth.

### **Miraculous demonstration of Jesus’ power:**

Did Jesus really do miracles? - Even non-Christians (Josephus) wrote about Jesus’ miracles.

Why did Jesus do miracles and how did those miracles advance his mission?

Jesus did miracles for several reasons:

1. He was compassionate
  - a. **Matthew 9:35-37**
  - b. **Matthew 14:14**
  - c. *How does that impact our appeal to God today through our prayers for healing?*
2. Gave authority to his teaching so that people would believe him
  - a. **Mark 1:21-28** – *What connection do the people make between Jesus’ authority to cast out demons and the rest of Jesus’ teachings?*
  - b. Jesus’ miracles were more than about just being nice. His miracles had a purpose – to show that his teaching was from God and to put Satan in his place.
  - c. Jesus did his miracles to grow people’s faith in his teaching – **John 20:30-31**
3. His miracles were spiritual warfare against evil
  - a. Casting out demons showed Jesus authority over Satan and his demons (**Mark 1:21-28** demonstrates this as well)
  - b. Jesus came to reverse those things and undo the hold Satan has on the world.
    - i. The wages of sin is death (Rom 3:23) but Jesus came to bring life (John 1) and even raised the dead (John 11:43-44)

We have seen that Jesus did miracles to grow our faith, to cure people of disease out of his compassion and to combat the devil. *If Satan is the tempter and he wants to disconnect us from God and bring us death, how would Jesus’ miracles be a direct attack on him?*

## **Jesus Death, Burial and Resurrection in the New Testament:**

Jesus took on our sins – **1 Peter 2:21-25**

- *Why did Jesus have to die?*
- *What does Peter say should be the results in how we live?*

Jesus' final miracle was his resurrection and ascension to heaven. You cannot answer the question of "Who is Jesus" without mentioning the thing that sets him apart from every other person who ever lived – Jesus had the power to conquer death and demonstrated that by being crucified, laid in a tomb and being alive again.

- Rom 1:4 – *What does Paul say Jesus' resurrection proved? How does Jesus' resurrection prove that?*
- Phil 3:10-11 – *What does Paul say Jesus' resurrection opens the way for in us?*

## **What is Jesus doing now?**

*Where is Jesus now?*

Heb 1:3 & Col 3:1 – Jesus is seated at God's right hand.  
Being seated at someone's right hand is a place of honor.

*What does Jesus have left to do?*

- Come again in glory (1 Thess 4:13-18)
- Judge the righteous from the wicked (Matt 25:31-46)
- Live with his people forever as their light and temple (Rev 21:22-24)

**Pliny 10.96** – "Those who denied they were, or had ever been, Christians, who repeated after me an invocation to the Gods, and offered adoration, with wine and frankincense, to your image, which I had ordered to be brought for that purpose, together with those of the Gods, and who finally cursed Christ; none of which acts, it is said, those who are really Christians can be forced into performing; these I thought it proper to discharge. Others who were named by that informer at first confessed themselves Christians, and then denied it; true, they had been of that persuasion but they had quitted it, some three years, others many years, and a few as much as twenty-five years ago. They all worshipped your statue and the images of the Gods, and cursed Christ.

They affirmed, however, the whole of their guilt, or their error, was, that they were in the habit of meeting on a certain fixed day before it was light, when they sang in alternate verses a hymn to Christ, as to a god, and bound themselves by a solemn oath, not to any wicked deeds, but never to commit any fraud, theft or adultery, never to falsify their word, nor deny a trust when they should be called upon to deliver it up; after which it was their custom to separate, and then reassemble to partake of food; but food of an ordinary and innocent kind."

**Suetonius 25.4** - "As the Jews were making constant disturbances at the instigation of Chrestus, he expelled them from Rome."

**Tacitus 15.44** – “Consequently, to get rid of the report, Nero fastened the guilt and inflicted the most exquisite tortures on a class hated for their abominations, called Christians by the populace. Christus, from whom the name had its origin, suffered the extreme penalty during the reign of Tiberius at the hands of one of our procurators, Pontius Pilatus, and a most mischievous superstition, thus checked for the moment, again broke out not only in Judaea, the first source of the evil, but even in Rome, where all things hideous and shameful from every part of the world find their centre and become popular. Accordingly, an arrest was first made of all who pleaded guilty; then, upon their information, an immense multitude was convicted, not so much of the crime of firing the city, as of hatred against mankind. Mockery of every sort was added to their deaths. Covered with the skins of beasts, they were torn by dogs and perished, or were nailed to crosses, or were doomed to the flames and burnt, to serve as a nightly illumination, when daylight had expired. Nero offered his gardens for the spectacle, and was exhibiting a show in the circus, while he mingled with the people in the dress of a charioteer or stood aloft on a car. Hence, even for criminals who deserved extreme and exemplary punishment, there arose a feeling of compassion; for it was not, as it seemed, for the public good, but to glut one man's cruelty, that they were being destroyed.”

**Josephus (Antiquities 18.3.3)** – "Now there was about this time Jesus, a wise man, if it be lawful to call him a man; for he was a doer of wonderful works, a teacher of such men as receive the truth with pleasure. He drew over to him both many of the Jews and many of the Gentiles. He was [the] Christ. And when Pilate, at the suggestion of the principal men amongst us, had condemned him to the cross, those that loved him at the first did not forsake him; for he appeared to them alive again the third day; as the divine prophets had foretold these and ten thousand other wonderful things concerning him. And the tribe of Christians, so named from him, are not extinct at this day."

## Lesson 3 - Who is the Holy Spirit?

*What is the most difficult thing you have ever tried to understand?*

*What made it difficult?*

- Complexity
- Lack of information
- Inability to relate

*What would you say are the barriers to “getting to know” the Holy Spirit in the Bible?*

The Holy Spirit has a few barriers to understanding it:

- Doesn't directly speak in the Bible like God or Jesus = seems impersonal
- There is no book of the Bible about the Holy Spirit
- No great long summaries of his work

**Example** - It is like trying to describe your neighbor to someone whom you have never seen. He has never spoken a word. You know he has about a dozen full time jobs, you aren't sure if they are a man or a woman or neither...gets pretty confusing.

You have to piece some things together. Even then you have the question of the difference between what they experience and what we experience today.

### Old Testament

**From the beginning** - The Spirit of God has been present from the very beginning (Gen 1:2)

Rarely called the “Holy Spirit” in the Old Testament (3X)

- Psalm 51:11 (once)
- Isa 63:10-11 (twice)

“Spirit” 389 times in the OT

- Means spirit or wind
- Came upon specific people to empower specific purposes – over and over “Then the Spirit of the Lord came up so and so and he went and did such and such...”
  - Represented God's power (Judges 11:29, 1 Sam 11:6 & Num 11:16-17)
- It is ever present – Psalm 139:7
- Inspired prophesy (1 Sam 19:23, Neh 9:30,

**Messianic – God's Spirit pointed to Jesus in the OT**

- Isa 11:1-6 – a prophesy about Jesus
- Joel 2:28-32 – points to Acts 2

### 2 Cor 13:14

- All three are there...all three are identified as one and yet have three separate roles.

## New Testament

“Spirit” 379 times in the NT

**Means spirit or wind** - *What does it signify about the Holy Spirit that the same word for spirit is the word for wind?*

Jesus - empowered by God's Spirit

- **Mark 1:9-11** - *Who is present in these verses?*
  - Father, Son and Spirit
  - Spirit as a sign of acceptance by God – here and in Acts 10:44 (Cornelius), and in epistles (Eph 1:13-14)
- Isa 61:1-2 & Luke 4:18-19 – just like OT, empowered his ministry
- Pointed beyond Jesus' ministry
  - John 14:16 – Counselor
    - *Was that just for them or for us too?*
    - *How does the H.S. provide counsel for us?*
  - John 14:26, 15:26 – He will remind them of everything (inspiration and recording of the Gospels) & Required Jesus leave before the Holy Spirit would come in power
  - John 16:7 – HS could not come until Jesus was gone
  - John 15:27 – He will testify on God's behalf and help us testify to others (See also 1 Thess 1:2-6)

### **The Church (Acts and beyond):**

Acts 2:1-4 – The Holy Spirit came in power and it sounded like a mighty wind.

- The nature of the Spirit is not predictable. Makes it hard to completely pin down.

Acts 2:38 – given to Christians, presumably at Baptism

- Represents God's power (Luke 4:14), presence ( ), approval (seal of ownership – 2 Cor 1:22) & God sent Jesus. Jesus sends the Spirit

Gal 5:22-23 – works in our lives to produce fruit.

Eph 1:13-14 – A seal guaranteeing we are God's own possession and guaranteeing what is to come.

### **Did things change between testaments?**

The Holy Spirit in the OT was pointing to the New and to Jesus Christ.

So when the Messiah arrived, Jesus Christ, things did change. It no longer had to point to what was going to happen but was active in the ministry of Jesus to empower him and point people to God.

Next step...when Jesus resurrected and ascended to heaven the role changed again. Became present in our lives (Acts 2), empowered our ministry, and counsels/intercedes for us, seal us, etc.

