PASTOR DANIEL TIMOFTE- WHATSAPP POSTS
VOLUME 2 (posted on whatsapp from Feb 2016 till Jan 2017)

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POST 01. 75 VERSES ABOUT ALCOHOL

1) Gen9:20-26 - Noah became drunk; the result was immorality and family trouble.
2) Gen19:30-38 - Lot was so drunk he did not know what he was doing; this led to immorality
3) Lev10:9-11 - God commanded priests not to drink so that they could tell the difference between the holy and the unholy.
4) Num6:3 - The Nazarites were told to eat or drink nothing from the grape vine.
5) Deut21:20 - A drunken son was stubborn and rebellious. Stoned.
6) Deut29:5,6 - God gave no grape juice to Israel nor did they have intoxicating drink in the
wilderness.
7) Deut32:33 - Intoxicating wine is like the poison of serpents, the cruel venom of asps.
8) Judges 13:4,7,14 - Samson was to be a Nazarite ('dedicated to God and ministry', forbidden to drink alcohol) for life. His mother was also told not to drink wine or strong drink.
9) 1Sam1:14,15 - Accused, Hannah said she drank no wine.
10) 1Sam25:32-38 - Nabal died after a drunken spree.
11) 2Sam11:13 - By getting Uriah drunk, David hoped to trap him and cover his own sin.
12) 2Sam13:28,29 - Amnon was drunk when he was killed.
13) 1Kings16:8-10 - The king was drinking himself into drunkenness when he was assassinated
14) 1Kings 20:12-21 - Ben-Hadad and 32 other kings were drinking when they were attacked and defeated by the Israelites.
15) Esther 1:5-12 - The king gave each one all the drink he wanted. The king was intoxicated when he commanded the queen to come to boast with.
16) Ps75:8 - The Lord’s anger is pictured as mixed wine poured out and drunk by the wicked.
17) Prov4:17 - Alcoholic drink is called the wine of violence.
18) Prov20:1 - Wine is a mocker, strong drink is raging.
19) Prov23:19,20 - A wise person will not be among the drinkers of alcoholic beverages.
20) Prov23:21 - Drunkenness causes poverty.
21) Prov23:29,30 - Drinking causes woe, sorrow, fighting, babbling, wounds without cause and red eyes.
22) Prov23:31 - God instructs not to even look at intoxicating drinks.
23) Prov23:32 - Alcoholic drinks bite like a serpent, sting like an adder.
24) Prov23:33 - Alcohol causes the drinker to have strange and adulterous thoughts, produces
willfulness, and prevents reformation.
25) Prov23:34 - Alcohol makes the drinker unstable
26) Prov23:35 - Alcohol makes the drinker insensitive to pain so he does not perceive it as a
warning. Alcohol is habit forming.
27) Proverb 31:4,5 - Kings, Princes, and others who rule and judge must not drink alcohol. Alcohol perverts good judgment.
28) Proverbs 31:6,7 - Strong drink could be given to those about to perish or those in pain. Better anesthetics are available today. Or tell them you offer them alcohol if they don't want God to comfort them, so that their descent from this world into hell would be less painful: that could make them think again!
29) Eccl2:3 - The king tried everything, including intoxicating drink, to see if it satisfied. It
did not. (also 12:8)
30) Eccl10:17 - A land is blessed when its leaders do not drink.
31) Is5:11,12 - Woe to those who get up early to drink and stay up late at night to get drunk.
32) Is5:22 - Woe to "champion" drinkers and "experts" at mixing drinks.
33) Is19:14 - Drunken men stagger in their vomit.
34) Is22:12,13 - The Israelites choose to drink; their future looked hopeless to them.
35) Is24:9 - Drinkers cannot escape the consequences when God judges.
36) Is28:1 - God pronounces woe on the drunkards of Ephraim.
37) Is28:3 - Proud drunkards shall be trodden down.
38) Is28:7 - Priests and prophets stagger and reel from beer and wine, err in vision, and stumble
in judgment.
39) Is28:8 - Drinkers’ tables are covered with vomit and filth.
40) Is56:9-12 - Drinkers seek their own gain and expect tomorrow to be just like today.
41) Jer35:2-14 - The Rechabites drank no grape juice or intoxicating wine and were blessed.
42) Ez44:21 - Again God instructed the priests not to drink wine.
43) Dan1:5-17 - Daniel refused the king’s intoxicating wine and was blessed for it along with his abstaining friends.

44) Dan5:1 - Belshazzar, ruler of Babylon; led his people in drinking.
45) Dan5:2,3 - The king, along with his nobles, wives, and concubines, drank from the goblets which had been taken from God's temple.
46) Dan5:4 - Drinking wine was combined with praising false gods.
47) Dan5:23 - God sent word to Belshazzar that punishment would be swift for the evil he had
committed.
48) Hosea4:11 - Intoxicating wine takes away intelligence.
49) Hosea7:5 - God reproves princes for drinking.
50) Joel1:5 - Drunkards awake to see God's judgment.
51) Joel3:3 - The enemy is judged for selling girls for wine.
52) Amos2:8 - Unrighteous acts of Israel included the drinking of wine which had been taken for the payment of fines.
53) Amos2:12 - Israel is condemned for forcing Nazarites to drink wine.
54) Micah2:11 - Israelites are eager to follow false teachers who prophesy plenty of intoxicating drinks.
55) Nahum1:10 - The drunkards of Nineveh will be destroyed by God.
56) Hab2:5 - A man is betrayed by wine.
57) Hab2:15 - Woe to him that gives his neighbor drink.
58) Hab2:16 - Drinking leads to shame.
59) Matt24:48-51 - A drinking servant is unprepared for his Lord's return.
60) Lk1:15 - John the Baptist drank neither grape juice nor wine.
61) Lk12:45 - Christ warned against drunkenness.
62) Lk21:34 - Drunkenness will cause a person not to be ready for the Lord's return.
63) Rom13:13 - Do not walk in drunkenness or immorality.
64) Rom14:21 - Do not do anything that will hurt your testimony as a believer.
65) 1Cor5:11 - If a Christian brother is a drinker, do not associate with him.
66) 1Cor6:10 - Drunkards will not inherit the kingdom of God
67) Gal5:21 – Habitual acts of the sinful nature, such as drunkenness, will prohibit a person from inheriting the kingdom of God as he might be unsaved; if he is saved and gets drunk he will be chastised by God 1Cor11:21 to 30
68) Eph5:18 - In contrast to being drunk with wine, the believer is to be filled with the Spirit.
69) 1Thess5:6-7 - Christians are to be alert and self-controlled, belonging to the day. Drunkards
belong to the night and darkness.
70) 1Tim3:2,3 - Bishops (elders) are to be temperate, sober, and not near any wine.
71) 1Tim3:8 - Deacons are to be worthy of respect and not drinkers.
74) Titus2:2,3 - The older men and older women of the church are to be temperate and not addicted to wine.
75) 1Pet4:3,4 - The past life of drunkenness has no place in the Christian's life.

Think twice. God knows better.

POST 02. CAN A CHRISTIAN DRINK ALCOHOL?

--ALCOHOL CONSUMPTION CAUSES MAJOR HEALTH PROBLEMS. Researchers have linked alcohol consumption to **more than 60 diseases**, most common are: anemia, cancer, cardiovascular diseases, cirrhosis, dementia, depression, seizures (convulsion like epilepsy), gout, high blood pressure, nerve damage, pancreatitis, lumps and fibroms, affects the immune system providing a door for infections,
including tuberculosis, pneumonia, HIV/AIDS, and other sexually transmitted diseases (including some that cause infertility). People who drink heavily also are more likely to engage in risky sex. Certain damaging components of alcohol are always stored in your body and certain damages produced to your body are irreversible.

"Alcohol does all kinds of things in the body, and scientists are not yet fully aware of all its effects" says James C. Garbutt, MD, professor of psychiatry at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill School of Medicine and a researcher at the university's Bowles Center for Alcohol Studies. "It's a pretty complicated little molecule."

-OVER 2.5 MILLION PEOPLE ANNUALLY BECAUSE OF ALCOHOL, many more millions suffering illness and injury – statistic comes from World Health Organization based on measurements from only 100 out of 220 countries. In 2014, in the United States alone 9,967 people were killed in alcohol-related driving crashes, accounting for nearly one-third (31%) of all traffic-related deaths.

-Police considers you a law breaker if your blood alcohol is above

0.08%, that means about 150ml alcohol for a 65kg person; risks of driving under the influence of alcohol:

•Reduced reaction times

•Reduced concentration and vigilance

•Feeling more relaxed and drowsy, which may cause a driver to fall asleep at the wheel

•Difficulty in understanding sensory information

•Difficulty doing several tasks at once (e.g. keep in the lane and in the right direction, while observing other cars in traffic)

•Failure to obey road rules

•Over confidence, which may lead to risk taking

•Impaired Vision

...now, you may not drive, but these effects of alcohol can still harm you!!!

- **In New Testament times, the water was not very clean**. Without modern sanitation, the water was often filled with bacteria, viruses, and all kinds of contaminants. As a result, people often drank wine (or grape juice) because it was far less likely to be contaminated. In 1Tim5:23, Paul was instructing Timothy to drink a little bit of wine because of his stomach health but today we have better medication. In that day, fermented wine did not have the same degree of alcohol as today.

--Although **GRAPE JUICE qualifies as "the fruit of the vine"** (see Matt26:29; Mark14:25; Lk22:18), it seems that some of the New Testament carnal churches used REAL ALCOHOLIC WINE for communion as some got drunk during communion 1Cor11:21.

--**THE LORD MADE WATER INTO WINE** (Jn2:1) **AND CONSUMED WINE** (Lk7:33-39), where "oinos" in Greek, means 'wine' but also 'grape juice'; equivalent word "tyirosh" in Hebrew, it means 'grape juice'. I can't imagine Jesus supporting alcoholism (millions are dying every year because of alcohol, I personally hears alcoholics use the excuse "Jesus made wine out of water!") Hab2:15 'wow unto him that pours wine into his neighbor's cup till he is drunk...' Jesus changed 6 pots of water into wine, about 300 liters, while the wedding feast had culturally about 100-200 people! Would Jesus invite all to get drunk?

--Luke 7:34 says people called Jesus a glutton and alcoholic, friend of sinners and prostitutes; that does not mean that Jesus was drinking alcoholic wine, neither that he was going with prostitutes or partaking of sinners' sinful lives, those were just false accusations;

--Deut18:4: "Bring the first fruit also of your corn, of your WINE, and of your oil..." "Wine" here is the Hebrew "tirosh," meaning freshly pressed juice. Similarly in Is65:8 we read of the **"NEW WINE ("TIROSH" FRESH GRAPE JUICE), FOUND IN THE CLUSTER"** – you don't find alcoholic wine in grape clusters but grape juice (see 2Chron31:4-5; Neh10:37-39;13:5,12)

--JESUS IS THE FIRST OF THE FIRST FRUITS, 1Cor15:23, and the true vine, Jn15:1. First fruit of wine is grape juice (new wine), Jesus represents the new wine, which is grape juice, not the intoxicating and harmful alcoholic wine. Alcoholic wine is a fermentation or alteration of the grape juice, just as an alteration of Bible doctrine brings destruction, also as the manna kept overnight produced worms.

--Mark 2:22 **"NEW WINE IN NEW WINESKIN"** – new wine is grape juice that through boiling and with certain ingredients had a slowed down fermentation; when fermentation occurs, grape juice releases gas that expands the volume of the recipient becoming alcoholic wine; new wineskin can expand, old ones are already expanded and if new wine is placed inside, they burst. It speaks of the fact that the new life found in Christ can't be lived by someone who is not born again.

--Jesus said at the last supper that He will only drink again of the fruit of the vine in heaven: can you imagine alcohol in heaven?? Grape juice I can imagine!

--Ex12 forbade any FERMENTATION to be consumed and even kept in the house during Passover, therefore for sure Jesus used grape juice at the Last Supper not alcoholic wine, also unleavened bread

--Even if the example of some of the early churches was to use wine in communion, does this mean the modern church is required to do the same? Not necessarily. Think of the OFFENSE to CHILDREN who would be introduced to alcohol at church; the use of real wine could be a **STUMBLING BLOCK** to those with a background of **ALCOHOL**

ADDICTON. Read Rom14:21 , 1Cor10:31,32.

--When He was hanging on the cross, with acute thirst, **Jesus refused the mixed wine** they offered Him to alleviate his suffering.

--On Pentecost, when the disciples were filled with the Holy Spirit, onlookers said, “These men are drunk with new wine” (Acts 2:13). The Greek word here is gleukos, which was either new unfermented wine or “must,” a sweet boiled non-alcoholic grape juice. These onlookers were mocking the devoted disciples by saying, “They are drunk on grape juice.” This indicates that the disciples were known for their abstinence of alcohol!

--Pr.31:4 “It is not for kings, O Lemuel, It is not for kings to drink wine, Nor for princes intoxicating drink." If you are born again, you are a king and a priest 1Pet2:9. Lev.10:9,19 forbade priests to drink alcohol so that they could have a clear thinking.

CONCLUSION

– SO CAN A CHRISTIAN DRINK A BIT OF ALCOHOL?

--YES! The bible does not forbid drinking alcohol but getting drunk. It is drunkenness and addiction to alcohol that a Christian must absolutely refrain from (Eph5:18; 1Cor6:12; 10:23).

Now when can you say that someone is drunk? Only when one stumbles and falls in the street?? Or rather if his thinking starts to be affected even a bit – I would say? Police defines drunkenness starts at at 0.008% or about one beer or two but your thinking is affected with even less alcohol than one beer.

-Alcohol also affects your health; **your body is the temple of the Holy Spirit** 1Cor3:16 and you should not harm your health

-Pastors and evangelists in many ministries (in our Greater Grace ministry as well) have made a **COVENANT BEFORE GOD IN 3 AREAS** for their own protection and for the sake of their testimony: **WOMEN** (don't be alone in a closed room or in a car with a woman other than immediate family: wife, sister, daughter, aunt, grandmother), **ALCOHOL** (don't drink alcohol at all but don't forbid alcohol unto the church) and **MINISTRY MONEY** (don't handle ministry money but have elders and deacons do that).

-Many Christians claim not to be dependent on alcohol but they can't go one day without their one glass of wine: they don't get drunk but they can't go without it; just like watching movies: nothing wrong about watching good movies but don't let them control you into dependance. However, one glass of wine could become 2 then 5 glasses, soon or late, maybe 20 years later with some sort of disaster and shame; why not make a personal decision before God to walk far away from the cliff of alcohol risks? Don't give space to the devil Eph4:27.

-Marihuana use in small quantities ("recreational use") was just legalized in certain states and other states are following: guess how many will be harmed by it and how many will overdose it? Guess how many Christians that advocate alcohol in small quantities will also advocate marihuana in small quantities?

Alcohol is an addictive drug and none of us is superman to control it: proof is that millions are dying because of alcohol every year.

POST 03. ANOINTING OIL?

--Anointing oil was used in the Old Testament for pouring on the head of the **priests** and sprinkling the tabernacle and its furnishings to mark them as holy and set apart to the Lord (Ex25:6; Lev8:30; Num4:16)

--Kings were also anointed with oil, as a symbol of consecration (setting apart) by God for the specific task of leadership

--Oil was also poured **on wounds** for the purpose of softening the wound and wine as antiseptic Luke10:25

--Lev24:2 oil was used to **burn in lamps** continually, symbol of the Holy Spirit's presence. Oil is used as a symbol for the Holy Spirit in the Parable of the Wise and Foolish Virgins (Matt25:1-13)

THERE ARE 2 MAIN GREEK WORDS FOR THE ACTION "TO ANOINT":

-"ALEIPHO" – it means regular anointing or rubbing with oil; it is used 7 times: Mat6:17 (when you fast, anoint your head and wash your face); Mark6:13 (disciples anoint the sick);16:1 (to anoint to dead body of Jesus); Luke7:38,46 (sinful repentant woman anointed the feet of Jesus); Jn11:2,12:3 (Mary anoints Jesus' feet); **James5:14 (elders anoint the sick)**

-"CHRIO" – it means ceremonial anointing with oil as consecration to an office or spiritual service; it is used 5 times, 4 are referring of **God anointing Jesus**: Luke4:18; Acts4:27; 10:38; Heb1:9; fifth use: **God has anointed us**: 2Cor1:21

Name **"CHRIST" means "anointed one",** in Greek it is "Christos", its Hebrew translation is **"Messiah"**

-NOUN "ANOINTING" is "chrisma" and comes from word "chrio"; it is only used in 1Jn2:20,27; it can be translated also unguent, smearing, unction, being a symbol of a special endowment of the Holy Spirit.

1Jn2:20 "But you have the **ANOINTING from the Holy One (Jesus is the Holy One, see Rev3:7)**, and you know the truth". Anointing here means that the Spirit of Jesus leads us and teaches us the truth Jn16:13

In Matt6:17 ('when you fast, anoint your head and wash your face') Jesus rebukes hypocrites: Jews had the habit of anointing their head with some aromatic oils when they woke up (instead of hair gel) but when some fasted they didn't care for their hair or face so that others would notice they are fasting. Jesus is not commanding us to anoint our heads with oil and wash our face every time we fast.

SHOULD CHRISTIANS USE ANOINTING OIL TODAY?

James 5:14 is not a commandment that every time we pray for someone sick we should anoint the person with oil but oil is just a symbol of the healing work of the Holy Spirit; symbols are symbols: the oil does not heal but the Holy Spirit heals. James continues in v15: "the prayer of faith will heal the sick person", not the oil.

James wrote this letter to Jews (James1:1); letter was written a few years after the crucifixion, being one of the first writings of the New Testament. Jews were familiar with the process of anointing with oil: according to the law of Moses when someone was already healed of leprosy he had to go to a priest who was anointing him with oil in a symbolic way as a confirmation of his physical cleansing - see **Lev14:1-32**, the oil didn't heal the leprosy but was just a symbol that God had considered the person clean spiritually as well v3-5. In this situation the **ceremonial anointing with oil was a way to show God's acceptance for the one that was healed of leprosy.**

When Jesus sent the disciples to anoint with oil and heal the sick ('go rather to the lost sheep of Israel', to Jews who read Moses' books) **Mark 6:13, Jesus did a revolutionary act**: this **anointing action proclaimed that spiritual cleansing is available** Lev14:3-7, then the healing of the body followed as a confirmation of the available spiritual cleansing through faith in God; many are looking for the physical healing but the spiritual cleansing available through the blood of Jesus is more important. Many of the ones healed physically by Jesus are in hell today as they did not desire God (see Luke 17 the 9 lepers healed by Jesus went their way).

JESUS NEVER ANOINTED ANYONE WITH OIL even though He has healed many (just as Jesus never baptized anyone himself but he asked the disciples to do it Jn4:2). If anointing with oil was required for healing then Jesus would have anointed people (or at least would ask his disciples to anoint) every time he healed anyone.

PAUL NEVER MENTIONED ANOINTING WITH OIL. Paul healed many without oil at the beginning of his ministry Acts19:12; then later Paul asked Timothy to drink a bit of wine for medical reasons – stomach issues – but did not ask him to use oil 1Tim5:23. Same for Trophimus 2Tim4:20 or Epaphroditus Phil2:27.

CONCLUSION

-Christians can use anointing with oil before praying for healing but it is not an obligation. We do anoint with oil in our church at times, or anytime upon request, using regular oil (I prefer olive oil)

-Preachers that sell anointing oil that is said to have "special powers" are deceivers; their purpose is cash and self-promotion

-charging cash for anointing with oil is sin, those are false shepherds; see our study "Shepherds according to the Heart of God"

-"double anointing" formula is not biblical but a distortion of 'double portion of Elijah's Spirit', see 2Kings2:9 and Deut21:16,17.
-claiming that some special oil offers filling with the Holy Spirit is a deception, the Holy Spirit is received once and for all through faith in Jesus Rom8:9 and filling of the Spirit is through availability to God Eph5:18, not through oil; ask me for our study "Spirit filling".

Many people run after the "oil prophets" because they want an easy solution that avoids the cross of Jesus; in fact they say to the "oil-anointing prophet": let me live in sin far away from Jesus, just anoint me with your magic oil for protection against demons. If you have done that, repent and trust in Jesus alone.

POST 04. WHY BIBLE COLLEGE?

The Bible is clear on the importance of studying the Word of God;
--see our studies "Is the Bible inspired by God?", "The Most Important Book", "Is the Bible scientific and trustworthy?", "365 Fulfilled Prophecies".

Here are some questions many ask regarding BIBLE COLLEGE TRAINING:

1. "THE HOLY SPIRIT TEACHES ME (1Jn.2:20:27), WHY WOULD I NEED MEN TO TEACH ME?"

ANSWER:
--the "anointing teaches you" v27 means that you have the HOLY SPIRIT of the "Holy One" (Rev.3.7), Jesus;

--JESUS GAVE TEACHERS (men) to the church Eph.4:11-12, Mat.28:18-20, these teachers are used by the Holy Spirit to teach you; just verify your (or our) teachers are indeed led by the Holy Spirit (ask me for our studies "Spirit Filling", "Shepherds according to the heart of God", "How to choose a local assembly");

--The Holy SPIRIT USED PHILIP to evangelize the Ethiopian leader in Acts 8:29;

--Paul said to Timothy: "THINGS YOU HAVE LEARNED FROM ME, TEACH OTHERS THAT WILL BE ABLE TO TEACH OTHERS" 2Tim.2:2;

--Jesus said to the 11 Apostles in John 16:5-15 that when the Comforter, the HOLY SPIRIT, WILL COME, HE WILL TEACH THEM ALL THINGS; they are the only ones (with Paul added later) that were taught directly by Jesus, then Jesus sent them to preach, to teach and to make disciples Mat.28:18-20; the Holy Spirit inspired them to write the New Testament and to lay the foundation of the early church;

--verses about the importance of trained believers teaching believers: Ex.18:20, Lev.10:11, Deut.4:9, 1Sam.12:23, Ezra 7:10, Ps.51:13, Is.28:10, Ez.44:23, Acts 4:18, 5:42, Rom.12:7, 1Cor.14:19,26, 1Tim.1:13, 3:2 (a shepherd should be able to teach), 4:11,13,16, 5:17, 6:2,3, 2Tim.2:2, 24, Tit.2:1,4, Col.1:28, Heb.5:12, 2Jn.1:9,10;

2. "I DONT NEED TO KNOW THE BIBLE IN ORDER TO KNOW GOD!!"

ANSWER:
--THE HOLY SPIRIT TEACHES BELIEVERS THROUGH THE BIBLE, which is inspired by the Holy Spirit: 1Pet.1:11, 2Pet.1:21, 2Tim.3:16; some claim that they are taught by the Holy Spirit without the Bible: if so, then why did the Holy Spirit inspire the Bible? Jesus answered Satan: "it is written", in Matt.4 and Luke 4, also Jesus said a few times, "Have you not read the Scriptures...?" see Matt.12:3, 19:4, 22:31.

--Some claim they moved to a spiritual level superior to the Bible: therefore they claim to be superior to Jesus and the 12 Apostles who lifted up the Bible.

3. "I DONT NEED A BIBLE COLLEGE TO TEACH ME, I LEARN IN CHURCH!!"

ANSWER:
--Bible college should never replace church attendance: our students are our witnesses that we ask them to be in their churches on Sundays, even if that means to drop attending some or all of our Sunday classes; Jesus said in Matt.16:18 "...I will build My Church...", not "I will build my Bible College".

--Most churches have 0.5 to 3 HOURS OF TEACHING PER WEEK (in our church we have 40min to 60min sermons on Wednesdays and Sundays); songs are not categorized as teaching, even though songs do transmit a small amount of teaching; some churches do 2 to 4 hours of songs in a church service and 1-3 hours of other activities (testimonies, 'miracles', several fund raisings, motivational speeches) but only 15 minutes of preaching and teaching; in our Bible college we teach about 14 hours per weekend, 28 weekends per year;

--Bible college has the advantage of doing THOROUGH COMPLETE STUDIES ON CATEGORIZED SUBJECTS, which in church service could not be done, as there you have people with different levels of understanding, teenagers, elderly, visitors, newly saved or even unsaved;

--Bible college offers the OPPORTUNITY TO CHOOSE SUBJECTS OF STUDY, while in church you can't offer that option; over a 4 years period we offer 40 different courses (or subjects of study, like "Counseling", "Methods of Evangelism", "Survey of Doctrine", "Church History", "Theology of Grace" and others, ask me for the list of courses)

--Bible College offers the OPPORTUNITY TO ASK QUESTIONS, which most churches don't; however, in many of our churches we do weekly/monthly times of 'questions and answers' (or seminars), usually on Sundays after the morning or evening church services; some of our students told us that their pastors are never approachable for Bible questions;

--By taking ATTENDANCE in Bible college we enforce a discipline that can't be done in church for obvious reasons; as children might be forced by parents and attendance sheets to attend school at first but after a while they might enjoy school and attend with a willing heart: so with our students;

--In Bible college you can do EXAMS AND VERIFY BIBLE KNOWLEDGE, which you can't do in church; however life is the best exam testing if the teaching has reached only your short-term memory and not the heart (character, will, decisions, self-image, faith, testimony, meditation).

--Bible college gives CERTIFICATES, DIPLOMA AND DEGREES: this is not the purpose of Bible study but is a method of certifying that someone underwent some Biblical studies; a piece of paper does not guarantee a victorious spiritual life; a piece of paper should not be the criteria of employing someone as a church minister; some of our students told us they came to our Bible college in order to get a certificate but after a few weeks of classes they said their motivation has changed: now they come because they love the Bible teaching;

--MOST OF OUR CHURCHES WITHIN OUR WORLDWIDE MINISTRY OFFER BIBLE COLLEGE TRAINING (or a few churches that are in the same area offer one central Bible college with teachers coming from these churches); many churches do not offer Bible college training because their pastors and leaders are not properly trained and can't teach a full 35 hours course on a specific subject;

--Bible college is an arm of the church, not an independent entity;

--Our Bible college is mainly intended for people from our church; however, we register students from other churches as well: we are not selfishly competing with other churches, we are of the same kingdom of Jesus, in the same team;

--In our Harare Bible college we have students from over 70 different churches, some have been attending or even graduating from 1 or more Bible colleges from other ministries;

--Bible college is not replacing your personal reading and study of the Scriptures but complements it;

4. WHY SHOULD I COME TO YOUR BIBLE COLLEGE? DO YOU NEED MY $$?

ANSWER:
--we are sad to notice that most Bible colleges in Africa charge huge fees compared to the average income in the respective countries; in our main Bible College branch in U.S.A. you would have to pay around 800$ per semester (which fee is decreasing periodically, from 4000$/semester in 2004); in Zimbabwe we only charge $15 per semester, which helps us pay part of our 4 digits monthly rent; our 100 branches in Africa charge nothing or under $15; our purpose is not $$ but to accomplish the will of God; you can still attend our classes without paying byt you will not write exams;

--in Micah 3:11 God is rebuking those who teach for the purpose of money;

see also 1Pet.5:2;

--our teachers are volunteers; most of our worldwide teachers have regular jobs or businesses and are not paid by our Bible colleges;

5. IS "BIBLE COLLEGE" BIBLICAL?

ANSWER:
--The Bible does not say how we should organize our teaching method, just that we have to study and to teach. The Apostles spent 3.5 years, 24/7 with Jesus, the best teacher ever; we offer 4 years of training plus practice opportunities afterward, it is our conviction that 1-2 years of study is not sufficient;
--Apostle Paul taught every day for 2 years in the school of Tyrannus Acts19:9;
--1Sam.19:20, Samuel had a group of prophets under training;
--In Nehemiah 8, Ezra read the Bible for over 4 hours and the levites were explaining it in small groups (they were 42.000 Jews)
--Church history shows that great revivals were motivated by proper anointed Bible studies; emotional movements without Bible training have led masses astray Hos.4:6;

6. "I DONT BELIEVE IN THEOLOGY!"

Word "theology comes from greek words "theos" ("God") and "logos" ("word") which means 'word about God'. Every person on Earth has a certain "theology", even unbelievers. So "your theology" is what you believe about God. Some Christians' theology is so small that it can sadly fit on a page A4.

If you are a Christian, you do have a theology but it might not be in line with the Bible; you may build up your theology from church services, songs, friends but not really from the Bible.

You might say, "I dont need theology in order to worship God"... Do you mean that you would worship someone whom you dont know? Would you ignore God's command to study the Word (see Mat.4.4)? Would you marry someone whom you dont know, a complete stranger? (If you would, you are danger!)

7. BIBLE COLLEGE REQUIREMENTS?

--there is no requirement other than respecting our Bible college standards: attendance, decent dress code, Doctrinal statement (see "Standards" list and "Doctrinal Statement")

--We register men and women as well: all Christians need to know the Scriptures; if you don't know the Bible, you don't know God.

--We don't require any level of studies, (no A, O levels or other). We accept you even if you can't write and read: that was the case of the Apostle Peter; all the disciples were fishermen, ignorant and unlearned Acts4:13 without any formal training (except Paul who was a highly trained pharisee, Matthew was a tax collector therefore he knew Maths, Aramaic and Greek; Judas was educated also according to history, his father being a Sadducee). In our Togo/Lome branch we have a blind man who has graduated;

--We don't require you to get permission from your pastor to attend our Bible college; unfortunately we have heard of cases where pastors forbid their members to attend any Bible college because they might feel threatened or challenged; if they forbid you to come to our Bible college, he should be honest to help you go to another Bible college, or he should start a Bible college, even if would only offer 1-2 courses per week. Last year we lost some students because their pastor has started a Bible college: but that was a great joy for us!

8. WILL I BECOME A PASTOR AFTER GRADUATING?

ANSWER:
--NO! Bible training is necessary in order to become a pastor (1Pet.5:2 pastor should be "apt to teach"; 2Tim.2:15 "study to show yourself approved unto God, a workman/teacher that needs not be ashamed, rightly dividing the Word of Truth") but training alone does not qualifying one to be a pastor: you must be called by God to that office and your call should be recognized and ordained by your pastor; Sadly we hear of many pastors that even though having good intentions, they hurt many by not being properly trained. Would you allow a second year medicine student to operate on your heart? Hopefully you wouldn't, but in the spiritual area many do that error.

POST 05. THE BLOOD OF CHRIST

Nothing is more precious to the Christian than the blood of Christ. Many favorite hymns of the Church have the blood of Christ as their theme, for example:

"Are You Washed in the Blood",
"There Is a Fountain Filled with Blood",
"There Is Power in the Blood",
"Nothing but the Blood" and
"Saved by the Blood".

Although the blood of the cross may be repugnant to the world, to believers it is **the power of God unto salvation** (1Cor1:18).

The necessity of a bloody sacrifice is an important doctrine in the Word of God. Christianity is a bloody religion. William Evans states: "The atonement is the scarlet cord running through every page in the entire Bible. Cut the Bible anywhere and it bleeds; it is red with redemptive truth." The trail of blood runs all the way through the Bible from Genesis to Revelation.

In the Old Testament the Hebrew word for blood ('dam') occurs 360 times, mostly in those books dealing with the sacrificial worship, namely Leviticus (88 times) and Ezekiel (55 times). It also appears frequently in Exodus (29 times), Deuteronomy (23 times), and the Psalms (21 times). With the exception of a few figurative references to wine (Gen49:11; Deut32:14; Eze19:10), the Hebrew word always refers to the literal blood of a man or an animal.

The necessity for the shedding of innocent blood to atone for man's sin begins as early as Genesis 3:21 when **God provided the coats of skin for Adam and Eve**. Apparently the **requirement of a bloody sacrifice was made clear to that first family because when Cain refused** to bring a bloody sacrifice it displeased the Lord (Gen4:3-7). **Noah** was obviously aware of the need to present a bloody sacrifice to the Lord since he offered up several animals upon leaving the ark (Gen8:20,21). **The offering of the Passover Lamb** was a clear picture to the Israelites of the necessity of blood (Ex12:1-28). Of course, the full development of the blood sacrificial system was expressed by **Moses** through the institution of the levitical law (Lev1-7; 16-17; see also Heb9:22).

In the New Testament the Greek word for blood ('haima') occurs ninety-eight times.

The blood is also used figuratively to refer to "the seat of life". Lev17:11 "the life of the flesh is in the blood".

CHRIST COULD NOT SIMPLY BLEED WITHOUT DYING NOR DIE WITHOUT BLEEDING TO SAVE US.

Animal sacrifices were just a symbol for the yet future sacrifice of Jesus; only the blood of Christ could take away sin (Heb10:4). It was not the blood alone, however, that was required; it was also death. Only a bloody death could accomplish man's redemption (Rom5:8-10; 1Cor15:3; Heb 9:15).

SOME MEDICAL FACTS
The blood is formed of:
--erythrocytes or red blood cells. These cells are derived from the liver initially (in babies) and later from the bone marrow. **Hemoglobin**, which gives blood its distinct red color, is contained in the erythrocytes and is vital in **carrying oxygen** from the lungs to the various tissues; nutriments also are carried;
--a smaller component of whole blood is made up of **white blood cells** which are manufactured in lymphoid tissues and in the bone marrow. The white blood,cells aid the body in **fighting off infection**;
--noncellular elements such as platelets, clotting factors (these stop bleeding), immunoglobulins, and albumin. Most of these proteins are made in the liver, lymphoid tissue, or bone marrow. Finally, the cellular and noncellular elements are **suspended in water containing specific minerals.** The water and minerals must always be in proper concentrations in order to sustain life. No part of whole blood is more important than the other; all must work together.

DID JESUS TAKE HIS BLOOD TO HEAVEN?
No, or else the work of salvation was not finished on the cross: the atonement was completed on the cross when Christ cried, **"It is finished"** (Jn19:30). If Jesus would have had to take His blood to heaven to wash our sins, it would mean that our sins were not yet paid for on the cross; our sins were not in heaven so that Jesus would need to take His blood to heaven. Jesus went to heaven on the basis of His shed blood (finished sacrifice) to present Himself before the Father as a fulfilled sacrifice on our behalf.

In Heb 9:12 it is said that Christ entered heaven "through" ('dia') not "with" ('sun' or 'meta') his own blood. Christ entered into the presence of God after he had obtained eternal redemption by virtue of his shed blood. In other words, after Christ had purchased salvation on the cross by shedding of His blood, He was received back into the presence of God Rom4:26. Jesus became our Savior on the cross, not in heaven; His death on the cross saved us, not His ascension; through His ascension, Jesus became our mediator at the right hand of the Father on the basis of His sacrifice done on the cross.

The Father's approval of Christ's sacrifice is seen in the fact that He is welcomed into heaven and seated in the highest place of honor, the right hand of God (Heb1:3). In Heb12:24 the word "blood" is clearly used as a metaphor referring to a violent, bloody death. The point of the verse is that the murder of Abel cried out to God for vengeance whereas the violent death of Christ cries out to God for mercy and forgiveness. The death of Abel resulted in condemnation; the death of Christ results in justification. To take this verse literally results in the absurd conclusion that Abel's blood and Christ's blood actually spoke, which is not accurate.

THE WORK OF THE BLOOD:

1. HIS BLOOD REDEEMS US. There was a price against us that we could not pay, but the blood of Jesus redeemed us. The blood was a price paid to redeem us from being lost forever; a price to also reconcile the holiness and the justice of God who cannot just excuse sin but punish it – and Christ was punished in our place as He became sin on the cross 2Cor5:21.

1Pet1:18,19 says, "For you know that it was not with perishable things such as silver or gold that you were redeemed from the empty way of life handed down to you from your forefathers, but with **the precious blood of Christ**, a lamb without blemish or defect" also Rev5:9.

2. HIS BLOOD BRINGS US INTO FELLOWSHIP WITH GOD. According to Eph2:13, "But now in Christ Jesus you who once were far away have been brought near through the blood of Christ". Fellowship with God assures further cleansing 1Jn1:7;

3. HIS BLOOD MAKES PEACE WITH GOD. Man, by nature, is at war with God; and we can only come to God on His peace terms—the blood atonement. The Bible says in Col1:20, "And, having made peace through the blood of His cross, by Him to reconcile all things unto Himself ..."

4. HIS BLOOD CLEANSES. Not only does it remove the punishment of sin, it removes the pollution. I don't care what sin you've committed; "the blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanses us from all sin" (1Jn1:7).

5. HIS BLOOD GIVES POWER OVER THE DEVIL. Rev12:11 says, "And they overcame him [Satan] by the blood of the Lamb ..." The devil doesn't want you to learn about the blood. He hates it! How do you have power through the blood? **Not by invoking the blood, as the blood is not a person whom you can talk to**, but by faith in the sacrifice of Jesus. Satan fears that you receive Jesus as Savior, you allow Jesus to wash you through His blood and then Satan loses you Col1:13 and also loses any ground to accuse you.

6. HIS BLOOD MAKES US JUST (RIGHTEOUS) through faith in Jesus' sacrifice Rom5:9

7. HIS BLOOD SANCTIFIES US (SETS US APART FOR GOD) Heb13:12

---COMMONLY ASKED QUESTIONS---

-IS IT BIBLICAL TO PRAY: "I CLAIM THE BLOOD?" No, it is not in the Bible; the blood can't hear or respond; **pleading the blood** is a pagan assumption that the blood is a person; you can't claim the blood to remove problems or obstacles in your life, that job belongs to God's power; the blood's only function is only in relationship with the sinner and his relationship/fellowship with God. The blood cannot be claimed against Satan: it is like throwing your medicine against an enemy; you need to swallow the medicine to have strength against your enemy.

Rev7:14 speaks of **robes washed in the blood of the Lamb**, a symbolic speech referring to the "clothes of the inner man" not natural actual clothes see Eph4:24 and Rev3:18

-IS THE COMMUNION CUP DRINK EFFECTIVELY THE BLOOD OF JESUS? No, it is symbolically the blood of Jesus, we drink the communion cup to remember (as a reminder) the sacrifice of Jesus 1Cor11:25. When Jesus gave the cup to the disciples and told them, "this is My blood", the grape juice was still grape juice, not blood.