Similarities:

- present (Ps 139:7)

- powerful - enabled OT people to do marvelous thing. Enabled NT people to have spiritual gifts.
- sign of messianic age (Luke 4:18-19 & Acts 10:38) – messianic age had arrived.

#### Differences

- Individual in OT but Corporate/Community in the NT. Now we ALL have God's Spirit (Acts 2:38). It was expected that a Christian would have the H.S. (Acts 19:2ff).
- Role changed to counselor and interceder on our behalf.

## Lesson 4 - Why is there a church?

Point to draw out – the why of the church is evidenced by the eternal impact it has always had and even has today

- Sins forgiven/lives turned around
- Answered prayers – healing, difficult situations, etc
- Restored relationships with God and others
- Community

**Get them to say all those things – *How has the church impacted your life?***

- *Are there people close to you who you would not know otherwise?* – **COMMUNITY**
- *Have you ever had God turn your life around for the good?* – **LIVES CHANGED**
- *Have you ever had a broken relationship restored because you were a Christian?* – **RESTORED RELATIONSHIPS**
- *Have you ever had an answered prayer? What was it?* – **GOD INTERVENING IN REAL WAYS AND IN DIFFICULT CIRCUMSTANCES**
- *Has God ever forgiven you of anything?* – **SINS FORGIVEN**

*We can ask “How do you define church?” and give brainy answers*

Or

*We can tell those stories and get the real deal.*

### **CHURCH - ENGLISH**

***Ever wonder where the word “church” comes from? It is not Greek or Hebrew.***

- Greek – “The Lord’s” – the Lord’s what? People.

Pointed to people, not to building - **Church as people, not place:**

*Why do people think of church as a building?*

### **CHURCH - GREEK**

Ekklesia – out of, to call -----not a called out building or a called out hour of the week.

- It literally means “an assembly” – assembly of buildings? No. Of people!
- **BUT See ACTS 19:32** – HA! Not Christians, just a group of people with a common cause.

Synagogue as assembly – **Matt 18:15-17**

- *Were there any churches yet?*
- *What is Jesus talking about?*

**Church as a congregation - Rom 16:5** – Assembly of Christians & met in homes

**Church universal – Eph 1:22 & Acts 8:3** – was Paul destroying buildings or people?

- **In the NT – the church met in homes. The homes were not the church.**

DON'T DO THIS PART

*Called out of what?*

**Aliens and strangers in the world:**

- 1 Peter 2:11
- Heb 11:13-16

*What do you think these two guys meant calling Christians aliens and strangers?*

- The world is a messed up place. Some really nasty things happen here.
- It is good to know that there is more to the story. While we live here this is not really our "home"

PIC UP HERE

**CHURCH & JESUS CHRIST - IDENTITY**

Have to start with Jesus – source of our identity

- Without Jesus it all falls apart - Take Jesus out of the equation and there is no such thing as "church" – this assembly of people has no reason to be together apart from Christ.

*Why is Jesus what sets the church apart from any other group of people?*

- Gives us a specific, eternal purpose
- Redeemed

**Sad thing is – people relate to Jesus but sometimes not to Christians**

*Why do you think that is?*

**Talk for minute – who Jesus was and how that impacts who we are:**

*What made Jesus so great?* – The most famous person in world history.

Jesus was a leader, a great leader...*What made Jesus and his leadership unlike a great CEO that leads a company to profit or a great president that leads us to success as a nation?*

- Ministry
  - Taught with authority
  - Raised the dead
  - Healed the hurting
- He is leading us through death to life
- The impact of his leadership is eternal

So people followed him. *Wouldn't you follow a guy who you knew raised the dead and taught in a way you had never heard before?*

Some of the greatest crowds Jesus ever drew were after his death:

- Acts 2:41 – 3000
- Acts 4:4 – grew to 5000 total Christians
- Acts 21:20 – many thousands

*Why would so many people rally around a dead man?*

- Because he wasn't dead
- They came because Jesus conquered death

So where does "church" come into play here?

### **Read Acts 1:4-11**

We learn a couple of vital things about why there is such a thing as church in these verses.

1. *What does Jesus say they will do for him in his absence?* – be his witness
2. *Why is that necessary and witness of what?* – If Jesus is gone but left us here to carry on he needs us to share the good news to those who don't know.
3. *What do the two men in white tell the disciples about Jesus?* – Jesus has left but will return
4. *Where does that leave those of us who live in between his leaving the earth and his return (even now 2000 years later)?*
  - a. It leaves us with a community of other people who are living between his ascension and second coming.
5. If Jesus has left but is coming back it only makes sense that those he leaves behind who have a common identity (Christ followers), have a common mission (to be a witness) to form a community of faith where they can be supported by each other, encourage each other, love each other, and do what God has asked them to do.
6. That is also necessary because the life God has called us to live is different from the lives many people in the world live (aliens and strangers) – so we need each other and a community of faith to stay strong in our relationship with God.

**At this point we have a few hundred believers who some of whom are in Jerusalem waiting for the Holy Spirit as Jesus promised it to come to them in Jerusalem.**

### **Acts 2:1-8**

*How did the Spirit show the crowd that God was up to something to get them to listen?*

- People wonder what speaking in tongues was all about – in scripture it was people speaking real languages...not gibberish.

Peter preaches Jesus Christ as the messiah who was crucified and risen. 3000 believe and are baptized.

When many, many people hear and believe that message and have a common identity, common story and common savior...*What would people who had a common identity, common story, and common savior probably do?*

- They would gather together
- They would learn together
- They would grow together

### **Acts 2:42-47**

This is the heart and soul of what a church should be about.

To them “church” was not 1 hour a week in a specific place or in a certain room.

*What was “church” to them?*

*How do we live that out today?*

*Are there parts of that we neglect? Why?*

*Do you think we have made church “too small?” Why or why not?*

These Christians banded together. They met each other’s needs. They loved each other. They spent time together. They were a community of people who were came together because of their common identity in Jesus Christ.

### **Why is there a church today?**

It is our goal to embody those same principles that they embodied in the world we live in today. Why? Because have the same identity, message and mission that they had.

Jesus’ mission becomes our mission:

- Bring glory to God – John 14:13
- To seek and save the lost – Luke 19:10
- To show compassion to the world – Mark 6:34
- To reflect the love of God – John 3:16
- To defeat death – Matt 28:6 (he is not here he is risen)

*What does that really look like?*

*What is the church’s ultimate goal?*

### **Upcoming follow up topics:**

- *Why do we worship like we do?*
- *Why do we meet on Sunday?*
- *Why do we take the Lord’s Supper every week? What does the Lord’s Supper actually mean?*
- *Why do we take up an offering on Sunday?*
- *Why do we sing without instruments? Are instruments sinful?*

**Application** – church is not just a concept or something we talk about. This is who we are. We live it. We embody it.

Print “One another” passages and hand them out to everyone.

Find a way to live out 3 of the “Do’s” this week

## ***One Another Passages***

### **Things to do in regard to each other:**

- Rom 12:10 – ***Be devoted*** to one another in brotherly love. ***Honor*** one another above yourselves.
- Rom 12:16 – ***Live in harmony with*** one another. Do not be proud, but be willing to associate with people of low position.
- Rom 13:8 – Let no debt remain outstanding, except ***the continuing debt to love*** one another, for he who loves his fellowman fulfilled the law.
- Rom 14:19 – Let us therefore make every effort to ***do what leads to peace*** and to ***building up*** one another (=mutual edification)
- Rom 15:7 – ***Accept*** one another, then, just as Christ accepted you, in order to bring praise to God. (notice here how we treat each other has a direct relationship to our relationship with God)
- 12:25 – so that there should be no division in the body, but that its parts should ***have equal concern*** for each other. If one part suffers, every part suffers with it; if one part is honored, every part rejoices with it.
- Gal 5:13-14 - You, my brothers, were called to be free. But do not use your freedom to indulge the sinful nature; rather ***serve*** one another in love. The entire law is summed up in a single command: ‘Love your neighbor as yourself.’”
- Gal 6:2 – ***Carry*** each other’s ***burdens***, and in this way you will fulfill the law of Christ.
- Eph 4:2 – Be completely humble and gentle; be patient, ***bearing with*** one another in love.
- Eph 4:32 – Be ***kind*** and ***compassionate*** to one another, ***forgiving*** each other, just as in Christ God forgave you.
- Eph 5:22 – ***Submit*** to one another out of reverence for Christ.
- Phil 2:3 – Do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit, but in humility ***consider others better than yourselves***.
- Col 3:13 – ***Bear with*** each other and ***forgive whatever grievances*** you may have against one another.
- 1 Thess 3:12 – May the Lord make ***your love increase*** and overflow for each other and for everyone else, just as our does for you.
- 1 Thess 4:18 – Therefore ***encourage*** each other with these words
- Heb 10:24 – And let us consider how we may ***spur*** one another on toward love and good deeds.
- James 5:16 - Therefore, ***confess your sins*** to each other and ***pray for*** each other so that you may be healed. The prayer of a righteous man is powerful and effective.
- 1 Peter 1:22 – Now that you have purified yourselves by obeying the truth so that you have sincere love for your brothers, ***love*** one another deeply, from the heart.
- 1 Peter 4:9 – ***Offer hospitality*** to one another, without grumbling.

- 1 Peter 5:5 – Young men, in the same way be submissive to those who are older. All of you, **clothe yourselves with humility** toward one another.
- 1 John 1:7 – But if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have **fellowship with** one another, and the blood of Jesus, his son purifies us from all sin.

**Things to avoid doing to each other:**

- Rom 14:13 - Let us **stop passing judgment** on one another.
- Gal 5:15 – if you keep on biting and devouring each other, watch out or **you will be destroyed by** each other.
- Gal 5:26 – Let us not become conceited, **provoking and envying** each other.
- Col 3:9 – **Do not lie to** each other, since you have taken off your old self with its practices and have put on the new self
- James 4:11 – Brothers, **do not slander** one another.
- James 5:9 – **Do not grumble** against each other.

## Lesson 5 - The Mission of the Church

### Body of Christ:

**1 Cor 12:12-27** – we are the body of Christ

**Eph 5:23** – Christ is the head of the church/body

*If we are the body of Christ and Jesus is our head...how do we tell what our mission is?*

### Mission of Jesus:

Matt 5:16 – let your light shine (**evangelism**)

John 10:10 – Life to the full. (**edification**) *What does that mean to have full life in Christ?*

Luke 19:10 – seek and save lost (**evangelism**)

Luke 4:18-19 (**benevolence**)

Eph 2:10 – God has us here for good works. *Who does that sound like...another guy who went around doing good works?*

*So Why are we here?*

- Carry on the mission of Jesus Christ
- That is why we are called Christians – we follow in the steps of Jesus trying to live and do as he did.

“The church continues in principle the works Jesus did in his earthly ministry. The church is the body of Christ. Christ does his work in the world now through the church, and the work of the church is to offer Christ to the world. When the church fails to do the work of Christ, it becomes the corpse instead of the body of Christ.” – Everett Ferguson

### ***What is our purpose/mission?***

#### **Evangelism**

- *How would you define evangelism?* – Preaching/teaching/sharing the Gospel
- *What is the Gospel?*
- *Why is it significant enough to share?*
- **Matthew 28:19**
- Lots of words for this in scripture that show how the early church practiced it:
  - Preach – Acts 8:4
  - Say – Acts 8:6
  - Speak – Acts 8:25
  - Testify – Acts 8:25
  - Bear witness – Acts 8:25
  - Announce – Acts 20:20
  - Persuade – Acts 19:8
- Not just about a professional on Sunday in a sermon

- The majority of people who become Christians at Northwest do so due to their relationships, knowing and studying with someone – **that means you have a role to play in reaching lost people.**
- *What is it that we are proclaiming?*

### **Edification**

The building/growing of faith – 1 Cor 14:12

- Knowledge of God – Col 1:10
- Grace and knowledge – 1 Pet 2:2
- Grow in Christ – Eph 4:15
- Building up Christ's body in love – Eph 4:16
- We are called to grow in our faith (1 Cor 10:15-17)
- Purpose of our assembly – 1 Cor 14:26
- Goal of our ministry – Eph 4:16
- Includes our relationships with each other – Rom 15:2 & 1 Thess 5:11

### **Benevolence**

- *How did Jesus show compassion?*
- *How does the church do that today?*
- **Rom 12:13**
- **James 1:27, 2:15-16**
- **To Christians - Gal 6:10**
- **To Non Christians - 1 Thess 3:12 & Rom 12:14, 20**
- We are the hands and feet of Jesus Christ today.

*How are we accomplishing it?*

- Ministries of the church - benevolence
- Worship – edification
- Bible class – edification
- Life groups – edification, evangelism, benevolence
- Program/non-programmed – many people doing things that are not ever on a program or schedule
- Giving – provides some of these things to be done in an organized fashion.

*What distracts us from our mission?*

Missional church video?

## Lesson 6 - What is Worship?

(Marva Dawn's *Worship Without Dumbing Down* used for some of this information)

*Worship – What does it mean to worship someone or something?*

Worth + Ship = Old English (Worth + to create) – Marva Dawn 76-77

### Why do we Worship?

*What was the last nice thing someone did for you?/What was the greatest thing anyone has ever done for you?*

*How did you respond? Why?*

*How valuable do you think God is? Why?*

*What has God done that demonstrates His worth?*

- On board – What God has done

*More personal – what has God done in your life that demonstrates His worth?*

- On board – In your life

*How did you react when God did that for you?*

*Have we lost our sense of wonderment/awe of God? Why?*

*How do we reclaim that?*

*How would that improve our worship?*

Most significant act of God – our salvation

### Worship connected with real life

Why do we worship? – Worship is connected to **REAL LIFE!**

Worship flows out of God's working in someone's life:

- Exo 14 – Parting of the Red Sea ----- Exo 15:1-9 = Song of the Sea
- Luke 1:26-38 – Angel tells Mary she will give birth to Messiah ----- Luke 1:46-55 – Mary's Song

Worship flows out of real life. Worship is connected to the events in our life and our expression of thanks to God for working in our lives.

*What has God done in your life that is worthy of praise?*

***We tell him thank you but have you ever sang it to him, not because Thank you Lord was in the Order of Worship but because thankfulness flowed out of your life and resulted in singing?***

### **God is the center of worship**

We don't worship people or things. We worship the creator of heaven and earth. Bad shift – make us the center of worship. When people say things like, "They didn't sing any songs I like or that song leader was too fast or I just didn't get anything out of worship this morning. *What does that signify?*

It is not about us. It is about us pouring ourselves out to God and giving Him what he deserves.

*What kind of statements would put God back at the center?*

- Example – Wasn't God glorified this morning?!?

Culture – claims personal authority and seeking self-fulfillment. Worship undoes both of those.

*How does worship demonstrate and uplift God's authority over us?*

*How is self-fulfillment put behind us when we come into the presence of God?*

- Isa 6:1-8
  - *What was Isaiah's response to being in God's presence?*
    - Lamented his own sinfulness
  - *What was the angel's response to being in God's presence?*
  - *Once Isaiah's guilt was taken away what did he desire to do?*
  - *How should our response be the same as Isaiah's?*

**One big debate is whether worship is for insiders or outsiders – Is it to uplift Christians or is it to draw in non-Christians. Misses the point.**

**Worship is not for insiders or outsiders – worship is for God.**

If we put God at the center and clearly give him our best, wouldn't that be the best experience for insiders and outsiders?

God is the draw

*Let's say you come to worship because you are down and you need some encouragement. What would be more meaningful, getting songs sung to you to make you feel better or really getting to praise God and pour yourself out to Him? Why?*

## **How do we worship? – Qualities not Acts of Worship**

### **Quality of Being Honest/Real:**

One of the most important aspects of worship is honesty with God. It is important that the songs we sing reflect the attitude of our heart.

*What % of your life is happy go lucky?*

*What % of our worship is happy go lucky?*

*Why the disconnect?*

*What % of the psalms are happy and joyful and what % are lament? Why? What does that mean for us?*

- 150 psalms
- 67 lament
- 33 thanksgiving psalms

### **Quality of Whole Life Worship:**

Compartmentalized vs broader view of worship (Rom 12:1-2):

*Do we compartmentalize our worship...in other words reserve it for an hour or so a week (7-9 songs)? Why? Are we trained to think like that?*

*How does Romans 12:1-2 inform us that there is more to worship than an hour each week?*

Even our holiness is related to worship...if we are to be a pleasing aroma to God's throne we must live lives of holiness.

### **Quality of Embracing both Horizontal and vertical components:**

- **Matthew 5:23-24**
- “9 Anyone who claims to be in the light but hates a brother or sister[b] is still in the darkness. 10 Anyone who loves their brother and sister[c] lives in the light, and there is nothing in them to make them stumble. 11 But anyone who hates a brother or sister is in the darkness and walks around in the darkness. They do not know where they are going, because the darkness has blinded them.” – **1 John 2:9-11**
- “16 This is how we know what love is: Jesus Christ laid down his life for us. And we ought to lay down our lives for our brothers and sisters. 17 If anyone has material possessions and sees a brother or sister in need but has no pity on them, how can the love of God be in that person? 18 Dear children, let us not love with words or speech but with actions and in truth.” – **1 John 3:16-18**
- “20 Whoever claims to love God yet hates a brother or sister is a liar. For whoever does not love their brother and sister, whom they have seen, cannot love God, whom they have

not seen. 21 And he has given us this command: Anyone who loves God must also love their brother and sister. ” – **1 John 4:20-21**

**The two are interconnected. That is why if you really listen when we sing some of the songs are to God and others are to each other (A common love for each other... vs Praise God from whom all blessings flow...”**

**End class with prayer and song:**

6 - All in all

18 – awesome God

32 – Come let us sing

36 – Covenant of Love

75 – Heart of worship

76 – Here I am to worship

**How we worship/acts to express our adoration to God:**

## Lesson 7 - Worship Part 2

*Anyone like birthday parties?*

*What is the best birthday party you ever had?*

Birthday – day all about that person.