-ACTS20:28 SAYS, Take heed therefore unto yourselves, and to all the

flock, over the which the Holy Spirit hath made you overseers, to feed **the church of God**, which he hath purchased with **his own blood.**

DOES THIS VERSE ABOVE IMPLY "THE BLOOD OF GOD"? DOES GOD HAVE BLOOD? God does not have blood or flesh as God is spirit Jn4:24; however, through the incarnation of Jesus, God became man Jn1:1-14, therefore the body of Jesus and by implication the blood of Jesus belong to God in a personal way; however, if you have received Jesus, then you also belong to God in a personal way 1Cor6:19, Jn17:23, Zech2:8.

Heb9:14 How much more shall **the blood of Christ,** who through the eternal Spirit offered himself without spot to God, **purge your conscience** from dead works to serve the living God?

Heb10:29 Of how much sorer punishment, suppose ye, shall he be thought worthy, who hath **trodden under foot the Son of God, and hath counted the blood of the covenant, wherewith he was sanctified, an unholy thing**, and hath done despite unto the Spirit of grace? - (verse speaks of rejecting Jesus as Savior)

Rev1:5 Unto him that loved us, and **washed us from our sins in his own blood**...

POST 06. BRAIDS AND HAIR EXTENSIONS

...Should Christian women wear them?

FIRST, LET'S SEE SOME OF THE HEALTH RISKS:
-HAIR LOSS: appears because of the pulling of hair and tightness of the braids, phenomena called **'CENTRAL CENTRIFUGAL CICATRICIAL ALOPECIA';** loss of hair centers on the vertex (crown) of the scalp and spreads peripherally; hair loss is irreversible; braids placed too close to the skin cause also hair loss and irritation of the skin, creating a door for infections; many women lost 30% of their hair density within 5 years of using braids;
-HAIR HEALTH: follicles of hair are damaged through the traction;
-HYGIENE HAZARD: as these braids are expensive, many women keep the braids for a long time (adding to the risk of infections, by not washing); there are cases reported of bacteria transmitted via wigs made with human hair;
-HEADACHES caused by the continual hair pulling or bacterial cause;
-weight of dreads might affect skin and scalp.

IN TERMS OF COST, it is shocking that some women invest 20% or more of their monthly wage into braids. I believe it is irresponsible. In terms of spending their $$, how they look to others becomes more important than spending for God's ministry, for self and family (food, rent, clothes, health, leisure) or spending with friends. If you ask me what I choose between looking at your 'nice' hair and receiving a cake, i'll take the cake and I will respect you even more! :-)

IN TERMS OF SCRIPTURES, the Bible does not forbid beautifying methods; Peter however encourages women to not trust outside methods to adorn (beautify) them in others' eyes, but to beautify the inside as a priority: therefore you can modestly use beautifying methods, like braids of hair, but your beauty that should first be noticed by others should be the spiritual beauty of your soul:

1Pet3:3 **Your adorning let it not be that outward adorning of plaiting (braiding) the hair**, and of wearing of gold (jewels), or of putting on of apparel (elaborate expensive clothes);
1Pe 3:4 **But let it be the hidden man of the heart**, in that which is not corruptible, **even the ornament of a meek and quiet spirit**, which is in the sight of God of great price.
1Pe 3:5 For after this manner in the old time the holy women also, who trusted in God, adorned themselves, being in subjection unto their own husbands...

Paul quotes the same teaching, inspired from Peter's leter (or maybe Peter inspired himself from Paul's letter):

1Tim2:9,10 ...women adorn themselves in **modest apparel**, with reverence and sobriety; **not with braided hair, or gold, or pearls, or costly array**; But, which becomes women professing godliness, **with good works**.

Righteous people in the Bible used cosmetics, see Ruth 3:3, also Jesus mentioned "anointing your head" in accordance with Jewish cosmetic habits

Mat6:17; the New Jerusalem is said to be adorned as a bride Rev21:2. See also Jer31:4, Is61:10, Ez16:11.

Wicked women in the Bible also used cosmetics to entice men, see Jezebel 2Kings9:30, Ez23:40, Jer4:30. I am not against cosmetics, just use modesty and invest more energy, time and money in the beautifying of your inner man than on your outward look.

However, are you trying to find a husband using cosmetics only? If that is the only reason for which he is drawn unto you, then he will soon go after a more cosmeticized woman.

You may complain that your hair is not as beautiful as the hair of white women; who said your hair is not beautiful? God gave African women a certain style of hair and it is beautiful the way it is, do not accept Satan's lie; some Africans desire a white skin and many whites spend huge time and money to get a black skin (by sunbathing or ultraviolet methods that end up in skin cancer). Some men desire to be women and some women desire to be men; some desire to be taller, thinner, to have bigger lips, buttocks and so on...often angry with God: "why did you make me so?"

Just accept that God loves you the way you are and He loves your soul even though you are a sinner, because Jesus died to pay for your sin; when you know that God loves you, you don't care about what others think of your look anymore; if you have received Jesus as Savior, your body is the Temple of the Holy Spirit 1Cor3:16: the Holy Spirit is looking at your heart 1Sam16:7, not at your hair. Your walk with Jesus pleases the Holy Spirit, not your dreads.

Remember that this body is falling apart through aging 2Cor5:1-4, but you will soon have a perfect eternal beautiful body, if you have received Jesus as Savior.

So yes you can use cosmetics; but what is your priority? Others' opinion about your body, or what God thinks of you?

POST 07. "WHO WAS CAIN'S WIFE? WAS CAIN'S WIFE HIS SISTER?"

Answer: The Bible does not specifically say who Cain's wife was. The only possible answer is that Cain's wife was his sister or niece or great-niece, etc.

The Bible does not say **how old Cain was when he killed Abel** (Genesis 4:8). Since they were both farmers, they were likely both full-grown adults, possibly with families of their own.

Adam and Eve could have had other children at the time when Cain killed Abel; definitely **Adam and Eve had many more children later** (Genesis 5:4); since they lived over 900 years, it is safe to believe they possibly had a few tens of children.

The fact that **Cain was scared for his own life after he killed Abel (Genesis 4:14) indicates that there were likely many other children and perhaps even grandchildren of Adam and Eve already living at that time.** Cain feared people already-living would punish him for the killing, he didn't fear future generations that would be born after the killing.

Gen5:3 says that when Adam was 130 years old he begot Seth (born after the killing of Abel), which name means "replacement", in Gen4:25 Eve saw Seth as a replacement for Abel who was killed; the Bible does not say that Cain and Abel were the only 2 children of Adam and Eve at the time of the crime; the Bible only mentions these 2 because of the importance of the event of the first killing. Genesis 4:1 mentions Cain as the first born of Adam and Eve and possibly Abel was second born but maybe not. Others were born after these 2 brothers but the Bible does not mention them in regards to the first killing.

Genesis 5 gives genealogies names: in verse 3 Seth is named as being born to Adam when Adam was 130 years old (remember that Cain was born before Seth); Seth is not said here to be the first born or the only one born after Cain as daughters or even brothers could have been born after Cain and before the killing of Seth (girls are usually not mentioned in Jewish genealogies).

If there was another brother born before Seth and before the killing of Abel, why Gen5:3 mentions Seth? Because Seth is more important to mention: his son Enos lived at a time of revival and was maybe involved in it; a more

important reason for mentioning Seth is that **Seth is in the genealogy line of Jesus, see Luke 3:38.** Most of the sons mentioned in Genesis 5 are not first-born but they are the ones mentioned there as **they are in the genealogy line of Jesus.**

ADAM AND EVE'S CHILDREN INTERMARRIED? YES.

-Since Adam and Eve were the first (and only) human beings created directly by God, their children would have no other choice than to intermarry. **Yes, Cain married his sister (and no, God did not look for dirt to create a woman for Cain to marry).**

-God did not forbid inter-family marriage until much later when there were enough people to make intermarriage unnecessary (Leviticus 18:6-18). The reason that incest today often results in genetic abnormalities is that when two people of **similar genetics** (i.e., a brother and sister) have children together, there is a **high risk of their recessive characteristics becoming dominant.** When people from different families have children, it is highly unlikely that both parents will carry the same recessive traits (but it still happens). **The human genetic code has become increasingly "polluted" over the centuries as genetic defects are multiplied, amplified, and passed down from generation to generation.** Adam and Eve did not have any genetic defects, and that enabled them and the first few generations of their descendants to have a far greater quality of health than we do now. Adam and Eve's children had few, if any, genetic defects. As a result, it was safe for them to intermarry.

-Another obvious reason for introducing the rule of forbidding siblings to inter-marry later is to protect children from sexual temptation at home.

For an example, think of the cars industry: when the first automobiles were first made over 200 years ago, there was no need of traffic lights, driving lessons and high ways, but these became needed later and roads rules had to be created and gradually adapted. The same way, marriage rules had to be adapted later for obvious reasons.

POST 08. CALLING - HOW DO I DISCOVER MY CALL?

DEFINITION: "Call" is a divine appointment to a position, an experience (fellowship) or to ministry (service).

Many ask, "what is God calling me to do?"

Before you even try to answer that question, make sure you have responded to these primary and fundamental calls of God:

1. God called us to salvation – Jn11:28 "Come unto me, all you that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest"; you are called to receive Jesus as Savior; "that we should be called children of God" 1Jn3:1

Rom10:13 "whoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved".

Prov1:24 "I have called but you didn't listen..." also Jer7:13, Is65:12

2. God called us to fellowship with the Trinity 1Cor1:9; 1Thes2:12

God invites you to call Him: Jer33:3 "call Me and I will answer you and I will show you great and mighty things"

3. God called us to holiness 1Thes4:7; we attain holiness through faith in Christ not through personal human effort 1Cor1:30, same applies for the following:

...Called out of darkness into His light 1Pet2:9

...Called us to peace 1Cor7:15

...Called to freedom Gal5:13

...Called to His eternal glory 1Pet5:10 and to share Jesus' glory 2Thes2:14

...Called you unto the marriage supper of the Lamb as part of the Church of Jesus, His bride

...We are called to inherit blessings 1Pet3:8

...Called to glory and virtue 2Pet1:3

… ...and many others, see our study "95 things that happen at the moment of salvation"

4. God called us to a local church Heb10:25. No church, no ministry! Can a finger separate himself from the body and do ministry on his own?
You must be in good-standing with your church (Mat18:15-17), called to be one body Col3:15. Jesus spoke to 7 local churches in Rev2 and 3, not to scattered individual believers.

See our study "How to choose a local assembly"

5. Called to have a pastor teacher that helps you grow in Christ Eph4:11,12; see our study "Shepherds according to the heart of God"

6. God called us to make disciples 2Tim2:2, Mat28:18-20

7. Called to share the Gospel Matt28:18-20; Rev22:17 "the Spirit and the bride say: "Come"!

8. Called to walk on the steps on Jesus even if it leads us to be persecuted 1Pet2:21, 1Cor11:1; 1Jn3:16

GOD CALLED US ALL TO MINISTRY:

--Luke 6:11-16 after praying all night, Jesus called 12 to be His apostles, ones that would have His authority; in Luke9:1 Jesus called the 12 disciples to send them to preach and make miracles; before His ascension to heaven, Jesus told 500 brethren to go into all the world to preach the good news of Jesus Acts1:8.

STEPS TO DISCOVERING YOUR CALL:

1. Know that you're a vital part of the body of Christ. No one else can do what YOU do, you are unique and an essential part of the body of Christ (Rom12:4,5; 1Cor12:12-21)

2. Seek the Lord for a vision (Prov3:6); Isaiah heard God speak about a work to be done and he said, "Lord here I am, send me!" Is6:8

"Vision"=A supernatural revelation that conveys the plan and purpose of God.

Vision can be defined also as "a mental image, the ability to perceive something not actually visible, as through mental acuteness or keen foresight."

3. Entrust your pursuing of the vision to God (Prov16:3). The Amplified Bible states, "He will cause your thoughts to become agreeable to his will"

4. Share your vision with spiritually mature people you can trust (Prov11:14; 12:15; 15:22, Eph5:21): Pastor and leaders, mature wise friends. Wise counsel provides safeguards in your life. "We ought to obey God rather than men" Acts5:29, Gal1:1, Jer17:5, 1Thes2:4, Jn12:43, Col3:23 but don't use these verses for selfish independence

5. Be around people that share the same vision (1Cor3:9). You should not be working for God ALONE, find someone to help you launch and develop your ministry. Start by assisting someone in doing what you would like to be doing and be a learner

6. Be in an atmosphere of teaching and training (Eph4:11,12). Keep yourself exposed to sound biblical teaching, which is suitable for practical Christian living and ministry

7. Seek to glorify God (Col3:17). This is a heart ATTITUDE. The phrase "in the name of" means to express the thoughts and nature, and speak with the authority of the named individual. To glorify God literally means to DEMONSTRATE HIS ATTRIBUTES. To do that, let God transform your thinking Rom12:1,2. Your call to service is not so that you can boast and lift up yourself 2Cor4:5.

8. Be ministry minded (Mat20:28). Be sensitive to the NEEDS of the people. Your sensitivity to people is solely based on your sensitivity to God and God's heart towards you. Let Jesus wash your feet first then you will be able to wash others' feet Jn13. Let the love of Jesus motivate you to minister 2Cor5:14

-Gal5:13 "serve one another in love"; king David served faithfully a flock of sheep before God placed him in a position to serve a nation; Joseph served fellow-prisoners before God would use him to serve the nation of Egypt and his own extended family

-be available to serve generally and God will lead you in serving specifically

9. Depend on the Spirit of God to empower you (see our study "Spirit filling"). The anointing of God is essential to you functioning in the Ministry.

10. Maintain a life of purity (2Tim2:19-21; 2Cor7:1). Right-living insures your usefulness to God. Confess often and quick to God 1Jn1:7-9. You are mature not when you don't sin at all but when you confess quickly and get up Prov24:16. To confess means to agree with God and get right with God, not to look for an excuse for your failure.

11. Walk worthy of your call Eph4:1 – your 'walk' does not determine your call but your call determines your life-style. You are called by grace Gal1:15 and grace teaches you to deny ungodliness Titus2:11. Continuing in failure does not remove your calling but it affects your usefulness to God and your spiritual growth

12. Don't neglect your gift (1Tim4:14). The gift that God has given you is to be GIVEN AWAY to serve others! The body of Christ is depending on your contribution to the kingdom of God. Don't be passive.

13. If through a certain area of service **you are growing** spiritually, changed from glory to glory into resembling Jesus 2Cor3:18 – then that could be your area of service! If others are blessed by your service – **fruit abounding** – it is another indication of your call to that service.

14. Keep your family BEFORE your ministry. Maintain balance between family and ministry. Be careful not to do ministry at the expense of your family. There's a difference between serving God and serving God so much that you are neglecting your family. The Lord never intended for us to serve Him and let our families suffer in the process. You will know when your priorities are out of order when your wife and children begin to complain about your excessive absence. Your family is your FIRST ministry! Paul said, "husbands, love your wives as Jesus loved the church" Eph5:25.

15. ...and of course, **don't let ministry separate you from the very God** that entrusted you the ministry! Don't be so occupied to work for God that you don't have time to talk to God and to listen to God! Don't worship your gifts, ministry and calling. Abraham was asked to bring his son as a sacrifice so that Abraham looks at God not at his son. Paul was placed a few times in prison. Hosea2:14 "I will lead her into the desert and speak tenderly to her there".

POST 09. CALVINIST OR ARMENIAN?

-Calvinism (John Calvin, 1509-1564) and Arminianism (Jacobus Arminius, 1560-1609) are two systems of theology that attempt to explain the relationship between God's sovereignty and man's responsibility regarding salvation.
-Sovereignty means jurisdiction, supremacy, dominion, power, ascendancy, suzerainty, tyranny, hegemony, domination, sway, predominance, authority, control, influence.
-God is sovereign regarding the material creation: nothing happens without God's will (matter and animals don't have a free will). Sovereign regarding creatures means that He initiates based on His Will but creatures have a free will to make a choice. God is sovereign to offer a free salvation and man is also sovereign to receive or reject salvation.
-God is sovereignly authoring salvation alone without man's participation other than accepting it (man is not co-author of salvation, Heb12:2, Jn19:30).
- I, Daniel Timofte, hold to the armenian view

Key aspects about the 2 views:

1. DEPRAVITY

-Calvinism says people are so depraved and rebellious that they are unable to trust God without His special work of grace to change their hearts without the free will of man being involved.

-Arminians say, people are depraved and corrupt, but are able to decide to trust God with the general divine assistance that God gives to everybody, Jn16:8.

-Man is totally depraved, meaning he cannot save himself through his own effort and there is nothing good in man that could motivate God to love and save man; remember man ate from the forbidden tree of "knowledge of good and evil", so human good is still condemned before God, see Is64:6.

-Verses: Rom3:9-12,23; 5:7,8,12,19; 6:6-20; 7:14; 11:32; Job15:14-16,25:4-6,Ecc9:3, Ps143:2, 2Cr6:36, Is53:6, Micah7:2-4, 1Jn1:8-10, Mark7:21, 10:18, Luke18:19, 1 Kg8:46; Ps51:12, 116:11, 130:3, 143:2; James3:2, Jer.17:9, Tit1:15,16; 3:3, Eph4:17-18, Jer10:7-14, Prov28:26;Jn8:34, Gal4:8, 2Tim2:25,26; Jn8:31-36, Is1:5,6. See our study on "Total Depravity".

-Man is depraved but still has a free will to make choices. See #6 below.

2. ELECTION

-Calvinism says God chooses unconditionally whom he will mercifully bring to faith and salvation and whom he will justly leave in their rebellion then send to hell.

-Arminians say God has chosen us, elected to bring to salvation all those whom he foresaw would choose to accept Jesus as Savior, God knows the future as He is outside of time;

-God offers the choice to the unsaved, to which he says yes or no. After believing in Jesus the Christian receives from God faith (capacity of trust in God for his daily life) based on man's free will, or availability to God, see below point on faith.

3. ATONEMENT

-Calvinism says the death of Christ God provided sufficient atonement for all (some say only for the saved), but designed it to be effective only for those that were chosen by God.

-Arminians say the death of Christ God provided a sufficient atonement for all and designed that it would become effective for everyone that decides to receive Jesus as Savior.

-Verses on unlimited atonement: Is53:6; Jn1:29, 3:16, 1Jn2:2, 4:14; Rom11:32, 2Cor5:14-19; Heb2:9, 1Tim2:4,6; 4:10, Tit2:11; Rev22:17; 1Pet3:18;

-Verses that say Jesus died for the church or for believers do not say Jesus died only for them but brings out the aspect that Jesus' death is benefiting only those who accept Jesus: Acts20:28, Jn10:15; 17:9; Mat1:21, Eph5:25, Mat20:28; Rom8:31-35.

-The death of Christ offered an unlimited atonement in its purpose, aiming all humans (2Pet.3:9) but unsaved men limit the outcome of atonement by rejecting it (Ps78:41, Gal5:4, Luke7:30)

4. NEW BIRTH

-Calvinists say that the new birth is God’s work of renewal in our hearts which produces the act of willing saving faith, so they say new birth precedes faith and man has no part in getting saved.

-Arminians say the new birth is God’s work of renewal in our hearts in response to our act of saving faith by accepting Jesus, new birth follows faith and man has a part in getting saved by accepting Jesus.

5. PERSEVERENCE

-Calvinists say God works to preserve in faith all who are truly born again and that no one is ever lost who was truly chosen by God.

-Arminians say God works to preserve his people, but does not always prevent ones who were born again from falling away from faith in this life: Heb6:4-6, Rom11:22, 1Cor9:27; 2Cor6:1; Gal5:4; Col1:22-23; 1Tim1:19; 3:6; 4:1,16; 5:8; 6:10,20,21; 2Tim2:18; 2Pet2:15, 3:17; 1Jn2:26; 2Jn1:8.

-One can't lose his eternal salvation which he has received without merit as a gift: Rom6:23, you cannot un-merit salvation by behavior; see our study “Salvation is secure".

6. FREE WILL

-God created angels and man with a free will to make choices; animals live by instinct;

-God provided the options of choices: obedience or disobedience Gen2:9-17; one third of angels chose to follow Satan in his rebellion, also Adam and Eve chose to disobey God. After their fall, demons and humans still have a free will.

-God in his sovereignty decided to offer salvation to all humans only but not all humans decide to receive salvation, also damnation to all demons with no chance of salvation (Mat25:41; Heb2:16).

7. GOD'S FOREKNOWLEDGE
-God knows the end from the beginning Is46:10
-God is outside of time and space, therefore He knows the future and knows who will receive Jesus and thus He is able to initiate towards those individuals based on His foreknowledge: John the Baptist chosen from the womb, Isaiah, Jeremiah, Jacob, Pharaoh, Judas, Paul; Mat19:12, Lk1:41; Jn17:12; Gal1:15, Rom9:13; Is49:1; Jer1:5
-God knew who would believe even before creating the world because He knows the future: Acts2:23; Eph1:4, Rom8:29; 2Thes2:13; 2Tim1:9; 1Pet1:2,20; Tit1:2; Rev13:8; 17:8.

8. GOD'S JUDGMENT
-If God would elect some for hell and some for heaven then He is responsible for those choices; how can God punish unsaved humans if they are not responsible for rejecting Jesus?
-Punishment involves responsibility for a choice; Jn3:18; 2Thes1:8,9; 2:10-12.

9. EVANGELISM
-Why evangelize if God decides who goes to heaven and who goes to hell?
-Some accept calvinism to escape responsibility for evangelism. However, some great evangelists were calvinists who evangelized as obedience to the Bible but did not believe their evangelism can make a difference since God has already decided who goes to heaven. Jn20:31; Rom10:14.

10. FAITH
-Calvinism says salvation faith is offered by God regardless of the decision of the individual, they call it "irresistible grace", see point #11.
-Armenians say God offers the possibility of choice of salvation and man makes a choice using his free will with assistance from God, see John16:8; after salvation God offers to the Christian the possibility to have his trust (faith) in God increased (Rom.10:17 'faith comes by hearing the Word of God'; 12:3 'God gave every believer a measure of faith'): God initiates and man accepts or refuses.
-Why did Jesus weep at the unbelief of the Jews if faith comes sovereignly from God without humans sovereignly responding (Jn11:35, Lk19:41)? Why did God weep (see Book of Jeremiah)? Why Jesus rebuked the disciples for having little faith in Mat6:30?
Ask me for our study on faith.

11. IRRESISTIBLE GRACE
-Calvinists believe God calls man to salvation without him being able to refuse; armenians believe you can oppose the grace of God, see again verses from point #5, also Gal2:21, Heb4:16; 12:15; Jam4:6.
-Col.2:6: "as you have received Christ, so walk ye in Him". If you have received Jesus irresistibly, then why your daily walk with Jesus is a choice, not an irresistible call? God does not drag you every day.
-If grace for salvation can't be resisted, then why daily living grace can be resisted?
-There are variations of types of armenians and calvinists regarding above points.
-Armenians and calvinists should not hate each other because of different views. The true enemy is elsewhere.

POST 10. CREATION vs EVOLUTION

As Christians we need to be ready to explain why we believe in God; Christianity is scientific! Satan today twists science to make men believe there is no God.

1Pet.3:17
1Tim.6:20

Theories:

1. The universe was created by God (true)
2. The universe always existed (wrong)
3. The universe came into being by itself by purely natural processes (known as evolution) so that no appeal to the supernatural is needed (wrong)

There are at least six different meanings to the word “evolution.” Students are deceived into thinking all six types of evolution below are true:

1. COSMIC EVOLUTION —the origin of time, space, and matter. Big Bang or a big explosion produced everything from nothing.

2. CHEMICAL EVOLUTION —the origin of all elements (iron, calcium, oxigen and all other about 118 elements) from hydrogen.

3. STELLAR AND PLANETARY EVOLUTION —Origin of stars and planets from cosmic dust (cosmic dust came together to form stars)
4. ORGANIC EVOLUTION —Origin of life from matter
5. MACROEVOLUTION —Changing life forms from one kind into another. Atheist science teaches that a dog became horse, for example, or a whale became a cow.
6. MICROEVOLUTION —Variations within kinds. Only this one has been observed as true: crossing different breeds of dogs can produce other types of dogs, but not horses.
First 5 points are not true, just theories proposed by atheist scientists.

PROOFS FROM UNIVERSE THAT THE UNIVERSE IS NOT MILLIONS OF YEARS OLD:

1. The shrinking sun limits the earth-sun relationship to fewer than "billions of years." The sun is losing both mass and diameter. Changing the mass would upset the fine gravitational balance that keeps the earth at just the right distance for life to survive.
2. The ½ inch layer of cosmic dust on the moon indicates the moon has not been accumulating dust for billions of years.
3. The existence of short-period comets indicates the universe is less than billions of years old.
4. Fossil meteorites are very rare in layers other than the top layers of the earth. This indicates that the layers were not exposed for millions of years as is currently being taught in school textbooks.
5. The moon is receding (getting further from earth) a few inches each year. Billions of years ago the moon would have been so close that the tides would have been much higher, eroding the continents quickly.
6. The moon contains considerable quantities of U-236 and Th-230, both short-lived isotopes that would have been long gone if the moon were billions of years old.
7. The existence of great quantities of space dust, which by the Poynting-Robertson effect would have been vacuumed out of our solar system in a few thousand years, indicates the solar system is young.
8. At the rate many star clusters are expanding, they could not have been traveling for billions of years.
9. Saturn's rings are still unstable, indicating they are not billions of years old.
10. Jupiter and Saturn are cooling off rather rapidly. They are losing heat twice as fast as they gain it from the sun. They cannot be billions of years old.
11. Jupiter's moon, Io, is losing matter to Jupiter. It cannot be billions of years old.
12. Jupiter's moon, Ganymede has a strong magnetic field. Among other factors to consider is that all the ancient astronomers from 2000 years ago recorded that Sirius was a red star—today it is a white dwarf star. Today's textbooks in astronomy state that billions of years are required for a star to "evolve" from a red giant to a white dwarf.

PROOFS FROM THE EARTH THAT THE EARTH IS NOT MILLIONS OF YEARS OLD:

13. The decaying magnetic field limits earth's age to less than billions.
14. The volume of lava on earth divided by today's rate of efflux gives a number of only a few million years, not billions. I believe that during the Flood, while "the fountains of the deep were broken up," most of the earth's lava was deposited rapidly.
15. Dividing the amount of various minerals in the ocean by their influx rate indicates only a few thousand years of accumulation.
16. The amount of Helium 4 in the atmosphere, divided by today's formation rate on earth, gives only 175,000 years. (God may have created the earth with some existing helium. Just as Eve was created with already-long hair, she didnt need to wait for her hair to grow)
17. The erosion rate of the continents is such that they would erode to sea level in less than 14,000,000 years.
18. Topsoil formation rates indicate only a few thousand years of formation.
19. Niagara Falls' erosion rate (four to seven feet per year) indicates an age of less than 8400 years. Don't forget Noah's Flood receding water could have eroded a part of the seven and a half-mile long Niagara River gorge in a few hours as the flood waters raced through the soft sediments.)
20. The rock encasing oil deposits could not withstand the pressure for more than a few thousand years.
21. The size of the Mississippi River delta, divided by the rate mud is being deposited today, gives an age of less than30,000 years. (The

Flood in Noah's day could have washed out 80% of the mud there in a few hours or days, so 4400 years is a reasonable age for the delta.)
22. The slowing spin of the earth limits its age to less than the "billions of years" called for by the theory of evolution.
23. A relatively small amount of sediment is now on the ocean floor, indicating only a few thousand years of accumulation. This embarrassing fact is one of the reasons why the continental drift theory is vehemently defended by those who worship evolution.
24. The largest stalactites and flowstone formations in the world could have easily formed in about 4400 years.
25. The Sahara desert is expanding. It is about 4000 years old (the flood happened about 4000 years ago).
26. The oceans are getting saltier. If they were billions of years old, they would be much saltier than they are now.
27. Ice accumulation at the poles indicates less than 5000 years.

...ALSO EVIDENCE FROM BIOLOGY
28. The current population of earth (7 billion souls) could easily be generated from eight people (survivors of the Flood) in less than 4000 years.
29. The oldest living coral reef is less than 4200 years old.
30. The oldest living tree in the world is about 4300 years old.
Another factor to consider: The genetic load in man is increasing. Geneticists have cataloged nearly 1300 genetic disorders in the human race. It is certainly reasonable to believe that the human race was created perfect from the hand of the Creator but has been going downhill as a result of our disobedience to the laws established by the Creator. The Bible teaches that we live in a sin-cursed world as a result of Adam's sin.
31. The oldest known historical records are less than 6000 years old.
32. Many ancient cultures have stories of an original creation and a worldwide Flood . Nearly 300 of these flood legends are now known.
33. Biblical dates add up to about 6000 years.

HERE ARE SOME RESOURCES FOR YOU:

A GREAT BOOK TO READ:
-- "SCIENCE VS. EVOLUTION" pdf book, 1008 pages, 14mb size; click to download from:

http://www.herbert-armstrong.org/Miscellaneous/Science%20v%20Evolution.pdf

Titles of chapters in the above pdf book:
1. History of Evolutionary Theory - ***How modern science got into this problem***

2. The Big Bang and Stellar Evolution - ***Why the Big Bang is a joke and stars cannot evolve out of gas or dust***

3. The Origin of the Earth - ***Why the Earth did not evolve out of a molten state***

4. The Age of the Earth - ***Why the Earth is not millions of years old***

5. The Problem of Time - ***Why long ages cannot produce evolutionary change***

6. Inaccurate Dating Methods

7. The Primitive Environment - ***Why raw materials on earth cannot produce life***

8. DNA and Protein - ***Why DNA and protein could not be produced by random chance***

9. Natural Selection - ***Why natural selection only makes changes within species not between species***

10. Mutations - ***Why mutations cannot produce cross-species change***

11. Animal and Plant Species - ***Why the species barrier cannot be broken***

12. Fossils and Strata - ***Why the fossil/strata theory is a hoax***

13. Ancient Man - ***Why there is no evidence humans have evolved from anything***

14. Effects of the Flood - ***What actually happened after the Flood***

15. Similarities and Divergence - ***Why similar structures are not an evidence of evolution***

16. Vestiges and Recapitulation - ***You have no useless or unnecessary structures inherited from earlier life forms***

17. Evolutionary Showcase - ***The best examples of evolution have proven worthless***

18. The Laws of Nature - ***The laws of nature oppose the evolutionary theory***

19. Evolution, Morality, and Violence - ***Evolutionary theory is ruining modern civilization***

20. Tectonics and Paleomagnetism

21. Archaeological Dating - ***Correlating Egyptian and other archaeological dates with the Bible***

22. Evolutionary Science Fiction - ***Fabulous fairy tales which only tiny children can believe***

23. Scientists Speak - ***Evolutionary scientists say the theory is unscientific and worthless***

24. Utterly Impossible - ***Things evolution could never invent***

25. The Latest Evolution Crisis - ***The most recent news (to 2006) in the Evolution Battle***

26. The Case for Intelligent Design - ***The evidence keeps getting stronger***

27. Summary of the Anthropic Principle - ***Discovering a flood of coincidences***

28. Eighteen Factors Disproving Evolution - ***Evolution flunks the science test***

29. Say It Simple - ***What is this all about?***

30. Problems with Big Bang Creationism - ***When opposites are combined***

31. Will You Defend God before unbelievers in this Time of Crisis? - ***Schools, Employment, and Churches***

Speakers holding seminars on creation that I recommend:

KEN HAM – find videos on youtube

KENT HOVIND – videos on youtube, also check out his great series of 7 seminars at http://creationism.org/videos/index.htm

Websites of interest:

http://evolutionfacts.com/

https://answersingenesis.org/creation-vs-evolution/

http://creation.com/

http://creationism.org/

http://nwcreation.net/subjects.html

POST 11. "What is the difference between dating and courting?"

Answer: Dating and courtship are two methods of beginning relationships with the opposite sex. While there are non-Christians who date with the intention of having a series of intimate physical, sexual relationships, for the Christian this is not acceptable and should never be the reason for dating. Many Christians see dating as little more than friendship and maintain the friendship aspect of their dating until both people are ready to commit to each other as potential marriage partners.

First and foremost, dating is a time when a Christian finds out if his or her potential marriage partner is also a believer in Christ and a disciple of Jesus. The Bible warns us that believers and unbelievers should not marry each other, because those living in the light (of Christ) and those living in the darkness cannot live in harmony (2Cor6:14,15). As stated before, during this time there should be little or no physical contact (hand shake or "good-bye" type of cheek kiss in public are acceptable), as this is something that should wait until marriage (1Cor6:18-20).

Courtship takes the position that the two people have marriage in view (and have no physical contact at all, no touching, no hand-holding, no kissing) until marriage. Many in a courtship relationship will not spend any time together unless family members, preferably parents, are present at all times.

In addition, courting couples state up front that their intentions are to see if the other person is a suitable potential marriage partner. Courtship advocates claim that courtship allows for the two people to truly get to know each other better in a pure way without the pressures of physical intimacy or emotions clouding their view.

There are problems inherent with both styles. For daters, spending time alone with a member of the opposite sex whom we find attractive can present temptations that can be very hard to resist. The Christian dating couple must have boundaries in place and be committed to not crossing them. If they find this hard to do, they must take steps to ensure that Christ will always be honored during their time together and that sin is never given a chance to take hold of their relationship. Just as with the courting couple, the parents of the dating couple and pastor should be involved in the relationship, getting to know their child's companion and being a source of wise and discerning advice and guidance for both of them.

Of course, the courtship style presents its own set of difficulties. While many courtship advocates see it as the only choice for finding a mate, others find it oppressive and overly controlling. In addition, it can be hard to find the "real" person behind the public face presented in front of the entire family. No one is the same in a group setting as he or she is one-on-one. If a dating/courting couple is never alone together (alone in public areas, not in a room or hidden in a forest of course), they never have that one-on-one opportunity to relate and get to know one another in emotional and spiritual intimacy. In addition, some courtship situations have led to borderline "arranged marriages" by the parents and have resulted in resentment in one or both of the young people.

It is important to remember that neither dating nor courtship is mandated in Scripture. In the end, the Christian character and spiritual maturity of the couple is far more important than the exact nature of how and when they spend time together. Scripturally speaking, the result of the process—godly Christian men and women marrying and raising families to the glory of God—is far more important than the method they use to achieve that result. "Therefore, whether you eat or drink, or whatever you do, do all to the glory of God" (1Cor10:31).

If you got married in a parents-arranged process or maybe driven by lust or any other wrong reasons, then the Bible says to stay married and to honor Christ in your marriage 1Cor7:13,27.

Marriage is a decision taken through your personal relationship with God, which is also called believer's priesthood 1Pet2:9; you dont obey a so-called prophet that tells you "God told me you should marry John/Ellen". God does not force anyone to marry at all, let alone a specific person: God is a loving Father who assists you in your choices but finally choice is yours 1Cor7:39. In the Old Testament God spoke indeed through prophets (never in relation to marriage anyway) but today he speaks to you through the Word and through the Holy Spirit and counsels you through the church.

Courtship is not a guarantee that the two will get married; a separation can still occur so they should behave in a way that will not make them ashamed of each other or enemies after ending courtship. Same applies for engagement: if you are engaged you are not yet married, learn from Joseph: he had no sex with Mary during engagement or before marriage, actually in their case until after she gave birth to Jesus Matt1:19,25.

We can't develop the whole subject in here. I advise you a few pdf books available in whatsapp, especially "Courtship – Biblical Romance".

POST 12. DEMONIC POSESSION

WORD 'DAIMONION' (Greek) means 'DEMON' and it is used 60 times in the New Testament, being translated most of the time 'devils'; 4 times used in the Old Testament, plus 23 verses that name demons as 'evil spirits'.

WORD 'SATANAS' (Greek), meaning 'accuser', is translated 'Satan' and it is used 37 times in the New Testament. In the Old Testament it is used 19 times (of which 14 in the book of Job).

We need to **DIFFERENTIATE BETWEEN DEMONIC POSSESSION AND DEMONIC OPPRESSION:**

1. POSSESSION is when a demon enters a person and operates from the inside, thus the person might still have a free will which cooperates with the demons, or through a gradual process might have no more free will;
-a Christian can't be possessed by demons because he is indwelled continually and forever by the Holy Spirit and is set free forever from the

possibility to be possessed by darkness Col2:13, see our studies 'Spirit filling' and 'Salvation is eternal'. For a demon to possess a Christian, the demon would have to chase out the Holy Spirit, which is not possible (see Jn10:28,29 nobody, not even Satan, can snatch us out from God's hand)

2. OPPRESSION is when demons influence someone from the outside;
-Saul was oppressed by a demon sent by God to chastise him because of his rebellion; the demon produced depression and fits of violence 1Sam16:14,15; 18:10,11; 19:9,10; a Christian can be oppressed and could end up in a mental health sanatorium
-Paul was physically oppressed by a demon (sent by Jesus) that caused him some health problem, see 2Cor12:7
-Peter was influenced (not possessed) by Satan to speak to Jesus words of opposition regarding the cross, however Jesus did not exorcize Satan from Peter, see Mat16:23
-Job was oppressed by Satan: his family got killed, possessions stolen and health damaged, all these were however allowed by God to prove to Satan that Job loves God for who God is, not for what God gives; many of the 'prophets' of our days would have advised Job to 'sow a seed' (cash) to get healed, to require their expensive 'deliverance services', then blame Job for 'lack of faith' or 'secret sin' if not healed; or send Job to Nigeria to a more powerful prophet!