### **The Lord's Day (Rev 1:10) = Why Sunday?**

- Not “the church’s day” but the “Lord’s Day”
- Acts 20:7 – met on the first day of the week
- *Why the first day of the week? What special significant does Sunday have in the New Testament?*- Resurrection of Jesus Christ
- That shows he is the Son of God/Messiah (Rom 1:4)

### **Why do we assemble as a church?**

*How would you answer that question?*

1. Glorify God – Eph 3:21
  - a. *How do our assemblies aim to give God glory?*
    - i. Singing His praises (1 Cor 14:26 & Rom 15:6)
    - ii. Our living pure lives (1 Cor 6:20)
    - iii. Confessing who He is (Phil 2:11)
    - iv. Harmony/unity among the Christians (Rom 15:5-7)
  - b. *How would living unholy lives disconnect or break the purpose of worship?*
  - c. *How does disunity in the body lead to improper worship?*
  - d. *How do we give God glory at Northwest?*
2. Strengthening Christians – 1 Cor 14:26
  - a. Done through worship (See 14:26)
  - b. **Fellowship** = Done through time in each others’ lives
    - i. Fellowship is not just about doing stuff
    - ii. Fellowship is about being in each other’s lives so we can grow together (Heb 10:25)
  - c. *How do we strengthen Christians at Northwest?*
    - i. Missionary work
    - ii. Counseling
    - iii. Classes/worship assembly
    - iv. Benevolence – assisting the body financially
3. Evangelism/Outreach – 1 Cor 14:23-25
  - a. *If we are doing #1 & 2 to our best, how will #3 work out?*
  - b. Trying to not Build Barriers to outsiders
    - i. Songs we sing
    - ii. Words we use - propitiation

- iii. Isolation/cliques – visitors right there with us but we don't see them, we want to talk with our friends

## **What**

**We Assemble  
what he has done**

## **How**

**On Sunday**

## **Why**

**To worship God/remember our Lord &**

### **Where we worship (Acts 2:47):**

- Small gatherings – in homes (Like what we have Sunday nights)
- Large gatherings – at temple (like what we have on Sunday and Wednesday)

*What are some advantages of the big group?*

*What are some advantages of the small group?*

*Why is it important to have both?*

### **What do we do in worship and why?**

*What things do we do in the assembly? Why?*

- Sing
- Pray – Acts 2:42
- Listen – Sermon/Scripture (Acts 2:42)
- Lord's Supper (Acts 2:42)

The order of these things is not as important as why we are doing them.

*What do you think was the central act of worship in the early church?*

*What do we uphold as the central act in most churches today? – Sermon*

- Some churches take L.S. quarterly, monthly, some rarely to never but won't miss a sermon! We pay that guy to get that done so better be good!
- We call it auditorium, not communitorium...doh!

### **Lord's Supper – What is it all about?**

*What does the Lord's Supper mean to you?*

*What do you focus on/think about during the Supper?*

*What does the NT teach regarding the Supper? Why do we do it?*

Matthew 26:26-30 – Jesus starts it as a Christian practice

- *What do we learn about the Supper based on what Jesus taught here?*
  - It is a **thanksgiving**
  - It **reminds** us of our Lord – his body and blood
  - It is about **forgiveness**
  - There is **hope** – take it with Jesus in the kingdom

Jesus thanked God for the bread. *What do we give thanks for in the Supper?*

### **1 Cor 11:17-20**

- *What problem does Paul point out that they are having?*
- *Why is it not the Lord's Supper they eat? Do they think they are eating the supper? What is getting in the way?*
- This is the Lord's Supper...not ours. This is about Him, not us
- Shows it was a full-blown meal at the time that the Bread and wine were a part of as a special part of worship.

### **1 Cor 11:23-26**

- *Why did Jesus say we take this supper?*
- *How did the Corinthians show they were unable to do that?*

### **1 Cor 11:27-29 & 33-34**

- *What kind of "unworthy manner" is Paul then talking about?*
- *What does the "Examining" of self then include?*
- *What does it mean to "recognize the body of the Lord"? – 2 parts*
  - See 1 Cor 10:16-17 – Christ's body makes us one body. Christ's blood brings us together
  - 1 Cor 12:27 – Now you are the body of Christ

We emphasize the vertical but rarely the horizontal component. Paul is saying both are important.

The Supper is a communal act. It is taken in community by community.

It is a memorial

It builds anticipation

### **Other Things we do together (From E.Ferg. 232):**

- Pray - Acts 4:31
- Proclaim God's Word/Teach – Acts 11:26
- Eat Lord's Supper – Acts 20:7-8
- Church discipline – 1 Cor 5:4
- Strengthen/Encourage each other - Heb 10:23-25
  - Hear a missionary report – Acts 14:27
  - Reconcile a dispute – Acts 15:6, 30

### **How we Use Space/Focus of Sunday worship**

Early Christians viewed worship as flowing from their very lives and did not confine worship to 60 minutes of time at a specific street address with a given congregation.

However, they still saw an importance in the Sunday assembly. We know that because they did it regularly.

What is the Sunday assembly about?

*What would you say is the prime emphasis of the Sunday morning service? Why?*

**Over Emphasis on hearing the sermon: - how we lay out the room**

- Worship is participatory
- Preaching requires an audience who is willing to listen and participate in the message by learning from scripture and living out the truths found there.
- Hearing a sermon is not a passive act
- *Have you ever heard a sermon and it changed the way you looked at something or did something?*

All of these things come together to create something for God that is pleasing to Him and results in the building up of His people.

## Lesson 8 - Prayer

**Pass out papers and pens for prayers at the end**

*What is prayer?*

*What do you pray for?*

Married folks – when you were dating sometimes felt like you had to say all the right words  
Still true when married?

*How does that relate to prayer?* – Not about saying everything just so (thee and thou)

**Jonah's (our 2 year old) prayed last night..."sanks you for..."**

- I would clarify what he was saying
- We worked out the prayer together
- Ends with "Ament"
- We are more like that than we think.

Prayer – conversation with our Father

Reminds me of **Romans 8:26-27**

- God gracefully interprets our prayers and helps us exactly how we need.
- *Have you ever gone through a time like that?*
- *How does it make you feel to know God was present at that time*
- *How does it make you feel to know God cared enough to really listen and even speak for you?*

God is our Father and we are his children **Matthew 7:7-12**

- *What is Jesus' point in regard to prayer?*
- *Does seeing God as our Father change the way we prayer?*

Do people have other views of God than Father? How does our view of God impact the way we pray?

**Bottom line – God is closer than we think.**

Ask "Where is God?" in heaven? – Closer than that!

*Where is God?* – **progression from far to near**

- In heaven – "our Father in heaven"
- In a temple somewhere? - OT

OT – *What represented the presence of God in the OT?*

- Temple

- Temple went from bronze to silver to gold as the worshipper got closer to the presence of God.
- Ornate and expensive

Temple = holy place. You don't just do anything you want in there...

### **Putting it in Perspective:**

Imagine walking into an ornate temple.

*What things would you do in there?*

*What things would you not do in there? Why?*

NT – things change

- In our presence – Matthew 18
- In us – we will get to that one

### **Draw building -----Draw stick man**

*Which of these is a temple?*

NT – We are the temple:

- 1 Cor 3:16-17 – God's people are a temple where God's spirit/presence dwells
  - When God's temple was destroyed in Jerusalem in AD 70 it was really just stones being toppled.
  - God's temple cannot be destroyed. *Why?*
  - *If God's presence is in our lives, what does that say about how we live?*
  - Grow up in church – be quiet in the auditorium. Certain things you don't do in there, why? Because that room is holy!
  - Not really...we are holy. So no matter where we go we take that purity standard with us.
  - *If we are God's temple, the place where God's spirit dwells, what does that say about our worship? What is it confined to?*
- 1 Cor 6:18-19 – Tie between our morality and our identity
  - Just like you don't do certain things in a temple, we are also to be pure and holy.
  - *Why does this show us that purity is important?*
  - *How are purity and worship tied together?*

Eph 2:19-22 – “<sup>19</sup> Consequently, you are no longer foreigners and strangers, but fellow citizens with God's people and also members of his household, <sup>20</sup> built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, with Christ Jesus himself as the chief cornerstone. <sup>21</sup> In him the whole building is joined together and rises to become a holy temple in the Lord. <sup>22</sup> And in him you too are being built together to become a dwelling in which God lives by his Spirit.”

### **God dwells in us**

When we worship we are not worshipping a distant God who is out of touch with our situation. We worship a God who is present among us and in us and works through us.

## **Presence & Prayer**

- *Anyone keep in touch from people from your childhood?*
- *What makes that hard to keep up with?*
- *I have a hard time keeping in touch with people who are far away and who I am loosely connected with*
- *It is easier to be in touch with people I am near or around often.*
- *If God is really that close it changes everything...including our perspective on prayer.*

## **Presence/Nearness:**

*How does that impact the way we view prayer...praying to a God that is as distant as the tip of our nose?*

- *Have you ever felt like God was so far away or so busy with more important things that your prayers may not feel that important?*

**Frequency:** The more you stay in touch with someone the better your relationship will be. If we spend more time in worship it will come more natural to us and the relationship will grow stronger.

*How often do you pray?*

*Why do you pray...what drives you to prayer?*

- *Habit vs situation*

*What do you pray the most for?*

*Why is prayer vitally important?*

*What posture do you pray in?*

- *Our physical posture in worship can represent what is in our hearts*
  - *On feet*
  - *On knees*
  - *On face*
- *Hard to be proud laying on your face*

**Proskeneo** – Greek word for worship – lay face down in worship and awe

- *Have you ever prayed face to the floor?*
- *What drove you there or made that prayer different?*

## **Worship not just about what we do but about who we are**

### **Worship People/Priests:**

OT – They needed a priest to intercede to God for them, offer sacrifices for them and atone for their sins. Had to be born a descendent of Aaron.

### **Putting it in perspective:**

*What are some things you would never expect a priest of the Lord to do? Why?*

*What makes you have higher expectations of them than others?*

NT – We are all priests of God.

**1 Peter 2:5**

- holy Priesthood who are offering spiritual sacrifices (Rom 12:1-2)
- *Who is this talking about? Ministers? Elders? All Christians?*
- *Have you ever thought of yourself as a priest of the Lord?*

That means we have direct contact with God. We don't need any person, minister, elder or priest to connect with God.

When you pray God really does hear.

*Why were priests supposed to be holy?*

*Why does God think holiness is so important?*

*If we are priests, why is it important that we are holy?*

**1 Peter 2:9-10**

- You are special. God chose you and loves you and makes you holy and pours out his grace on you.
- *How do you feel knowing that God made you special, valuable and God's special possession?*

This is our identity – you may be more connected with God than you ever realized.

**Connecting this to worship**

We are God's temple

We are God's priests

We represent the presence of God's Spirit in the world.

Our worship flows out of that. When we sing or pray or read scripture or commune or give...it is all connected together. God is in us and works through us and we offer Him worship He deserves.

Worship is not an isolated part of our week. Worship is a part of who we are and our identity in Christ.

**Application:**

Spend time in prayer – If you want to get on your knees or flat on your face or keep your seat or go outside or whatever you need...just do it.

We are going to break off into smaller groups and close the class in prayer.

**Pass out papers and pens to write down requests**

Take requests for the group in these three categories:

- Health
- The Lost
- Concerns/situations
- Thanksgiving
- Praise

## Lesson 9 - Sin, Salvation & Christianity

*Why should people become Christians?* – If we cannot answer that question we have a problem.

- Short answer - People are guilty before God without the blood of Christ to forgive their sins
- Let's look at the answer

### **Eternal beings:**

We are more than flesh and bone. If we are just flesh and bone and when we die that is it, dead, no more...then there is little reason to be a Christian (1 Cor 15:17-19 – futility of life of a Christian if Gospel is not true).

*What is a spirit/soul?*

*How long does it last?*

There is life beyond the grave...so it is important how we live because how we live now will be reflected in how we live after we die

### **Matt 25:31-46**

- *What connection is there between how we live in this body, before we die, and what happens after we die?*

God as our creator & judge

God is our **creator** and he made us in his **image** (Gen 1:26) and we are accountable to him (Acts 17:30)

Since God will be the judge of our lives it is important we turn to Him to learn how he wants us to live and what is right by his standards.

- Prov 14:12 – a way that seems right but ends in death
- Psalm 119:9-16 – We keep pure by obeying God's word, studying it and living it
- 2 Tim 3:16

God has revealed himself to us in the Bible in order to teach us how we are to live.

*What was the most profound way God showed us how to live in the whole Bible?*

- Jesus Christ – **verse that says Jesus was an example for us?**

### **Our choice:**

- We can choose to live however we want – our way or God's way
- If we choose to live our way, rebel against God = sin

*How would you define sin?*

*What consequences does sin, not living for God, carry?*

- Rom 6:23

*Who is guilty of sin?*

- Rom 3:23 – all have sinned

We all have sinned, sin results in death – we have a problem.

**Eternal consequences:**

**Eternal salvation (on God's terms):**

## Lesson 10 - Our Response to God's Grace

### Ephesians 2:1-9

- *What is the state of someone apart from God? (2:1-4)*
- *Who is responsible for making us alive again? (2:5)*
- *What is our part? (2:8-9) – Faith*

### Zoom in on 2:8-9:

- Grace you have been saved through faith
- It is a gift
- It is not by works

### Works vs. gift

- *What is the difference between a working for something and getting it as a gift?*
  - Work for something – you earned it
  - Gifted something – someone gave it to you because they wanted to

### Through faith

- Heb 11:6 – Without faith it is impossible to please God.
- *What is faith? – Heb 11:1*
- This is what evangelism is about – impacting people with the Gospel (we talked about last week – the solution to sin and death) so that they will put their faith in Jesus Christ.

So faith is required for someone to be saved but Paul makes it clear that faith is not a work...it is not something we do that **earns our salvation. We can't do anything that earns our salvation.**

- Earning salvation – doing enough stuff that God finally says we are good enough. Impossible
- Salvation is a gift that is given to those who possess particular qualities

**BIG POINT** – It is possible for God to want a response for us without that response being something that earns our salvation.

*So what things does the NT talk about in regard to how we express our faith and respond to God's saving work through Jesus Christ?*

We have to let the NT speak for itself and answer this question for us. People have come up with all sorts of answers to this question ranging from don't do anything to we do everything.

**BIG QUESTION** \_ *How does God want us to respond to the news about Jesus?*  
(already have faith on the list)

### Peter's answer to the BIG QUESTION

*If we had an apostle right here with us and asked him the question, How does God want us to respond to the Gospel/good news about Jesus...what would he say?*

We have the answer of one apostle on this question

**Acts 2:22-24, 29-33**

**Acts 2:36 – He is Lord and Christ/Messiah**

- Building his case – prophecies, what Jesus did in his life and ministry, ultimate proof = resurrection.
- *Whom you crucified* – there is the “uh oh” moment...they killed the son of God. Truth is, so did we...sin put him there.

**Acts 2:37** – They ask Peter our question – “What shall we do” – implied in response to this truth?

**Peter’s answer** has to be taken at face value – repent and be baptized, God will give His Spirit to you

- Repent – *What does that mean? Is it a one time deal?*
  - *Why is it necessary to repent if we are going to be in relationship with God?*
  - *If we are unrepentant, can we expect to have a relationship with God?*
  - 2 Peter 3:9 – God wants everyone to repent = acknowledge what is evil and turn from those things toward life.
- Baptism & Is it a “Work”?
  - Some view baptism as a work, therefore, they say it is not a part of our faith response
  - They will say faith is necessary and repentance is necessary but baptism is not.
    - Repentance is something we do. Faith is something we have
    - Baptism is the only part done to us – passive.
    - Baptism is not a work done to earn salvation – no such thing exists.
    - Yet the Bible urges people to be baptized – Mark 16:16, Matthew 28:19, 1 Peter 3:21
  - Baptism is an expression of our faith and is submitted to. Someone does it to us
  - *What does baptism mean?* – Rom 6:1-6
  - Baptism is not a work – it is the furthest thing from a work of anything God asks us to do in response to the Gospel.
- 10 conversion stories in Acts – all include baptism
- *Why would we chose anything else*
- **We may never completely understand how all this works together – but part of faith is reading scripture and trying to do what we find there, whether we can figure it all out or not.**

We are not trying to pinpoint the moment someone is saved

**Receiving the Holy Spirit**

- Seal guaranteeing what is to come
- Mark of ownership
- Guides us and directs us toward God
- Helps us do godly things/fruits of Spirit

**Different times receiving the HS:**

In Acts some receive HS at different times, sometimes prior to baptism, sometimes during and sometimes after (Yvette asked about this)

- There are some who say faith only. Some say you must have faith and you must repent. They say neither of those are **works**. But then they draw the line at baptism
- Why?

Acts 2:38 – be baptized and receive it

Acts 10:1-8 – Cornelius introduced

Acts 10:9-15 – Changing Peter's view of who/what was clean

Acts 10:16-22 – God sends him to Cornelius

Acts 10:28 – the problem of association with Gentiles

Acts 10:34-43 – The Gospel explained to first Gentiles

Acts 10:44-48 – HS comes on them...reaffirms for Peter that they were not separated from God

Notice his response – Doesn't say why keep them from faith or from repenting...**assumes baptism is the thing to do when someone is convicted by the good news about Jesus**

*They received HS first...why?*

- To reassure Peter God had accepted them and that he could break custom and they could be a part of the family of God
- People baptized right then and there – if this is really true and this is how God wants you to respond, why wait?

#### **Blessings of being a Christian:**

- Salvation from sin
- Eternal life
- New creation
- Resurrection
- Eternity with God in heaven
- Forgiveness of sins
- God's Holy Spirit living in us

#### **Curses being apart from God:**

- Dead in sin
- Aliens to God
- Eternal torment – hell/judgment

*What questions do you have about this?*

*Questions about repentance, baptism, faith?*

*How do you go about laying this out to your friends?*

## Lesson 11 – Life in Christ

“If anyone is in Christ he is a new creation; the old has gone and the new has come.” – **2 Cor 5:17**

This verse is going to highlight everything that has to do with living a life for Jesus Christ. Everything has been made new and has been renewed.