CHARACTERISTICS OF DEMON-POSESSION:

1. SUPERNATURAL STRENGTH: a demoniac in Mar5:4 was breaking chains
2. HEALTH ISSUES: epileptic symptoms, blindness, inability to speak; not all such health issues are caused by demons, some can have other causes: in some cases God, Ex4:11, in other cases man's sin or careless living; accidents; in some cases just hereditary genetic errors of our fallen nature, result of Adam's and Eve's sin
3. SUPERNATURAL KNOWLEDGE: Acts16:16-18
4. UNSOCIAL BEHAVIOR, violence, harming self and others; Mary Magdalene is said to have had 7 demons, church history says she used to be a prostitute, thus promoting sin Mark16:9
5. HATE TOWARDS GOD, towards the Gospel and towards Christians Mk1:24

CAUSES OF DEMONIC-POSSESSIONS:
1. IDOL WORSHIP – someone who is not saved and worships idols opens himself to demonic possession; an idol is anything that takes the place due to God only (self, career can be idols etc.)
-Judas' idol was money Jn12:6, and as he had not trusted in Jesus in a personal way Jn13:10, Satan had a free way to enter Judas Luke22:3
-idol worship is worship of demons
Lev17:7;Deut32:17; Ps106:37; 1Cor10:20

2. REJECTING CHRIST – God sends them a work of delusion because they reject Jesus 2Thes2:11;
-parents are responsible to be spiritual covering for their children through their prayers and godly living 1Cor7:14; if parents get involved in occult or ravaging sin then they open the door to demonic influence and possession of their children; today many children reach demonic possession or oppression through parent's carelessness regarding what kids watch on TV; 2Tim2:26

A Christian can't be possessed by demons, but he can be influenced to sin and rebel against God; recovery comes not through prayer alone or through expensive deliverance sessions but through **a daily intake of the Word of God**, accepting through faith the mind of God for every area of life. If a Christian is influenced by demons in the area of alcohol for example, he must study to worship God with all of his mind and allow the Holy Spirit to take control instead of alcohol control Eph5:18; if pornography, then study the purity of Christ and of celibacy or marriage; if violence then study the meekness of Christ; if theft then study about hard work + thankfulness + love for others instead of material lust; Eph4:26-27 through sin you can give place to Satan to influence you and push you further into sin.
Not all sins come from Satan but man's heart is also a source of sin Mat15:19

Many develop a circus-type of interest in demonic possessions but, to the great joy of darkness, they forget that most of the demonic possessions, over 99.99%, are the Judas-type of possessions: Judas looked very normal from the outside but had the greatest unclean spirit inside, Satan. There are 5 billion people today that worship Satan through tens of thousands of religions (atheism and materialism are religions too!); today's deliverance sessions are centered on the spectacular deliverance of the 0.001% that are

possessed with violent demons (often counterfeit possessions) but they don't care much about the other 99.99% of demon-possessed people, 5 billion humans, that are possessed with dirty religious spirits, captives unto Satan to do his will 2Tim2:26

-2Cor4:4 The god of this age has **blinded the minds of unbelievers,** so that they cannot see the light of the gospel that displays the glory of Christ
-Acts26:18 ...To open their eyes, and to turn them from darkness to light, and **from the power of Satan unto God;** also Matt12:29
-1Jn3:8 'he who commits (continual tense in Greek, meaning "habitually") sin is of the devil...Jesus was manifested to destroy the works of the devil' – Jesus did it by dying on the cross to pay for our sins and through the preaching of this good news, Col2:15

How do we put demons to flight:
-The Word: Jesus chased Satan by answering his temptations with "it is written" Matt4 and Luke4
-Humility and submission to God: James4:7,8
-Faith and sobriety (not given to wine or anything similar): 1Pet5:8,9

Nowhere does the Bible say that we are to chase demons through **'formulas'**, as: 'I claim the blood of Jesus!' That is paganism and superstition! **If you believe in Jesus, you don't have to 'claim' the blood**: the blood has already washed you and redeemed you. Demons don't flee a spoken formula or some 'sanctified objects' but they flee God and they flee those that trust in God. Seven sons of Sceva tried to use the 'formula' but they were chased away being unsaved Acts19:14! Apostles chased demons through faith, in the name of Jesus, not 'claiming the blood'! Acts16:18; 13:10

Exorcising a demon from a demoniac person does not mean that person will automatically also accept Jesus as Savior, he still has to make a choice to accept Jesus; Jesus said that if his house remains empty (instead of being inhabited by the Holy Spirit) then that **demon takes other 7 demons and comes back** Mat12:45.

Remember that **Satan and his demons are heading to the lake of fire Rev20:10**. Don't fear them: if you believe in Jesus, **Jesus who is in you is greater and more powerful than demons** 1Jn4:4; **demons are under our feet** Rom16:20; **you have authority to trample on demons** Luke 19:10 and that authority is exercised through faith in the Word and through preaching the Gospel; we don't have authority to send demons to hell: God only has it, kept for the appointed time Mat8:29; 25:41

POST 13. DISCIPLESHIP

"MATHETES" in Greek means "disciple", "follower" or a learner through relationship (not through distance learning methods or through books only); it is used as a noun 27 times in singular form in the New Testament (Gospels and Acts): Matt10:24,25,42;27:57; Luke 6:40; 14:26,27,33; John9:28; 18:15,16; 19:26,27,38; 20:2,3,4,8; 21:7,20,23,24; Acts 9:10,26,36; 16:1,16 and 243 times in plural form.

A disciple of Jesus is one that is in a learning relationship with Jesus under the leading of the Spirit of Jesus Rom8:9 and under the instruction of another disciple of Jesus (Mat28:18-20 go into all the world... and make disciples).

Salvation is a gift through faith in Jesus only, no works required Rom6:23, Jn3:16, Eph2:8-10. **You don't have to become a disciple of Jesus in order to be saved.** Salvation is an event that takes one moment, discipleship is a developing process that lasts a lifetime. Jesus' words: "sell everything you have and give to the poor then follow me" from Luke18:22 were not a condition for salvation but for discipleship.

The followers of Jesus were first called "disciples" until in Acts11:26 when they were called "Christians" by pagans as a mockery: word "Christ" means "anointed one" but has also the sense "greasy one" (there is a displeasing aspect when touching someone that has fat on his skin). 1Pet4:16 mentions the name "Christian" as an honor.

FIVE MARKS OF A DISCIPLE:

1. PUTTING JESUS FIRST: Mark8:34-38 a disciple denies himself and others having Jesus as the first priority in his life; Luke 14:33 'if you don't give up everything you can't be My disciple' (this statement does not mean we should all quit our jobs and families but that these should be brought at the feet of Jesus). Of course, one can't be a disciple of Jesus without being saved first;

2. Jn8:31 "if you **CONTINUE IN MY WORD**, you are indeed My

disciples"
-A learner of Jesus learns, studies, meditates and applies continually the Word of Jesus, confessing to Jesus and accepting the recovery process described in 1Jn1:7-9.

3. Jn13:35 "by this will all know that you are My disciples: if you **have LOVE** (Greek: 'agape') one for another"
-Word 'agape' means 'unconditional love' of which God is the source. Other Greek words for love: 'eros' (sensual love; word "erotic" derives from it); 'storgeo' (parental love); 'phileo' (friendship love)

4. Jn13:36 "Herein is My Father glorified: that **YOU BRING FORTH MUCH FRUIT**, so you shall be my disciples".
-Fruit expected by God from a disciple are not works of the natural man (or flesh) Gal2:16, Eph2:9 but fruit of the Spirit Gal5:22 and good works motivated by faith 1Tim2:10; 6:18; Tit3:14.

5. A disciple of Jesus **MAKES DISCIPLES unto Jesus** Mat28:18-20, 2Tim2:2; 2Cor4:5.

--Discipleship involves **FELLOWSHIP** – Jesus told the disciples individually "follow Me" ("follow-ship") Matt9:9; Jn1:43; that means spending godly time with ones you are discipling; Paul said to the Corinth church: "follow me as I follow Christ" 1Cor11:1, also 4:16; Paul said to the Thessalonians: we gave you in us an example to follow 2Thes3:9; John said, 'our fellowship is with the Father and with the Son and we invite you all into this fellowship' 1Jn1:3;

Charles Spurgeon was one of the most amazing preachers that ever existed (19^{th} century), he brought to Christ more than 1 million people **but he didn't really make disciples**: his church died out slowly after his death; **Charles Wesley** (18^{th} century) was not such a good theologian and preacher as Spurgeon but he **made disciples**: the Methodist movement (over 80 million members today) is present all over the world 300 years after Wesley.

--The **GOAL** of discipleship is to become **MORE LIKE CHRIST** 2Cor3:18 regarding self and to **SHINE OUT CHRIST** in regards to this world 2Cor2:14

--The **greatest ASSURANCE** in discipleship is that Jesus is with us till the end of the age (world) Matt28:20

--The **MOTIVATION** in discipleship is the love of Christ that draws us 2Cor5:14

--The **COST** of discipleship is death of self Gal2:20; Matt16:24

--HOW DO YOU CHOOSE A DISCIPLE? Preach Christ and live out Christ then look behind to see who is following after you because of the life of Christ that you shine out; a disciple is **TEACHABLE, AVAILABLE, FAITH-ORIENTED**;

In 25 years, an evangelist reaching 1000 people a day would reach 9,000,000 people. Someone discipling one person every 3 years, who are reproducing themselves disciples every 3 years (each new disciple making one disciple every 3 years), within 25 years comes to over 5000 disciples who by evangelizing each an average of 5,000 within 25 years, this would reach 25,000,000 people in less than 25 years.

Train men to become your co-workers. A great man of God said, "why do yourself the work of 10 men when you can train 10 men to do the work?" 2Tim2:2

Discipleship takes time: the apostles spent 3 years (day and night) with the best teacher ever, Jesus; mushrooms grow over-night but don't last; baobab or sequoia trees grow slow but strong and great. **Some disciples start slow** but then take off (Mark left Paul in Acts13:13 but later joined Paul again 2Tim4:11), while **others start well but soon stop** (Demas was missionary with Paul and in prison with Paul Col4:14 but he later left Paul looking for material security 2Tim4:10)

Check out a good book (by Dietrich Boenhoffer; pdf format, 9mb) on discipleship:

http://www.staidans.co.nz/wp-content/uploads/2016/02/FullDiscipleship.pdf

See here about 30 hours of Bible college classes on the subject of Discipleship:
http://open.mbcs.edu/index.php/courses/show/45

POST 14. EASTER

The name “Easter” is never mentioned in the original Scriptures. However, one English translation of the Bible does use the word. The King James Version chose to translate Acts 12:4 like this:

> “And when he [Herod Agrippa, the King] had apprehended him [Peter], he put him in prison, and delivered him to four quaternions of soldiers to keep him; intending after EASTER to bring him forth to the people.”

The book of Acts was originally written in the Greek language by the Christian Gentile and physician Luke. The Greek word that the King James Version translates as “Easter” is most certainly not the word “Easter.” It is actually the word “PASCHA” (Hebrew: PESACH) which means “Passover”—and this is how all accurate translations show it. For example, the New King James Version used word: PASSOVER.”

It was during an annual Passover celebration that Jesus was crucified at Jerusalem. Passover is an annual Jewish religious celebration instituted by God (Lev.23:5). It dates from the time of Moses when God delivered the Israelites from bondage and spared their first-borns when all first-borns in Egypt died (Ex12:11; Num9:2f; Deut16:1f; 2Kings23:21f).

The name “Easter” has its roots in ancient polytheistic religions (paganism). On this, all scholars agree. This name is never used in the original Scriptures, nor is it ever associated biblically with the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. For these reasons, many prefer to use the term “Resurrection Sunday” rather than “Easter” when referring to the annual Christian remembrance of Christ’s resurrection.

The use of bunny rabbit and eggs are also of pagan origin, used as symbols of sexual fertility.

It would have been a better witness to the world if Christians had not attempted to “Christianize” pagan celebrations—adopting the name “Easter” in English (Ishtar/Semiramis) in remembrance of Christ (Romanians do not use word "easter" but "pashte", close to "pesach"; French use "pacque"). Sadly, Jesus has been obscured by painted eggs and bunnies. Attention has been shifted away from spiritual truth and toward materialism (clothing, products and candies with the wrong symbolism). Stores merchandise the name of “Easter” (not “Resurrection Sunday”) and sell goods that have nothing to do with Christ’s death and resurrection. Christians naively use symbols and practices that unknowingly perpetuate ancient anti-Christ traditions—symbolic customs followed by the same religious cults that inspired the destruction of great numbers of Christians and Jews.

Many churches recognize the problem and make every effort to keep the focus of Resurrection Sunday totally on Jesus Christ and the Good News that He brought, not on rituals and traditions.

The Bible makes it clear that Jesus was resurrected on the first day of the week, Sunday (Matt28:1; Mark16:2,9; Luke24:1; Jn20:1,19). Jesus' resurrection is most worthy of being celebrated (see 1Cor15).

So you can celebrate Christ's resurrection on Easter Sunday. Christ's resurrection is something that should be celebrated every day, not just once a year. At the same time, if we choose to celebrate Easter Sunday once a year, we should not allow the fun and games to distract our attention from what the day should truly be all about—the fact that Jesus was resurrected from the dead, and that His resurrection demonstrates that we can indeed have an eternal home in Heaven by receiving Jesus as our Savior.

POST 15. END TIMES

I put together a few end-times-prophetical points to watch for; do not listen to anyone announcing a date for the end: Jesus said that no one knows the day or the hour (Mat.24:36);

In Mark13:30 Jesus said the generation that will see all of these signs happen (at an unprecedented scale) will not pass away until Jesus comes back; "generation" in the Bible can mean 40 or 70 (Ps90:10) or 120 years (Gen6:3).
One of the signs is the rebirth of the state Israel, which took place in 1948: Christ could come at any time to take his church (Mark13:28-33; 1Thes4:16-17; see also our study “Christ's coming - 2 stages").

1. **FALSE BIBLE TEACHERS: 2Pet2:1-3, Matt24:11,24 -** there are about 2,500 cults in America alone, many more worldwide; Many cult leaders claim to possess deity 2Thes2:4; mind control practices and an unhealthy study of Scriptures. They claim to have latter day new revelations (beyond the Bible) and direct revelation from God, excluding the Bible; they divert authority away from the Scriptures and become the authority themselves see Matt28:18; they are money hungry

2. **HOMOSEXUALITY would be increasingly evident** at the end of the age 2Tim.3:3; USA and many western nations have legalized homosexual marriages and even adoptions by such;

3. **EARTHQUAKES** Matt.24:7; The year with the largest total was 2010 with 24 earthquakes greater than or equal to magnitude 7.0; 3 million people died in earthquakes in 20th century ; VULCANIC ERUPTIONS: 25 to 50 per year

4. **STRESS** would be part of living 2Tim3:1, with many tens of thousands every year dying of heart attack or other health issues caused by stress, or many committing suicide because of stress

5. **Many WARS** and rumors of wars Matt24:6; 66 countries are directly at war today, with Islamic terrorism now reaching possibly into any country of the world

6. People would **FORSAKE THE TEN COMMANDMENTS** and the BIBLICAL moral code, committing adultery, stealing, abortion, lying, and killing Matt24:12, some of these sins protected by governments' laws

7. There would be a **COLD RELIGIOUS SYSTEM, denying God's power** 2Tim3:5

8. Men would **substitute FANTASY IN PLACE OF CHRISTIAN TRUTH** (2Tim4:4). This is so evident at Christmas when the birth of the Savior is lost behind the myth of Santa Claus and 'xmas', also Easter lost behind eggs and rabbits

9. **DEADLY DISEASES** (Matt24:7). The worldwide increase in AIDS deaths. Over 160,000 Americans die of cancer each year. New deadly viruses are discovered lately

10. **The fact that God once FLOODED THE EARTH** (THE NOAHIC FLOOD) WOULD BE DENIED (2Pet3:5-6). There is a mass of fossil evidence to prove this fact, yet it is flatly ignored or misinterpreted by the scientific world

11. **The institution of MARRIAGE WOULD BE FORSAKEN** BY MANY (1Tim4:3): marriage is forbidden for priests by the Catholic religion but also in the society at large marriage is mocked and seen as "old-fashioned"

12. There would be an **increase in FAMINES** (Matt24:7); 1 in 10 people worldwide are obese (unbalanced or unhealthy nourishing); The United Nations Food and Agriculture Organization estimates that about 795 million people of the 7.3 billion people in the world, **or one in nine**, were suffering from chronic undernourishment in 2014-2016

13. **VEGETARIANISM** would increase (1Tim4:3-4) on religious reason or on other ideological reasons (yoga, oriental religions that see animals as gods, animals' rights movements)

14. There would be a **CRY FOR PEACE** (1Thess5:3) at any cost, finally embracing the Antichrist who will bring temporal peace; ecumenical movement, the call to unite all under one world religion (just as at Babel tower)

15. **THE POSSESSION OF JERUSALEM would be at the center of international turmoil** (Zech.12:3); UN held a few times a vote about condemning Israel for occupying Jerusalem which in UN's view it is palestinian territory, next vote might be held towards the end of 2016 with the possibility to punish Israel including through military action: the Bible says that armies of the world will come against Israel and Jesus will intervene to defend Israel;

16. **KNOWLEDGE would increase** (Dan.12:4); this is obvious today in terms of worldwide education and technology

17. There would be **HYPOCRITES WITHIN THE CHURCH** (Matt13:25-30)

18. **MEN WOULD MOCK THE WARNING SIGNS OF THE END OF THE AGE** saying, "for since the fathers fell asleep, all things continue as they were from the beginning of the creation." (2Pet.3:3,4). The Bible even reveals **their motivation: they love lust**

19. **YOUTH WOULD BECOME REBELLIOUS.** For men shall be lovers of their own selves, covetous, boasters, proud, blasphemers, disobedient to parents, unthankful, unholy (2Tim3:2)

20. **Humanity would become MATERIALISTIC** and SELFISH (2Tim3:4): gambling, lotto, "I want to become a millionaire"-type-of-TV-shows

21. There would be **many involved in TRAVEL** (Dan12:4): 8 million people take planes every day, 3.3 billion travelers in one year

22. The **GOSPEL WOULD BE PREACHED** as a warning **to all nations** (Matt24:14): Gideons Society says 6 billions Bibles have been distributed during the last century

23. Jesus said **CHRISTIANS WOULD BE HATED** "for His name's sake" (Matt.24:9); over 100.000 Christians are killed every year for their faith, many more are persecuted for Jesus, see www.persecution.com

24. "And there shall be **SIGNS IN THE SUN, AND IN THE MOON, AND IN THE STARS**; and upon the earth distress of nations, with perplexity; the sea and the waves roaring; Men's hearts failing them for fear, and for looking after those things which are coming on the earth: for the powers of heaven shall be shaken" Luke21:25-26

NEXT MAJOR EVENT ON GOD'S SCHEDULE is the rapture of the church and the coming of Jesus, this one event announced in 1Thes4:15-17 can happen at any moment (see our study "Jesus' second coming") but certain events are announced in the Bible, events that could happen before the coming of Jesus or immediately after:

01. INVASION OF MUSLIMS INTO EUROPE: many believe that the invasion will end with civil wars as nationalism awakens and also because of the many problems caused by these invaders "refugees": thefts, sexual abuses, terrorism; Dan11:18

02. INVASION OF ISRAEL: Ez28-32 names the invading nations: "Tubal and Meshec" (Russians), “Sidonians” (Lebanese), “Egyptians”, “Cush” (Somalis, african), “Put” (Tunisians, Moroccans), “Lydians” (Turks) and “Arabs,” “Assyrian” (Syrians, Iraqis) and "many others" (UN and/or other coalitions)

03. DESTRUCTION OF MECCA BY IRAN: Is21:1-17; Iran, "Elam", hates Mecca (just as the ISIS terrorists) and has weapons directed at Mecca ("Duma, Arabia") waiting for an opportunity; the type of destruction prophesied against Arabia indicates possible use of atomic bomb and burning of its oil Jer51:25-62

04. FALL OF BABYLON: Is21:9, Jer51, Rev14;8, 18:2; Bible prophecies often have more than one application; some theologians believe that Babylon is only a counterfeit system of religion, however the verses announcing Babylon's destruction refer to a geographical place;
Here are some arguments that MECCA might be ('one' if not 'the') end-times Babylon:
--it is BUILT ON ANCIENT BABYLON in Arabia: Ez.25:12-13 (Edom, Teman, Dedan), Jer49:21 (not far from the Red Sea); "built on 7 hills" could refer to the 7 Islamic dynasties
--Arabs call the towers built at Mecca "THE TOWER BABEL"
--the tower complex at Mecca with its 7 buildings is the GREATEST BUILDING ON EARTH (1.3 million square meters) and the height of the main tower of 200 meters makes it one of the tallest building aspiring to fulfill the desire of the Babel builders in Gen11 "TO REACH THE SKY", which can also be translated "with the heaven (sky) on top", which means astrology and worship of stars; Mecca towers have a Moon observatory
See: http://shoebat.com/2014/04/21/muslims-rebuild-tower-babel-shocking-research/
--Gen11 "to have A NAME" (FAME) – all sunni Muslims honor Mecca and are required to come to Mecca once in their lifetime; Sunni Muslims pray 5 times facing Mecca (90% of Muslims are sunni and 10% are siites; there are 50 countries that have Muslim majority)
--Muslims have ONE LANGUAGE, Arabic, just as Babel had Gen11:6
--Kaaba, the house at Mecca is called "the house of God", its 250kg gold gate is called "Bab-Illah" pronounced identically as Babel, Muslims see it personified as A WOMAN, just as Rev.17:3 calls it A WOMAN, A WHORE; Kaaba was dedicated to Aphrodite the Prostitute before Islam; Kaaba is dressed in purple and scarlet Rev17:17

--The woman is drunk with the blood of the saints Rev17:6; Islam fits best this prophecy, having killed millions of Christians and continuing to kill tens of thousands of Christians every year; Vatican (which some believe to be Babylon) has only killed Christians at certain times in history but Islam continually since its beginning in the 7th century; Mecca denies the Father and the Son, while Catholics dont, 1Jn2:22
--Rev6:9 speaks of martyrs slain for their faith in Jesus: Islam best fits this prophecy of killing martyrs even in a literal way, as they use the sword in amputations and decapitations; however, "slain" can have a wider application, just as it is said about Jesus to be the Lamb slain Rev5:9
--Rev13:5 Islam speaks GREATER BLASPHEMIES than any religion: "Alah akbar", "Mohamed is the greatest prophet", "Jesus is the slave of Alah", "Alah will destroy all Christians", "Jesus didn't die on the cross"; the Koran is filled with blasphemies against Jesus and the Bible
--beast as a lamb speaking as a dragon Rev.13:11 best describes Islam with its 2 branches, one peaceful as a lamb (Sunni) and one speaking as a dragon (Siites, ISIS)

More about islam:
www.answering-islam.org
www.thereligionofpeace.com

End times news:
www.hallindsey.com
www.prophecyupdate.com
www.raptureready.com

POST 16. FASTING

"TO FAST" in Hebrew (Old Testament) is "tsum/tsom"="to cover over (the mouth)", used 47 times; 21 times as action: Jud20:26, 1Sam7:6; 1Sam31:13; 2Sam1:12; 12:16,21to27; 1Ch10:12; Ezr8:23; Neh1:4; Est4:16; Is58:3to4; Jer14:12; Zec7:5 ....and 26 times as noun: 2Sam12:16; 1Ki21:9to12; 2Ch20:3, Ezr8:21,9:1; Est4:3,9:31; Ps35:13;69:10;109:24 ; Is58:3to6; Jer36:6,9; Dan9:3; Joel1:14; 2:12,15; Jonah3:5; Zec8:19

"TO FAST" in Greek (New Testament is "nesteia/nestis"="religious abstinence from food"; used 30 times; 8 times as noun "the fast/fasting": Mat17:21, Mar9:29, Luk2:37, Act14.23, Acts27:9, 1Cor7:5, 2Cor6:5, 2Cor11:27 ...and 22 times as verb (action): Mark4:2, Mat6:16,18; Mat9:14,15;15:32; Mark 2:18,20 and 8:3; Luke5:33,35; Luke18:12, Acts10:30;13:2,3

Probably very few of us seldom if ever fast; many today practice fasting (diet) for health purposes, which is not a religious fast. Fasting has become a very emotional issue for a lot of people and often carried to extremes. Some demand that we should fast. Others don't want anyone telling them how/what/when to eat.

I. FASTING IN THE OLD TESTAMENT

A. The "Day of Atonement" was the only fast that was commanded by the Law (Lev16:29to31; 23:26to32; Num29:7). Fasting was generally a deliberate act of worshipping God.

1. Though not called "fasting," the phrase "afflicting one's soul" was used which included fasting.

2. Thus, fasting was more than a physical exercise, but had a spiritual purpose.

B. Other times when fasting occurred in the Old Testament.

1. Fasted in times of war or threat of war Jud20:26; 1Sam7:6

2. Fasted when loved ones were sick 2Sam12:16to23

3. Fasted for their enemies Ps35:11,13

4. Fasted when loved ones died 1Sam31:13; 1Chron10:12

5. Fasted when seeking God's pardon Deut9:15to18; 1Kings21:17to29; Jonah3:4to10

6. Fasted when facing danger Ezra8:21; Est4:3;4:16

7. Fasted to commemorate certain calamities Jer52:12,13; 2Kings25:23to25; Jer41; 2Kings25:1to4

II. FASTING IN THE NEW TESTAMENT

A. FASTING AND JESUS.

1. Jesus fasted from food forty days (Matt4:1to9; Luke4:1,2). The Bible does not say that He didn't drink. Jesus was led by the Holy Spirit into the fasting and into temptation in the desert. Ask God's leading about if and when and how you would fast. Also make sure your motivation is right: a deeper fellowship with God.

2. Jesus taught about fasting (it should be secret, before God) in his sermon on the mount (Mat6:16to18).

3. Jesus was questioned about it by John's disciples Matt9:14to17

4. Jesus taught of a combined power of prayer and fasting Mt17:14to21

B. FASTING AND THE CHURCH

1. The church at Antioch fasted Acts13:1to3
2. The churches of Galatia fasted Acts14:21to23
3. The apostles fasted 1Cor6:1to10
4. Paul often fasted 2Cor11:23to27
5. Married couples may decide for fasting from food associated with a sexual fast, an agreed temporary abstinence 1Cor7:5

III. THE PURPOSE OF FASTING

--Some fasting was the natural reaction to grief.
--The purpose of affliction through fast was to "humble" the soul Ps35:13. We don't fast to impress God or to twist His hand to do what we request (blackmail God), but in fasting we desire total concentration on God; we can fast not only from food, but also from certain activities that might not be evil in themselves (tv, games or other pleasures) but we concentrate our time and attention on God (Ezra8:21to23; Is57:15; 66:1,2).

IV. THE NATURE OF FASTING

A. The usual form of fasting was to abstain from ALL FOOD, but NOT WATER.

B. Sometimes a fast was PARTIAL, restricting the diet, but not total abstention (Dan10:2,3). Daniel mourned and fasted three weeks by abstaining from "pleasant bread," meat, and wine (Dan10:3), he avoided pastries, doughnuts, and other delicacies available for a king's court, but it implies he did eat some food but not delicacies.

C. Sometimes a fast was TOTAL, included water Jonah3:5to10; Est4:16; Acts9:9

V. THE LENGTH OF FASTING

A. One day [Sunrise to sunset] Jud20:26; 1Sam14:24; 2Sam1:12;3:35

B. Three days Est4:16

C. Seven days 1Sam31:13; 1Chron10:12

D. Forty days Ex34:28; Deut9:9; 1Kings19:8; Matt4:2

E. Continual – Samson was never allowed to eat grapes or drink grape juice, wine, or alcohol, just as the Nazarites for the period they would be Nazarites (Num6:3; 'nazarite' means 'separated one' for a determined time); however, this was an Old Testament teaching that does not apply in a literal form under the New Covenant in Christ, in its spiritual application a Christian is to separate himself unto God, set apart from anything that can twist his mind from thinking rightly with God.

VI. WARNINGS CONCERNING FASTING

A. It can turn into an empty ritual Is58:3to9

B. It can be turned into a show Matt6:16to18

VII. FINAL THOUGHTS ON FASTING

A. Should Christians fast today?
-Yes, but fasting is not an obligation.
-Jesus assumed that his disciples would fast Matt9:14,15 and the N.T. church practiced it.

B. WHY Should Christians fast?
-There are times when we need divine help (temptation, illness, beginning a new work, appointing elders, in times of war, seeking forgiveness, a deeper walk with God).

C. HOW Should Christians fast?
1. Not to be seen of men Matt6:16to18
2. Not as some regular ritual Matt9:14to17
3. Not without true repentance Is58:3to9
4. Fasting should be accompanied by prayer, meditating on the Word and reading/studying the Word.

CONCLUSION: Fasting is not a church ordinance (there are only 2 church ordinances: water baptism and the Holy Communion), but rather it is a private matter. The church can be called to fast together, but the choice is yours. Destroying your body through excessive fast, avoiding always certain foods (Col2:20to23, 1Tim4:1to3) cutting yourself like Baal's followers (1Kings18) or whipping yourself like Mexican Catholics is worthless, for it was never prescribed nor practiced by the true followers of God or by Jesus Christ and it denies the cross of Jesus.

Christian fasting is the effect of what Christ has already done for us and in us. It is not an effort of the flesh, but the Spirit's fruit: remember that the last-mentioned fruit of the Spirit is "self control" (Gal5:23). You can eat to the glory of God (1Cor10:31) or you can fast to the glory of God, just as you can eat and fast in the flesh.

POST 17. WHAT IS THE FIVE (5) FOLD MINISTRY?

The concept of the five-fold ministry comes from Eph4:11:
"He gave some to be:
--(1) apostles
--(2) and some to be prophets
--(3) and some to be evangelists
--and some to be (4) pastors and (5) teachers."

As a result of this verse, some believe the Bible supports the offices of living apostles and prophets in the church today.

Eph4:12-13 tells us that the purpose of the five-fold ministry is:

"to PREPARE God's people for works of service, so that the body of Christ MAY BE BUILT UP until we all REACH UNITY in the faith and in the KNOWLEDGE of the Son of God and BECOME MATURE, ATTAINING TO THE WHOLE MEASURE OF THE FULLNESS OF CHRIST."

Some come to the conclusion that since the Body of Christ continues to be built up today, all these 5 offices need to continue to exist in church today. However, the Bible teaches clearly that the office of the 12 apostles was only for the 12, so there are no living apostles today but the 12 continue to minister to us through the Bible; when James was killed with the sword (Acts12:2), he was not replaced; Rev.21:14 mentions only 12 apostles of the Lamb; word 'apostle' means 'sent one' and Jesus only appointed 12 apostles with the special mission to give teaching received personally and directly from Jesus (Gal1:1,11,12), nobody today can claim this. Paul did not appoint apostles ('apostolos') but pastors and elders ('poimen' and 'presbuteros' in Greek) and in his epistles he gave criteria for appointing pastors and elders, not apostles; one can call himself an apostle ('sent one') of his church if he desires so, but not an apostle of Jesus appointed by Jesus personally, nobody can claim today that his word is equal with the word of the 12 apostles of Jesus and with their recorded words, the New Testament. **We still have the 12 Apostles ministering to us today**: the 12 speak to us through their recorded words in the New Testament. For more infos ask me

for our study 'Are there apostles today?'. Same applies for prophets, ask me for our study defining the ministry of prophets.

However, Eph2:20 informs us that the church is "built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, with Christ Jesus Himself as the chief cornerstone." If the apostles and prophets are our foundation, are we still building the foundation by having today apostles and prophets? Although Jesus Christ is most definitely active in the church today, His role as the cornerstone of the church was completed with His death, burial, resurrection, and ascension (1Cor3:11). If the work of the cornerstone is complete, so must the work of the apostles as our foundation be complete. And the same way that we learn from Jesus through the Bible, the same way we learn from the apostles and the prophets through the Bible. Nobody (other than cults) dares to claim that Jesus speaks audibly and in person in churches today but through the Holy Spirit through the Bible, through godly preaching of the Word. Jesus gave written messages through John to the 7 churches in Revelations chapters 3 and 4, not directly by His audible voice. Jesus does appear lately to many in visions (especially to Muslims) but only with a brief message to bring them to salvation through faith in Him, Jesus does not teach them the Bible as well: that teaching job He left with his church, see Mat28:18-20, 2Tim2:2. Same applies to Apostles: their word can still be heard through the Bible.

What was the role of the apostles and prophets? It was to proclaim God's revelation, to teach the new truth that the church would need to grow. The apostles and prophets completed this mission. How? By giving us the written Word of God, the completed revelation of God. The Bible contains everything the church needs to know, to grow and fulfill God's mission (2Tim3:15-16). The foundation work of the apostles and prophets is complete, nobody should add to the Bible. The ongoing work of the apostles and prophets is manifested in the Holy Spirit speaking to us through the recorded written Word of God, written by Apostles and Prophets.
In that sense, the five-fold ministry is still active. The 12 Apostles still speak to us today teachings they have received directly from Jesus and have recorded these teachings in the Bible, we don't need new apostles and prophets today that want to replace the words of the 12 apostles and prophets with their words.

--Another interesting aspect is that the above points 4 and 5 are in fact presenting only one same office: 'some pastors and teachers' refer to one same office: 'pastor-teacher', not two offices, 'pastors' + 'teachers'; article 'some' ('ho' in Greek) is placed before every office but not before 'teachers'; Formation 'some pastors and teachers' in Greek is 'ho poimen kai didaskalos'; theologians call it 'Granville Sharp' rule, a particularity of the Greek language where article 'ho' meaning 'the' or 'some', when used only once before 2 nouns in the same case which are connected by 'kai' (meaning 'also', sometimes 'and'), shows that the 2 nouns, 'pastors' + 'teachers' refer to the same person; in other words, it is not written 'ho poimen kai HO didaskalos', (second 'HO' is missing), if 2 'ho' would be used then they would be two separate offices.

Word 'kai' means 'also'; in the same verse we have Greek word 'de' used twice which means 'AND' (AND some prophets, AND some evangelists) but between words 'pastors' and 'teachers' word 'KAI' is used, that is most of the time translated by 'ALSO', rarely by 'and'. Therefore 'ho poimen kai didaskalos' should be translated 'pastors that are also teachers' or 'pastors-teachers'.

Here are some similar Granville Sharp formations:
-2Pet1:11: '...HEMON Kurios KAI Soter Iesous Christos' = 'our Lord also Savior Jesus Christ'; here article 'hemon' appears only once before 'Kurios' (it is not repeated before 'Soter') and 'kai' connects 2 nouns ('Lord' + 'Savior') which means that both nouns reffer to the same person, Jesus.

-Heb3:1: 'ho Apostolos kai archiereus...Jesus Christ' = 'our Apostol also High-Priest ...Jesus Christ' – the 2 nouns ('Apostol' + 'High-Priest') are referring to the same person, Jesus.

-Acts13:1: 'tis prophetes kai didaskalos' = 'certain prophets also teachers' – should be translated 'prophets-teachers';

-other 'Granville Sharp' verses: Rev16:15, 2Cor1:3, 2Pet2:20 plus 80 other verses.

Another interesting point is that Paul here did not give an extensive full list of the gifts that involve also teaching in church: he did not mention deacons, preachers, elders, who can also teach, preach, evangelize, he just gave the main offices of teachers of the Church, offices that have teaching as their main responsibility.

Timothy was a pastor but Paul encourages him to do the work of an evangelist 2Tim4:5; Peter was one of the 12 Apostles but he called himself an elder ('presbuteros') in 1Pet5:1; words 'pastors', 'elders', 'bishops' (or 'overseers' from 'episkopos' in Greek) are synonyms, interchangeable.

Some use the formula 'five fold ministry' just as a cover-up for having apostles and prophets today: they don't want to be accountable to the Scriptures and to edify the Body of Christ, they just want honor and riches. They just want to be above 'simple pastors'. They just want to pretend that they have a special mysterious powerful relationship with God that 'simple pastors' don't have. Eventually it's all about cash.

Matt19:4: 'Have you not read the Scriptures?'

POST 18. FOODS

Question: Does God require us to follow the Old Testament laws about not eating pork and other kinds of meat today?

Answer:

The dietary laws for Israel recorded in Lev11, which include, for example, a prohibition against eating pork, were given **to Israel only**, with a specific spiritual meaning and, perhaps, also for health reasons in the desert conditions. Remember that God told Noah in Gen9:3, **"Every moving thing that lives shall be meat for you"** (and that includes pork), but Israel was born centuries later. In Is64:1-7 God rebukes Israel for eating forbidden unclean foods (pork), He does not rebuke the church there.

The law contained different **SHADOWS or SYMBOLS pointing to Christ** Heb8:5,9.23,10:1, Col2:17:

--the **TEMPLE** spoke of the body of Jesus: Jn2:19;
--the temple had a few articles: the **ALTAR** that symbolized the cross, **ANIMAL SACRIFICES** that pointed to the sacrifice of Jesus Jn1:29, a **BASIN** for washing hands that speaks of confessing sins 1Jn1:9, a **LAMP-STAND** , the only source of light inside the temple, with 7 arms speaking of Jesus as the light of the world Jn8:12, the **PROPITIATORY** or the ark, symbol of the heavenly throne of God where Jesus went on the basis of His His own blood Heb9:12, a **VEIL** that was broken from top to bottom symbolized the Body of Jesus broken for us on the cross Heb10:20, **WOOD PILLARS COVERED IN GOLD** spoke of Jesus humanity and divinity, exterior of the temple was covered not in gold but in **animal skins** which have NO BEAUTY just as Jesus had no physical human beauty Is53:2, **INCENSE** altar that speaks of prayer as Jesus intercedes for us Rom8:34; a human **HIGH PRIEST**, Jesus being our High Priest Heb8:1
--different **CEREMONIALS** and interdiction: regulations regarding uncleanness (touching a woman during menstruation days, touching a dead body, touching blood or a bleeding person etc), redeeming the first born; interdictions regarding foods as symbols for sin; **holy-days**: sabbatical days and sabbatical years, jubilee years, now Jesus is our rest Matt11:28; **circumcision** was a sign of a covenant with God, today God desires circumcision of the heart Rom2:29; **FEASTS**: tents feast speaking of the tabernacle of God Rev21:3, feast of trumpets speaking of the rapture 1Thes4:16, feast of the first fruits speaking of Jesus as first fruit 1Cor15:23, feast of Pentecost speaking about the yet future coming of the Holy Spirit and...many many other rituals and symbols and shadows.

THE PROHIBITION REGARDING UNCLEAN FOODS had spiritual meanings pointing to Christ (see Lev11):
--Animals that **CHEW CUD** or have a **SPLIT HOOF** but not both (like camels, rabbits, pigs) were unclean; chewing cud is symbol of meditation and a split hoof speaks of a precise walk; pork was forbidden, it usually carries more diseases than any meat, but also pigs eat dirt and love mud, spiritually an image of living in sin (see the prodigal son's story).
--Sea creatures that do not have **FINS AND SCALES** (like crustaceans); fins, just like wings, speak of a blessed walk/flight, as opposed to the cursed serpent's crawling in the dust; scales speak of our shield of faith and the protective Bible doctrine around us;
--Birds that eat **dead flesh** (like crows, raptors, sea gulls) – dead flesh is opposed to the living flesh of Christ, which means that the sacrifice of the body of Jesus gave us eternal life
--**DRINKING HUMAN BLOOD** was forbidden – and it still is, as it also falls in the category of cannibalism and / or hurting your neighbor, as opposed to the command of loving your neighbor; "the life of the flesh is in the blood" Lev17:11 means that blood sustains one's life and drinking someone else's blood usually involved killing that person; pagan religions at the time believed that drinking human blood is a form of worship of their

gods and a form of extending your own life or magic powers; blood transfusion for the purpose of saving someone else's life is allowed as transfusion is not drinking blood; the only blood we are symbolically invited to drink is the blood of Jesus, symbol of receiving the life of Jesus by faith Jn6:56, Gal2:20.
--LEAVEN – it was forbidden for 7 days during the passover feast, Ex12:15, therefore Jesus and the disciples at the last supper had un-fermented grape juice and unleavened bread; leaven is an alteration and symbolized the alteration or destruction produced by sin; today the Christian is no longer bound by this interdiction, however for the sake of protecting against dangers of alcoholism we advise use of grape juice instead of fermented wine for the holy communion. See our study on "Alcoholism".

The New Testament, however, makes it clear that observation of these Old Testament ceremonials, symbols and food laws for religious reasons is no longer required in the New Testament era. See our studies: "We are not under the Law of Moses", "What is Sabbath".

If certain foods are bad for health, they are not forbidden by God for that reason today. Some claim that God does not allow us to eat pig because of health risks but those same persons eat processed foods that contain lots of harmful chemicals, eat sugar, drink coke, coffee and tea that have bad effects on health. It is good to take care of your health as much as you can but there isn't any command from God to keep yourself perfectly pure physically from any food toxins. Today however all foods may contain some type of toxins (pesticides, radioactivity from nuclear waste, preservatives, colorants, genetically-modified cells and other chemicals).

Jesus Himself declared all foods to be "clean", saying that what enters man's mouth can't defile him spiritually (Mark 7:17-23); that statement was in apparent contradiction to the law of Moses that declared certain foods unclean – unless if Jesus knew that prohibited foods and ceremonials were just symbols fulfilled by Jesus and thus Jesus did not abolish those ceremonials and food prohibitions but He was their fulfillment. When a shadow slowly appears from around a building, the shadow tells a little about the person that is coming, but when the person arrives in view, we no longer look at the shadow but at the person. Rituals, ceremonials and food prohibitions were shadows of Jesus, see Col2:17, Heb8:5; 10:1.

In Acts 10:9-16, Peter was informed by God through a vision that he was not to reject the use of certain animals for food: "do not call unclean what God has cleansed". When did God cleanse unclean foods? When Jesus died on the cross, ceremonials and food prohibitions were fulfilled and thus no longer in function for the Christian. See Col2:14

Col2:14 "Blotting out the handwriting of ordinances that was against us, which was contrary to us, and took it out of the way, nailing it to his cross" (ordinances in Greek is "dogma", which means "decree", "law"; handwriting refers to the hand of God that wrote them; see our study "We are not under the law of Moses")

Eph2:15 "Having abolished in his flesh the enmity, even the law of commandments contained in ordinances"

1Cor10:25-28 "**whatsoever is sold in the market place, that eat** without asking questions for conscience sake...if an unbeliever invites you to eat, whatsoever he offers you to eat, that eat asking no question for conscience sake"

1Tim4:3,4 "...they forbid marriage and **foods** which God has created to be received with thankfulness of them that believe and know the truth; For everything God created is good, and nothing is to be rejected if it is received with thanksgiving, because it is consecrated by the word of God and prayer"

Rom14:6 "He that eateth, eateth to the Lord, for he giveth God thanks; and he that eateth not, to the Lord he eateth not, and giveth God thanks."

Rom14:14 "I know, and am persuaded by the Lord Jesus, that there is nothing unclean of itself: but to him that esteems any thing to be unclean, to him it is unclean."

Rom14:17 "the kingdom of God is **not a matter of eating** and drinking, but of righteousness, peace and joy in the Holy Spirit"

Rom14:20-21 "Do **not destroy the work of God for the sake of food.** All things indeed are clean, but they are evil for the man who eats and gives offense. It is good not to eat meat or to drink wine, or to do anything by which your brother stumbles."

1Cor8:8 "Food will not make us acceptable to God. We are not inferior if we don't eat, and we are not better if we do eat."

Col2:16,17 "Let no man therefore **judge you in meat,** or in drink, or in respect of an holyday, or of the new moon, or of the sabbath days: Which are a **shadow of things to come,** but **the body is of Christ**."

Heb9:9 "...the way into the holiest of all was not yet made manifest, while as the first tabernacle was yet standing: Which was a figure for the time then present, in which were offered both gifts and sacrifices, that could not make him that did the service perfect, as pertaining to the conscience;
Heb 9:10 Which stood only in **meats and drinks**, and divers washings, and carnal ordinances, imposed on them **until the time of reformation (until the cross: Jn19:30 "It is finished!")**.
Heb 9:11 But Christ … "

Heb13:9 "Be not carried about with divers and strange doctrines. For *it is* a good thing that the heart be established with grace, **not with meats**, which have not profited them that have been occupied therein."

In Acts chapters 15 and 21 Paul and the other church leaders did not teach gentiles to keep Sabbaths and foods according to the law of Moses.

In Gal2:11-21 Paul rebukes Peter who was eating with the Gentiles, and Gentiles' diet was not in accordance with Moses' law at all; Paul does not rebuke Peter for eating unclean foods but for pretending that he was not eating unclean foods when some Jews arrived, as Peter was afraid that those Jews would condemn him for eating unclean foods; Paul continues in verses 14 to 21 explaining that we are not made righteous by keeping the law, in this case staying away from foods forbidden by the law of Moses.

Jn13:35 Jesus said that his disciples will be **recognized by their love for each other, not by their diet;** there are unbelievers that follow more strict diets than Jews, sabbatharians and adventists, however none have any gain or recognition in the sight of God for keeping foods.

In the New Covenant of grace, the Bible is far more concerned with **how much we eat** (self-control) and **sharing food** with others than what foods Christians eat see 2Pet1:5-7, Matt25:35; 1Cor11:21.

CONCLUSION

There is no saving grace in either eating or not eating certain foods. We are saved by grace through faith in the Lord Jesus Christ; see Eph2:8-10, Jn3:16,6:47, Rom6:23.

Many people feel they can win God's favor and have eternal life by following the dietary laws of the Old Testament. But this is a misunderstanding. You cannot save yourself—but Christ can, and He will as you commit your life to Him by faith.

During the future 1000 years reign of Jesus on the earth, Israel will have again a central place in the plan of God on the earth and the law of Moses will be again ruling on the earth, with Sabbath-keeping, animal sacrifices, an earthly temple built by God in Jerusalem, but all adapted to look back at the past sacrifice of Christ, salvation being always through faith in Jesus' death on the cross, not through keeping rituals or sacrifices.

Post 19. THE GOSPEL MESSAGE IN THE GENESIS CHAPTER 5 GENEALOGIES

Ten generations of names in Genesis chapter 5 carry the Gospel message.

1. Adam - means **man,** named so by God being the first man.

2. Seth - Adam's son was named Seth, which means **appointed**. Eve said, "For God hath appointed me another seed instead of Abel, whom Cain slew."

3. Enosh - Seth's son was called Enosh, which means **mortal, frail, or miserable**. It was in the days of Enosh that men began to defile the name of the Living God.

4. Kenan (Cainan) - Enosh's son was named Kenan, which can mean **sorrow.**

5. Mahalalel - Kenan's son was Mahalalel, from Mahalal which means **blessed or praise**; and El, the name for God. Thus, Mahalalel means the Blessed God. Often Hebrew names include El, the name of God, as

Dan-i-el, "God is my Judge", etc.

6. Jared - Mahalalel's son was named Jared, from the verb yaradh, meaning **shall come down.**

7. Enoch - Jared's son was named Enoch, which means **teaching, or commencement**. He was the first of four generations of preachers. In fact, the earliest recorded prophecy was by Enoch, which amazingly enough deals with the Second Coming of Christ (he is quoted in the Book of Jude in the New Testament).

8. Methuselah - Enoch was the father of Methuselah. Enoch walked with God after he begat Methuselah, whose name means **his death shall bring**. Apparently, Enoch received the prophecy of the Great Flood, and was told that as long as his son was alive, the judgment of the flood would be withheld. The year that Methuselah died, the flood came.

(Can you imagine raising a kid like that? Every time the boy caught a cold, the entire neighborhood must have panicked!)

It is interesting that Methuselah's life, in effect, was a symbol of God's mercy in delaying the coming judgment of the flood.

Enoch, of course, never died: he was translated (raptured). That's how Methuselah can be the oldest man in the Bible, yet he died before his father!

9. Lamech - Methuselah's son was named Lamech, a root still evident today in our own English word, lament or lamentation. Lamech means **despairing**.

10. Noah - Lamech, of course, is the father of Noah, which is derived from nacham, **to bring relief or comfort**, as Lamech himself explains in Genesis 5:29.

...AND ALL THESE NAMES IN A PHRASE:

Man (is) appointed mortal sorrow; (but) the Blessed God shall come down teaching (that) His death shall bring (to the) despairing rest.

Here's the Gospel hidden within a genealogy in Genesis!

(You will never convince me that a group of Jewish rabbis conspired to hide the Christian Gospel right here in a genealogy within their venerated Torah!)

This demonstrates that in the earliest chapters of the Book of Genesis, God had already laid out His plan of redemption of mankind. It is a love story, written in blood on a wooden cross which was erected in Judea almost 2,000 years ago.

Post 20. WHAT IS GRACE?

--Word **"GRACE" in Hebrew is "CHEN"**, it is used 39 times in the Old Testament, translated at times as "favor"; here are some references:
Gen6:8; 19:19; 32:5; 33:8,10
Ezra9:8
Ps45:2; 84:11
Prov1:9; 3:22,34; 4:9; 22:11
Jer.31:2
Zec4:7;12:10

--Word **"GRACE" in Greek is "CHARIS"**, it is used 156 times in the New Testament; it means "FAVOR" or "GIFT"; as times ("echo charis") it can mean "TO THANK"
Here are most of the New Testament verses that contain the word 'grace':
Luke: 1:30; 2:40, 52; 4:22; 6:32,33,34; 17:9
John: 1:14,16,17
Acts: 2:47, 4:33, 7:10, 46; 11:23; 13:43; 14:3,26; 15:11,40, 18:27; 20:24,32; 24:27; 25:3,9
Rom: 1:5; 3:24; 4:4,16; 5:2,15,17,20,21; 6:1,14,15,17; 11:5,6; 12:3,6; 15:15
1Cor: 1:4; 10:30; 15:10,57; 16:3
2Cor: 1:12,15; 2:14,15; 4:15; 6:1; 8:1,4,6,7,9,16,19; 9:8,14,15; 12:9; 13:14
Gal: 1:6,15; 2:9,21; 5:4
Eph: 1:6,7; 2:5,7,8; 3:2,7,8; 4:7,29
Php: 1:7
Col: 1:6; 3:16; 4:6
2Thes: 1:12; 2:16
1Tim: 1:12,14
2Tim: 1:3,9; 2:1
Titus: 2:11; 3:7
Phm: 1:7; 2:9; 4:16; 10:29; 12:15,28; 13:9
Jas.4:6
1Pet: 1:2,10,13; 2:19,20; 3:7; 4:10; 5:5,10,12
2Pet: 1:2; 3:18
2Jn1:3

Jude1:4
...there are also some other 20 verses that contain the salutation "grace and peace be with you", as in Rom1:7

Word "CHARISMA" means "GIFT" ("charis" means 'grace' and "ma" means 'result of'), some Bible translations translate it "free gift" to accentuate the fact that it is free just as grace is; there are other words in Greek for the word "gift": "dorea", "doma" but Eph2:8 and most other verses above use 'charisma'.

From the above verses we can conclude:

1. Salvation is received by grace or unmerited favor, simply through faith in Jesus' death on the cross on our behalf, as payment for our sins Eph2:8, 2Tim1:9;

2. Call to ministry is by grace 1Cor15:10

3. Grace teaches us to live a life that pleases God, not the law: Tit2:11-12, Acts15:11, Rom6:14

4. Grace and Works are 2 opposite systems when it comes to receiving salvation: Rom11:6; salvation is received as a gift through faith in Jesus (Rom6:23); the Christian's works will be evaluated by Jesus to determine his rewards in heaven, not salvation, since salvation is a gift, 1Cor3:10-15

5. *Grace is not Withheld Because of Demerit*. Grace is a gift not reward or wage

6. *Grace Cannot produce a Debt;* God does not expect you to pay for grace; some people believe that salvation is received freely but it is maintained by works or merit, which is wrong; salvation is free before and after having received it: you don't have to pay for it before or after; if you give me a car for free then later you ask me to pay for it, then it is no longer "free" but purchased, merited

7. *Men are Said to be Saved that "Good Works" may Result*, *Eph2:10, not because of good works; good works follow salvation, not precede it*

8. The teachings of grace **give equal warning** against the sin of turning either in the way of Gentiles (who turn grace into an excuse for living in sin, Jude1:4) or in the way of the legalistic Jews (who denied grace and tried to earn salvation through the works of the law, Gal1:6, 2:21)

Final thoughts:
I. GOD saves sinners by grace (see our study, "What is Salvation")
II. GOD keeps through grace those who are saved (see our study "Salvation is secure")
III. GOD teaches in grace those who are saved and kept how they should live, to His eternal glory (Tit2:11)

For more on the subject of grace, you can click on link below to download a pdf book (size 1mb), "Grace", written almost 100 years ago by L.S. Chaffer:
http://lewissperrychafer.org/Grace.pdf

POST 21. IS THE BIBLE TRUSTWORTHY?

Is there proof that the Bible is true? Who wrote the Bible and what evidence exists that the Bible should be treated seriously? How it be proven that the Bible was inspired by God?

Below is an attempt to answer and perhaps convince the skeptics and unbelievers who do not believe in the Bible and the authority that it carries as being the infallible word of God.

1. WRITTEN BY DIFFERENT MEN OVER 2000 YEARS
The Bible is a collection of 66 books which were written by about 40 men over a period of 2000 years or more. Most of these authors had never physically met but yet their message in what they wrote is structured, consistent, accurate, inter-related and perfectly unified throughout. Though these writers physically penned the 66 books, the individual writers, at the time of writing, had no idea that their message was eventually to be incorporated into one single Book, that we know today as being The Bible.

--2Tim3:16,17 **"All Scripture is breathed out by God and profitable..."**

2. THE SCIENTIFIC ACCURACY OF THE BIBLE
Another striking evidence of divine inspiration is found in the fact that many of the
principles of modern science were recorded as facts of nature in the Bible long before
scientist confirmed them experimentally; here are some examples:

--The Earth is round, not flat as once believed, Is40:22, and suspended on nothing, Job26:7; Job wrote this 4000 years ago when people believed the earth was carried by a huge man, Atlas, or by 4 elephants

--Atmospheric circulation Ecc1:6

--Field of Gravity Job26:7

--Biological importance of blood to life Lev17:11,12

--The Bible refers to dinosaurs: Job40:15 and Job41:1

--The Existence of Water Paths (Ocean Currents) in the Seas: Ps8:1,3,6,8; also The Existence of Springs and Fountains in the Seas: Gen7:11;8:2, Prov8:28, confirmed by modern science

--Only in recent years has science discovered that everything we see is composed of invisible atoms. Scripture tells us that the "things which are seen were not made of things which are seen" Heb11:3

--Medical science has only recently discovered that blood-clotting in a newborn reaches its peak on the eighth day, then drops. The Bible consistently says that a baby must be circumcised on the eighth day. Principle of hand washing in running water, quarantine, dietary principles and many medical principles are all in the Bible before science discovered them

--Science has discovered that stars emit radio waves, which are received on earth as a high pitch. God mentioned this in Job38:7: "When the morning stars sang together..."

--Science expresses the universe in five terms: time, space, matter, power, and motion; Gen1:1,2: "In the beginning [time] God created [power] the heaven/or skies/universe [space] and the earth [matter] . . . And the Spirit of God moved [motion] upon the face of the waters." The first thing God tells man is that He controls of all aspects of the universe

--Jer33:22 claims that the stars of the heaven are innumerable. Hippocrates, some 2500 years ago numbered 1,022 stars. Kepler 400 years ago recounted and revised the number. Today scientists agree with Jeremiah. There are billions just in our galaxy! It is interesting that the Bible makes the number of stars equivalent to the number of grains of sand on the seashore Gen22:17; Heb11:12, scientists today agree with the Bible in this area!

--Luke17:34to36 says the Second Coming of Jesus Christ will occur while some are asleep at night and others are working at daytime activities in the field. This is a clear indication of a revolving earth, with day and night at the same time on the respective sides of the planet.

--Jud5:20 mentions “the stars in their courses.” While it was once believed that the stars were fixed, today we know that they too move in a predictable way

--Job38:19 is accurate in the way it characterizes light. Note that darkness is in a place but light is in a way. It travels a path

--Job38:24 indicates the light of the sun (by heating) makes the wind

--Hyssop oil was charged by God to Moses to be used symbolically being a purifying agent. Hyssop oil has been shown to contain 50% antifungal and antibacterial agents Num19:18, Ps51:7

--the universe is expanding Job9:8; Is42:5; Jer51:15; Zech12:1. Repeatedly God declares that He stretches out the heavens. In 1929, astronomer Edwin Hubble showed that distant galaxies were receding from the earth, proving that the universe is expanding

--Ez5:5, 38:12 claims that Jerusalem is the center of the earth. ICR commissioned a computer analysis of the earth’s land-masses and discovered that the geographic center is in Palestine, near the holy city

--Heb.1:11-12 describes the wearing down of the creation in language that nicely mirrors the second law of thermodynamics and 2Pet.3:12 describes the heavens one day passing away in a fire that causes the elements to melt in fervent heat (description of nuclear meltdown caused by God)

See more:

http://www.genesispark.com/essays/gods-word/

3. OVER 100 PROPHETIC ACCURACIES ABOUT JESUS CHRIST
Jn5:39 – **"You search the Scriptures because you think that in them you have eternal life; and it is they that bear witness about Me"**
The one consistent theme of the Bible, is that from Genesis to Revelation, the Bible consistently refers and prophesies about Jesus Christ who ultimately is mankind’s Lord & Saviour. There are over 300 specific

prophecies in the Old Testament that are fulfilled in the life, death and resurrection of Jesus Christ in the New Testament.

4. PROPHECIES ABOUT WORLD EVENTS:

--The Bible announced that ISRAEL would be scattered among all nations (Deut28:64) and that before the end of the world Israel will come back in their land (Zach8:7-8, Is51:3) and will be hated by many nations Zach12:2-3, 14:2-3

--About IRAN (Persia) that it will hate Israel and will want to destroy it Ez38:5; see more:

http://blogs.christianpost.com/bibleprophecy/gods-decreed-end-of-iran-6602/

www.seekingtruth.co.uk/middle_east.htm

--RUSSIA will attack Israel – Ez38 and 39; see:

www.thepropheticyears.com/reasons/Russia.htm

www.hallindsey.com

www.prophecyupdate.com

www.raptureready.com

--In Daniel 2, four kingdoms are described in the interpretation of the dream of Nebuchadnezzar who was the king of Babylon. The four were the BABYLON, MEDO-PERSIA, GREEK AND THE ROMAN empire (Dan2:39-43). These four kingdoms occurred just as prophesied.

--The following cities were prophesied to be destroyed and never rebuilt which has come true since they have not yet been rebuilt. NINEVEH (Nah1:10, 3:7, 15, Zeph2:13,14), BABYLON (Is13:1-22), and TYRE (Ezek26)

--Dan12:4 prophesied that at the end of times KNOWLEDGE WOULD INCREASE as well as the ability to travel great distances

--Jesus foretold that towards the end of this world there would be famines, wars, sicknesses, earthquakes, lack of love, false prophets and so on, all during one generation's lifespan see Mat24:6-50

4. The Bible Is Endorsed by Jesus Christ

Matt5:17-18 **"...For truly, I say to you, until heaven and earth pass away, not an iota, not a dot, will pass from the Law until all is accomplished"**
When Jesus was on earth at the time, only the Old Testament existed. Jesus read and quoted from the Old Testament. Therefore if the Bible was inaccurate or untrustworthy, Jesus would have not quoted the Old Testament. When Jesus was tempted by the devil, Christ overcame the devil's temptation by responding with Scripture quoted from the Old Testament. This was a clear indication not only of the authority and trustworthiness of the Bible but also that Jesus Himself was willing to be obedient to do what The Bible teaches; Matt4:1-17

5. Its Survival
The Bible starting from Genesis has survived for over 1500 years. No other book has been so consistently studied, bought or quoted by mankind. Its teachings are still relevant even after 1000 years, a clear proof that God's word is authoritative and does not change. No other book has been loved or hated as the Bible but yet it still survives and remains the highest seller among all books.
Matt24:35 **'Heaven and earth will pass away, but my words will not pass away'**

6. Archaeological Evidence
Many archaeological and geographic evidences exist to prove the accuracy and historic truthfulness of the Bible. Archaeological discoveries have been made which verify the various Biblical stories and events mentioned in scripture

https://answersingenesis.org/archaeology/6-archaeological-finds/

Copies of the Old Testament scriptures found at the Dead Sea, many having placed in caves before Jesus' birth, proves that the Old Testament has not changed:

www.deadseascrolls.org

7. Life Changing Power
For thousands of years, the Bible has changed countless lives and has provided a means by which mankind can know and understand who God is and what God says about every life situation that we face on this earth. The Bible also is one huge story about God's relationship with man. The Bible speaks of God's love and plan of salvation from sin through Jesus Christ. People of different backgrounds and beliefs can testify of the life changing

experiences that God's word has brought to their lives.
Heb4:12-13 – **For the word of God is living and active, sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing to the division of soul and of spirit, of joints and of marrow, and discerning the thoughts and intentions of the heart.**

Helpful & Recommended Websites

http://www.bibleevidences.com/
http://christiananswers.net/archaeology/
http://carm.org/when-was-bible-written-and-who-wrote-it
https://answersingenesis.org/is-the-bible-true/can-you-prove-the-bible-is-true/
http://www.reasons.org/
http://www.the-gospel.org/stdy_aplgy/prophecy.php
https://answersingenesis.org/archaeology/6-archaeological-finds/

http://www.inspiredwalk.com/1804/proof-bible-true
http://www.icr.org/

POST 22. CHRIST AND THE TABERNACLE

The Old Testament institutions and ceremonies were powerless to save the souls of men. They were devised as types of Christ and the different phases of effectual salvation (Heb7;11,12; 8:5; 9:23; 10:1). The Tabernacle and later the Temple typified the places and the manner in which GOD met with His people and dealt with their sins. They were a type of the Incarnate Christ and His ministry for men. The priesthood typified the one and only perfect priest, the Lord Jesus Christ Heb8:1. The Offerings, Feasts, and Ceremonies all typified things having to do with redemption through the Messiah and the life of the redeemed. The places of the Old Covenant were typical of spiritual places or conditions. Even the land was a type of salvation to come through the Christ.

The following are some of the main types found in the Tabernacle:

01. The HIGH PRIEST was appointed by God (Ex28:1; Heb5:4-6; 7:20-24). Only the High Priest could make atonement (Lev16:13; Heb7:27; 6:20; 8:3; 9:7, 12, 24-28; 10:12; 13:20; 2:9; 1Cor6:20; 1Pet1:18-19; Ex28, 29; Lev8; Num3,8; Heb.5,7,9). Jesus was the Great High Priest offering up Himself as the perfect sacrifice for our sin debt

02. **The TABERNACLE** symbolizes Christ (Ex25-27). It symbolized the dwelling place of God in the midst of His people. As a type of Christ, it symbolized the meeting between God and man (Heb9:21-24; 2Cor5:19; Col2:9; Heb10:5; Rev21:3; Jn1:14;2:13-22). The tabernacle is a symbol, picture and prophecy of the man in whom God should become incarnate. It is also a symbol of the Body of Christ, the Church (Col1:26-27; 1Cor3:16, 12:13; Rom12:5; Eph2:21,22)

03. The GOAT HAIR TENT COVER (Ex.26:7ff) completely covered the Tabernacle. It is a symbol of the complete way in which the sacrificial death of Jesus covers the Body of Christ. Because of the death of Christ, and our acceptance of it, God cannot see our sins (Lev9:15; Num28:22; Is53:10; Heb9:10, 14, 26, 28; Eph5:2; 2Cor5:21; 1Jn1:9; Ps32:1)

04. Two COVERINGS OF THE TABERNACLE consisted of (1) ram's skins dyed red, and (2) a covering of porpoise or badger which was dull bluish, or gray in color and had no comeliness or beauty. It was nothing to be desired and was despised and rejected for coverings by men. It is a picture of Christ to all who do not come by way of the Cross (Is53:2,3)

05. The GATE to the Tabernacle was the only entrance. It was accessible, attractive and well supported. Christ is the only gate into the presence of God (Jn10:7, 9; 14:6; Eph2:13; 1Cor2:2; Heb10:19-20)

06. The BRAZEN ALTAR (Ex27:1-8) is a type of Christ our sacrifice (Jn1:29). The sacrifice stands at the entrance of man's approach to God. Man has no access to God except as a sinner atoned for by blood. All who pass through the door must pass by the bloodstained altar or not at all. The Mizbeach - "slaughter place," just within the gate was easily accessible, unavoidable and unmistakable. Fire on the altar was to burn continually, fire is here the symbol of the Holy Spirit Heb9:14

07. LAVER OF BRONZE (Ex30:17-21) symbolizes Christ our cleanser which cleanses from defilement (Eph5:25-26; Jn17:17). It denotes spiritual renewal. We have daily cleansing from defilements of life, and it is accessible only through our Priest. We are continually

cleansed by Christ through the Spirit and the Word (Jn15:3; 1Jn1:6-9)

08. HOLY PLACE was the first room the priest entered and contained three pieces of furniture: Table of Presence, Menorah or Golden Lampstand, and Altar of Incense

09. The MENORAH or LAMP STAND OF PURE GOLD symbolizes the presence of God as the source of life's entertainment, and God's leadership. Christ is our Light (Jn8:12), and denotes spiritual illumination (Ex30:7-8; 27:20; Phil2:15-16; Prov4:18; 2Cor4:6; Eph1:18; 5:13; Matt5:14-16). The Holy Spirit gives illumination to the believer

10. BREAD OF THE PRESENCE lit. "face-bread," symbolizes the presence of the LORD as food of life. Jesus is the "Bread of Life" for every believer (Jn6:35). He is our spiritual sustenance. 12 loaves of bread spoke about Israel being before God's eyes continually

11. ALTAR OF INCENSE (Ex30:1-10) was a perpetual adoration of the LORD. Christ is our intercessor who is always making intercession for us (Jn17; Heb7:25; Rev8:3-5). It also symbolizes the worship of the believer (Jn4:21,23); and prayer of the saints (Rev.8:3, 4; Ps141:2; 1Tim.2:1-5)

12. The VEIL in the Temple (Ex.26:31-35) separated the Holy of Holies, or Most Holy Place, and the Holy Place. It is a type of Christ's body (Heb10:20; Matt27:51). The door into God's presence was opened to man when Christ died and rent the veil from top – God's side – to bottom – man's side (Jn.10:9). The unrent veil shut man out from the typical presence of God. The rent veil changed at once from a barrier to an open way into the Holy of Holies (Heb9:20, 26; 10:10,12,14; Eph2:4-6; Heb.4:15).

13. HOLY OF HOLIES was entered only one day of the year on Yom Kippur, the Day of Atonement. It represented God's dwelling place (Heb.9:24). It symbolized the human body of Jesus (Jn.2:19-21), and the body of believers (1Cor3:16-17; 6:19). In 2Cor6:16 it symbolizes the local church, and Ephesians 2:21 the universal church consisting of all believers in Christ

14. The ARK OF THE COVENANT (Ex25:10-16) contained the Law, manna and Aaron's budded rod. Christ had the Law in His heart and came to fulfill it (Matt5:17, 18). It is another symbol of God being with His people. Just as the Ark of the Covenant contained God's testimony to Israel, Christ is God's testimony of man. As God looked down towards the ark, He saw the blood on the cover, just above the law: God did not see the law accusing the believers but the blood that covered sins

15. The MERCY SEAT was the gold lid or cover on top of the ARK of COVENANT (Ex25:17-21; Lev16:13-16). The Mercy Seat is the cover, the covering or removal of sin by means of expiatory sacrifice. It is the Old Testament throne of grace. Justice and mercy met there, and the blood of the innocent sacrifice cleanses away all sin. Christ is that covering for sin (Heb9:5; Rom3:25; 1Jn2:2). He is the Mercy Seat

16. THE GLORY, 'MY GLORY' is the Shekinah. "Glory" describes Yahweh's self-manifestation, His transcendence, or His presence with men (Ex33:18-20; 34:5-7; 14:19; 40:34). It is a type of His dwelling in heaven (Heb9:24; Ex40:34-35). The glory is seen guiding Israel, it left the second temple Ez10:18, and reappeared with Christ (Matt17:5; Lk2:9; Jn1:14; Rev21:3; Heb1:3; Jn17:5; 2Pet1:16,17; Acts1:9; Mk14:62; Rev14:14)

GOLD speaks of deity 1Cor3:12, Rev21:18-21
SILVER speaks of redemption Ex36:24, 30:15
BRASS/BRONZE speaks of the heavens/heavenly nature Ex25:4, 26:31, 28:31
BLUE Heavens/Heavenly nature Ex25:4, 26:31, 28:31
PURPLE Kingly/Royalty Jn19:2, Rev17:4
SCARLET - Blood Sacrifice Lev14:4, Josh2:18, Is1:18
FINE LINEN Righteousness Lev6:10, Rev19:8
GOATS/RAMS HAIR Atonement Gen15:9, Ex12:5
WOOD – Jesus' Humanity Ex26:15, Is53:2
OIL – Holy Spirit Lev14:16, Ps47:7

THE THREE AREAS AND MEANINGS OF THE TABERNACLE ARE AS FOLLOWS:

1. THE OUTER COURT

-Symbol of the dispensation of Mosaic Law; area 1500 cubits (symbolic for aprox. 1500 years from Moses to Jesus); speaks of justification

-contained the brazen altar and the laver. The focus was on sacrifice, judgment and cleansing and represents the age of the Law. The area of the fence surrounding the outer court was 1500 cubits squared just as the period of time that the Mosiac law was in force for was approx. 1500 years! Everything in the outer court was constructed in bronze symbolising judgement. This is what the law did! It pronounced you guilty and that judgement and a blood sacrifice was required. But it also pointed, as the law does, to Jesus as the Way of salvation (as there was only one entrance to the outer court) and the need for 'justification'

2. THE HOLY PLACE

-Dispensation of Grace (Church age); volume 2000 cubits (symbolic for aprox. 2000 years of church age from crucifixion until the rapture); it speaks of sanctification; Jesus seen as the Truth Jn14:6

-it was a room of 20 X 10 X 10 cubits (representing the 2000 years of the church age). Only the Priests could come within this area and not without cleansing at the laver. But this area contained no items made of bronze (judgement) like the outer court did. It contained the Showbread (Christ the bread of Life), the Lampstand (Christ the light of the world) and the Altar of Incense (Christ our intercessor). It was made from gold, silver and wood representing the deity, redemption and the humanity of Christ. It pictures Jesus as the 'truth' and in terms of salvation it represents our need of sanctification as we walk in this life with Christ as our life and bread.

3. THE HOLY OF HOLIES

-Dispensation of the Messianic Kingdom or Millennium; volume 1000 cubits (symbolic for 1000 years or millennium); it speaks of glorification and Jesus is seen as the Life Jn14:6.

-This contained the Ark of the Covenant. Only the High Priest could enter here and only on one day of the year! Only on the Day of Atonement could the High Priest enter the Holy of Holies and be in the very presence of God Himself. This area represents the coming Kingdom age where God shall dwell among His people once again in visible form. In terms of the aspect of a believer's salvation it represents our 'glorification' – when we are with Christ and are like Christ! As a picture of Jesus, it shows Him not just as the way or even the truth, but as 'the life'. This special area of the tabernacle contained the very real presence and power of God and if we are to know Jesus today as 'the life' (and not just 'the way') then we too, as priests of the new covenant, need to come into His very presence in the new way opened to us.

https://bible.org/assets/pdf/FIT%20-%20Tabernacle.pdf

POST 23. JUDGE OR DISCERN?

QUESTION: What is the difference between judging and discerning?

In Greek, the language of the New Testament, 2 different words are often translated "to judge":

1. "KRINO" = to judge, to accuse, to condemn, to pass a sentence
To judge it means that someone mentally passes a sentence on someone else and accuses a person passing a condemnation sentence.
-Mat7:1 'judge not that you be not judged'
-Jn7:24 'judge (meaning to discern) not according to appearance but judge according to righteous judgment'
Acts4:19 'you judge if we should listen to you rather than obey God'
-Rom2:1 When you say they are wicked and should be punished, you are condemning yourself, for you who judge others do these very same things.
-1Cor6:5 find a wise man in church to judge between 2 brethren in conflict rather than go to pagan judges
-Jn8:4 the pharisees accused the woman caught in adultery and judged as being worthy of death
-2Cor5:14 we judge (with the meaning 'to decide') that if one died for all, then all are dead so that now they live for the one who died for them
-James4:12 only God is Judge; for government purposes God allows official judges to pass sentences on moral and social issues for the purpose of social order see Rom13 and Israel's history (example: Moses, Solomon were judges). However, **the supreme Judge of all is Jesus** Jn5:22.

2. "DIAKRINO" = discern, to analyze and separate thoroughly; to discern truth from error
-Mat16:3 'discern the face of the sky'
-1Cor11:31 if we would discern (diakrino) ourselves we would not be judged (krino)
-1Cor14:21 let the prophets (preachers) speak and the other one judge

(discern, diakrino)

Another important word for the study is **"DOKIMAZO"** = to test, to examine, to try, to prove
1Thes5:21 'prove all things'
1Jn4:1 'believe not every spirit but try the spirits to see if they are from God'

There are **SITUATIONS IN WHICH THE CHRISTIAN HAS TO ANALYZE THINGS** for the purpose of discerning: he is thus often accused of judging but he is not passing a condemnation or sentence. In discerning a false prophet (a false preacher), the Christian says: "what that man is doing/saying is not in line with the Scriptures and I will not follow that man or his words"; he might also warn others about that false prophet, without taking stones to stone him but he leaves his punishment to God. Paul says in Gal5:12 "I wish they were cut off" (word 'cut off' means to remove reproductive parts so that they can't reproduce others like themselves) but Paul leaves the cutting off to God.

Verses about discerning:

-Mat7:15 **beware of false prophets,** wolves dressed in sheep's skins

-**Paul warned in his letters of false prophets and evil doers;** he did not judge them but warned Christians to be aware of those people:
Phil 3:2 'watch out for those dogs, those evil doers'
2Tim4:15 Alexander the copper-smith did me much evil; the Lord will punish him; beware of him
Rom16:17 mark them and stay away from those who try to divide you from the Word of God

-**John** warned the church about Diotrephus a rebellious proud church member who wanted to take over church leadership 3Jn9

-**Jesus** praised the church in Ephesus for testing and discerning false apostles Rev2:2
-Jesus also warned the church of Tiatira of false prophetess Jezebel Rev2:20 and church of Pergamus Rev2:14 about false teachers that were preaching for money and promoting sin just like Balaam

We discern between someone's temporary fall into sin and a rebellious sinful lifestyle; I dont have a problem with a preacher that falls into sin of which he repents and gets corrected but I can't accept and follow a preacher that preaches sin and defends it and continues in it or who makes a false prophecy and does not repent of it but hides it and/or defends it and tells others "don't judge me". Moses asked the people to discern false prophets and to not follow them Deut18:20. A false prophecy is not just a small sin that we can just forgive and forget then continue to listen to that 'prophet', but it is a proof someone is a false prophet, that man should repent. A false prophecy is not just an error, you can't say "we are all sinners however', a false prophecy is rebellion. I can fellowship with the repentant sinner, not with the proud arrogant Hitler.