### **Making faith our own:**

“Some imagine that they are already Christians because they were born in a Christian country...Others suppose that, having had a Christian upbringing, and having been taught to accept the Christian creed and Christian standards of behavior, nothing further is required of them. But whatever his parentage and upbringing, every responsible adult is obliged to make up his own mind for or against Christ. We cannot remain neutral. Nor can we drift into Christianity. Nor can anybody else settle the matter for us. We must decide for ourselves.”

- Stott, Basic Christianity, 121

**Romans 14:12-13** – Everyone must give account

*When did it hit you that your faith was your own?*

*What changes when faith goes from something your parents gave you to something that was part of your identity?*

If we are Christians just because we were brought up that way it is important we examine the Gospel for ourselves and come to a real and lasting relationship with God.

Last week – Conversion

Conversion is just beginning

**Matt 16:24** – take up cross and follow – conversion just the beginning

### **Christian living has continuity with conversion:**

- *What were the components of our response to the Gospel that we talked about last week?*
  - Faith, repentance, baptism
- **Faith** – believing God is who he says he is and trusting him enough to do what he says
- **Repentance** – turning from evil toward holiness and righteousness
- **Baptism** – complete surrender and submission to God’s work, receiving the Holy Spirit and being united with Christ in his death and resurrection.

Trust, surrender, turn from evil, embrace righteousness, etc – all still have to do once a Christian.

**Like dating ---- Marriage**

*When you are dating someone what types of things do you do to get to know them/express your care for them?*

*What if you stop doing those things once you say, "I do"?*

Same is true with our relationship with God – there is continuity between our conversion and our life afterward.

### **It is about relationship:**

Once the barrier of our sins has been removed we have access to God, our Father.

**Heb 4:15-16** – Let us approach throne with confidence due to what Jesus did.

- *What did Jesus do that allows us to approach throne with confidence*
- *If we didn't have our sins forgiven, how might we not have confidence to approach God's throne?*

You cannot have a relationship with someone you have no access to. Jesus has given us access to God.

### **God's part - Our relationship with God comes with promises:**

*What are some of God's promises to us in the Bible?*

- Never leave us – Matt 28:20
- Not allow us to be tempted past what we can bear – 1 Cor 10:13
- Forgive us when we confess – 1 John 1:9
- Gives us wisdom if we ask – James 1:5

### **Bridge - Vine and branches connects God's part with our part:**

**John 15:1-8**

- *What is God, the gardener, looking for in us?*

*What does Jesus say is the only way to bear fruit?* – To be in the vine (15:4-5)

*What does that mean?*

*Why is that true?*

*How does Jesus say we show ourselves to be his disciples/followers?* – that we bear much fruit

**Our part - Fruit of Spirit – Gal 5:22**

**Our part - Christian responsibilities:**

- Expected to grow in our faith – 1 Peter 2:2
- To grow in our love for God and others – Matt 22:34-40
- To be a part of the community of faith – Heb 10:25
- Maintain our relationship with God through spiritual disciplines (Bible study, prayer, etc) - James 5:13 & 2 Tim 2:15 (study to show yourself approved)
- Worship – James 5:13
- Reaching out to the lost – Matt 28:19-20
- Doing good to all – Gal 6:10

*How do you feel the church can do a better job of helping you grow spiritually?*

*In what ways have you or could you engage yourself in ministry to continue growing in your faith and fulfilling your Christian obligations toward God and others?*

*What has been the most helpful thing that has grown your faith? Why?*

*In what ways can we encourage each other in this?*

*How can we rely/depend on God more than we do...he has the bigger responsibility here?*

*How connected are you to the vine? If you aren't bearing much fruit why do you think that is?*

## Lesson 12 - What Happens At the End of Time?

### What God is up to when it comes to the “end times” - Restoration

Draw two charts on the board:

1. Chart of the big picture...eternity/creation/redemption/judgment/reward or punishment
2. Your life from birth to eternal life

Connect the charts together with #2 being one small piece of #1 but both then going together toward eternity.

#### See Genesis/Revelation Comparison Chart

*What is this telling us about God is doing with humanity?*

- God is taking us back to His original intention for our lives – perfect relationship with him where we live eternally.

*How is God doing all that?* – We have discussed that already...getting our lives in line with God’s by doing away with sin, overcoming death, and giving us resurrection/new life.

#### Timeline

##### Important verses:

- 1 Cor 15:51-58
  - The second coming
  - We will not all sleep but will be changed – soul sleep (more on that in a minute)
  - Impacts how we live today (15:58)
- 1 Thess 5:1-11
  - Should impact the way we live today (5:11)
- Heb 9:27-29
  - after we die we are judged
- Matthew 25:31-43
  - judged to one of two places

**Summary – we are living and dying but will come a day when Christ will return and the dead will rise and the living will meet him in the air. We will be judged and we will go one of two directions – heaven or hell**

##### What do we experience between death and final judgment?

**1 – Aware**

**2 – Not aware = soul sleep**

##### People aware after death before final judgment:

- Moses and Elijah at transfiguration (Matt 17:3)
- Rich man and Lazarus (Luke 16:19-31) both Abraham and Lazarus are alive and kicking
- People at throne of God in Revelation – “how long?” (Rev 6:9-11)

- Gap in time between when people die and when Jesus returns

*What happens during that time?*

Theories

- Soul sleep could mean we aren't really aware until Jesus returns...then like when you sleep you awake in the morning and the next thing you know is eternal life/judgment but 10,000 years had passed by
- Or it could be we are very much aware and taken care of by God in the meantime.

**Soul sleep?**

- 1 Cor 15:51 - Here **sleep** refers to those who have died
- 1 Thess 5:6 – Here the **sleeping** is talking about people who are alive but unaware of what is coming...spiritual slumber

*What do you think Paul means when he says we will not all sleep?*

- Calling death sleep
- *Why would he compare death to sleep?*
  - You appear motionless but will arise again

Sleep = metaphor that you can stretch too far. It could just be emphasizing one point and not to be taken too far to give us insight into what our awareness will be like. You are aware when you sleep, afterall!

*What happens after we die?*

**1 - Judgment**

**Hebrews 9:27-28**

<sup>27</sup> Just as man is destined to die once, and after that to face judgment, <sup>28</sup> so Christ was sacrificed once to take away the sins of many people; and he will appear a second time, not to bear sin, but to bring salvation to those who are waiting for him."

- ***What do these verses tell us happens after we die? – judgment***

**Revelation 20:11-14 gives more detail about that judgment:**

<sup>11</sup> Then I saw a great white throne and him who was seated on it. Earth and sky fled from his presence, and there was no place for them. <sup>12</sup> And I saw the dead, great and small, standing before the throne, and books were opened. Another book was opened, which is the book of life. The dead were judged according to what they had done as recorded in the books. <sup>13</sup> The sea gave up the dead that were in it, and death and Hades gave up the dead that were in them, and each person was judged according to what he had done. <sup>14</sup> Then death and Hades were thrown into the lake of fire. The lake of fire is the second death. <sup>15</sup> If anyone's name was not found written in the book of life, he was thrown into the lake of fire."

- Sounds like we are saved by our works...not exactly.
- Revelation is about picking God's team even when everything in the world is telling you it is a bad idea.
- "according to what he had done" points back to the options given to the seven churches...choose God and live for him or choose the world and be apart from God.
- You will be judged according to your choices/what you do with that choice

## Whether or not we choose to follow God has a direct impact on our eternity

### Hell

#### Hell in the New Testament:

One of the words translated “Hell” in the New Testament is the word “Gehenna.” Some believe that in Jesus day this was a nasty garbage dump where people would go and burn their trash down in a valley outside the city. That valley had a wicked history. Ahaz and Manasseh sacrificed their children there by burning them in an idolatrous/pagan worship practice (**2 Chronicles 28:3, 33:6**). Jeremiah 19 gives us graphic detail of the evil slaughter that took place there. It was so bad that God told him to rename it “the valley of slaughter” because the Babylonians had massacred Jews there and threw their bodies in the valley. Jesus’ audience almost certainly knew those stories. That place had a history of being a literal, burning hell. So when Jesus teaches that people who are outside of God and Christ will be judged and sent to Gehenna/hell forever that is not something anyone would want to be a part of.

#### What is hell like? Read each of these verses and mention something they teach about hell

- **Matthew 10:28** - Hell is a place of destruction.
- **Matthew 5:22** – It is a place of fire
- **Matthew 25:41** - It is eternal
- **2 Thessalonians 1:8** – It is for those who don’t obey the Gospel
- **2 Thessalonians 1:9** – It is a place apart from God’s presence and God’s power

#### Last bullet most important – hell is life apart from God.

To some it sounds very gloomy, negative, harsh and unpopular. God is not always popular and neither is the truth but that doesn’t make it any less true or applicable. **Read Matthew 7:13-14**

### Heaven

Heaven is God’s dwelling place. It is where he sits on his throne and reigns supreme.

- Matt 5:16, 6:9
- Revelation 4:1-9 is a description of God’s throne room in heaven.
- God is surrounded by a heavenly court that give him praise
  - Elders
  - Angels/creatures

It is the place of God’s redeemed:

- John 14:1-4
- 2 Cor 5:1-10
- Phil 3:20, Rev 11:12, and Heb 11:16

Description of heaven – **Revelation 21:1-22:5**

## Lesson 13 - Eternal Life & Heaven

Jonah story – we are going to Uncle Chris’ house this week. When he saw his church clothes this morning that is where he wanted to go. He has never been to Uncle Chris’ house or seen it but he wants to be there. *Why?* – Uncle Chris is there

Misconception #1 – we get eternal life after we die

- Line last week...pointed into eternity

A few verses that seem to say we get it when we die:

- Matthew 19:16 – what must I do to get it
- Matthew 25:46 – some to punishment others to eternal life

Middle of the road – could go either way:

- Luke 18:30 – depends on what “in the age to come” means

Verses that say we have eternal life now:

- John 3:15-16
- John 5:24 – “has eternal life”
- John 10:28 – I give them eternal life
- 1 Tim 6:12 – take hold of the eternal life to which you were called
- Rom 6:4 – baptism and new life

Already & Not Yet verses:

- John 6:40 – believe in Christ and have eternal life and will be raised up in last day

*So which is it? How do you put those pieces together?*

It is both – when we become Christians eternal life has already begun. Death won’t stop us from it

**Rom 8:28-39** – nothing can separate us from God

God wants us to be living for eternity now.

*How do we do that? What does that look like?*

Misconception #2 – Eternal life is about time

- The Greek word for eternal life can mean a quality, quantity or both.
- Eternal life is not just about living forever...it is about the quality of that life.
- That is why there is a difference between those who are saved and those who are not and yet both live forever but only one really has eternal life.

- There is a difference between living forever and having eternal life
- Difference = presence of God

## WHAT WILL HEAVEN BE LIKE?

### Revelation 21

Qualities of our new eternal existence:

- **21:3** - God will dwell with His people – this is the MAIN POINT! This is what God has always been after but sin has kept this from being the case. Once God has made all things new and there is no more sin and death, he will again dwell with his people like he did in the beginning (before sin and death entered the picture)
  - **Rom 8:35ff** is finally fully fulfilled!
- No tears, death, mourning, or pain – all things new and redeemed
- No sea – a symbol of chaos and “restless insubordination” (Metzger, 99)
  - This was the home of Leviathan, etc – God has brought even the most chaotic parts of creation to order
  - This could be the sea on the earth or the sea that was around the throne of God (4:6)
- **\*Heaven is eternal:**
- *15For this reason Christ is the mediator of a new covenant, that those who are called may receive the promised eternal inheritance—now that he has died as a ransom to set them free from the sins committed under the first covenant. Hebrews 9:15*
- **Revelation 21:4**
- **\*Heaven is a place of incomparable beauty:**
- *1Then the angel showed me the river of the water of life, as clear as crystal, flowing from the throne of God and of the Lamb 2down the middle of the great street of the city. On each side of the river stood the tree of life, bearing twelve crops of fruit, yielding its fruit every month. And the leaves of the tree are for the healing of the nations. 3No longer will there*

- *be any curse. The throne of God and of the Lamb will be in the city, and his servants will serve him. 4They will see his face, and his name will be*
- **Gulf Coast Church School; Elementary, Lesson 6 Page 4**
- *on their foreheads. 5There will be no more night. They will not need the light of a lamp or the light of the sun, for the Lord God will give them light. And they will reign for ever and ever.*
- **Revelation 22:1-5**

**21:5** – God speaks for only the second time in the whole book of Revelation

“I am making everything new”

- New
  - This is not like having an old pair of shoes and getting a new pair, which means the old is no longer used and the new is a completely different, replaced pair.
  - This word means “a new kind” (Metzger, 98)
  - Continuity with and different from what we now know
- “I am making”
  - not I will make
  - the sense that the things are so sure and true because God is the one doing it
  - It is already happening – gives us hope!

**21:6** - “It is done”

- Again...present tense. Not it will be done like this but it is done
- This is like John 14 :1 – “I go there”
- When was the last time we heard this? – It is finished (John 19:30)

**Alpha** – beginning and **Omega** – end.

- Here we have the end of all things which is, ironically a new beginning. God is creative by his very nature.
- In bringing old things to a close he actually starts something new
  - “Because God is the initiator of the world, God is also its consummator” – Reddish, 404

**21:6-8** – Two camps:

- Those who follow God will end up where he is (given their blessing and inheritance by God)
- Those who follow the beast will end up where he is (fire lake of the 2<sup>nd</sup> death)

The city of God comes down from heaven (the church – 21:9-10)

21:9-27 – a description of the church.

- God’s people are his city and a bride – shows you can’t take these images too literally but that each is trying to make its own point.

Many believe that the New Jerusalem of Rev 21 is set up in contrast to Babylon (Rome) of Revelation 17-18. See Reddish’s chart at the end of these notes.

Highlights even further – God’s way will win and the way of the world, though it seems mighty and righty...will fail.

**21:10** – carried to a mountain (a place of divine revelation) to see the bride, the Holy City and New Jerusalem

- Shone with God's glory
- 12 open gates with angels at each one
  - 12 tribes
  - 12 apostles
  - OT and NT together – God has unified it all
- Cube-like city of vast proportions.
  - It is not about figuring out how many feet or miles this is and analyzing it.
  - The point is, it is **HUGE** and **PERFECT!**

**21:18-21** – 12 Jewels decorating the foundations of the city

- Could come from Exodus 28 & 39 where the breastplate of the high priest had 12 stones.

**21:22** – no more temple

- The temple represented God's dwelling among his people
- There is no more need for mere representations. God is visibly present!

**21:24** – kings of the earth?

- Up to this point kings of the earth have represented evil
- Why do they now bring glory to God's city?
  - Some have said this is pushing for universal salvation (ignores the rest of Revelation)
  - More probable – some of the worldly will be saved and come to repentance.

**21:25** – No gates

- No need for security or protection
- Cities typically shut gates at night – now there is no night
- There are no more evil or danger left. All God's enemies have been defeated

**21:27** – **Application**

- If we are to be the kind of people God wants in his kingdom, we have to avoid the shameful and deceitful ways of the world.
- Take a moment to reflect on anything that falls into those two categories in your life and think about how important it is to God that they be taken care of.

### **The Two Cities (Reddish, 404):**

John has drawn an intentional contrast between the city of “Babylon” and the new Jerusalem. A comparison of the details of the cities illustrates the opposing natures of these two cities.

#### ***Babylon***

Its “sins heaped high as heaven” (18:5)

Located in the wilderness (17:3)

The great prostitute (17:1)

Clothed in purple and scarlet (17:4)  
husband (21:2)

Adorned with gold and jewels and pearls (17:4)

Full of abominations and impurities (17:4)

A dwelling place of demons (18:2)

God’s people told to “come out” of the city (18:4)

A city of death – filled “with the blood of the saints  
and the blood of the witnesses to Jesus” (17:6)

The kings of the earth commit fornication with  
city (21:24)  
the city (17:2)

God will give the city torment and grief (18:7)  
more (21:4)

The light of a lamp will shine in it no more (18:23)

Deceives the nations by its sorcery (18:23)  
nations (22:2)

The city will be destroyed (Ch. 18)  
and ever (22:5)

#### ***The New Jerusalem***

The holy city (21:2)

Located on a mountain (21:10)

A bride (21:9)

Prepared as a bride adorned for her

Adorned with precious jewels, gates of  
pearls, street of gold (21:18-21)

Uncleanness, abomination and falsehood  
are excluded (21:27)

The dwelling of God (21:3)

God’s people will enter the city (21:14)

Death will be no more (21:4)

The kings of earth bring their glory into the

“mourning and crying and pain will be no

God is its light, the lamb is its lamp; there  
will be no night there (21:23, 25)

Leaves of its tree are for the healing of the

The redeemed will live in the city forever

## Lesson 14 - What is the Bible?

When you pick up a book to read it, what you think it is supposed to be has an impact on how you read it.

*What are different reasons for reading the books we read?*

- Entertainment
- Information
- Self-help

*Why do you/we read the Bible?*

- Information that leads to eternal transformation

*What makes the Bible different than any other book written?*

- Other books written from the minds of people
- The bible is revelation from God via inspiration written so we can know God
- **Authority of the Bible – if the Bible comes from God, divine maker and creator – then these words have authority**

*How would you view a letter of things you needed to do that came from your crazy neighbor vs the president of the United States, a commanding officer, your spouse?*

*How much importance would you give the two and why the difference?*

- Who the letter is from makes a difference on how important you think it is

### Revelation

*What does Revelation mean?*

*Why does God reveal anything to us?*

**Revelation** - We can only know as much about God as God reveals himself to us. That is called divine revelation. God reveals certain things about himself to us through His Words and His Actions. We find both recorded in the Bible.

So if you want to find out who God is you have to go to scripture to get the majority of your information.

### Scriptures regarding Revelation

### Inspiration

*What does inspiration mean?*

- Something breathed in (Actually, scripture is breathed out – misnomer!)
- *From whom?* – From God to us.

## Lesson 14 – Is Hell Real?

### Things have changed...

- 5 years ago title for this class – “What is hell like”
- Why? – People assume hell is a reality
- Now...universalism abounds – “Is hell real?”
- Reality of hell is challenged

### The Following Section is from Randy Simmons

#### WHAT DOES THE BIBLE TEACH ABOUT HELL?

The common word for “hell” in the Old Testament is “**Sheol**”, which means “the grave.” The Hebrew word “Sheol” was translated into Greek as “**Hades**.” Jesus, in the parable of the rich man and Lazarus, said that Lazarus had gone to a place called “paradise” (Luke 23:43). Two people died, but in their afterlives they were treated differently.