Ask God to give you meekness so as not to judge others and wisdom as to discern false teachers. Study the Bible daily: the Word of God is a discerner of hearts Heb4:12.

POST 24. IS LOBOLA A CHRISTIAN CUSTOM?

ANSWER: NO!
Here is why:

LOBOLA is most of the time a required (and heavily negotiated) price the bridegroom has to pay for his bride, often a huge price.

LOBOLA IS NOT DOWRY, since dowry is a willing gift by the parents of the bride given to the bride.

Christians are bought with the blood of Jesus (1Pet1:18-19), not with gold or silver therefore YOU CAN'T EVALUATE THE VALUE OF A BRIDE or of any human in dollars. Sport clubs evaluate players in terms of their effectiveness on the field but how can you evaluate the value of a future bride?
Mat.16:26 says one soul is worth more than the world.

LOBOLA IS A FORM OF SLAVERY: parents keep their daughter slave unto themselves until a boy buys her for himself into marriage; the fact that the girl is allowed to choose her "buyer" does not make the purchase innocent. Often engaged people that can't pay the lobola delay their

wedding for years and fall in sexual sin before marriage, at times with the intention that once they have a child together, her family has to decrease the lobola (which plan does not always work).

Here are some arguments people use to support lobola:

"BUT THE GIRL'S PARENTS HAVE SPENT MONEY RAISING THIS GIRL!"
The bridegroom's parents also have spent money raising their son!! A parent has no right to ask for a refund when child gets married!

"BUT THIS IS OUR AFRICAN CULTURE!"
-India practices lobola also! It is a pagan habit. Should we follow culture even when it goes against the Scriptures? In Europe many cultures indicate we should get drunk at weddings, should a Christian get drunk? Drunkenness is sin, see Eph5:18.
-Many parents in India abort boys as they desire to have girls for lobola benefits; they now require artificial inseminations with baby-girls!! And to get lobola quicker often they give their girls into marriage as soon as 10 years old, often marrying men 20 years older. Muslims practice lobola also.

"BUT ABRAHAM PRACTICED LOBOLA ALSO!"
-In Gen24 Abraham gave good-will gifts to the girl and to the girl's family, there was no required price negotiated. Of his great riches Abraham gave some gifts; a Zimbabwean that earns 200$/month and is required to pay 5000$ for lobola is not a balanced "gift". If something is required, then it is not a gift but a price or a ransom.
I recently advised an engaged couple to give 50$ "lobola first payment" then after the wedding, some day when he will become rich like Abraham, he will give gifts similar to Abraham's gifts to appease the lobola-hungry family.

"BUT JACOB WORKED FOR LABAN 7 YEARS FOR HIS WIFE RACHEL!"
-Laban required Jacob to work (as a payment) for his daughter Rachel, see Gen29; Laban was behaving according to the pagan culture in which he lived. Moreover, Laban tricked Jacob by giving him Lea, which is another evidence that he was not a man of God but was behaving in a pagan way. The result of Laban selling his daughters to Jacob? Both daughters hated their father for selling them and eating Jacob's money from the deal, see Gen31:14-19

Other pagans that practiced lobola:
-Sechem in Gen34:12
-Saul started as a man of God but became jealous of David's success, so he asked David to pay lobola in ways that could place David in situations where he could be killed, see 1Sam18:25.
Some cultures practice an exchange of gifts between the 2 families, with no negotiation or pressure, nothing bad about it.

“BUT LOBOLA IS A SIGN OF FAMILY APPROVAL!”
-Do you need family approval or God's approval (Gal1:10)?
-What if the girl is Christian and her family is not and are disapproving her faith and her fiancee?
-What if the lobola ceremony involves pagan practices?
-Why should uncles and cousins be involved in the new union of a couple as a family? Is the boy marrying the girl's family also?
-I remind you that the man and the woman that get married are becoming a new family (see Mat19:5 and Eph5:31 "man shall leave his mother and father and cleave to his wife and the 2 shall become one"); the 2 are not one with their relatives but with each other; families of the 2 are not getting married!
-I formally had to ask for my wife's hand from her father, as a culture habit: if he said no, we would still have gotten married. 'Asking of the hand' is today rather a formal announcement of intention of marriage, not a request of permission as it used to be centuries ago

"BUT LOBOLA IS A PROOF THAT THE BRIDEGROOM IS SERIOUS AND HE WILL NOT EASILY DIVORCE BECAUSE OF THE GREAT SUM ON MONEY INVOLVED!"
-Marriage vows are kept before God, not before the family; Africa has a lot of loboled marriages ending in divorce anyway!...and a lot of "small houses" and immorality, despite the lobola system. -Lobola and often culture interfere with the Biblical foundation of marriage
-A huge lobola is not a motivation to stay married, the love of Christ is the true motivation 2Cor.5:15
-Lobola being huge does not prove he appreciates a lot his future wife: I will see his appreciation in his laid down life for her, see Eph5:25

"BUT LOBOLA UNITES THE 2 FAMILIES!"
-Why not invite Jesus to unite the 2 "extended families" through faith in Jesus, Eph1:10, 2:14,16, thus the 2 families becoming united members of

one Body of Christ, 1Cor12:27
-Jesus removes the enmity or any wall or distance, not lobola

In our African churches (and we have 230 churches in 24 African countries) we advice that where lobola can't be avoided, **IF YOU ARE PARENTS OF THE FUTURE BRIDE** then ask for a symbolic lobola: a bread as Jesus is the bread of life, 1kg of salt as we are the salt of the earth and 1L of water as Jesus is the living water. This way you will have a chance to evangelize your pagan in-laws.

IF YOU ARE A CHRISTIAN BRIDEGROOM-TO-BE, then explain to the parents of the girl (and to the girl also: a Christian man should marry a Christian girl, see 1Cor.6:14) that your Christian faith does not allow you to buy your wife; if the parents of the girl insist for a huge lobola, the girl should seek counsel from her pastor for wisdom: their union should continue even if her parents dont agree; try to bring the pastor home to mediate the issue or a legal counselor that they would respect; if parents intervene with violence, then if needed police can be asked to intervene as the laws of Zimbabwe forbid selling humans. Parents have no legal right to stop their daughter from getting married, unless if she is underage or marries someone underage in which case parents should report to police, not use violence.

Mark10:9 Jesus said, "What God has united let no one separate"; families removing the wife for an unpaid lobola is sin, it is also against the laws of Zimbabwe.
Eph5:31-32 man gets married out of a personal decision, not under pressure or permission from family.

IF YOU ARE PARENTS OF A FUTURE BRIDE, then 2Cor12:14 is for you: **PARENTS ARE RESPONSIBLE TO SAVE UP FOR THEIR CHILDREN, NOT CHILDREN FOR THE PARENTS**. Remember that the money and the debts of the future bridegroom will belong to the bride as well: if the bridegroom has to pay 5000$ to the parents of the girl, after the wedding him and his wife together will have 5000$ less or might have now a debt of 5000$ if he had borrowed. Husbands and wives should have one wallet as they are one flesh.

WHEN DO WE RECOGNIZE PEOPLE AS MARRIED?
--We accept the traditional marriage, where the bridegroom and the bride agree to be married before the 2 families; John the Baptist acknowledged Philip's marriage even though ruler Philip was not married before God in the temple, he was not a believer in God (Mat.14:3); we acknowledge pagans' marriages without them coming to church to get married in church, of course; as a Christian you can get married as a pagan only, you have that freedom, but why not do the government papers and even church marriage as well if you are a Christian? Why not honor the God ordained government and Christ's church?

--We accept the marriage before the government, as the government is God's tool in keeping social order, see Rom.13:1; this type of marriage is a legal protection against polygamy, also guarantees heritage rights for spouses and children, child support rights in case of divorce and other legal benefits;

--We accept and highly advise marriage in church, of course

A Christian might do one or all these 3 ceremonies; I and my wife did the the church wedding one week after the civil (government) marriage, consummating marriage by living together and sexual union after the marriage in church.
We prefer not to marry anyone in church unless they did the civil marriage, this way we are sure they are not polygamous (already married to someone else).
Some people delay long time church marriage because of lack of money: they want a huge event, maybe out of pride...?
Pastors should not charge money for getting people married.

Ask me for the doctrine of marriage in pdf format, 24 pages.

POST 25. "MASTURBATION - IS IT A SIN ACCORDING TO THE BIBLE?"

ANSWER: The Bible never mentions masturbation or states whether or not masturbation is a sin, however it is sin.

The Scripture most frequently pointed to in regards to masturbation is **the story of Onan in Genesis 38:9,10**. Some interpret this passage as saying

that “spilling your seed” on the ground is a sin. However, that is not precisely what the passage is saying. God condemned Onan not for “spilling his seed” but because Onan refused to fulfill his duty to provide an heir for his brother, in accordance to the law of Moses Deut25:5,6. The passage is not about masturbation, but rather about a man refusing to fulfill a family duty.

First of all, while the Bible nowhere explicitly states that masturbation is a sin, **IT IS CLEAR THAT THE ACTIONS THAT LEAD TO MASTURBATION ARE SINFUL.**

Masturbation is nearly always the result of lustful thoughts, sexual stimulation, and/or pornographic images and all these are sinful. It is these problems that need to be dealt with first. If the sins of lust, immoral thoughts, and pornography are forsaken and overcome, masturbation will end. Many people struggle with guilty feelings concerning masturbation, when in reality, the things that led to the act of masturbation are far more worthy of repentance.

-There are some biblical principles that can be applied to the issue of masturbation. Eph5:3 declares, **“Among you there must not be even a hint of sexual immorality, or of any kind of impurity.”** It is hard to see how masturbating can pass that particular test.

-1Cor6:9-10: 'Do not be deceived: neither the sexually immoral, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor **EFFEMINATES**, nor thieves, nor the greedy, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor swindlers will inherit the kingdom of God.' Word "effeminate" implies a man that behaves as a woman, or homosexual, or one that has sex with himself – through masturbation.

-Col3:5 'Put to death therefore what is earthly in you: **sexual immorality, impurity, passion, evil desires...**

-The Bible teaches us, **“So whether you eat or drink or whatever you do, do it all for the glory of God”** (1Cor10:31). If you cannot give God glory for something, you should not do it. If a person is not fully convinced that an activity is pleasing to God, then it is a sin: **“Everything that does not come from faith is sin”** (Rom14:23).

Further, we need to remember that our bodies have been redeemed and belong to God. **“Do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit, who is in you, whom you have received from God? You are not your own; you were bought at a price. Therefore honor God with your body”** (1Cor6:19,20). This great truth should motivate us about what we do with our bodies.

IN LIGHT OF THESE PRINCIPLES, WE CAN CLEARLY CONCLUDE THAT MASTURBATION IS SIN.

Clearly, masturbation is not glorifying to God; it involves immorality and it does not honor God as the owner of our bodies.

If you are ashamed to talk to some mature Christian about something you do in secret, then that action might be sin; can you tell God about it without shame and thank Him for it? (If you can, then you don't know the God of the Bible. For example, homosexuals that claim to be Christians and claim that homosexuality is not sin, they are not worshiping the God of the Bible)

Studies have revealed the following **RISKS OF MASTURBATION:**
-**difficulties in relating normally** with persons of opposite sex
-**homosexual (lesbian) desires** (attraction for persons of same sex);
-**lack of desire of having sex with his/her spouse**, as in masturbation the sexual trigger is mechanic, not emotional arousal by spouse as in marriage;
-sexual disorders in the marital relationship (not able to have a normal sexual relationship: no erection or erectile dysfunctions)
-in masturbation **one is oriented toward self, loving himself in an unhealthy way**, while in a marital sexual relationship as intended by God, one is oriented toward the other, serving the other and loving the other;
-masturbation causes one to **selfishly seek self-pleasure**, attitude which might continue in marriage: wife will be seen as an object of pleasure;
-in masturbation the **pituitary gland does not produce enough oxytocin hormone,** hormone that helps in rebuilding the elements consummated in the marital sexual discharge (hormons and semen chemicals); this hormone is called also "the spouses' attachment hormone" and its level is dependent on the love relationship of the spouses: the more the spouses decide to love each other, the higher the level of the hormone released and the better the recovery of the organism after each sexual discharge; if not enough oxytocin hormone for recovery, then the prostate gland is affected over time, quantity and quality of semen decrease resulting in impotence, difficulty of having children;
-in masturbation **certain hormones are produced at a higher rate than in**

normal sexual act and certain hormones are almost missing (prostaglandin E2, hormones GABA, betaendorfin, noradrenalin and others), an imbalance of chemicals that causes inflammation in semen and kills sperm cells, causing infertility over time;
-pornography and masturbation have caused **decrease of testosterone level** from average 501 ng/dl to 391 ng/dl in only 15 years (1989-2004); if not enough testosterone in the blood, then not possible to have viable sperm cells, therefore no children, also fatigue, stress and other symptoms.
-masturbation produces **a state of continual state of exhaustion and fatigue**, with **head aches**, **sleep disorders** (no sleep or low quality sleep, erotic dreams and discharge of semen), **depression;** masturbating often and a lack of proper food causes body to lack certain elements, resulting in anemia and more fatigue;
-through masturbation **man looses a lot of vital elements through semen**, which are not replaced properly because of lack of oxytocin recovery hormone or improper foods: potassium, zinc, calcium, magnesium, fructose, spermines, acid prostatic fosfatidic, free-aminoacids, prostaglandines, enzymes, fosforilcolin (which is very important in the recovery of brain cells and nervous system cells) and others. Same applies to women to a certain degree through orgasm obtained through masturbation.

I heard of some preachers in Harare say, 'better masturbate to cool off pressure rather than fall in a sexual act'; however pressure is cooled off just for a short time (hours or days), only for temptation to come stronger next time, leading sooner or later to sexual act and keeping you all the time captive to immoral thoughts and guilt. The solution 'do a smaller sin to avoid the bigger sin' is not a real solution.

THE REAL SOLUTION is repentance and the Word of God; have a strong daily diet of the Word; find a trustworthy mature Christian friend to whom you can confide and who can pray with you, encourage you and keep you accountable; attend a Bible believing church where you will all focus on Christ together – 'he who walks with the wide becomes wise' Prov13:20. If you have immoral friends, they will stimulate sexual thoughts in you, pushing you back into masturbation and other sexual sins.

Walk in the Spirit and you will not fulfill the lusts of the flesh Gal5:16. See our study, "How can I be filled by the Holy Spirit?"

POST 26. WHAT ABOUT THOSE THAT HAVE NEVER HEARD THE GOSPEL?

Many ask this question as an excuse to continue worshiping idols and ancestors or live in atheism. "Take your Christianity back to Europe, we Africans only have heard of Christianity about 200 years ago! Where was your God for 1800 years?" – I was told recently.

Someone else said to me, "If you say that Jesus is the only way to heaven (Jn14:6), do you mean that our ancestors and so many that have never heard the Gospel will go to hell?"

ANSWER:

-God speaks in different way to human beings: the most common way God reveals Himself is through **CREATION**; Paul says in Romans chapter 1 that **the power and eternal godhead of the Creator is seen through creation** and if man still decides to worship creation: idols and ancestors, then he is without excuse; **he who humbles himself before the Creator of the universe is assured salvation by grace** through forgiveness of sins based on the sacrifice of Jesus, even if he never heard about Jesus; he who tries to earn salvation by merit or ignores the Creator cannot be saved; since in regards to creation you can't pay back the Creator for food, air, water, sun and so on, how can one try to pay for eternal life?

Acts14:17 he left not himself without **witness (testimony),** for he did us good, and gave us rain from heaven, and fruitful seasons, filling our hearts with food and gladness.

Ps19:1 The heavens (universe) declare the glory of God; and the firmament (sky) shews his handy-work.

-To **"WORSHIP THE CREATOR"** means to admit that the Creator has made all things, to honor Him, to thank Him, to submit to the Creator, to desire to know more about Him, to desire to know His will and to do His will at any cost; humility before God brings salvation and it results in worship;

-since the fall of Adam and Eve, man has a **CONSCIENCE of good and evil**; Rom2:15 explains that those that have never heard the Gospel will be judged according to their **response to the voice of their conscience** Rom1:19; however this judgment is not in regards to heaven or hell but in regards to amount of rewards in heaven or degrees of punishment in hell (1Cor3:10-15; Luke 12:47).
Salvation always was and always will be by grace, not by works Eph2:8-9, God doesn't change Heb13:8; the revelation of God to man increases from Genesis to Revelation but it does not change and it is not contradicting itself. See our message on 'Dispensations'.

-To those that worship the Creator through the testimony of the creation, God is faithful to give more specific revelation about Himself; there are many missionary stories of how preachers of the Gospel found tribal people that were worshiping the creator and were informed by God through dreams that He will send to them people with God's book (read book "Eternity in their hearts" by Don Richardson); see also Cornelius in Acts 10 or 16:6-10; Gen20:11 Abraham found out that the people of Gerar believed in God and honored Him without a preacher sent from God; lately there are many Muslims that have received visions of Jesus and have become Christians

-If someone truly worships the creator of the universe, he will want to know more about Him and will receive the Gospel message if he hears it; if someone rejects the Gospel message, either he didn't understand it, either he didn't truly worship the Creator;
If someone understands clearly the Gospel but rejects it and still claims to believe in God, then his faith is vain: he believes in a god of his own imagination; because he has rejected the true God, Satan has further blinded his mind to believe a lie 2Cor4:4, 2Thes2:10-12

-CHILDREN UNDER THE AGE OF COMPREHENSION (age of accountability) and those that have **MENTAL DISABILITIES** are saved without needing to believe, as they don't have a capacity to believe, of making a decision to receive or reject the Creator: God is not unjust to them;
David knew that he will go to heaven and he knew that he will go to be with his dead child therefore he knew his dead child went to heaven (2Sam12:23)
Jesus said about children, "for their is the kingdom of God...' Mat18:3; when a child grows up and starts to be able to understand the Gospel but rejects it, then he is responsible for his unbelief;

-GOD IS FAITHFUL TO OFFER TO EVERY HUMAN A CHANCE FOR SALVATION, so as to bring in His house people "from every tribe and language and people from every nation" (Rev5:9); to some God offers many chances and opportunities for salvation but they keep on rejecting God, while others get a more limited testimony from God but grab it instantly; in Isaiah 65 God stretches out His hands to rebellious people and reveals Himself to people that are not even looking for Him, because "God desires that none would perish" 2Pet3:9; God does not desire to send people to hell but He is forced to do so because of people's rebellious unbelief

-IN THE PERIOD OF THE OLD TESTAMENT people were saved by grace through faith in God; they did not have a full understanding of who Jesus would be, **JESUS WAS A MYSTERY KEPT SECRET** until the appointed time, mystery that was slowly, gradually revealed by the prophets of the Old Testament and further revealed by Paul and the other apostles Mark4:11; Rom16:25; Eph3:3,4; 5:32; Col.1:26,27; 2:2; 4:3

-Jesus said in Jn14:6 "I am the way, the truth and the life; nobody comes through the Father but through Me"; Jesus paid for the sins of all humans, however some have never heard a clear message about Jesus but **God is not unjust to send them to hell**; if they humble themselves before God admitting their bankruptcy and calling upon God's mercy, then God forgives their sins because of Jesus. Muslims and people from all other religions do not truly humble themselves before God: they preach a message of merit and works, and in fact many who call themselves Christians do the same;

-Some of the pharisees believed in Jesus secretly but did not confess Jesus publicly because of fear of persecution Jn12:42,43; that is the case for many Muslims, Buddhists, Atheists (see on youtube video “Expelled – no intelligence allowed”).
Some know very well about Jesus but do not accept Him as Savior as some sin they embrace keeps them away.

Do not look for an excuse to avoid the Gospel message. You are responsible to respond to God's call. You see the loving hand of God in creation. You may even have heard the Gospel message: the good news that Jesus died to pay for your sins and by simply accepting his sacrifice on your

behalf your sins are forgiven and you will enjoy eternity in God's presence, instead of eternity without God. It takes a second to put your trust in Jesus, even just before your last breath but don't risk waiting that long: you could die suddenly with no more chance to accept Jesus!

POST 27. The 59 "One Another" of the New Testament

1. "…Be at peace with each other." (Mark 9:50)
2. "…Wash one another's feet." (John 13:14)
3. "…Love one another…" (John 13:34)
4. "…Love one another…" (John 13:34)
5. "…Love one another…" (John 13:35)
6. "…Love one another…" (John 15:12)
7. "…Love one another" (John 15:17)
8. "Be devoted to one another in brotherly love…" (Romans 12:10)
9. "…Honor one another above yourselves. (Romans 12:10)
10. "Live in harmony with one another…" (Romans 12:16)
11. "…Love one another…" (Romans 13:8)
12. "…Stop passing judgment on one another." (Romans 14:13)
13. "Accept one another, then, just as Christ accepted you…" (Romans 15:7)
14. "…Instruct one another." (Romans 15:14)
15. "Greet one another with a holy kiss…" (Romans 16:16)
16. "…When you come together to eat, wait for each other." (I Cor. 11:33)
17. "…Have equal concern for each other." (I Corinthians 12:25)
18. "…Greet one another with a holy kiss." (I Corinthians 16:20)
19. "Greet one another with a holy kiss." (II Corinthians 13:12)
20. "…Serve one another in love." (Galatians 5:13)
21. "If you keep on biting and devouring each other…you will be destroyed by each other."
(Galatians 5:15)
22. "Let us not become conceited, provoking and envying each other." (Galatians 5:26)
23. "Carry each other's burdens…" (Galatians 6:2)
24. "…Be patient, bearing with one another in love." (Ephesians 4:2)
25. "Be kind and compassionate to one another…" (Ephesians 4:32)
26. "…Forgiving each other…" (Ephesians 4:32)
27. "Speak to one another with psalms, hymns and spiritual songs." (Ephesians 5:19)
28. "Submit to one another out of reverence for Christ." (Ephesians 5:21)
29. "…In humility consider others better than yourselves." (Philippians 2:3)
30. "Do not lie to each other…" (Colossians 3:9)
31. "Bear with each other…" (Colossians 3:13)
32. "…Forgive whatever grievances you may have against one another." (Colossians 3:13)
33. "Teach…[one another]" (Colossians 3:16)
34. "…Admonish one another (Colossians 3:16)
35. "…Make your love increase and overflow for each other." (I Thessalonians 3:12)
36. "…Love each other." (I Thessalonians 4:9)
37. "…Encourage each other…"(I Thessalonians 4:18)
38. "…Encourage each other…" I Thessalonians 5:11)
39. "…Build each other up…" (I Thessalonians 5:11)
40. "Encourage one another daily…" Hebrews 3:13)
41. "…Spur one another on toward love and good deeds." (Hebrews 10:24)
42. "…Encourage one another." (Hebrews 10:25)
43. "…Do not slander one another." (James 4:11)
44. "Don't grumble against each other…" (James 5:9)
45. "Confess your sins to each other…" (James 5:16)
46. "…Pray for each other." (James 5:16)
47. "…Love one another deeply, from the heart." (I Peter 3:8)
48. "…Live in harmony with one another…" (I Peter 3:8)
49. "…Love each other deeply…" (I Peter 4:8)
50. "Offer hospitality to one another without grumbling." (I Peter 4:9)
51. "Each one should use whatever gift he has received to serve others…" (I Peter 4:10)
52. "…Clothe yourselves with humility toward one another…"(I Peter 5:5)
53. "Greet one another with a kiss of love." (I Peter 5:14)
54. "…Love one another." (I John 3:11)
55. "…Love one another." (I John 3:23)
56. "…Love one another." (I John 4:7)
57. "…Love one another." (I John 4:11)
58. "…Love one another." (I John 4:12)
59. "…Love one another." (II John 5)

POST 28. PEACE

PEACE=lack of conflict and freedom from fear of violence; a state of

tranquility and calmness between 2 sides

1. ETERNAL PEACE WITH GOD:

-Rom5:1 "Therefore, since we have been justified through faith, WE HAVE PEACE WITH GOD THROUGH OUR LORD JESUS CHRIST"
-You can have this peace with God by accepting that Jesus Christ died to pay for your sins; the state of conflict between God and man started in the garden of Eden when man sinned and this state of sinfulness is passed on ever-since: we are all born sinners;
-Jesus has taken upon himself the sin of the whole world (Jn1:29) so that now anyone who accepts Jesus as Savior is reconciled to God (Eph.2:16).
-Example: imagine man and God are back-to-back in total enmity because of sin: d b ; the sacrifice of Jesus (symbolized by the animal sacrifices since Eden until the cross) allowed God to turn toward man: d d; when someone accepts Jesus as Savior, he turns to God: b d; again: db – dd – bd

d b:
-Is.59:2 sins are a wall of separation between man and God;
-Habakkuk 1:13 God can't look upon sin

d d:
-Is65:2 I have stretched out My hands all day long to a rebellious people
-Luke19:42 if u knew the things which could have given u peace...
-Rom.5:10 "For if, when we were enemies, we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son, much more, being reconciled, we shall be saved by his life.

b d:
-2Cor.5:17 God has reconciled us to himself through Jesus Christ
-Col1:20-22

2. PEACE WITH GOD IN OUR DAILY LIFE
A Christian has eternal peace with God through Jesus (Rom.6:23) but in his daily life he can be 'at war' with God through a natural thinking, though without losing his eternal standing with God (Rom.8:6,7).

3. PEACE BETWEEN JEWS AND GENTILES
Eph.2:14 HE (JESUS) IS OUR PEACE, he has made both one, he has broken down the middle wall of partition
-In the Old Testament Jews had a special position before God compared to the gentiles, not in terms of call to salvation but in terms of call to ministry; Jews and gentiles were all saved the same way: by faith; however God had chosen the Jews to be distributors of the mysteries of God, the tools of God's revelation; at the temple there was a middle wall of partition: on one side were the Jews (with access into the temple) and on the other side gentiles (without access into the temple). Jews were not allowed to marry gentiles or even to eat with them: the cross has removed this separation;

4. PEACE IN LIFE SITUATIONS:
-Luke24:36 peace unto you; Jesus reminds us that He is with us: this gives us peace (rest) in the middle of difficult life situations;
-Phil.4:6-7 peace comes as result of prayer
-Jn16:33 in the world tribulations but I give u my peace

5. PEACE WITH OTHERS

-Rom12:18 "live in peace with all men as much as lieth on you";
-you purpose in your heart that you will not start conflicts but you will manifest Christ to others, including to those who start conflicts with you; Mat.5:44 "bless those who curse you and pray for those who despitefully use you".

6. WHAT ABOUT...PEACE AMONG NATIONS?
-a nation might have to righteously go to war against another nation, as for example a number of nations went to war against the Nazi Germany in the 2 world wars last century;
-can a Christian be a soldier? Yes; John the Baptist told soldiers to not abuse people, he didn't tell them to quit the army, see Luke 3:14; army, (police also), are tools of the government, government being the method God has ordained for the functioning of a nation, see Rom.13. Same about Cornelius, a centurion in Acts 10.

POST 29. "HOW SHOULD A CHRISTIAN VIEW POLITICS?"

Answer: Politics often spark bitter debates between Christians. Some say that “religion and politics don’t mix.” But is Christianity incompatible with politics? No it is not! You can be a Christian and be involved in politics.

The Bible gives us two truths regarding our stance towards politics and government:

1. The first truth is that **THE WILL OF GOD TAKES PRECEDENCE OVER EVERYTHING AND EVERYONE** (Matt6:33). God's plans and purposes are fixed, and His will is inviolable. What He has purposed, He will bring to pass, and no government can thwart His will (Dan4:34,35). In fact, **it is God who "sets up kings and deposes them"** (Dan2:21) because "the Most High is sovereign over the kingdoms of men and gives them to anyone he wishes" (Dan4:17). A clear understanding of this truth will help us to see that politics is merely a method God uses to accomplish His will. **Even though evil men abuse their political power, meaning it for evil, God means it for good,** working "all things together for the good of those who love him, who have been called according to his purpose" (Rom8:28).

In Matt4:9 Satan says he controls the kingdoms of this world, of course through unsaved leaders or saved ones but carnal (not led by the Spirit). Unsaved leaders are allowed by God for a while a certain amount of authority, see Jesus' words to Herod in Jn19:11.

2. Second, we must grasp the fact that **OUR GOVERNMENT CANNOT SAVE US**! Only God can. We never read in the New Testament of Jesus or any of the apostles expending any time or energy schooling believers on how to reform the pagan world of its idolatrous, immoral, and corrupt practices via the government. The apostles never called for believers to demonstrate civil disobedience to protest the Roman Empire's unjust laws or brutal schemes. Instead, the apostles commanded the first-century Christians, as well as us today, to proclaim the gospel and live lives that give clear evidence to the gospel's transforming power. Paul evangelized Publius, governor of Malta Acts28 and didn't rebuke him of anything related to politics.

-There is no doubt that our responsibility to government is to **obey the laws and be good citizens** (Rom13:1,2). **God has established all authority**, and He does so for our benefit, "to commend those who do right" (1Pet2:13-15).

-Paul tells us in Rom13:1-8 that it is the government's responsibility to rule in authority over us—hopefully for our good—to collect taxes, and to keep the peace.

-Where we have a voice and can elect our leaders, we should exercise that right by voting for those whose views most closely parallel our own (between 2 bad options vote the less evil choice).

-As an example of politics in U.S.A. (I am from Romania however), Democrats believe in 9 months abortion, massive immigration policies, one world government, homosexuality, legalizing use of marihuana, secularism (removal of religious rights and liberties), removal of right to possess guns for self-defense, anti-Israel&pro-Palestinians, mostly Atheists, while Republicans represent the opposite (however some Democrats and some Republicans have mixed views). Now if you are a Christian, even if maybe a Democrat government might have a better economic plan, the above general Democrat views are conflicting with your Christian views.

-Since Israel rejected God's leadership asking for a political king just as the other nations, God has allowed Israel to have kings: first leaders were elected by God (Saul, David, Solomon) and some others were elected by men (see book of Judges), while some inherited the throne from their father.

-One of Satan's grandest deceptions is that we can rest our hope for cultural morality and godly living in politicians and governmental officials. A nation's hope for change is not to be found in any country's ruling class. The church has made a mistake if it thinks that it is the job of politicians to defend, to advance, and to guard biblical truths and Christian values.

-The church's unique, God-given purpose does not lie in political activism. Nowhere in Scripture do we have the directive to spend our energy, our time, or our money in governmental affairs. **Our mission lies not in changing the nation through political reform, but in changing hearts through the Word of God.** When believers think the growth and influence of Christ can somehow be allied with government policy, they corrupt the mission of the church. Our Christian mandate is to spread the gospel of Christ and to preach against the sins of our time. Only as the hearts of individuals in a culture are changed by Christ will the culture begin to reflect that change.

-Believers throughout the ages have lived, and even flourished, under antagonistic, repressive, pagan governments. This was especially true of the first-century believers who, under merciless political regimes, sustained their faith under immense cultural stress. They understood that it was they,

not their governments, who were the light of the world and the salt of the earth. They adhered to Paul's teaching to obey their governing authorities, even to honor, respect, and pray for them (Rom13:1-8). More importantly, they understood that, as believers, their hope resided in the protection that only God supplies. The same holds true for us today. When we follow the teachings of the Scriptures, we become the light of the world as God has intended for us to be (Matt5:16).

-**Political entities are not the savior of the world. The salvation for all mankind has been manifested in Jesus Christ.** God knew that our world needed saving long before any national government was ever founded. He demonstrated to the world that redemption could not be accomplished through the power of man, his economic strength, his military might, or his politics. Peace of mind, contentment, hope and joy—and the salvation of mankind—is accomplished only through His work of faith, love, and grace.

However, **God has used governors and governments** for the advancing of his purpose: Joseph in Egypt was placed governor, second to the king and from that position he was able to help his family escape famine. One the most missionary nations and greatest nest of Christianity, U.S.A., was started by political means and flourished under Christian political leaders.

Here are some great books to download on the subject of politics:

https://blogs.thegospelcoalition.org/justintaylor/files/2010/09/Grudem-ch-1.pdf

http://www.waynegrudem.com/wp-content/uploads/2014/05/Why-Christians-should-influence-government-booklet.pdf

POST 30. PORNOGRAPHY

First of all, porn is sin and affects your fellowship with God.

Pornography ALTERS YOUR BRAIN by affecting your hormones.

Hormones are powerful chemicals secreted by the brain and glands throughout the body. They are responsible for altering moods, influencing behaviors and causing our body to effect physical changes, as needed.
Any image or video that creates a physical or emotional reaction can have a lasting impact on your brain. Magnetic resonance imaging (MRI) scans have shown how the physical makeup of the brain and its response to hormones can change over time in response to pornographic images. Chemical hormones reward sexual activity, as part of God's plan to encourage intimacy and procreation. In essence, pornography tricks the brain into providing these chemical rewards without the actual closeness, intimacy or marital relationship:
--When viewing pornography, the hormone **DOPAMINE** is released into the brain. This hormone is responsible for creating cravings.
-- **OXYTOCIN AND VASOPRESSIN** are two other hormones that are released by sex or viewing pornography and are altering neurophysiology, laying down neural pathways of
memory and associating them with any pleasurable sensations that we feel.
--ENDORPHINS are also released by the brain, these are the body's natural version of opiate drugs, capable of giving the sensations of feeling high and euphoric.
--Finally, the natural hormone **SEROTONIN** is released, which brings the sense of calm and relaxation after sexual intimacy.

In normal marital sexual relationships, **these hormones and brain pattern changes help humans bond to each other** by rewarding continued and increased contact. In healthy relationships, this desire/reward system reaches a limit, preventing obsession and allowing you to spend time away from your spouse without negative effects. However, **viewing pornography bypasses these normal limits, and addiction and obsession** are common results. The mind is chemically altered to believe that sexual satisfaction merely requires a keyboard and search terms rather than the complexities of courtship and a loving relationship with another human being.

DANGERS OF PORNOGRAPHY
1. Creates an emotional bond with an artificial world
All people have a critical need for human intimacy and emotional connection with others. When someone views pornography, they end up creating an intimate bond with an artificial, fake world and can actually lose the ability to bond with real people.

2. Sex without intimacy
Pornography is about sex being used for the wrong reasons. Because it is sex without emotional closeness, the underlying hunger remains unsatisfied.

The viewer starts wondering what is wrong with their relationships and gets irritated or depressed. They end up feeling emotionally empty and disconnected from those around them.

3. Unsatisfying
While pornography use may result in a short term high, it eventually results in feelings of emptiness, low self-esteem and deep loneliness. It ultimately creates emotional distance in relationships. Because the world of pornography is artificial and cannot satisfy the need for emotional intimacy, this basic need remains unmet, creating an appetite for more and more.

4. Triggers addiction cycle in brain
Studies show that actual brain function changes in someone who has an addiction – and the changes are the same in all addiction: alcohol, drugs, or pornography. Pornography viewers are not able to stop through their own will power: one might stop physically watching porn but could still see the images stored in his mind and lust; only God can offer real help. Pornography addicts will need to engage in the same difficult recovery process a drug addict has to go through.

5. Unfulfilling
Using pornography to feel pleasure and escape feelings of low self-esteem, anxiety, boredom and frustration creates a gateway for addiction. When the rush of pleasure disappears, the feelings a user is trying to escape from reappear stronger than ever, and they are compelled to repeat the cycle. Over time, their brain chemistry is altered and a full-fledged addiction occurs.

6. Great deception
Initially, one is attracted to pornography because of the positive things it did for him/her. ("I love the rush I feel," "This is my favorite pastime," "I feel lonely," "This is my reward to myself for making it through a rough day...") Eventually, it will do just the opposite. ("I no longer feel an emotional response to anything," "There is nothing in my life I enjoy doing," "I feel totally isolated from the world," "My anxiety and stress levels are at an all-time high...").

7. Imitation of the real thing
With pornography, sex is used as a substitute for nurture, intimacy, and love. Sex is no longer a wonderful source of connection between our deepest selves and a beloved marriage partner; it becomes a commodity used to avoid intimacy and mask needs that should be met through human connections.

8. Always hungry
Because this is an addictive substance, it creates an appetite for itself. This appetite increases over time as you spend more and more time viewing pornography. The time spent viewing pornography can jeopardize work, relationships and interest in healthy activities.

9. Escalation
Over time, the pornography we first started viewing becomes mundane. We escalate to view things which we once would have considered as going too far or totally wrong: bestiality (sex with animals), pedophilia, sadomasochism (physical violence combined with sex), homosexuality, incest, sex with statues and other objects, sex in group, prostitution, sex with dead people (necrophilia), rape (sadly, some of these are already legalized in certain countries and others are in discussion for legalizing). We feel increasing desire to do things which will damage our reputation and relationships.

10. Desensitization - eventually, you start to become numb. Even the most graphic, degrading porn doesn't excite you anymore. You become desperate to feel the same thrill again by going deeper into the mud of porn but can't find it.

11. Acting out sexually - at this point, many make a dangerous jump and start acting out sexually. They move from the paper and plastic images of porn to the real world. Ted Bundy started with porn and became a sex offender abusing women and killing them to cover up the rapes, becoming a serial criminal.

---Captured **Islamic terrorists' computers** (including Osama Bin Laden's computer) were all found to contain huge amounts of all kinds of porn: this addiction that takes over their minds motivates them as a drug to conquer other territories and take girls and even boys as sex-slaves, practice allowed by their koran. Verify info here: https://www.rt.com/news/350947-isis-porn-pentagon-flynn/

---There are **4,2 million pornographic websites**!

---There are **68 million search engine requests for porn every day**!

---around **40-60% of church goers watch porn often**, almost one third are women, and 20 to 50% of pastors; see here other sad statistics: www.roadtograce.net/current-porn-statistics/

Ex20:17 "you **shall not covet** your neighbor's wife"

Mat5:27-29 "whosoever **looks on a woman to lust** after her hath committed adultery with her already in his heart."

Job31:1 "**I made a covenant with mine eyes**; why then should I think (look lustfully) upon a maid"

Col3:5 "Put **to death, therefore: sexual immorality, impurity, lust, evil desires**"

Rev9:21 ...and they did not repent of their drugs ("pharmakeia" in Greek, at times translated 'sorceries') and their **sexual immorality**...

Gal.6:16 Walk in obedience to the Holy Spirit and as result **you shall not fulfill the lust** of the flesh.

CONCLUSION

God redeems (Eph. 1:7). God heals (1 Cor. 10:13). God does miracles (Matt. 17:20). God is bigger (Isaiah 55:8-9). The blood of Jesus can wash any sin 1Jn1:7-9.

If you are addicted to porn, look for **counsel from a mature Christian**; make yourself **accountable** to him.

Take a **daily intake of Bible** doctrine (1-3 hours)

Install **porn-blocking software** on your internet devices (free software) or give up internet devices for a while or just use them around people.

POST 31. POWER OF DEATH – JESUS OR SATAN?

"When a Christian loved one dies, people often say, "God called him home."
Scripture says that the devil has the "power of death" (Heb2:14) and is a murderer Jn8:44, also that Jesus holds the keys of death and hades (Rev1:18). Who then does cause death?"

There are 2 types of death:
1. -physical death of the material body
2. -spiritual death of the human spirit.

1. PHYSICAL DEATH

--God is both the **AUTHOR AND SUSTAINER OF LIFE** (Acts 17:25,28; 1Tim6:13). Jesus is the author of life, physical and spiritual life Jn1:4, 1Jn5:11.

--Since God is the Creator, all-powerful and judge, he obviously has the right and ability to **TERMINATE HUMAN LIFE.** The Bible tells us that God has killed millions of people (example: the pre-flood people, Sodom and Gomorrah, Onan in Gen38:10, the plagues on Egypt, fire from heaven as in Num11, 2Kg19 an angel sent by God killed 185.000 Assyrians)
-God prescribed the **death penalty** like in Lev20:10 also Rom13:1-4 (government here includes the judicial system and the army).
-Ex20:13 should be correctly translated **"thou shall not commit murder"**, instead of "thou shall not kill", as God allows humans to kill humans in specific situations (an of course you can kill and eat animals).
The difference between killing and murder is in the right and purpose of the action: only God has the right to kill according to His directive will and purpose and He extends that right to man in certain conditions, outside of those limits any killing is murder. God allows at times murder to happen in His permissive will. At times, God allows His plan to be voided or defeated by the unbelief of man: for example God wills that all men be saved 1Tim2:4 but not all men will be saved because of their rebellious unbelief.

At times God overturns murders or murderous plans: Paul was stoned to death but God brought him back to life Acts14:19, also the 2 witnesses in Rev11; history tells us that the apostle John was boiled in oil but was saved miraculously.

--God has also the **POWER TO LENGTHEN LIFE**. He extended Hezekiah's time by 15 years (2Kings20:6).

--God can even **RESTORE LIFE**, as he did by raising Jesus from the dead (Rom1:4). Jesus also has power to restore life, as he raised dead people (Lazarus in John 11).

--PHYSICAL DEATH IN OLD AGE is a natural process in which generally God is generally not directly involved: in Numbers 16:3-30

Moses said: “If these men die the **COMMON DEATH OF ALL MEN** then God has not sent me”.
Of special interest is the term “common.” It signifies the ordinary end of human life in which God is not **directly** involved.

Ordinarily, when people die, it is not because the Lord intervenes and takes the spirit from the body (James 2:26) — regardless of whether the person was “good” or “evil.” It simply is **A NATURAL PROCESS**, ultimately resulting from Adam’s disobedience to God (Genesis 2:17; 3:22; Romans 5:12).
The Lord, therefore, **allows** death to take us as a natural process. But we are not empowered to say, in **any specific case,** God “took” him or her, unless divine revelation indicates it, but since God allows it to happen at a certain moment, we can say that it was God's permissive will. Job saw his afflictions as from the hand of God, even though Satan was their cause but with God's permission Job2:10.

Having said that, what does the text mean which declares that **the devil “has the power of death”** (Heb2:14)?
First, it is clear that Satan does not possess unlimited power to directly take human life. If such were the case, all Christian people would be dead, for he is our “enemy” (Matt13:28). The book of Job demonstrates this truth as well. Satan could only afflict Job as God allowed, and the Lord refused to grant permission for Job’s life to be terminated (Job 2:6). God is greater than his adversary (1 John 4:4). Heb2:15 says that the power of death is in the fear of death, of which the Christian is set free knowing that death for him means going to heaven.

The reference to Satan’s “power of death” is doubtless an allusion to **the tempter’s role in the fall of humanity** at the beginning of time. Death reigns as a result of sin (Rom5:12). Since the devil introduced sin, he is characterized as the “murderer” of the human family (John 8:44).

PHYSICAL DEATH, THEREFORE, IS AN APPOINTMENT FOR US ALL (Heb9:27 — with the exception of those who are alive at the time of Christ’s return, 1Cor15:51).
Inasmuch as Satan ultimately shares a heavy responsible for the sin-death equation, in a manner of speaking, he thus is said to have “the power of death.” Not in a **direct** sense, but only in an **historical,** associated sense as source of Adam's sin that resulted into death.

The happy ending to this tragedy, however, is seen in the fact that Jesus, by his own resurrection from the dead, and the inspired promise that he is the “firstfruits” (or model, prototype) of those who are to follow, has, through the gospel, “brought life and immortality to light” (2Tim1:10). And that blessed “hope” (Acts 24:15) has delivered his people from the slavish **“fear of death”** (Heb2:15).

Therefore, we are able to say, “I desire to depart and be with the Lord, for it is very far better” (Phil1:23). Again, we “are willing rather to be absent from the body,” so that we may be “at home with the Lord” (2Cor5:8).
Our sweet refrain can be, therefore: “Happy are the dead who die in the Lord from henceforth, yes, says the Spirit, they may rest from their labors, for their works follow with them” (Rev14:13).

--Rev1:18 **JESUS HAS THE KEY OF DEATH AND HADES** (hades is the place where the dead unsaved souls are kept; ask me for our study on “Hell”); it means that nobody dies without Jesus' permission and nobody is brought back to life out of death unless Jesus does it.

2. SPIRITUAL DEATH

We can safely say that Satan introduced spiritual death while the physical death is a direct consequence of it: Adam's obedience to Satan brought in spiritual death, just as God had promised in Gen2:17, "**the day** you shall eat of it you shall die"; notice God said, "on that day you will die", not "on that day your body will be affected by gradual slow death till you will die one day some 900 years later"; **on the day** Adam ate the forbidden fruit he did not die physically but spiritually, while death started to affect his body from that day on through the aging process and eventually dying some 900 years later. Adam accepting God's provision of the animal skin offered by God and the animal sacrifices system had restored his spiritual life with God, animal sacrifices being a symbol of Jesus' yet future death of the cross for mankind' sin.

Col2:13 "When you were dead in your transgressions and the uncircumcision of your flesh, He made you alive together with Him, having forgiven us all our transgressions"

Eph2:1-3 "You were dead in your trespasses and sins..."

See other verses that show one can be alive physically but spiritually dead: Hosea13:1; Matt8:22; Matt10:28; Luke15:24; Rom5:12-18; Rom7:9; Eph4:18; 1Jn5:12; Jn5:25; Jn8:51; Jam1:15; 1Tim5:6; 1Jn3:14; Rev3:1.

Rev.6:9 proves that one can be dead physically but alive spiritually in the presence of God; for more on this issue see our study "The soul after physical death".

CONCLUSION

JESUS HAS NOT ONLY THE KEYS OF DEATH BUT ALSO THE KEYS OF LIFE AND OF THE KINGDOM.
The keys of live are his sacrifice on the cross for our sins and faith in His sacrifice on our behalf.

Jn6:47 "He who believes in Me has (present tense, now) eternal life"
Jn11:25, 26 "I am the resurrection and the life. He who believes in Me, though he die, yet he shall live"
Jn14:6 "Nobody comes to the Father (in the kingdom) but through Me"
1Jn5:11,12 "the eternal life is in the Son", "he who believes in the Son has life"

The keys of eternal life and of the Kingdom are available to you! Use them and share them with others as well!!

POST 32. PRAYER

-The first mention of prayer is found in Genesis, chapter 4.
Gen4:26 'And as for Seth, to him also a son was born; and he named him Enosh. Then men began to call on the name of the LOR'

WHAT IS THE CORRECT POSTURE FOR PRAYER?

-There is no correct or certain posture for prayer. In the Bible people prayed on their knees (1Kings8:54), bowing (Ex4:31), on their faces before God (2Chron20:18; Matt26:39), and standing (1Kings8:22). You may pray with your eyes opened or closed, quietly or out loud, however you are most comfortable and least distracted.

SHOULD I USE ELOQUENT WORDS?

Your prayers need not be wordy or impressive in speech.

Matt6:7 'When you pray, don't babble on and on as people of other religions do. They think their prayers are answered only by repeating their words again and again.'

Ecc5:2 'Do not be quick with your mouth, do not be hasty in your heart to utter anything before God. God is in heaven and you are on earth, so let your words be few'

WHY SHOULD I PRAY?

-Prayer Develops Our Relationship with God.
-If we never speak to our spouse or never listen to anything our spouse might have to say to us, our marriage relationship will quickly deteriorate. It is the same way with God. Prayer, communicating with God, helps us grow closer and more intimately connected with God.

Zech13:9 'I will bring that group through the fire and make them pure, just as gold and silver are refined and purified by fire. They will call on my name, and I will answer them. I will say, 'These are my people,' and they will say, 'The LORD is our God.'

Jn15:7 'But if you stay joined to me and my words remain in you, you may ask any request you like, and it will be granted'

-The Lord Instructed Us to Pray; One of the simplest reasons to spend time in prayer is because the -Lord instructed us to pray. Obedience is a natural by-product of discipleship.

Matt26:41 'Keep alert and pray. Otherwise temptation will overpower you. For though the spirit is willing enough, the body is weak'

Luke 18:1 'Then Jesus told his disciples a parable to show them that they should always pray and not give up'

See also Matt7:7; 1Tim2:8; Eph6:18

What If I Don't Know How to Pray?

Prayer is learned: from prayers recorded in the Bible, from other brethren; also the Holy Spirit will help you in prayer when you don't know how to pray.

Rom8:26,27 'In the same way, the Spirit helps us in our weakness. We do not know what we ought to pray for, but the Spirit himself intercedes for us with groans that words cannot express'

Other verses on prayer: 2Chron7:14; Jer29:13; Mark11:24; Jam5:16; 1Jn3:22; Ps34:17; Ps91:15; 1Sam1:27; Ps4:3; Ps18:6; Prov15:29; Is58:9; Luke11:9; 1Jn5:14; Deut3:26; Ez20:3; Matt18:19; Luke1:10; Acts1:14; Matt6:6; Mark1:35; Luke5:15,16; Luke6:12

Sometimes our prayers are not answered. The Bible gives several reasons or causes for failure in prayer:

- Disobedience - Deut1:45; 1Sam14:37
- Secret Sin - Ps66:18
- Indifference - Prov1:28
- Neglect of mercy - Prov21:13
- Despising the Law - Prov28:9
- Bloodguiltiness - Is1:15
- Iniquity - Is59:2; Micah3:4
- Stubbornness - Zech7:13
- Instability or Doubt – James1:6,7
- Self-indulgence - James4:3

PRAYER CLOSET

A believer should pray with others but also alone; here we will see about personal prayer.
Pray in your home or in a place at your choosing, better a personal secret place where you can't be disturbed.

Start your hour of prayer by worshiping God: thank Him for who He is and what He has done in your life; thank him for the death of Christ and resurrection, this is a time to count your spiritual and material blessings (see our study, "95 things that happen at the moment of salvation"); use the Bible, especially psalms. This first part can last 10-20min.

Continue by confession, this can be brief: 1Jn1:7to9 name your sin but don't go into 5000 details about your sins, God would get bored. Just believe in the power of the blood, not in the power of buckets of your tears. Once a sin is confessed, never remind God about it: just believe the blood washed it Rev1:5.

Then continue with supplications; pray for:
-SALVATION OF SOULS especially in Harare, Zimbabwe and the world; pray specifically for evangelism, for Christians you personally know, to be effective witnesses for Jesus Acts1:8, 2Cor5:20; pray for salvation of family members, neighbors, members of cults and other religions you might personally know (and even for those you don't know, God knows them).
-REVIVAL IN CHURCHES – pray that God would bring a WORD OF GOD REVIVAL in churches and in individual hearts of believers; pray for growth in Christ 2Pet3:9 and in number; pray for godly unity among churches: church leaders and believers;
-CHURCH LEADERS – pray for wisdom, protection, anointing of the Holy Spirit over preaching, leadership, counseling; protection for their families;
-BIBLE COLLEGES – trained workers for the field;
-BRETHREN – protection; spiritual growth; divine vision; health; jobs; different needs; pray for Christians that are persecuted for their faith (in 60 nations there are Christians that are killed for faith in Jesus). Pray for other nations, especially for revivals in Muslim African countries (North of Africa).
-GOVERNMENT – Rom13 – salvations, wisdom in decisions
-other personal requests.
Close by thanking God and worship and adoration. At times you can sing to God, you can read some verses and meditate loud on these verses and thank God; you can walk around your room, you can raise hands, you can get on your knees or sit;
Please respect your neighbors: if you are loud and disturb them, they will hate you and your God; "love your neighbor as yourself" Mat.12:31; no need to shout, God is not deaf; you can whisper, at times pray in your heart as Hannah that was murmuring only 1Sam1:13.

Let's believe God that this is the beginning of a great change through prayer, in our lives, churches, towns, country, continent and worldwide!

How to pray -elements of prayer

ADORATION - We express our adoration and praise to God, express wonder of His great majesty, His sovereignty and mighty power. We praise God for who He is and what He is like. We honor Him for the wonderful things He has done. In the Psalms are many excellent examples of praise and adoration.

CONFESSION - What is confession? Confession means to agree

with God about our sin. Confession involves repentance 1Jn1:9, Ps51

THANKSGIVING - We express appreciation to God for what He has done for us. Our gratitude demonstrates faith (1Thess5: 18, Ps107:1; 103:2)

SUPPLICATION - Making requests. We pray for other people and their needs and for our own needs. (Matthew 6: 11 -13, Philippians 4:6,7)

Hindrances to prayer

Ps66:*18 "If I had cherished sin in my heart the Lord would not have listened.*" If there is anything worse than not praying, it is praying when we should be confessing. Also Ps109:7, Prov15:29; 1Pet3:7; Matt5:23,24; James4:3 ; Selfish Motives

Prayer is like anything else: we learn by practicing. If you want to learn how to pray then pray; praying with other mature believers helps. God has invited us to come freely into His presence. Let us take Him up on this incredible offer!

Here are some QUOTES on prayer:

Allen, Charles L.: *The first purpose of prayer is to know God.*
Allen, George H.: *Kneel before you leap.*
Anonymous (or unknown):
Embark upon no enterprise you cannot submit to the test of prayer.
God eagerly awaits the chance to bless the person whose heart is turned toward him.
It is impossible to lose your footing while on your knees.
If Christians spent as much time praying as they do grumbling, they would have nothing to grumble about.
Our business in prayer is not to prescribe, but to subscribe to the wisdom and will of God; to refer our case to him, and then leave it with him.
Nothing lies beyond the reach of prayer except that which lies beyond the will of God.
God's power enters our human programs though the door of prayer. Unless the church's ministry is bathed in prayer, it remains merely a human endeavor.
Prayer will make a person cease from sin, or sin will entice a person to cease from prayer.
No day is well spent without communication with God.
Daily prayers lessen daily cares.
When you go to your knees, God will help you stand up to anything.
The more we pray, the more our horizons expand and the more we come to expect from a supernatural, miracle-working God.
Do not face the day until you have faced God.
Do not pray by heart, but with the heart.
Christ actually meant prayer to be the great power by which his church should do its work.
If family worship is neglected, other attempts at prayer are like sprinkling the foliage of a plant while leaving the roots dry.
Arguments never settle anything; but prayer changes things.
God rules the world through the prayers of his people.
Courage is fear that has said its prayers.
True prayer is a way of life, not just a case of emergency.
Prayer is hardest when it is hardest to pray.
Ministry without prayer becomes work in the power of the flesh. Prayer without ministry is complacent Christianity. A hour of prayer at the beginning of the meeting actually shortens the overall meeting time by bringing a greater spirit of unity, by emphasizing spiritual priorities, and by opening people's hearts to the Spirit's guidance.
He stands best who kneels most.
It is not possible to explain the power and effectiveness of the New Testament church without reference to prayer.
Nothing lies outside the reach of prayer except that which lies outside the will of God.
Without prayer no work is well done.
Christ actual means prayer to be the greatest power by which his church should do it work.
It's strange that in our praying we seldom ask for a change of character, but always a change of circumstances.
Appleton, George: *Prayer is essentially man standing before his God in wonder, awe, and humility; man, made in the image of God, responding to his maker.*
Augustine: *Do you wish to pray in the temple? Pray in your own heart. But begin by being God's temple, for he will listen to those who invoke him in his temple.*
Usually prayer is a question of groaning rather than speaking, tears rather than words.
Bartlett, Allen E.: *Seven days without prayer makes one weak.*
Baxter, Sidlow: *Men may spurn our appeals, reject our message, oppose our arguments, despise our persons, but they are helpless against our prayers.*

POSITIVE CONDITIONS FOR ANSWERED PRAYER

A. The Christian Must Pray ACCORDING to GOD'S WILL 1Jn5:14,15
A sovereign God has a perfect plan that will come to pass and which brings the most glory to Himself. God is sovereign at all times, and our prayers, in order to be effective, must be in accordance with His sovereign will for us. If what we ask of the Father is not what He intended us to have from the foundation of the world, He will not give it to us. This is why we must pray "in the Spirit" so our prayers will be energized by God and be according to His will.

To pray or to be "IN THE SPIRIT" means to allow God to take total control: in my thinking, in my decisions; (of course one first must be born again through faith in Jesus in order to receive the Holy Spirit Rom8:9; then this person needs to allow the Holy Spirit to take control continually); to be "in the Spirit" means to be filled with Christ as I am looking at Christ, for the Spirit elevates Christ (Jn16:13to15) and to accept my co-crucifixion, co-burial and co-resurrection with Christ; being in the Spirit comes by reading and believing the Word of God (2Pet1:20, Col3:16, Eph5:18to20). The word "filling" means "to be controlled". Will write more about this subject soon.

B. The Christian Must Be Abiding IN CHRIST AND IN HIS WORD Jn15:7
The Christian is to be in fellowship with his Lord and reveling in His Word before there will be effective prayer. One cannot pray according to God's will until he knows what God's will is, and God's will is found in the Bible. The Christian Must Be Obedient to the Word (1Jn3:22): The believer who chooses to be obedient to God will most certainly see God bless him in his prayer life. Answers to prayer will come in direct proportion to the willingness the Christian has to do God's will Mat6:33.
NOTE: There are many who would like to have answers to prayer but they are not willing to sacrifice time to know God's Word.

C. The Christian Must Ask IN FAITH James1:5,7
One must believe that God can and does answer prayer. Faith is going beyond the natural to the supernatural. Faith is simply trusting in God's faithfulness.

POINTS TO PONDER
1. The Christian is to come as a child to the Father and ask, not demand, things.
2. If the Christian is abiding in the Father and obeying Him, then the Holy Spirit will prompt the believer to pray according to God's perfect will. Rom8:26,27

HINDRANCES TO EFFECTIVE PRAYER
A. Cherished SIN Is59:1,2; Psa66:18
Sin, which is rebellion to God, breaks temporal fellowship with the Father. Until a Christian sees his sin, admits to it, confesses it, and seeks to forsake it, he will never have an effective prayer life. Sin is an awful thing, and one of the most awful things about it is the way it hinders prayer. Anyone who would have power in prayer must be merciless in dealing with his own sins: 1Jn17,9
Ps139:23,24 says,
"Search me, 0 God, and know my heart;
Try me and know my anxious thoughts;
And see if there be any hurtful way in me,
And lead me in the everlasting way."

B. SELFISHNESS James4:3
So often we ask for things in prayer when our motives are putrid. The human heart is very deceitful Jer17:9 but God answers the prayer of an honest man in faith. For instance, why should a woman desire the conversion of her husband? First of all and above all, that God may be glorified; she should pray because she cannot bear the thought that God the Father should be dishonored by her husband trampling under foot the Son of God. The wife would be selfish if she prays for the salvation of the husband so that she would be spared from his critiques of her Sunday church going, or spared from him spending money on alcohol when she could spend that money on her hair style, or that he is watching dstv instead of doing house shopping (these can't be primary reasons for the salvation of the husband, but the desire of change in the husband is obviously good; however, the husband could change and become very moral and loving: does that mean he does not need salvation?).

C. Stinginess Towards the POOR Prov21:13
Those to whom God has given much in the way of material blessing are to share it with those who have been given very little. There is perhaps no greater hindrance to prayer than stinginess, the lack of liberality toward the poor and toward God's work, which is oriented towards the poor spiritually;

how can you selfishly enjoy fellowship with God when there are so many lost souls that God loves and desires to bring into fellowship with Himself?

D. BROKEN RELATIONSHIPS Mat5:23,24
If you have sinned against a brother, go to him and ask for forgiveness; if he doesn't forgive you, you have done your part, God accepts now your prayer but not his, because he refuses to forgive; unforgiveness is sin Col3:13

E. POOR MARITAL RELATIONSHIP 1Pet3:7
Husbands and wives have biblical responsibilities to one another, for they are joint heirs of the grace of life.

F. IDOLATRY Ezek14:3
An idol is anything that takes the place of God, anything that is the supreme object of our affection. "Little children, guard yourselves from idols" 1Jn5:21

Here is a great book on prayer (PDF book, "How to pray", by R.A. Torrey; 54 pages, less than 1mb):
http://www.davidcox.com.mx/library/T/Torrey%20-%20How%20to%20Pray.pdf

A few points to ponder:

A) Prayer, as with all issues of Bible Doctrine, must be taught from the Scriptures to the Royal Family to be properly understood. Mt6:1 to 13; Lk11:1
B) Like most doctrines in Scripture, the concept of legitimate prayer has suffered due to misconceptions and religious distortions.

1) Prayer is not some kind of **"BLANK CHECK"**, which the believer fills in and God honors upon demand, distorting Mt 21:22 *"And all things you ask in prayer, believing, you shall receive."*
2) Prayer is **NOT A SYSTEM** by which we seek to PERSUADE God to acclimate to our thinking, or try to force Him to do something we desire, distorting Mk11:23. *"Truly I say to you, whoever says to this mountain, 'Be taken up and cast into the sea,' and does not doubt in his heart, but believes that what he says is going to happen, it shall be* granted *him."*
3) Prayer **does NOT enable us to FORCE God** into doing something He does not want to do, which distorts Lk 18:1-7.
a) we cannot legitimately pray for something that would violate God's Essence ("pray someone saved/positive"), or pray for something that is against Doctrinal principles
b) we cannot legitimately ask Him to make an "EXCEPTION" in our case
c) if the answer to a prayer request is obviously "no" because of going against God's character, we should NOT RATIONALIZE and insist
d) dont ask God for deliverance from DISCIPLINE Heb12/6
4) Standard WRONG human viewpoint about prayer includes:
a) "King James' English is God's preferred choice as far as language is concerned" – WRONG! Mk 14:36 *"And He was saying, "Abba!=Daddy! ..." God is not looking for an elaborate complicated vocabulary.*
b) "repetitious phrases somehow impress God and get His attention" – WRONG! Mt6:7 *"And when you are praying, do not use meaningless repetition, as the Gentiles do, for they suppose that they will be heard for their many words."*
c) "posture (kneeling, bowed head, folded hands, etc.) affects how well God responds to our prayers" – WRONG! See Gen32:29; Ex33:18; Jdg20:28; 1Sam1:9 to 13; Ps28:2; Ez9:8; Lk22:41; Acts1:15;16:24-25
d) "God is more inclined to listen if we are hungry/fasting" – WRONG! *(the Lord's prayer of Jn17 came immediately after a meal). Fasting does not force God to answer your prayer but it helps you to concentrate more on God than on food, dstv or other issues.*
e) "long public prayers impress God" – WRONG! *(saying Grace before dinner and mentioning everything but the food) Luke20:47*
f) "shouting impresses God "– WRONG! 1Kings18 prophets of Baal shouted to their sleepy god. Our God does not sleep, no need to shout.

What is prayer? Prayer is personal communication with God – talking and listening to Him. He loves and cares for us. He wants to hear what we have to say. He is delighted when we pray.

Why is prayer important?

God commands us to pray 1Thess5:17; Eph6:18

Prayer glorifies God Jn14:13

Prayer prepares our hearts to obey and walk with Jesus

Prayer builds intimacy with God

God answers prayer Acts4:23to33; Matt9:38

Prayer is more a privilege than a duty

What did Jesus say about prayer?

Luke11:1to13

Matt6:5to18

Matt7:7to11

Luke18:1to14

What example did He set for us?

Jesus prayed. He loved to pray. His regular habit was to pray. Prayer was a natural part of His life. Examples:

Mark1:35 We see Him praying in the morning

Luke5:15,16 He often slipped away to the wilderness to pray even when He was busy

Luke6:12,13 He spent the entire night in prayer

The night before the crucifixion was spent in prayer

Luke22:32; Jn17:6 to 19 He prayed for others by name

Luke9:29 He prayed with others

The disciples never asked Jesus how to walk on water or how to raise the dead but they begged Him to "teach us to pray". They knew there was a relationship between the power His life manifested and the hours He spent conversing with God the Father.

How to pray -elements of prayer

ADORATION - We express our adoration and praise to God, express wonder of His great majesty, His sovereignty and mighty power. We praise God for who He is and what He is like. We honor Him for the wonderful things He has done. In the Psalms are many excellent examples of praise and adoration.

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SUPPLICATION - Making requests. We pray for other people and their needs and for our own needs Matt6:11 to 13, Phil4:6,7

Prayer is like anything else: we learn by practicing. If you want to learn how to pray then pray; praying with other mature believers helps. God has invited us to come freely into His presence. Let us take Him up on this incredible offer!

WHAT CAN THE WE PRAY FOR?
A. For the unsaved Rom10:1; 1Tim2:1to4
B. For governmental rulers Tim2:1,2
C. For the furtherance of the gospel 2Thes3:1; Col4:3; Eph6:19
D. For believers under Satanic attack – pray specifically, for friends by names and specific situations Eph6:18
E. For believers to speak the gospel boldly Eph6:19,20
F. For deliverance from opposition because of preaching the gospel 2Thes3:2
G. For the saints to stand boldly for Christ and His Word Heb13:18; 1Thes3:10 Eph6:18; 2Cor13:7; Rom15:30; pray for your church and other churches; for your pastor and other pastors in town.
H. For God to send out laborers; pray for Bible Colleges and different training programs Matt9:38
I. For the spiritual growth of Christians: friends, family members, disciples in whom you invest the Word of God.

Epaphras was a disciple of the Apostle Paul; in Col4:12 Paul says that Epaphras laboured fervently in prayer for the Colosse church; "to labour fervently" in Greek is "agonizomai", from which we have the word "agony". He prayed fervently agonizing in prayer as he knew he was loved by God because of Christ's death and ressurection, he knew his position and value in Christ so therefore he knew that God listens to his prayers; he loved the Colosse church and had a fervent desire for their spiritual growth and he knew that much spiritual warfare depended on his intercession for the Collosians. This resulted in fervent agonizing prayer.

Prayer quotes:
Vander Griend: *If family worship is neglected, other attempts at prayer are like sprinkling the foliage of a plant while leaving the roots dry.*
As we listen to others pray, we learn from them things that will strengthen our own prayer lives.
It is in private prayer that we most easily get in touch with our spiritual selves.

A vital prayer life in your church leadership is one of the most important indications of your congregation's spiritual life.
The more we pray, the more our horizons expand and the more we come to expect from a super-natural, miracle-working God.
***V*an Zeller Hubert:** *A lot of the trouble about prayer would disappear if we only realized—really realized, and not just supposed that it were so—that we go to pray not because we love prayer, but because we love God.*
Vaughn Harold: *Churches are dying on their feet because they're not living on their knees. Today we have the worst of sins in the best of churches.*
Vianney John: *The interior life is like a sea of love in which the soul is plunged and is drowned in love. Just as a mother holds her child's face in her hands to cover it with kisses, so does God hold the devout man.*
Vincent de Paul: *We should spend as much time in thanking God for his benefits as we do in asking him for them.*
Wallace, John Aikman: *Prayer moves the hand that moves the world.*
Wagner, C. Peter: *We are now in the beginning stages of the greatest movement of prayer in living memory.*
Walker Alan: *Prayer is the most difficult and costly activity of the Christian.*
John Wesley: *God will do nothing but in answer to prayer.*
Pray, just as you are led, without reasoning, in all simplicity. Be a little child, hanging on him that loves you.
Unknown: *Prayer is not getting what I want from God—it is God's ordaining means of giving to me what he wants.*

WHY WE DO NOT PRAY

Christians have a multitude of EXCUSES as to why they do not pray, but these can be boiled down to four basic ones:

A. "LACK OF TIME": Most Christians acknowledge that prayer is necessary but they cannot find time to commune with God. They have forfeited the best things for good things. This excuse usually shows where our hearts really are, for men do what they want to do. We are told to "redeem the time" (Eph5:16), and prayer is a good way to do it. Part of our spiritual warfare is to make time to pray.
NOTE: Martin Luther said, "I have so much business I cannot get along without spending three hours daily in prayer."

B. "LACK OF KNOWLEDGE": Some Christians claim that they do not know how to pray. Perhaps they have thought of prayer as some emotional experience and they have never had it. Real prayer is as natural for the Christian as breathing, for it is simply talking with God. Besides, a knowledge of how to pray can be gained by a diligent reading of the Bible.
NOTE: It is one thing to know about prayer and another thing to be praying in the Spirit. We need to talk less about prayer and pray more.

C. "LACK OF RESULTS": A person may have tried praying but did not see instantaneous results so he became discouraged. We are told to keep on asking, expecting God to answer (Matt7:7,8). Christians must learn to persevere in prayer.

D. "LACK OF FAITH": This is undoubtedly the basic reason for failing to pray. We simply do not believe that the omnipotent God can meet our needs. The Lord's word, "Oh, ye of little faith..." Mat8:26.

PRAYER QUOTES:
Bible Illustrator: *It takes effort to pray well. It takes preparation to pray meaningfully. It takes diligence to pray faithfully. Yet prayer is not a burden, but a glorious opportunity that brings rich rewards.*
Biersdorf, John E.: *In prayer we have the courage, perhaps even the presumption and the arrogance or the audacity, to claim that God's love can be operative in the very specific situations of human need that we encounter.*
Billheimer, Paul: *Prayer is not begging God to do something He hesitates to do. It is not overcoming reluctance in God. It is enforcing Christ's victory over Satan. It is implementing upon earth heaven's decision concerning the affairs of men.*
Blanchard, John: *No answer to prayer is an indication of our merit; every answer to prayer is an indication of God's mercy.*
Boone, Wellington: *Prayer laid the tracks where the gospel was going to come.*
Booth, William: *Work as if everything depended upon work and pray as if everything depended on prayer.*
Bounds, E.M.: *The more praying there is in the world, the better the world will be; the mightier the forces against evil everywhere.*
Prayer means to pray with God till you are like him. If we really pray, we will become more like God, or else we will quit praying.

God shapes the world by prayer. Prayers are deathless. They outlive the lives of those who utter them.
John Wesley spent two hours daily in prayer. He began at four in the morning. Of him, one who knew him well wrote: "He thought prayer to be his business more than anything else, and I have seen him come out of his closet with a serenity of face next to shining.
Trouble and prayer are closely related to each other. Prayer is of great value to trouble. Trouble often drives men to God in prayer. Prayer is but the voice of men in trouble.
We do more of everything else than of praying. As poor as our giving is, our contributions of money exceed our offerings of prayer. Perhaps in the average congregation, fifty aid in paying, where one saintly, ardent soul shuts itself up with God and wrestles for the deliverance of the heathen world. . . . We emphasize other things more than we do the necessity of prayer.
God shapes the world through prayer.
Prayer is a wonderful, powerful; tool placed by Almighty God in the hands of His saints, which may be used to accomplish great purposes and to achieve unusual results. Prayer reaches to everything, takes in all things great and small which are promised by God to men. The only limits to prayer are the promises of God and his ability to fulfill those promises.
Prayer is God's life-giving breathe. God's purposes move along the pathway made by prayer to their glorious designs. God's purposes are always moving to their high and beneficial ends, but the movement is along the way marked by unceasing prayer. The breathe of prayer is from God.
To pray is the calmest things we can do, and to do it well, there must be calmness, time and deliberation.
God shapes the world by prayer. The more praying there is in the world the better the world will be, the mightier the forces against evil.
The prime need of the church is not men of money nor men of brains, but men of prayer.
What the church needs today is not more machinery or better, not new organizations or more novel methods, but people whom the Holy Spirit can use—people of prayer, people mighty in prayer. The Holy Spirit does not flow through methods, but through men and women. He does not come on machinery, but on men and women. He does not anoint plans, but men and women—men and women of prayer.

POST 33. RASTA

The word "Rastafarianism" often calls to mind dreadlocks (long braids or natural locks of hair), ganja (marijuana), the streets of Kingston (Jamaica), and the reggae rhythms of Bob Marley.
Rastafarians have no universally acknowledged leaders, no universally agreed-upon defining principles and don't see themselves as a religion, even though rasta is a religion through its philosophies.

The movement takes its name from the title **"Ras Tafari" .** In the Ethiopian (Amharic) language, **RAS** means "head/prince," and **TAFARI** means "to be feared/respected." Within the system of Rastafarianism, the term is a reference most particularly to Ras Tafari Makonnen (1892–1975), Ethiopian Emperor renamed **Haile Selassie I** (his Christian baptismal name) upon his coronation in 1930, when Selassie was lauded with the title **"Lion of Judah, Elect of God, King of Kings" ,** names which belong to Jesus. This sent a shock wave through the Afro-Caribbean culture. In the streets of Kingston, Jamaica, preachers like Joseph Hibbert started declaring that Haile Selassie was **the long awaited Messiah** , the second coming of Christ. Thus was born **one branch of Rastafari**, which looked to Selassie as the living God and black messiah who would overthrow the existing world order and usher in a reign of blacks.

Another branch of Rasta has sprung up alongside the messianic branch. This group traces its roots to **Leonard Percival Howell** and has clear **Hindu elements**. Sometime in the early- to mid-1930s, Howell produced a 14-page pamphlet, **"The Promised Key"** which laid the groundwork for a second branch within Rastafarianism influenced
by Hinduism and Rosicrucianism. Many of the leaders in this branch have also been Freemasons. The result has been a sort of Rastafarian pantheism that looks for **"the Lion Spirit in each of us: the Christ spirit",** believing that Christ is in every human, Christian or non-Christian. Pantheism does not believe that God is a person but that everything is God: trees, stones, animals, objects, creatures.

A summary of Rastafarian theology, as evidenced in the pantheistic branch:
-Rasta believe that "God is man and man is God"
-Rasta believe that salvation is earthly, to be earned by man through behavior, not through faith in Jesus' death on the cross for our sins
-that human beings are called to celebrate and protect life (in a way that in fact is adoration); that any human body is temple of God, therefore you

shouldn't cut your hair or have tattoos and you should eat healthy; however, not all Rasta smoke marijuana
-that the spoken word is a manifestation of the divine presence and power, that God is not a person
-that Rasta (Blacks) brethren are the chosen people to manifest God's power and promote peace in the world

CONCLUSION

BOTH BRANCHES OF RASTA ARE IN DIRECT CONTRAST TO THE WORD OF GOD:

1. Haile Selassie is not the Messiah (he himself denied being Messiah but not very clear as he enjoyed the fame and publicity). Those who worship him as such worship a false god. There is only one King of Kings, one Lion of Judah, and that is Jesus Christ (see Rev5:5; 19:16), who will return in the future to set up His earthly kingdom. Haile Selassie was a man and, like all men, he was born, he lived, and he died. Jesus Christ, the true Messiah, is alive and seated at the right hand of the Father (Heb10:12).

2. The pantheistic idea of Rasta is false ("you are god and god is you"), being based on the same lie that Satan has been telling mankind since the garden of Eden: "you will be as God" (Gen3:4). There is one God, not many, and although believers in Christ do possess the indwelling Holy Spirit and we do belong to God, we are not God. "For I am God, and there is no other; I am God, and there is none like Me" (Is46:9).

3. Salvation is not earned by works. No amount of earthly works or good deeds can make us acceptable to a holy and perfect God, which is why He sent His holy and perfect Son to die on the cross to pay the penalty for our sins (2Cor5:21, Rom6:23, Eph2:8-10).

4. Rastafarians are not the chosen people of God. Scripture is clear that the Jews are God's chosen people for the period of the Old Testament and the Great Tribulation and that He has not yet completed His plan for their redemption (Ex6:7; Lev26:12; Rom11:25-27); today Christians are God's chosen people (1Pet2:9). Jews or non-Jews are the same before God (Gal3:28), God does not make any difference in the Bible based on the color of skin. The different colors of skin (red, yellow, black, white) are a natural result of DNA combinations of the descendants of Adam and Eve, will write more soon about it with scientific proofs; no color of skin was given by God as either a curse or as a blessing.