The rich man went to Hades at death:

*<sup>23</sup>In hell, where he was in torment, he looked up and saw Abraham far away, with Lazarus by his side. <sup>24</sup>So he called to him, ‘Father Abraham, have pity on me and send Lazarus to dip the tip of his finger in water and cool my tongue, because I am in agony in this fire.’*

#### Luke 16:23-24

He could look across a “great chasm that has been fixed” (16:26) and see where the saved were located, but he could not escape his “agony” and “torment” (16:25,28).

“Gehenna” is a word appearing twelve times in the New Testament and is translated “hell” and “lake of fire.” It likely refers to the Valley of Hinnom, a dumping ground for the city of Jerusalem used in Jesus’ day to burn garbage. It was a place of filth and stench, or fire and death, a fitting metaphor for hell.

## WHAT WILL HELL BE LIKE?

### **\*It is a place of unquenchable fire:**

*<sup>41</sup>The Son of Man will send out his angels, and they will weed out of his kingdom everything that causes sin and all who do evil. <sup>42</sup>They will throw them into the fiery furnace, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.*

**Matthew 13:41-42**

*<sup>24</sup>So he called to him, 'Father Abraham, have pity on me and send Lazarus to dip the tip of his finger in water and cool my tongue, because I am in agony in this fire.'*

**Luke 16:24**

*<sup>8</sup>But the cowardly, the unbelieving, the vile, the murderers, the sexually immoral, those who practice magic arts, the idolaters and all liars—their place will be in the fiery lake of burning sulfur. This is the second death."*

**Revelation 21:8**

### **\*It will be a place of memory and remorse:**

*<sup>25</sup>"But Abraham replied, 'Son, remember that in your lifetime you received your good things, while Lazarus received bad things, but now he is comforted here and you are in agony.*

**Luke 16:25**

### **\*It will be a place of separation:**

*<sup>26</sup>And besides all this, between us and you a great chasm has been fixed, so that those who want to go from here to you cannot, nor can anyone cross over from there to us.'*

**Luke 16:26**

**\*The inhabitants will be Satan and his angels, along with unforgiven, disobedient, unrepentant sinners:**

*<sup>10</sup>And the devil, who deceived them, was thrown into the lake of burning sulfur, where the beast and the false prophet had been thrown. They will be tormented day and night for ever and ever.*

*<sup>15</sup>If anyone's name was not found written in the book of life, he was thrown into the lake of fire.*                      **Revelation 20:10,15**

*<sup>4</sup>For if God did not spare angels when they sinned, but sent them to hell, putting them into gloomy dungeons to be held for judgment;*

**2 Peter 2:4**

*<sup>8</sup>But the cowardly, the unbelieving, the vile, the murderers, the sexually immoral, those who practice magic arts, the idolaters and all liars—their place will be in the fiery lake of burning sulfur. This is the second death.”*

**Revelation 21:8**

## **Putting this in perspective today**

*Why do people have a hard time with hell?*

**The apparent contradiction – how can an all loving God willingly submit some people to eternal torment forever?**

**Rob Bell's question – does love win? Does God get what He wants?**

- Puts it in the court of the existence of hell as a challenge to God's sovereignty
- Either you have to say God doesn't get what he wants
  - What is the problem with that? –God sounds weak

- Or God gets what he wants and he wants people in hell...why else did he set it up that way?
  - What is the problem with that? – God sounds unloving

*What does God want?*

- 2 Peter 3:9 – God wants all to come to repentance
  - *What does that mean?*
- Josh 24:15 – people have the capability to choose God or choose something else
- God made us that way.

**God is love:**

- 1 John 4:7-10
  - *How is God loving?*
  - *How does God express his love?*
  - *How does Christ's death show the extent of God's love?*

The problem of **hell** does not make God unloving because of the **cross**.

- Romans 5:6-8

**God can be love and hell still be hell:**

*How does the cross show us that hell can exist and God still be a God of love?*

- Unloving God – leave us to die in hell forever
- Loving God – realizes our predicament and does something to lift us out of it.

**Hell is the result of choice:**

*What is hell?*

- The ultimate destination for those who choose someone other than God
- It is the ultimate and final destination for those who have rebelled and rejected against God and His love

**This makes sense out of why hell is the place it is:**

- Remove God from life and see what results

*What is God the source of?*

- Life
- Light
- Blessing
- Salvation
- Holiness
- Righteousness
- Kindness
- Compassion

*Take God away and what are you left with? – HELL*

*Why?*

- That is why hell is a place of darkness, death, suffering, etc – opposite of God's qualities because God isn't there to display his eternal nature.

*How do love and choice go together?*

**Hell is not the result of an unloving God forcing someone somewhere they don't want to be.**

Hell is the natural result of a life without God.

**Good news is this – we don't have to live lives terrified of hell. God has provided a way we can live with him forever and God wants us to be sure of our salvation!**

- 2 Peter 1:10

**Application:**

*How does hell motivate us to reach out?*

*More importantly – how does heaven motivate us to reach out?*

Continuity in our lives demands that we aren't waiting on heaven – we live for it now. We also don't need to be living like we are in hell either – *How can we live lives that seem to no longer acknowledge that God is at work or even around at all?*

*How do we break out of that and regain our trust and assurance that God is alive and well and active in our lives today?*

## Lesson 16 - Questions About Hell

1. *Will people get a second chance after they die?*
  - What do you think?
  - How would you answer someone who says that?
  - Where would you turn in scripture?

Some believe everyone will get as many chances as they need until they are won over by God's love.

Rob Bell said this,

“And so they expand the possibilities, trusting that there will be endless opportunities in an endless amount of time for people to say yes to God. As long as it takes... At the heart of this perspective is the belief that given enough time everybody will turn to God and find themselves in the joy and peace of God's presence. The love of God will melt every hard heart and even the most 'depraved sinners' will eventually give up their resistance and turn to God.” (p.107)

And this...

“Could God say to someone truly humbled, broken and desperate for reconciliation, 'Sorry, too late'? Many have refused to accept the scenario in which somebody is pounding on the door, apologizing, repenting, and asking God to be let in, only to hear God say through the keyhole: 'Door's locked. Sorry. If you had been here earlier, I could have done something. But now, it's too late.'” (p.108)

Jesus lays out that exact situation in **Luke 13:22-30**

- First Jesus answer the other question – will everyone be saved?
- Second he answers the question – will people get a second chance?

*What does Jesus mean by many will try to enter but not be able to?*

- Seems like if someone was trying to enter they could – **Rev 3:20**

The door = opportunity:

- Time when the door is open
- Time when the door is closed
- There will come a point in time when the opportunity is no more
- “The invitation is open but the way to the kingdom is narrow and demands more than a casual interest...When the door is closed it is closed. The door will certainly not be reopened for persons whose only claim is that Jesus once visited their town or preached in their streets or that they once saw Jesus in a crowd or knew members of his family. These appeals are not only futile but also self-incriminating because their opportunity carried obligations.” (Craddock, 172)
- *What does Craddock mean by their opportunity carried obligations?*

- Because they had time or opportunity with Jesus they should have followed him
- Instead this shallow connection became for them “fire insurance” even though it didn’t lead to any meaningful transformation in their lives.

### ***What did Jesus have to say about hell?***

#### **Matthew 25:31-46**

- *When do people experience hell?* – after judgment
- *How does Jesus describe hell?*
- *How long does Jesus say hell lasts?*
- *Who does Jesus say hell is for?*
  - Satan is not the ruler of hell...Hell is the place God punishes all those who stand in the way of His will, plan and purpose...including Satan (and sin and death – **Rev 20:14**)

#### **Matthew 13:40-42**

- *What happens to those who are weeded out?*
- *Who is it Jesus says gets weeded out?*
- Hell is a place of punishment, fire, etc for those who stand opposed to God and who uphold sin

#### **Matthew 8:11-12**

- *What other way does Jesus characterize hell?* – place of darkness
- *Why is it a place of darkness?* – It is devoid of God’s presence and God is light

There are many other passages we could look at including:

- Luke 16 – Rich man and Lazarus
- Matthew 5 – fires of hell
- Matthew 10 – destruction of hell
- Matt 23 – hell is a place of condemnation

*Why do you think Jesus had this much to say/warn about hell?*

### ***What did Jesus’ followers have to say about hell?***

Paul doesn’t really use the same terms Jesus did about hell. Do a word search for “hell” in Paul’s letters and come up empty

Instead he talked about: death, destruction, and wrath (Chan, 98)

#### **Paul - 2 Thess 1:6-9**

- *What makes hell, hell?* – the presence of God is gone

#### **Peter – 2 Peter 2**

#### **John – Revelation 14:9-11 & 20:10-15**

*Are there degrees of punishment in hell?* – ask the class

- Maybe – Matthew 11:24, Luke 12:46-48

Jesus – Savior...from what?

*What questions do you have about hell?*