As for smoking marijuana, it is a drug and as the Bible forbids getting drunk (Eph5:18), getting high with drugs is the same as getting drunk with alcohol; **in regards to long braids of hair**, Paul says it is shame for man to have long hair 1Cor11:14, and v15 says long hair is a covering given by God to the woman, not to the man.

Some Rastafarians claim to believe in Jesus as one of the ways of salvation; Hindus do the same, they add Jesus as a god among the 150 million gods they worship. But Jesus is the only way – not one way of salvation, see Jn14:6.

Rastafarians need to receive Jesus as the only Savior or else are doomed to hell. Pray for them and share Jesus with them.

POST 34. REPENTANCE

WORD **'REPENT'** in Greek is **'METANOEO'**, it means "to think differently; 'meta' means 'to change' and 'noeo' means 'thinking'; it is used 24 times in the New Testament

Mat4:17 'From that time Jesus began to preach, and to say, REPENT: for the kingdom of heaven is at hand'
Luke17:3 Take heed to yourselves: If thy brother trespass against thee, rebuke him; and if he REPENT, forgive him.

Many think repentance to only mean "turning forever from sin" but that is not correct, as no human can say that he has fully 100% turned away from all sin, see 1Jn1:7-9.The Bible tells us that true repentance will indeed result in a change of actions but not in perfection (Luke 3:8-14; Acts 3:19). Acts 26:20 declares, "I preached that they should **repent and turn** to God and **prove their repentance by their deeds**."

The definition of repentance is A CHANGE OF MIND THAT RESULTS IN A CHANGE OF ACTION.

What, then, is the connection between **repentance and salvation?** The Book of Acts seems to especially focus on repentance in regards to salvation (Acts 2:38; 3:19; 11:18; 17:30; 20:21; 26:20). To repent, in relation to salvation, **IS TO CHANGE YOUR MIND REGARDING JESUS CHRIST.** In Peter's sermon on the day of Pentecost (Acts chapter 2), he concludes with a call for the people to repent (Acts 2:38). Repent from what? Peter is calling the people who rejected Jesus (Acts 2:36) **to change their minds about Him**, to recognize that He is indeed "Lord and Christ" (Acts 2:36). Peter is calling the people to change their minds from rejection of Christ as the Messiah to faith in Him as Messiah and Savior.

Repentance is a change of thinking: from my natural thinking to God's thinking.
Repentance in terms of salvation can be defined as "trusting in Jesus for your salvation".

True repentance does not require tears; tears are not the proof of true repentance; if you drive the car towards a cliff, I don't expect your tears but your change of direction.

Mat27:3 says that Judas felt sorry, "metamellomai" in Greek, word it does not mean "to repent" but "to regret, to feel sorry"; Judas did not change his thinking to turn from self towards Jesus, he did not look at Jesus for salvation, just as many Jews that were bit by snakes in the desert and refused to look at the snake on the pole in Num.21, symbol of the sacrifice of Jesus (Jn3:14).

-A number of verses in our English Bibles say that **God 'repented' or 'shall not repent'**, in the original Hebrew for Old Testament and Greek for the New Testament, words "nacham" and "metamellomai" mean rather " to regret, to sigh", not "to repent".

Gen6:6 The Lord regretted ('nacham') of having created man (most translation say: "repented")

Ps110:4 The LORD hath sworn, and will not repent ('nacham', regret), Thou art a priest for ever after the order of Melchizedek.
Jer18:8 If that nation, against whom I have pronounced, repent ('shub') from their evil, I will repent ('nacham', regret) of the evil that I thought to do unto them.

-Hebrew word "shub" means "to repent", also "to turn", it is used over 1000 times in the Old Testament:
Ez14:6 'Repent (shub) and turn (shub) from your idols...'
Gen3:19 '...for you are dust and into dust you shall return (shub)'

God does not need to 'repent' from sin as God cannot sin Hab1:13.

Does God change his mind? In certain situations it only appears so: Moses interceded for Israel as God manifested His intention to destroy Israel, see Deut9:13,14; however, God had told Moses, "let me destroy them", knowing Moses' heart and that he will intercede for Israel, as Moses loved Israel as a mother loves her rebellious child. However, when later Moses asked God permission to see the promised land, God refused without a change Deu3:26: but anyway Moses did see the promised land and the promised seed, Jesus, 1500 years later, in Matt17.

In other areas God can indeed "change his mind", or change the outcome of certain situations; prayer does indeed move God to action:

Ez22:30 "I searched for a man among them who would build up the wall and stand in the gap before Me for the land, so that I would not destroy it; but I found no one."

What motivates us and others to turn to God? **The goodness of God leads to repentance Rom2:4.**

Let us hear Jesus' call to repentance addressed seven times to his churches in Rev2 and 3, the list of rewards promised by Jesus is very motivating!

POST 35. WHY IS THE DEATH AND RESURRECTION OF JESUS SUCH A GOOD NEWS?

01. ...because Jesus being God incarnate, He HAD TO DIE ON THE CROSS AS A MAN paying for the sins of all humans ever to exist 1Jn2:2, 2Cor.5:18.

02. ...because the death and resurrection of Jesus were PLANNED BY THE TRINITY BEFORE THE WORLD BEGAN, therefore before Adam and Eve were created and of course before they had sinned! Acts 2:23, 4:28, Rev.13:8; God knows all things before they happen, as HE exists outside of time Is.46:10. God had prepared the solution before the problem existed!

03. ...because though JESUS HAD THE POWER TO DEFEND HIMSELF against the sufferings of the crucifixion, He didn't! Is.53:7; Mat.26:53; Jn.18:11.

04. ...because Jesus was tempted by Satan and all his demons to quit the plan of the Father by avoiding the cross BUT HE OVERCAME THEM BY DYING ON THE CROSS! Mat.4:9-11, 27:40; Mark8:33; Col.3:15; Gen.3:15.

05. ...during the 3 days while dead, from Friday evening until Sunday morning, JESUS WENT TO THE "PRISON", see 1Pet.3:19, Ps.24, the place where spirits are kept for the final judgment and HE proclaimed to them his victory: "kerusso" in Greek means "to herald, to proclaim, to announce", much as a conquering king at the time was sending heralds through a defeated kingdom to announce his victory; Jesus did not "preach" to those spirits, offering to them a second chance, there is no second chance after death for humans: Heb.9:27, also never a second chance for demons: Mat.8:29.

06. ...because Jesus EMPTIED THE TEMPORARY DWELLING of the righteous that was in the bottom of the earth ("Abraham's bosom"), taking them to heaven with Him after the resurrection: Luke 16:22, 26; Ps.68:18; before the cross sins were just temporarily covered by the blood of animal sacrifices, at the cross sins were removed, washed, Rev.1:5.

07. ...because on the cross Jesus was forsaken by the Father and also punished for our sins, so that we who believe WOULD NEVER BE FORSAKEN OR PUNISHED! Mat.27:46 / Heb.13:5; 2Cor.5:18, Gal.1:4.

08. ...because the resurrection of Jesus is the proof that the FATHER HAS ACCEPTED JESUS' SACRIFICE for our sins Rom.4:25, 1Cor.15:17; immediately after the resurrection Jesus said to Mary, "dont touch Me as I didn't yet ascend to my Father" (Jn.20:17), then He ascended with his precious blood into the heavenly tabernacle (Heb.9:12,23,24); few days later Jesus said to Thomas, 'come touch Me...it is I' Jn.20:27.

09. ...because we, believers in Jesus, are assured to soon HAVE A RESURRECTION BODY just as Jesus has: 1Jn.3:2; Rom.6:5.

10. ...because of the cross A PERFECT HUMAN NOW REPRESENTS US IN HEAVEN, ever living to make intercession for us: Heb.7:25!

11. ...because of the cross and the resurrection, JESUS, WHO IS GOD, WILL ALWAYS BE THE GOD-MAN! Jesus will always continue to be GOD and will forever have a glorified human body!

12. ...because of the cross and the resurrection now the SPIRIT OF CHRIST IS FREE TO LIVE INSIDE THE BELIEVERS in Christ: 1Cor.3:16,6:19!

13. ...because of the cross and the resurrection, BELIEVERS IN JESUS ARE DEAD AND RISEN WITH CHRIST and are placed already in the heavenly places: Col.3/3, Eph.1:3-5.

14. ...because of the cross and the resurrection, BELIEVERS IN CHRIST ARE MY BROTHERS AND MY SISTERS IN CHRIST: John1:12; those who dont believe yet are loved by Christ and called to believe in Him: Mat.11:28 therefore I LOVE THEM BECAUSE OF CHRIST: Rom.13:9, Eph.5:1.

15. ...because of the cross and the resurrection, I HAVE A NEW HOME IN HEAVEN: Phil.3:20.

16. ...because of the cross and the resurrection, I HAVE NEW PRIORITIES in this life: Mat.6:20, Col.3:1-3.

17. because of the cross and the resurrection, THIS WORLD AFFECTED BY SIN WILL SOON BE CHANGED: Rom.8:21, 2Pet.3:13, Rev.21:1.

18. ...BECAUSE THE TOMB IS EMPTY, MY LIFE IS FULL!!!

POST 36. SANCTIFICATION

To **"sanctify" something means 'TO SET APART'** for a special use; to "sanctify" a person or to make him holy is to set that person aside of God for fellowship and use of God. At the temple of Moses objects and people were sanctified, set apart for God's use.

-Jn17:19 'And for their sakes **I** (Jesus) **sanctify myself**, that they also might be sanctified through the truth'

GREEK WORD "HAGIOS" is used about 240 times in the New Testament and it can be translated:
-"SAINT" (singular): Phil.4:20 or "SAINTS" (plural): Col1:26 and 60 other verses;
-"HOLY": Mat4:5 'holy' city, Mat1:20 'Holy' Spirit and other 180 verses;

GREEK WORD "HAGIASMOS" is used 10 times and it means 'SANCTIFICATION': Rom6:19, 1Thes4:3,4

There are 2 biblical aspects in regards to sanctification:
-a **once-and-for-all sanctification** – at the moment of salvation the believer is set apart to belong to God forever; it is called "positional sanctification"; "positional" refers to who you are, for example you are a human, also a child of your parents; these positional realities can't change

-a **growing sanctification**, called '**experiential sanctification**'; 'experiential' refers to what you have and experience as a human in your daily life; this experience can differ from one person to another, through personal choice; for example, even though you are a human you might decide to live as an animal but you can never loose your position of being a human; or even though you are child of your parents and you have rights of inheritance and food/housing, you might decide to stop benefiting from these rights, but you can't loose your position as child of your parents

HOW CAN I BE SANCTIFIED?
1. We are sanctified positionally, set apart forever to belong to God WHEN WE RECEIVE JESUS AS SAVIOR
-1Cor1:30 'You are in Christ Jesus, who became to us wisdom from God, righteousness, **sanctification** and redemption'
-Heb13:12 'Wherefore Jesus also, that he might **sanctify the people with his own blood**, suffered without the gate'
-Acts26:18 '… **they are sanctified by faith in Me** '
-Rom15:16 'being **sanctified by the Holy Spirit**'
-1Cor6:11 'but ye are washed and you are **sanctified and** you are justified in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of our God'
-Heb10:10 we are ' **sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all** '
The Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit are producing the positional sanctification.

2. We are sanctified experientially, in our daily life, BY BELIEVING/TRUSTING THE WORD OF GOD (not just head knowledge):
-Jn17:17 'Sanctify them through thy **truth**: thy word is truth'
-Eph5:26 'That he might **sanctify and cleanse the church with the washing of water by the word**'
-2Tim2:21 'If a man therefore purge himself from these, he shall be **a vessel unto honor, sanctified**, meet for the master's use and prepared unto every good work'

-Sanctification is not attained by staying away from sin through human effort: no human can say he stays away from all kinds of sins, 100% pure; sanctification is attained by being set apart to fellowship with Jesus, and the result will indeed be changed life

-At the temple of Moses **objects were sanctified** by sprinkling with water and blood, symbols of faith in the yet future work of salvation accomplished by Jesus on the cross; Christians should not use those Old Testament rituals today: God is not using them anymore since Jesus died on the cross. See our study 'The Old Covenant vs. the New Covenant'.

-'Holy water' or any other 'sanctified' objects have no use in Christianity today, they belong to superstitious pagan religions and to groups that sell such in a business manner, being harmful to one's relationship with God. If you believe in God, your faith in God sanctifies your living place, your objects and your family, sanctification and protection are not obtained through some objects or 'holy water' you buy in church. God protects and sanctifies you because of your faith in Christ, not because of some

'sanctified' object sold to you by some so-called 'prophet'.

-1Tim4:5 'For it is **SANCTIFIED BY THE WORD OF GOD AND PRAYER**' – Paul was speaking about foods, that they are sanctified by the Word of God (through the death of Jesus on the cross the Old Testament forbidden meats were now allowed, as the Old Covenant with its images and symbols was replaced by the New Covenant); our prayer sanctifies foods: we thank God for the foods He sanctifies or sets apart, for our use, and thus prayer sanctifies foods;

-1Cor7:14 'For the **unbelieving husband is sanctified by the wife...** now he is **holy**'. This verse does not say the unbeliever goes to heaven just because of having a Christian spouse; verse says the unbeliever spouse is "holy" and "sanctified", meaning: set apart for God's purpose and protected in this life by God because of the Christian spouse; unless the unbeliever receives Jesus as Savior, after this life he/she goes to hell.

1Pet3:15 'But **sanctify the Lord God** in your hearts...' It means to set the Lord apart in your heart as your only God and set your heart apart fully for the Lord.

POST 37. "THE SANCTUARY AND THE INVESTIGATIVE WORK" - ADVENTIST ERROR

William Miller, a Baptist preacher **predicted the world would end in 1844** with the Second Coming of Christ. Miller's followers condemned all the churches of the day as apostate and "Babylon," and warned Christians to come out of them. Many joined him, and the "adventist" movement was born and grew rapidly ("advent" in Latin means 'the arrival of an important person').

Christ of course did not appear in 1844, so after this "Great Disappointment," one "little flock" still insisted the date of their original predictions had been correct. They decided **the event marked by 1844 was not the Second Coming, but the entrance of Christ into the Holy of Holies in the Heavenly Sanctuary.** There, they said, He began the "Investigative Judgment." This doctrine says that in 1844 Jesus entered the heavenly sanctuary and started to investigate sins and thus announce who of the dead would be worthy of resurrection and heaven and who among the living keeps the commandments of God and is loyal so thus worthy of the kingdom; also they said Jesus had started to finally remove sins, as until 1844 confessed sins were transferred by the blood of Jesus and deposited into the sanctuary.
This doctrine was received and endorsed by Ellen G. White (I.J, p680).
This false doctrine was invented to avoid being called 'false prophets' because they prophesied world would end in 1844.

Here are proofs this '1844-Sanctuary' doctrine is wrong:

1. JESUS DID NOT GO INTO THE HEAVENLY SANCTUARY IN 1844 BUT AT HIS ASCENSION;
-Heb9:24 says Jesus has "entered" heaven, past tense, to represent us; v26 says Jesus has removed sins once and for all; v28 says Jesus will come second time not in view of sin but to bring salvation to those who await him (rapture 1Thes4:17 and resurrection of our physical body 1Cor15:51)

2. **Jesus perfected us forever through his sacrifice** Heb10:14; if sins were still in heaven until 1844 then Christians that lived before 1844 were not perfected yet

3. Through the blood of Jesus we have a new and living way to enter the Most Holy place Heb10:19,22 ; if sins were kept in the Most Holy place till 1844, then man was not welcome before God in the Most Holy place until 1844 therefore the writer of Hebrews was wrong

4. Right after the resurrection Jesus said to Mary, "don't touch Me for I have not ascended yet to the Father" see Jn20:17; as a high priest, no defiled thing or person was allowed to touch Jesus before going into the Holy of Holies (Hagai2:13, Lev21:23); a few days later Jesus has asked Thomas to touch him Jn20:27, as **He had already gone into the Most Holy place with His blood to present his sacrifice for all sins before the Father;** even for the sins of those that were not yet born, "once and for all" Heb7:27

5. Heb1:3 says Jesus has done already the cleansing of sins, past tense, not "will do" as Adventists believe

6. Heb1:3 says Jesus 'sat down at the right hand of the Father'; Jesus took all sins upon himself upon the cross 1Pet2:24, if sins were not already removed by the blood of Jesus on the cross then Jesus could not have sat at the right hand of the Father until 1844, if Jesus was still loaded with sin

7. 'Investigative Judgment' adventist theory says in 1844 Jesus started to investigate who is worthy of heaven through keeping the laws of God; however **heaven is not by merit** through keeping God's commandments (10 commandments of Moses) as no human has ever kept them perfectly; **heaven is a gift through faith in Jesus' sacrificial death of the cross** Rom6:23; see our studies on salvation

8. Date 1844 is calculated from Dan8:14, "two thousand and three hundred days; then shall the sanctuary be cleansed" **but the Bible does not give a starting point for when the 2300 days count should start**; 2300 days are not to be interpreted here as 2300 years; the 2300 days are yet a future event, just as the 7 years of tribulation and the entrance of Antichrist into the (yet future) temple are also future events, see 2Thes2:4

9. Sanctuary cleansing: Dan8:9 says the little horn had defiled the sanctuary and it would be cleansed after 2300 days; how can a "small horn" (Rome, according to Adventists) defile the heavenly sanctuary that Jesus had to cleanse in 1844? It is clear from the Scriptures that it is about an earthly sanctuary, see again 2Thes2:4

10. Ellen White says in TGC page 422 that the sin of mankind was transferred through the blood of Jesus to the sanctuary in heaven and **sin will be placed by Jesus on Satan** (see Lev16, the goat and scapegoat: one goat is sacrificed for sin and the other one is chased away into the desert; first represents Jesus who took our sins on the cross, second represents Satan: this last one is chased away with all memory of sin, not with sins; first goat was sacrificed for sin v9, second is chased away with the spoken list of sins v21, as Satan, the accuser of brethren, speaks and repeats sins: he is chased away with all memory of sin and its accusation); Jesus carried our sins on the cross 1Pet2:24, not Satan; sins were washed by the blood of Jesus, sins will not go to hell with Satan

11. The Bible does not say that sin was ever transferred to heaven as Adventists believe; Jesus had to go to heaven with his blood to present his finished sacrifice to the Father; sin was already paid on the cross, not in heaven 1Pet3:18, 1Jn3:5, 1Jn4:10, Rev1:5; Heb1:13 says God can't look upon evil, iniquity, sin, if heaven was filled with mankind's transferred sin then God would be blind until 1844;
-Heb9:23 says the heavenly tabernacle had to be cleansed: the blood cleansed or blotted away the declaration of guilt that was proclaimed by the divine standards against us Col2:14, Eph2:15,16

12. Ellen White taught that Jesus will eventually finish his mediation ministry and Christians will have to stand alone before God, being judged by their works in regards to heaven or hell, see *The Great Controversy*, p425; Heb7:25 contradicts this error, "He ever lives to make intercession for us"; Eph2:8to10 we are saved not by works but by grace, also Tit3:5; works of Christians will be analyzed not to determine access to heaven or hell, but rewards in heaven 1Cor3:10to15

12. Ellen taught "...Satan has taken full possession of the Churches" (Spiritual Gifts V.l,p189,90); I agree Satan has different degrees of influence on many churches through wrong doctrines and practices, but "full possession"?... In light of the above points, Ellen was actually in full possession of Satan. Satan has full possession of cults: cult-worshipers are not saved, following a fully demonic religion.
Any religion that denies salvation by grace alone comes wholly from Satan. Imagine a meal made by God in which Satan adds a bit of poison and again imagine a meal made by Satan, which resembles a bit God's meal. How do you discern the difference? With the Bible.

POST 38. SATAN

A. THE NAMES AND DESCRIPTIVE TITLES

1. ***SATAN*** "adversary, hater, and accuser 1Chron21:1
2. ***DEVIL*** "slanderer, accuser, deceiver Rev20:2
3. ***BEELZEBUB*** prince of demons, originally it meant "Lord of Flies"; the Jews later changed it to mean 'Lord of the Dung Hill' Mark3:22
4. ***BELIAL*** *it* means "good-for-nothing Deut13:13
5. ***THE WICKED ONE*** He is the evil one, who has no reverence for Christ 1Jn2:13,14; Matt6:13

6. ***PRINCE OF THIS WORLD*** World politics, business and society are under his domain.
The Lord Jesus did not deny when the devil in the wilderness said the world belongs to him Matt4; Luke4; Jn12:31; 14:30; 16:11
7. ***THE GOD OF THIS AGE*** 2Cor4:4
8. ***PRINCE OF THE POWER OF THE AIR*** Eph2:2
9. ***THAT OLD SERPENT*** Rev12:3,9;20:2
10. ***DRAGON*** Rev20:2
11. ***THE EVIL ONE*** 1Jn5:18
12. ***ANGEL OF LIGHT*** *2*Cor11:14
13. ***FATHER OF LIES*** Jn8:44
14. ***MURDERER*** Jn8:44; 1Jn3:12to15
15. ***ROARING LION*** 1Pet5:8
16. ***RULER OF DARKNESS*** Eph6:12

B. THE PERSONALITY OF SATAN

There is a general denial that the Devil is a person. To deny such is to deny the Word of God. The Scriptures teach that he is as much a person as the Lord Jesus Christ.

C. THE ORIGIN OF SATAN

Satan was a created being Ezek28:15. His position was the greatest of all the angelic hosts, "Thou art the anointed cherub that covers" (Ezek28:14). He was one of the cherubim that overlooked the mercy seat of the temple in heaven.
His name, Lucifer, means "Son of the Morning." He was created in perfect beauty (Ez28:12,17). Some hold that he was the choir leader of heaven, as the tabrets and pipes were prepared in him the day that he was created (Ez28:13). Others may ask, "Isn't the 28th chapter of Ezekiel speaking about the King of Tyre?" Yes, to begin with but the inspired writer goes beyond the King of Tyre, and speaks about a person that no human person could possibly fulfill, "Thou hast been in Eden" (Ez28:13). Who could this be but Satan? He was perfect in his ways (Ez28:15) until sin was found in him

D. THE CAREER OF SATAN

What was the sin that caused Satan to be? What was it that changed Lucifer into the Devil? It was the original sin of the universe: pride. "I will ascend above the heights of the clouds; I will be like the most High" (Is14:14). The sin of pride was caused by choosing his own will above the will of God. "I will" (or pride) became the original sin of the universe.
He appeared in the garden of Eden and thrust the human race into sin and death. He came to Job and wrought misery in his life. He tempted David to number the people. He tempted Christ Matt4 and Peter Luke22:32. He hindered Paul in his great work 1Thess2:18. He snatches the Word from people's hearts (Mark4:15)

E. THE LOCATION OF SATAN
He does have access to the throne of God, for he accused Job, and we are told that he accuses the brethren daily. "The accuser of our brethren is cast down, which accused them before our God day and night" Rev12: l0. It is an error to think of the Devil living in a palace in hell; his location is in the heavenlies (or earth's atmosphere).

F. THE CHARACTER OF SATAN

1. ***Has Great Dignity (or position)****;* His titles show this. "Now is the judgment of this world: now shall the prince of this world be cast out" Jn12:31; also Jude8, 9; 2Cor4:4

2. ***Has Great Power.*** God (Jesus) sent Paul to the Gentiles "to open their eyes, and to turn them from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan unto God" Acts26:18; also Job1:10-12; Luke11:14,18; Eph6:11,12. The whole world without Christ is under Satan's control

3. ***Has Great Cunning and Deceit****.* "Satan himself is transformed into an angel of light" 2Cor11:14; also Matt24:24; 2Cor2:11

4. ***Has Great Malignity.*** "He that commits sin is of the devil; for the devil sins from the beginning. For this purpose the Son of God was manifested, that he might destroy the works of the devil" 1Jn3:8; also 2Cor4:4

5. ***Has Great Fear of God.*** "Submit yourselves therefore to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you" Jam4:7

G. THE WORK OF SATAN:

1. ***He Is the Author of Sin and Tempts Men to Sin.*** "Then was Jesus led up of the spirit into the wilderness to be tempted of the devil" Matt4:1

2. ***He Produces Sickness (but not every sickness) and Has Power of Death.*** "that through death he (Jesus) might destroy him that had the power of death, that is, the devil" Heb2:14; also Luke13:16; Acts10:38

3. ***He Lays Snares for Men.*** "God peradventure will give them repentance to the acknowledging of the truth . . . that they may recover themselves out of the snare of the devil, who are taken captive by him at his will" 2Tim2:26

4. ***He Takes the Word Out of Hearts.*** "When anyone hears the word of the kingdom, and understands it not, then comes the wicked one, and catches away that which was sown in his heart" Matt13:19

5. ***He Puts Wicked Purposes Into Hearts.*** "Neither give place to the devil" Eph.4:27

6. ***He Blinds Minds.*** "The God of this world hath blinded the minds of them which believe not, lest the light of the glorious gospel of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine unto them" 2Cor4:4

7. ***He Harasses Men.*** "...there was given to me a thorn in the flesh, the messenger of Satan to buffet me, lest I should be exalted above measure" 2Cor12:7

8. ***He Accuses Men Before God.*** "The accuser of our brethren is cast down, which accused them before our God day and night" Rev12:10

9. ***He Enters Into Unregenerate Men.*** "Supper being ended, the devil having now put into the heart
of Judas Iscariot, Simon's son, to betray him . . . [Jesus] riseth from supper" Jn13:2

10. ***He Sows Tares Among God's People.*** "the enemy that sowed the tares is the devil; the harvest is the end of the world; and the reapers are the angels" Matt13:38,39

11. ***He Gives Power to the Lawless Ones.*** "...that no advantage may be gained over us by Satan: for we are not ignorant of his devices" 2Cor2:10,11

12. ***He Resists God's Servants.*** "He shewed me Joshua the high priest standing before the angel of the LORD**,** and Satan standing at his right hand to resist him" Zech3:1; also Dan10:13

13. ***He Hinders God's Servants.*** "We would fain have come unto you, even I Paul, once and again; but Satan hindered us" 1Thess2:18

14. ***He Sifts God's Servants.*** "The Lord said, Simon, Simon, behold, Satan hath desired to have you, that he may sift you as wheat" Luke22:31

15. ***He Holds the World captive.*** "We know that we are of God, and the whole world lies in the evil one" 1Jn5:19

H. THE LIMITATION OF SATAN:

1. ***He Is Not Omnipresent.*** He can be at only one place at a time. He is a created being, and a created being cannot be in two places at the same time. He is not everywhere, but his followers (demons) are. He can move rapidly to the aid of his agents Luke10:18

2. ***He Is Not Omniscient.*** He is wise; too wise for us, but he is not all-wise. The Devil would know less if we would tell him less. Spiritism is not all trickery. It is demonism, controlled by the Devil. No one can communicate with the dead, but the Devil and his angels know info about the dead and communicate this knowledge to their mediums and can imitate voices of the dead.

3. ***He Is Not Omnipotent.*** He is not all-powerful, though he has more power than we do. He is subject to the Word of God. A good example of this is found in Job 1 and 2

I. OUR ATTITUDE TOWARD SATAN:

1. ***Redemptive Rights Are to Be Claimed by the Believer from God.*** "They

overcame him by the blood of the Lamb, and by the word of their testimony; and they loved not their lives unto
the death" Rev12:11; also Eph6:16; Heb2:14; Col2:15; 1Jn3:8

2. ***Full Equipment Is to Be Appropriated by the Believer.*** "Put on the whole Armour of God, that ye may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil" Eph6:10,11; also Eph6:12to18

3. ***Strict Self Control through being Spirit filled.*** "Neither give place to the devil" Eph4:27

4. ***Vigilance.*** "Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, walks about, seeking whom he may devour" 1Pet5:8; also 2Cor2:11

5. ***Resistance Is to Be Made by the Believer.*** "Submit yourselves therefore to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you" Jas4:7;also 1Jn2:14

POST 39. SOUL AND SPIRIT

WHAT IS THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN SOUL AND SPIRIT?

In the Old Testament, **Hebrew word "RUACH"** means "spirit", used for the Holy Spirit ('Qodesh Ruach') or human spirit or for evil spirit; often the word "spirit" is used with other meanings than the literal meaning: will, mind, emotions, physical strength, identity, person

-Gen41:8; 1Kings21:5 sad SPIRIT (emotions)
-Ex6:9 Jews in Egypt had anguish of SPIRIT
-Ex28:3 workers with a SPIRIT of wisdom (mind, knowledge)
-Josh5:1 Caananites' hearts melted and there was no more SPIRIT in them
-Judg15:19 Samson's SPIRIT (physical strength) came again and he was revived after drinking water
-1Sam16:15 an evil SPIRIT (demon) troubled king Saul
-2Cr36:22 the Lord stirred up the SPIRIT (mind and will) of Cyrus to help the Jews
-Ps32:2 blessed he in whose SPIRIT (will, conscience) there is no guile
-Ps78:8 a generation whose SPIRIT is not steadfast with God
-Pr17:27 a man of understanding is of an excellent SPIRIT
-Pr25:28 he that has no rule over his SPIRIT (will) is like a city that is broken down
-1Kings10:5 there was no more SPIRIT (life) in her
Also: Ezra 1:5; Job20:3; Pr1:23

And other times "ruach" is used to indeed mean 'spirit':
-Zach12:1 ...says the Lord, who has created the earth and the SPIRIT of man that is within him
-Ecc12 the dust shall return to the earth and the SPIRIT shall return to God
-Ps31:5 into your hands I commit my SPIRIT
-Num16:22 the God of the SPIRITS of all flesh
-Ps104:4 He makes his angels SPIRITS

WORD **"NEPHESH"** in Hebrew means **"soul"** and many times, just as with the word "spirit", it is used for mind, will, emotions, physical life, persons (Gen12:15); same for the Greek word "**PSUCHE**", meaning soul; it is used at times for God: Heb10:38

In the New Testament word "PNEUMA", means 'spirit':
-"Hagios Pneuma" means "Holy Spirit", translation "Holy Ghost" is wrong; "phantasma", meaning "ghost", is only used twice, when disciples thought they saw a ghost or a demon Mat14:26, Mark6:49 but bible translators have translated it erroneously "spirit", instead of "evil spirit" or "ghost".
-word 'pneuma' is used to mean also emotions, will, person:

-Mat5:3 blessed are the poor in SPIRIT (humble; one who recognizes he is 'spiritually poor and needs God')
-Mat12:43 unclean SPIRITS
-Luke 23:46 Father, into your hands I commend my SPIRIT
-Jn6:63 the words I speak to you they are SPIRIT and they are life
-Acts 7:59 Stephen: "Lord Jesus, receive my SPIRIT"
-Acts17:16 Paul's SPIRIT (mind, emotions) was stirred within him in Athens
-Acts18:5 Paul was pressed in the SPIRIT to preach
-Rom1:9 God...whom I serve with my SPIRIT in the Gospel of His Son
-Rom2:29 circumcision of the heart in the SPIRIT
-Rom7:6 serve God in newness of SPIRIT
-1Cor2:11 who knows the things which are in man, except the SPIRIT of

man that is within him?
-1Cor5:3 absent in the body but present in the SPIRIT
-1Cor5:5 ...destruction of the flesh (chastisement to bring to repentance) so that his SPIRIT might be saved in the day of Jesus Christ
-1Cor6:20 glorify God in your body and in your SPIRIT, which are God's
-1Cor7:34 holy with the body and with the SPIRIT
-2Cor2:13 Paul had no rest in his SPIRIT for he did not find Titus
-Phil1:27 stand fast in one SPIRIT (unity or Holy Spirit)
-2Tim4:22, Phil1:25 the Lord Jesus Christ be with your SPIRIT
-James2:26 as the body without SPIRIT is dead, so faith without works is dead also
-2Cor3:17 the Lord is the SPIRIT
-Rev19:10 the testimony of Jesus is the SPIRIT (authority, life or strength) of the prophecy

SO WHAT IS THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN SOUL AND SPIRIT?
-1Thes5:23 presents man as being **spirit + soul + body;** a human being has a spirit (which can be dead or alive), he is not said to be a spirit only but a 'living soul' Gen2:7
-spirit is the part of man that is connected to God, which died when Adam and Eve sinned, confirming the promise of God that they would die the day they would eat the forbidden fruit (physically they didn't die that day) and their spirit came back to life when they have accepted by faith the animal sacrificed by God to cover them, symbolizing the sacrifice of Jesus, but their bodies and souls were still affected by sin till death
-soul is that part of man that makes his identity, it is who man is as a being: will, mind, emotions, conscience, self-consciousness; the physical body is the material vehicle of the soul and of the spirit that makes it possible to relate to this world; souls without bodies are seen in Rev6:9, they can talk and follow events on the earth

-Eph2:1-5, Col2:13 **we were dead spiritually** in our sins before we have accepted Jesus but now brought back to life, meaning the once dead spirit of Christians is made alive when accepted Christ
-1Tim5:6 speaks of widows given to earthly pleasures as being **spiritually dead**
-Heb12:22 speaks of us now joining in Christ the **spirits of just men** made righteous
-Heb4:12 speaks of the Word of God that **divides (or discerns and analyzes) spirit and soul**
-Heb10:39 **man's soul is said to be saved, not his spirit,** as his spirit needs to be brought back to life while soul is eternal in his saved or unsaved state (see our study "What happens with the soul after the physical death")
-1Cor15:45 Adam was made a **living SOUL** while the second Adam, Jesus, was made a **life-giving SPIRIT;** Adam passed on natural life (and a dead spirit) through the procreation process while Jesus gives spiritual life through faith (life which affects man's spirit, soul, body)
-Jn11:25,26 Jesus said that **he who believes in Him shall never die** – it speaks of spirit and soul never dying, while the physical body would still experience death waiting for the resurrection
-there are verses that say that we have been saved and brought back to life or resurrected (past tense: Eph2:6, Col3:1), these verses speak of the human spirit; there are verses that speak of being saved in the present, these speak of the soul (mind, will, conscience) and there are verses that speak of our future salvation, they speak of soul and body being delivered from the presence of sin and corruption

Words 'soul' and 'heart' are often used with the same meanings.

Word **HEART** – definition: seat of affections and center of volition and decisions;
Meanings of the word 'heart':
1.will – center of decisions; Ex8:15; 35:5; Deut8:2; 11:16; 1Sam13:14; Rom10:10; Heb3:10,12
2.mind – perception; analyzes, remembers, is processing thoughts; Gen6:5; 17:17; Deut4:9,29; 1Sam9:19; 1Cor14:25;
3.emotions – appreciates (joy, sadness, likes or doesn't like): Gen6:6; Jud18:20; 1Sam1:8; 2Cor2:4;
4.conscience – contains standards (twisted to the unsaved, or washed by the blood of Jesus and recreated with Jesus' new life' standards): 1Sam24:5; 2Sam24:10; 1Jn3:20,21
5.self-consciousness – aware of who you are as a being, encompassing all above points: 2Kings5:26; Prov.23:26; 2Cor3:3; 6:11; 1Pet3:4

Even though words 'soul' and 'spirit' are used **at times** with similar meanings, they are different.

POST 40. SPIRITUAL FATHER

1Cor4:14 "For if you were to have countless tutors in Christ, yet you would not have many FATHERS, for in Christ Jesus I HAVE BEGOTTEN YOU (I BECAME YOUR FATHER) through the gospel."

Mat.23:9 "DO NOT CALL ANYONE ON EARTH YOUR FATHER; for One is your Father, He who is in heaven."

--These 2 verses seem to be in contradiction. Paul called himself a father unto the Corinthians, while Jesus said to not call anyone father but God; Jesus meant "father is an absolute way" is only God; Jesus also has used the word "father" referring to earthly fathers. Only God can give spiritual rebirth (new birth) and spiritual provision.

--Matt.23 verses 8 and 10 forbid to call someone else than Jesus a teacher or guide in an absolute way, but Jesus himself gave teachers to the church Eph.4:11, Mat.28:18-20.

--Word **"FATHER"** is used about 1700 times in the Bible and most of the time it does not relate to God as a father but to human fathers.

MEANING OF THE WORD **"FATHER"** IN THE SCRIPTURES:

01. IN TERMS OF CREATION God is called "father" by angels: verse Job 1:6 and 2:1 "the sons of God" implies angels would call God "father" but Satan is not included here in the formula "sons of God"; however, Gen.6:2 and Jude 6 implies some "sons of God" (angels) became fallen angels or demons; see also Hebr.12:9 "God, Father of spirits": God can't give birth to spirits but He has created all spirits, also James1:17 "Father of lights"; Hebrew is a poetic language: God is called "Father" here in regards to his created spirits;

02. IN TERMS OF NATIONAL ELECTION Israel is called by God his "first born" in Ex.4:22;
--"first born" is a title of honor and preeminence, used in ancient culture, which legally included double portion of inheritance, plus succession of the throne or family business leadership;
--Israel as a nation being "adopted" by God as His first born does not mean that all Israelis would go to heaven (see Korah and his companions who descended to hell, Numbers 16) but that God has decided to reveal Himself in a special deeper way to Israel and to use Israel to bring God's revelation to all nations: from Abraham, Isaac and Jacob (Israel) to Jesus who was born as a Jew, then the 12 Apostles, Jews, spread the Gospel into all the world in person, through their disciples and writings; Rom.9:4;

03. IN TERMS OF SPIRITUAL RE-BIRTH, only Christians can call God "Father": only those who believe in Jesus are ADOPTED AS CHILDREN OF GOD: Rom.8:15, Gal.5:4, Eph.1:5, and in the same time they are BORN AGAIN FROM GOD: 1John 2:29; 3:1,9; 4:7 and 5:1,4,18.
--Angels are not called "sons born of God" but created sons;
--we are adopted as sons of God through faith in the blood of Jesus, angels dont have this privilege Heb.2:16; we have received the Holy Spirit into which angels desire to look and study: 1Pet.1:12; angels and demons study God's wisdom by looking at the church Eph.3:10;
--Christians have the Spirit of God dwelling in them, thus having the nature of God inside them: 1Cor.3:16,6:19.
--John8:27 speaks about God as "THE FATHER". In an ultimate, supreme way there is only one that is "the father", the same way that Sarah called Abraham "my lord" but she knew that there is only one who deserves to be called "THE LORD" in a supreme way: God.

04. IN TERMS OF NATURAL BIRTH, every human has one father; adoption also offers fatherhood rights;
--in Luke 14:26 and Mat. 15:6 Jesus used the word "father" to mean human fathers; Heb.12:9;

05. ABRAHAM IS CALLED OUR "FATHER" meaning **OUR EXAMPLE OF FAITH** James2:21, Acts7:2, Rom.4:1,11,12,16,18; Jews would call their ancestors "fathers" (Rom.9:10 Paul addressed Jews) but in Romans Paul does not write to Jews only but to gentiles mostly;

06. SATAN IS CALLED FATHER OF THOSE WHO FOLLOW HIM – in John 8:44 Satan is called father of pharisees; Judas was called "son of perdition" in John17:12, as he chose to follow the way of destruction, same phrase applies to the Antichrist in 2Thes.2:3;
--in Acts13:10 a sorcerer is called by Paul, "son of the devil";

07. JESUS IS CALLED "THE ONLY BEGOTTEN SON OF GOD" and He called God "FATHER"; "only begotten" in Jn3:16 means that Jesus

is the only Son of His kind: not created as the other "sons" of God – the angels, not adopted as the Christians, not just chosen for a mission as nation Israel but one that has the same nature as God the Father: Heb.1:2,3, Col.1:17; also Jesus as a human was appointed "first born" or heir of all things of the Father; ask me for our complete study "Jesus is God";

08. PAUL SAID IN 1COR.4:14 THAT HE WAS A "SPIRITUAL FATHER" to the Corinthians, meaning that he had brought them to Christ by preaching the Gospel to them; he said this to show to them that he cared about them but he had to rebuke them for their bad spiritual condition and he encouraged them to follow his example v16 as he followed Christ (see 1Cor.11:1).
--Here spiritual father means one that brings someone to Christ and continues his fatherhood responsibility by nurturing them, caring for them, being an example. Ask me for our study "Shepherds according to the heart of God".

CONCLUSION
--Many "men of God" today take this last point, Paul's expression of "fatherhood" to control people's lives, to mean they are the only way for blessing, anointing, prosperity. When the one that brought you to Christ does not follow Christ anymore (Paul said "follow me as I follow Christ" 1Cor.11:1), then you should continue to love that person and pray for him but you don't follow him anymore, look to follow someone else who follows Christ.
--Maybe the one who brought you to Christ is not a shepherd: he can't lead you any further but you need a shepherd now. You are responsible before God to find one. Pray for leading.
--A spiritual father means one to whom you look up for daily/weekly doctrine, a godly example to follow, one to whom you can go at any time for counseling, one from whom you accept exhortation, encouragement and rebukes, one to whom you bring your family as well for spiritual growth;
--You choose who is your spiritual father. Use your Bible and the leading of the Holy Spirit to discern who should that be. You need a shepherd who knows you by name (in a big church a pastor should have under-shepherds to help him), one who sees your walk with God and thus can encourage or rebuke you in love;
--Learn the difference between a guru and a shepherd: a guru manipulates, is impersonal, gives certain teachings without a relationship with the students, a guru points others to himself; Jesus in Mat.28:18-20 said, "teach...and make disciples", both words in Greek involve teaching through a daily personal relationship, not a school-type teaching;
--A quick test for choosing a "spiritual father" is this:
1. Is this "man of God" indeed born again?
2. Did this man of God become rich in a poor church (and/or poor country)? ...He may be after your money as well!
Paul worked for his needs at times and was ready to spend of his own money for the Corinthians 2Cor.11:7-9 and 12:15 and he refused to take money from the Corinthians, receiving gifts from the Phillipi church; thus the Corinthians could see that Paul was not after their money.
Ask me for our study "How to choose a local assembly" for more points that apply to choosing a spiritual father as well.

--You don't need to call him "Spiritual Father"; just call him 'Shepherd' (or 'Pastor' or by his name); Paul didn't establish here the office of "spiritual father" but a principle; the office that is established by Jesus is that of a shepherd or pastor ('poimen' in Greek, see Eph.4:11). Paul called himself an ambassador 2Cor.5:20, a soldier 2Tim.2:3, also a nurse 1Thes.2:7 – we don't call pastors by these names either.

--Do not make a quick choice: you may attend a church for a few months before you can really know what a certain pastor teaches and his life style before making a decision.

POST 41. SPIRITUAL GIFTS

"CHARISMATA" in Greek means 'gift', comes from word 'charis' (grace)

Rom12, 1Cor12-14, Eph4 and 1Pet4:8-11 are the the main biblical passages on spiritual gifts

A spiritual gift is a divine endowment given by the Holy Spirit to every member of the Body of Christ according to God's grace for use within the context of the Body.

12 PRINCIPLES ABOUT GIFTS:

1. Every Christian has **one or more spiritual gifts** 1Cor12:7

2. Many believers have received **more than one gift**

3. Spiritual gifts are be **given at the moment of regeneration**, but they may lie undiscovered and dormant for a long period of time. Multi-gifted Christians often discover their combination of gifts through a gradual process

4. Gifts **can be abused and neglected**, but since they are received at regeneration, they cannot be lost. In the Corinth church believers were be highly gifted but spiritually immature

5. Gifts are **not the same as the gift of the Spirit**. The gift of the Spirit is the Holy Spirit himself and it has been bestowed on all believers Jn14:16; Acts2:38

6. Gifts are **not the same as the fruit of the Spirit**

-Spiritual fruit is produced from within; spiritual gifts are imparted from without

-Fruit relates to Christlike character; gifts relate to Christian service

-The fruit of the Spirit, especially love, should be the context for the operation of the gifts of the Spirit. 1Cor13 says that spiritual gifts without spiritual fruit are worthless. Fruit is eternal, but gifts are temporal 1Cor.13:8; we evaluate spirituality by fruit and the way gifts are used, not by the gifts one has

7. Spiritual gifts are **not the same as natural talents**

-Talents (natural abilities) are received at birth, spiritual gifts belong exclusively to believers in Christ

-In some cases, the gifts of the Spirit coincide with natural endowments, but they transcend these natural abilities by adding a supernatural quality. Both are given by God Jas1:17, and should be developed and used according to their purpose for the glory of God 1Cor10:31

8. All Christians are called to a ministry, **but not all are called to an office**

-Offices (e.g., elder, deacon, evangelist, and teacher) are humanly recognized and appointed spheres of ministry within the body; Titus appointed elders in pastoral office but their pastoral gift came from God

9. Some spiritual gifts are **more desirable** in the church than others because they result in **greater edification of the body** 1Cor12:31; 12:28-30; 14:5

10. Charismata literally means grace-gifts--they are **sovereignly and undeservedly given by the Holy Spirit**. There is no basis for boasting or envy.

-it is required of stewards that one be found faithful 1Cor4:2

-work with what God has given to you 2Tim1:6, and seek to please Him rather than men Gal1:10; 1Thess2:4

11. Gifts are God's **spiritual equipment for effective service and edification** of the body

12. High mobilization of spiritual gifts was the **key to the rapid multiplication of the church** in the New Testament Rom1:11, Eph4:12, 2Tim2:2

WHY IT IS IMPORTANT TO DISCOVER YOUR GIFTS?

A. YOU WILL BE SATISFIED

-You will gain an understanding of the unique and indispensable **ministry** you have been called to accomplish in the body of Christ

-You will discover a significant part of **your purpose** for being on this planet and realize that God has made you competent to produce something that will last for eternity

-You will have a sense of **fulfillment and joy** in the service of others as you become an available instrument through which the Holy Spirit can work

-God will not call you to accomplish anything without giving you the power and enablement to do it

-You will be able to make more intelligent decisions about possible involvement in specific opportunities and training in light of your God-given function in the body Rom12:4

-You will also use your time more effectively by focusing on the things you have been equipped to do well rather than expending your energy in areas of minimum potential

B. OTHERS WILL BE EDIFIED Eph4:12-16

C. GOD WILL BE GLORIFIED 1Pet4:10,11

DESCRIPTION OF GIFTS

1. PROPHECY Rom12:6; 1Cor12:10,28,29; 14:1-40; Eph4:11--The ability to receive and proclaim a message from God. This could involve the foretelling of future events, though its primary purpose as seen in 1Cor14:3 is preaching: one who prophesies speaks to people for their strengthening, encouragement, and consolation

2. SERVICE Rom12:7--The ability to identify and care for the physical needs of the body through a variety of means. The Greek word for this gift is the same as that for ministry or deacon, but the gift should not be confused with the office

3. TEACHING Rom12:7; 1Cor12:28,29; Eph4:11--The ability to clearly explain and effectively apply the truths of God's Word so that others will learn. This requires the capacity to accurately interpret Scripture, engage in necessary research, and organize the results in a way that is easily communicated

4. EXHORTATION Rom12:8--The ability to motivate others to respond to the truth by providing timely words of counsel, encouragement, and consolation. When this gift is exercised, believers are challenged to stimulate their faith by putting God's truth to the test in their lives.

5. GIVING Rom12:8--The ability to contribute material resources with generosity and cheerfulness for the benefit of others and the glory of God, even without being rich

6. LEADERSHIP Rom12:8--The ability to discern God's purpose for a group, set and communicate appropriate goals, and motivate others to work together to fulfill them in the service of God. A person with this gift is effective at delegating tasks to followers without manipulation or coercion.

7. MERCY Rom12:8--The ability to deeply empathize and engage in compassionate acts on behalf of people who are suffering physical, mental, or emotional distress

8. WISDOM 1Cor12:8--The ability to apply the principles of the Word of God in a practical way to specific situations and to recommend the best course of action at the best time

9. KNOWLEDGE 1Cor12:8--The ability to discover, analyze, and systematize truth for the benefit of others. With this gift, one speaks with understanding and penetration and supernatural perception

10. FAITH 1Cor12:9--The ability to have a vision for what God wants to be done and to confidently believe that it will be accomplished in spite of circumstances and appearances to the contrary; it transforms vision into reality

11. HEALING 1Cor12:9,28,30--The ability to serve as a human instrument through whom God supernaturally cures illnesses, restores health and inner healing, or healing of memories. The possessor of this gift is not the source of power, but a vessel who can only heal those diseases the Lord chooses to heal

12. MIRACLES 1Cor12:10,28,29--The ability to serve as an instrument through whom God accomplishes acts that manifest supernatural power

13. DISTINGUISHING OF SPIRITS 1Cor12:10--The ability to clearly discern the spirit of truth and the spirit of error 1Jn4:6, distinguish reality versus counterfeits, the divine versus the demonic, true versus false teaching, and in some cases, spiritual versus carnal motives

14. LANGUAGES 1Cor12:10,28,30; 14:1-40--(translation "tongues" is wrong being an old out of use word). The ability to receive and impart a spiritual message in a language the recipient never learned

15. INTERPRETATION OF LANGUAGES 1Cor12:10,30; 14:5 to 28

16. APOSTLESHIP 1Cor12:28,29; Eph4:11--Since the requirement for the office of apostle includes having seen the resurrected Jesus (Acts 1:22; 1 Cor. 9:1), this office ceased to exist by the second century

17. HELPS 1Cor12:28--The ability to enhance the effectiveness of the ministry of other members of the body. This is the only usage of this word in the New Testament, and it appears to be distinct from the gift of service. Some suggest that while the gift of service is more group-oriented, the gift of helps is more person-oriented.

18. ADMINISTRATION 1Cor12:28--This word, like helps, appears only one time in the New Testament, and it is used outside of Scripture of a helmsman who steers a ship to its destination

-The ability to steer a church or Christian organization toward the fulfillment of its goals by managing its affairs and implementing necessary plans

-A person may have the gift of leadership without the gift of administration.

19. EVANGELISM Eph4:11--The ability to be an unusually effective instrument in leading unbelievers to a saving knowledge of Christ. Some with this gift are most effective in personal evangelism, while others may be used by God in group evangelism or cross-cultural evangelism

20. SHEPHERD OR PASTOR Eph4:11--Peter was commissioned by Christ to shepherd His sheep Jn21:16; Peter exhorted the elders in the churches of Asia Minor to do the same 1Pet5:2; Acts20:28

-The ability to personally lead, nourish, protect, and care for the needs of a flock of believers

-Someone may have the gift of pastoring but not the office, yet he can still minister without imposing himself or creating discord

Other gifts could be:

-CELIBACY the ability to enjoy being single and maintain sexual self-control; Matt19.12;1Cor7:7-9)

-VOLUNTARY POVERTY the ability to renounce material comfort and adopt a life-style of relative poverty; 1Cor13:3

-MARTYRDOM the ability to display an attitude of joy while suffering or even dying for the faith; 1Cor13:3; Phil1:29

-HOSPITALITY the ability to welcome and provide for those in need of food and lodging; Rom12:13; 1Pet4:9

-MISSIONARY the ability to minister effectively in a second culture

-INTERCESSION the ability to pray for a long period of time on a regular basis for the ministries and needs of others

-EXORCISM the ability to discern and cast out demons with authority

Other spiritual gifts (music, craftsmanship and others) are also given to members of the body of Christ for mutual edification.

Many if not all believers have combinations of two or more spiritual gifts

-Gifts that work together: shepherd (pastor)-teaching, leadership-administration, evangelism-teaching, tongues-interpretation, and discernment-exorcism

-There are variations in the gifts and gift-combinations, but also in the spheres and manifestations of gifts. For example: some are more effective teaching small groups, others with large groups; some can effectively communicate with youth, while others are best at teaching adults.

1Pet4:10,11 implies a twofold classification:

(1) **speaking gifts** (ministry of the Word)

(2) **serving gifts** (ministry of practical service)

Discovering Your Spiritual Gift(s)

Ask yourself these questions:

1. Have I received Christ as my Savior? Spiritual gifts are bestowed only on believers

2. Am I walking in fellowship with the Lord? To be effective, spiritual gifts must be manifested in the context of the fruit of the Holy Spirit. This fruit is impeded by unconfessed sin and a failure to abide in fellowship with Christ Jn15:4

3. Do I really want to develop my gift(s)?

Ask God to show you your gifts Phil4:6,7; Jas1:5. Ask mature Christians to help you identify your gifts. Be involved in a local church and take opportunities for service. Areas of service that bring you and others growth might reveal your gifts.

POST 42. IS THERE SUCH A THING AS "SPIRITUAL HUSBAND/WIFE"?

False teachers have invented the false doctrine of "spiritual spouse" to mean that a demon might have espoused you with or against your will and you need the "man of God" to deliver you.

Here are some points to consider:

1."SPIRITUAL HUSBAND/WIFE" IS A PAGAN DOCTRINE (Buddhism, Hinduism, voodoo-witchcraft, ancestral worship and other pagan demonic religions), it is not in the Bible. These false teachers twist verses like Matthew 13:25, which says, “But while his men were sleeping, his enemy came and sowed weeds among the wheat, and went away,” to teach that spiritual husbands come at night to have sex with humans in their sleep! That parable obviously speaks about the false doctrines of the evil

one, not about demons having sex with people.

In Genesis chapter 6 demons took on human bodies to have children with humans in order to distort all human race so as to block Jesus from becoming a human; God has destroyed those demons' human bodies at the flood and has placed those demons in everlasting chains awaiting their final judgment: see Jude 6 and 2Pet.2:4. Not all demons have done that since there are demons that are not in chains today, but are free on the earth awaiting the time of their final doom (Mat.8:29).

Demons today can't have human bodies as before the flood, but they can possess humans' bodies that allow them (small children can be possessed against their will because of their parents who are not a godly covering); demons can influence a Christian through temptation but they can't possess a Christian, as he is the Temple of the Holy Spirit, 1Cor.3:16,6:19 (ask me for a detailed study about the in-habitation of the Holy Spirit).
Jesus told the disciples in Luke 24:39 that a spirit does not have flesh and bones (therefore sex neither).

A demon (evil spirit) can't have sex with a human's body or spirit and can't marry another spirit or body, see Mark12:25;

In Mat.4 and Luke 4 Satan carried Jesus to a high mountain to tempt him with the kingdoms of this world: he needed permission from the Father for that, remember that the Holy Spirit led Jesus in the desert to be tempted by Satan, see Mat4:1 (see also how Satan obtained permission from God to harm Job in order to test him: Job1:12, 2:6; see also Jn.19:11). Satan did not carry Jesus or Job in the "underworld" and did not have sex with any of them.

2. THESE FALSE TEACHERS HAVE A WRONG UNDERSTANDING OF DREAMS
-if you dream you have sex with a friend they say you just had sex with a demon under the cover-up of your friend's image; that is wrong: dreams come from the multitude of your daily thoughts Eccl.5:3; if you entertain sexual lust during the day, you will have sexual dreams at night; ask me for our study "Dreams and visions". Demons can't give you dreams: dreams are a natural function of your brain (most pregnant women dream a lot, also people on certain medication) and supernaturally only God can give dreams, not demons. But if demons make you fall in the temptation to lust (or sin) during your day, you will automatically have crazy dreams at night.
These weird teachers say that if you don't remember having sexual dreams, it is because your spirit spouse has erased your memory so you still need deliverance from the "man of God"...

Mostly the doctrine of 'spiritual spouse' is supported with dreams of people, this is their only 'proof' that the 'underworld exists'. Those who have dreams of an 'underworld' have always thought a lot about it and feared it before having those dreams. Their fear has caused their dreams.
Other times demon possessed people (unsaved) have demonic false visions (as hypnosis) of an invented "underworld", see Ez.13:7, 22:28; Lam.2:14, Col.2:18.

3. THESE FALSE TEACHERS HAVE A WRONG UNDERSTANDING OF MARRIAGE AND/OR SEXUAL PURITY
-They fail to counsel from a biblical perspective: first they should make sure the person asking for counsel has received Jesus as Savior; then teaching the counseled about what is marriage, about sexual purity and about walking in obedience to the Word of God and the Spirit of Christ. Instead of urging to repent from sin, they shift the responsibility to blame demons and organize a "deliverance session", of course for a 'small gift' or a fee or even just for undue honor.

4. DEMONS' HABITATION is on the earth, according to the Bible, not in some "underworld":
-Eph.6:12 says demons are "above the skies" ('epiouranos' in Greek, or atmosphere); Rev.12:7-12 says Satan and his demons were cast on the earth;
-God is the only creator, see Gen.1:1, Col.1:15,16; demons could not have created an "underworld", they are not creators but distorters;
-the "underworld" can't be hell: demons fear hell (Luke 8:31) therefore demons can't go in hell to torture people or to have sex with them; Catholics believe demons torture people in hell, which is not true: hell is a place of eternal punishment created by God for demons and unbeliving humans, where they will suffer, see Mat.25:41;

5. The false doctrine of demons taking people to the "UNDERWORLD" HAS THE RESULT that people run to false prophets to offer protection and deliverance against demons, while in fact the biggest part of DEMONS' WORK IS THE SPREADING OF FALSE DOCTRINES:
--5 billion of people are non-Christians following many different false religions, like Islam, Buddhism, Atheism (yes atheism is a religious view

where man is god), Materialism.
--out of the 2 billion of self-declared 'Christians' a vast number might not be born again, believing doctrines of demons like salvation by works instead of grace, or denying the Trinity.

See verses about the work of demons: Jn.13:27; Acts26:18; 1Cor.10:20; 2Cor.11:14; 2Cor.12:7; 1Tim.4:1, 5:15; 2Thes.2:9;2:24;3:9; 9:20;12:9; 16:14; 20:7-8. Some of the demons' doctrines are blocking people from getting saved, other false doctrines forbid the saved from growing spiritually.

If one believes demons can take Christians to some "underworld" to have sex with them, then he rejects major Christian doctrines presented above and he fears demons, running to a false solution: the "man of God" to deliver him, instead of putting on the Armour of the Spirit, Eph.6:10-18, 1Pet.5:7, 1Jn4:4,18.

Here are some WAYS TO HELP someone who thinks he has a spiritual spouse:
--make sure they have accepted Jesus as Savior;
--teach them what it means that they are children of God (see our studies "95 things that happen at the moment of salvation", also "Salvation Assurance")
--teach them about mind renewal Rom.12:1-2; a consistent daily intake of Bible doctrine through a daily Bible reading plan and godly teachings;
--teach them the doctrine of sexual purity and the doctrine of marriage;
--teach them the doctrine of 'Spirit Filling'

POST 43. THINGS JESUS DIDN'T HAVE

Jesus didn't have rich parents: they could not afford after his birth to sacrifice the required lamb so they only brought forth doves as allowed to bring by those who were poor. Luke 2:23, Lev12:8

Jesus didn't have a rich country to live in: his country was under taxes and occupation by the Romans.

Jesus didn't have a guest house to be born into: He was born into a stable, shared with animals.

Jesus doesn't have a birthday. We "gave" him 25 of December as birthday. As if an orphan or abandoned child whose birthday is lost.

Jesus didn't have outside beauty that would draw attention: His love drew crowds and still draws us today: 2Cor5:14, Eph3:19.

Jesus didn't have skill and high education: he learned the skill of carpentry from his father Matt13:55. His education was to allow the Father to speak to him continually Is50:4.

Jesus didn't have a teenage identity crisis: at 12 years old He loved the Book, the Bible Luke2:42-52.

Jesus didn't have a palace as he grew up: he lived in a poor village, Nazareth, that had a bad reputation Jn1:46

Jesus didn't have a carefully planned ministry budget: some of His followers took care of expenses by donations Luke8:3. Once he sent Peter to pull out a coin from the mouth of a fish Matt17:27.

Jesus didn't have a faithful ministry accountant: He picked up Judas for the task even though He knew that he was a thief Jn12:6.

Jesus didn't have a place to lie his head Matt8:20: different ones opened up their houses for Him. At times he spent the night in solitary places in prayer Luke5:16, not in a cozy office nor suite dorm.

Jesus didn't have a personal plan or a will: He accepted the Father's will Luke 22:42.

Jesus didn't have words of His own: His words belonged to the Father Jn7:16.

Jesus didn't have educated followers: He was content with rough simple peasants and fishermen.

Jesus didn't have courageous followers who would defend him with their lives: they ran away and denied Him but He didn't give up on them.

Jesus didn't have regrets to leave this world Jn18:11: He looked forward

to the cross with joy as beyond the cross He saw His church Heb12:2.

Jesus didn't have earthly possessions to be left behind for inheritance or for confiscation, only his shirt had some value to the Roman soldiers: yet He was the heir of the Father, creator and possessor of all things and through His blood He sealed an eternal testament with eternal possessions to be offered for free to those who believe in Him Heb1:2, Rom8:17.

Jesus didn't have a burial place: Nicodemus gave Him his own tomb Jn19:39.

Jesus didn't have burial ointments prepared: women brought them but too late Mark16:1.

Jesus didn't have an earthly wife: He will be married forever to His church Eph5:25-27.

Jesus didn't have any personal sin: yet He took upon Himself all the sins of mankind Is53:12.

Jesus didn't have many followers while on the earth: yet in heaven He will have people from every tribe and every language Rev7:9.

PRAISED BE JESUS FOREVER!

POST 44. TOTEMS?

QUESTION: Should a Christian have and follow totems?

Following totems is idolatry.

A totem is any natural or mythical animal to whom you feel a close connection during your life or some particular period of your life. The energy of the totem animal is believed by pagans to speak to them in some way that is relevant to their own personality or circumstances in life.

Native peoples of many countries have animal spirits that play a very important part in their lives. **In Chinese astrology all the signs are animals and in western astrology most of the signs are animals.**

By getting to know their animal totem, pagans believe they can gain insight and understanding of their own life circumstances more clearly, and share in the totem power or 'healing and medicine'. **Pagans believe animal totems manifest a specific kind of energy** that will align to forces of the spiritual realm that are influencing their life. Witch doctors tell you which is your totem or they let you choose one.

Some pagans believe that humans have animal ancestors therefore they worship animal totems. **Evolution of man from animals is a pagan doctrine,** God did not create Adam and Eve through a gradual process of evolution from animals but through an instant creative act out of dirt (soil).

Totems are part of animistic idolatrous religions. Animism believes animals, dead ancestors, places and objects possess spiritual strength to help ones that submit to them. That is idolatry and a lie from hell. Only God has power to protect.

ANIMISM BELIEVE ANIMALS HAVE ETERNAL SOULS. However, animals presented in the book of Revelations (for example the white horses that can fly, Rev19) are special spiritual creations of God just as the angels, only that those horses will not have a free will but will respond/obey as machines or robots do.

"The lion shall lie down with the lamb and eat grass" Is11:6 speaks of the Millennium (100 years) time when Jesus will reign on the earth, not about the new eternal heaven. When an animal dies, it ceases to exist for eternity, there will be no resurrection for animals as they are not created in the image of God like man is.

The Bible tells us to look at animals and **learn from their behavior,** not to identify with them or try to draw leading, protection and energies from them:

Prov6:6 '**look at the ant**, oh sluggard' (learn hard work)

Ps33:17 '**a horse is vain for safety** and his great strength cannot give deliverance' (only God can deliver us)

Jer5:8 'they are **well-fed lusty horses**, each one neighing after his neighbor's wife' (avoid sexual sins, being led by sexual instincts as horses do)

Jesus is symbolized by a lion (the lion is seen as king of the animals), Jesus being called "Lion of Judah" Rev5:5 which means king; Satan is said to be **roaring like a lion** in search to devour people 1Pet5:8. These are comparisons and personifications (symbols), not totems.

You can learn lessons from all animals' behavior but you should not have a special relationship of identification with any animal as that is idolatry.

Your only identification should be with Jesus: Gal2:20 "I have been crucified with Christ and I no longer live, but Christ lives in me. The life I now live in the body, I live by faith in the Son of God".

1Cor1:5 'In Him (in Christ) you have everything' (also 2Pet1:3)

Here below is a list of animals and their totem pagan meaning, I got these from a pagan website; I add biblical proofs that Jesus is our only need, not totems:

--"Bear totem gives strength, solitude, focus" – contradicted by Phil4:13 'I can do all things through Him that strengthens me'; I focus on Jesus Heb12:2 because Jesus focuses on me as his church Acts9:4

--"Bee gives diligence, productivity" – contradicted by Eph2:10 'Christ created me for divine productivity'

--"Butterfly produces change, love, transformation" – 2Cor3:18 'Christ changes me from glory to glory into His resemblance'

--"Buffalo gives confidence to achieve goals" – Phil1:6 'I am confident Jesus will achieve his purposed work in you'

--"Cat teaches mystery, clear perception, agility" – Christ is the mystery of God revealed to us and in us Col1:27

--"Coyote teaches how to get free of a trap" – Christ has set us free from the kingdom of darkness Col1:13

--"Cow teaches nurturing and growth" – Eph4:15 Christ gives us growth

--"Dog teaches loyalty, unconditional love" – 2Tim2:13 Jesus is faithful even when we are not faithful; Jn3:16 and Rom5:8 unconditional love is that God loved us when we were yet sinners

--"Dolphin teaches communication, harmony, trust" – the Love of God does, see 1Cor13

--"Dragon gives fertility, wisdom" – Ps115:14 God causes you to flourist; Christ is our wisdom 1Cor1:30

No time now to finish correcting the pagan list below with Bible verses, but you can do this exercise on your own!

Eagle teaches Courage, Freedom, Spiritual Balance
Elephant gives Strength, Intelligence, Loyalty
Fish gives Life, Transitions
Fox teaches Camouflage, New worlds, Supernatural power, Fox is a Protector
Frog teaches Abundance, Fertility, Transformation
Giraffe teaches Flexibility, Intuition
Hippo teaches Motherhood, Routines
Horse teaches Friendship, Freedom, Power, Stamina
Hummingbird teaches how to find joy in all circumstances
Lion teaches Personal Power, Courage, Strength
Llama teaches Endurance
Monkey teaches Energy, Curiosity
Otter teaches Curiosity, Joy
Owl teaches Magic, Wisdom
Panther teaches Valor, Grace, Swift action
Penguin teaches Change, Agility, Order
Pig teaches Prosperity, Intelligence
Pigeon teaches Perseverance toward a goal
Rabbit teaches Love, Vigilance, Fertility
Ram teaches Adventure and Power
Raven teaches Magic, Shapeshifting
Rooster teaches New beginnings, sexual prowess
Seal teaches Balance, Intuition
Sheep teaches purification through forgiveness
Snake teaches Rebirth, Wisdom, Healing
Squirrel teaches Trust, Preparedness

Tiger teaches Passion, Sexual energy
Turtle teaches Longevity, Opportunity
Whale gives Provision, Creation, Awakening
Wolf gives Freedom of Spirit, Discipline, Loyalty

You can learn lessons from all animals' behavior (don't pick one in a personal way). But **trusting in animal spirits or demon spirits is idolatry; using any kind of "protecting objects" is idolatry.**
James 5:14-15 says to call elders of the church to anoint you with oil and pray for you, not to buy oil from them and anoint yourself at home.
Trusting in objects (bricks, water pots etc) that were "blessed" by a "man of God" is idolatry.

Trusting in "luck" is idolatry. Is65:11 "wow unto them that set a table for luck/fortune ('gad' in babilonian) and unto fate ('meniy')."

POST 45. HOW DO WE HEAR THE VOICE OF GOD?

This is a question that many Christians are asking; many men of God disciple people unto themselves, instead of making them disciples of Jesus according to Mat.28:19, so these people never get to learn to discern the voice of God; they dont know God because of unbelief, love of self or a lack of proper teaching and are always in need of someone else to speak to them on behalf of God, as Israel did in the desert, 'Moses, you speak to us instead of God for we are afraid...', see Exodus 20:19.

God speaks in different way:

1. GOD SPEAKS THROUGH NATURE:
--Nature says on God's behalf: 'God exists and He has an eternal power' Rom.1:20
--'God is majestic, glorious and infinite' Ps.19:1
--'God gives us rain, fruitful seasons and all needed for living' Acts 14:17; rain falls on the righteous and on the unrighteous speaking about a loving God Mat.5:45;

2. GOD SPEAKS THROUGH THE SUPERNATURAL: miracles supported the message of the Apostles proving they were sent by God: Rom.15:9; 2Cor.12:12; Heb.2:4; however, beware of false signs and miracles: 2Thes.2:9; Jesus rebuked Thomas for desiring a miracle instead of having faith John 20:29; Jesus did a lot of miracles but He knew miracles done before rebellious pharisees would not bring them to faith Mat.12:39;

3. THROUGH DREAMS AND VISIONS: Abraham Gen.15:1, Abimelech Gen.20:1-7, Jacob Gen.28:10-17, Joseph Gen.37:1-11, Pharaoh's cup bearer and baker Gen.40, Pharaoh Gen.41, Samuel in 1Sam.3, The Midianite and Amalekite armies Jud.7:12-15 and others; there are lately many testimonies of dreams and visions of Jesus in the Muslim world;

4. GOD SPOKE LAST THROUGH JESUS: Heb.1:1-2, Jn.10:27, 12:49; receiving Christ as Savior is the only way a person can be saved and thus really having a possibility to learn discerning the voice of God Jn.8:47;

5. GOD SPEAKS THROUGH THE BIBLE: 2Tim.3:16, 2Pet.1:20-21; Rev.1:1-3 and 22:18-20; prophecies and supernatural scientific knowledge attest its author is God; Satan said to Jesus, "it is logos (written)" in Mat.4:6, but Jesus was able to answer, "it is rhema (a personal word that produces fellowship)" v7, Satan can read the logos but can't have a personal word from God, "rhema" (same applies for the unsaved);

6. THROUGH THE HOLY SPIRIT IN OUR HEARTS: Rom.8:16, 26,27; Gal.4:6; 1Jn.2:27; the Holy Spirit might give you peace or restlessness in regards to making certain decisions (choosing between 2 options that are not sin); He might bring to your remembrance a certain verse that helps you in a situation of need;
Many claim to follow the voice of the Holy Spirit but they act in opposition to the Word of God: you can conclude that it is not God leading them! Why would the Holy Spirit lead a believer that willingly ignores the voice of God in the Scriptures? Mat.22:29: "You greatly err because you dont know the Scriptures..."

7. THROUGH CHRISTIANS WITNESSING FOR GOD, thus God speaks to the unsaved Acts1:8, 2Cor.5:20; Jn.13:20, 17:20; Acts 18:9-10; 1Cor.14:21;

8. THROUGH GODLY COUNSELORS: Prov.13:20, 15:22; Jn.17:8
God's voice can be heard through godly men of God that speak the Word of God in preaching, teaching, counseling, encouragement, fellowship;

9. THROUGH CIRCUMSTANCES: 1Cor.16:9, Rev. 3:7; however, circumstances alone are not sufficient to discern the will and voice of God; God controls human history and all things that happen are directed or allowed by God, 1Cor.10:13, Job2:10; God can use circumstances to rebuke and chastise a rebellious child of God (1Cor.11:29-32, Heb.12:6) or to test a believer and to help him grow (2Pet.1:7, 2Cor.12:9);

What is required for a believer to hear or discern the voice of God? Humility, concentration on God, availability, worship, study and meditation on the Word.

Ps.46:10 "Be still and know that I am God..."
1Kings 19:11-12 Gos spoke through a still small voice, not through the storm or the earthquake;
Jn.10:27 "MY sheep listen to MY voice..."
Prov.1:24 "Because I have called you and you refused to listen..."
Heb.4:7 "Today, if you hear His voice, harden not your heart..."
Rev. 2:7,11,17,29; 3:6,13,22 "He that has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches"

God so longs to speak to us but because we do not pull ourselves away from the hustle and noise of life, His voice is muffled. Jesus constantly withdrew to commune and hear the voice of the Father *(Mark* 6:46; *Luke* 5: 16; *Luke* 6: 12). May we come away daily to a quiet place to commune with God and hear His voice.

POST 46. WHY DOES GOD ALLOW EVIL TO EXIST?

First, how do we define evil?
-evil is that which is opposed to good
-an evil person is rebelliously opposed to God and justifies his rebellion

God did not create evil but has allowed creatures (man and angels) to choose between good (God's way) and evil (any other way different than God's way; in man's case, test of evil was to eat from a tree that was forbidden unto man; Eve justified her sin and entered into evil but Adam sinned because of love for Eve 1Tim2:14).

Evil is the absence of divine good, just as darkness does not exist in itself, darkness is just the absence of light; a hole in a wall does not exist in itself, it is just the absence of material is a certain area of a wall; cold does not exist in itself, it is just the absence of heat; a lie is the absence of truth.

"CAN EVIL COME DIRECTLY FROM GOD?"
God said: "I am the Lord, and there is none else…I form the light, and create darkness: I make peace, and **I create evil**: I the Lord do all these things" (Is45: 5,7, also Amos 3:6). However, "I create evil" is not translated correctly here as Hebrew word "raah" translated as 'evil', can also mean 'something displeasing', 'affliction', 'calamity', 'trouble' see 1Sam29:7, Ps41:1, Jonah4:1.
James1:13 says God cannot do evil.

"WHY DOES GOD ALLOW EVIL?"

Answer: The Bible describes God as holy (Is6:3), righteous (Ps7:11), just (Deut32:4), and sovereign (Dan4:17-25). These attributes tell us about God that:
(A) **God is capable of preventing evil**
(B) **God desires to rid the universe of evil**
So, if both of these are true, why does God allow evil today? If God has the power to prevent evil and desires to prevent evil, **why does He still allow evil?**

Here are some reasons why:

1) GOD HAS MADE ADAM AND EVE WITH A FREE WILL, or a capacity to make decisions, they were not created as robots; same applies for the angels. God did not create evil but has **offered the option of disobedience**; if you don't have an option, then you are not free but limited;

--God could have placed a wall around the tree of good and evil, or a guardian angel to block Adam's access but He didn't; He allowed man a choice; as Adam and Eve chose to disobey, their bodies became sinful and mortal, passing on through birth a sinful nature to their descendents Rom5:12; their spirits also died and were brought back to life by accepting

through faith God's solution for their sin: a sacrifice of an innocent animal, symbol of the yet future sacrifice of Jesus Jn1:29; because of sin, they still had to die physically Rom8:10 but their bodies would be brought back to life at the resurrection.

--Anyone who receives Jesus as Savior receives the Holy Spirit forever, therefore **the Christian's raised spirit cannot ever sin** 1Jn3:9, Eph2:1-5 being one entity with the Spirit of God, never to be separated again Eph1:13, but the body and soul can and do sin 1Jn1:8-10 until the death of the body Rom7:20-25. **After the resurrection, a Christian's body having no sin nature means that he can never sin again**, the same as God cannot sin Hab1:13.

--THIS IS HOW GOD SOLVED THE PROBLEM OF EVIL FOR ETERNITY: GLORIFIED HUMANS WILL HAVE THE NATURE OF GOD (AND NO MORE SIN NATURE) AND GOD'S NATURE CANNOT SIN.

--We do not know how God solved the **FUTURE POSSIBILITY OF COMMITTING EVIL IN THE CASE OF ANGELS**; **we know that 1/3 of angels have decided to follow Satan in his rebellion against God** Rev12:4,9, shortly after the 7 days of creation Gen1:31, Jn8:44. **We don't know if there are today angels that choose to forever become demons** by rebelling against God, or if later in the future angels will still have the option to rebel against God; **however, God's description of eternity indicates that there will never again be sin, suffering, curse and judgment** Rev21:4;22:3, resulting that angels will never again rebel; maybe angels that have not followed Satan have graduated their test and were somehow upgraded by God to never be able to sin again; man's upgrade and angels' upgrade were possible through their choice of acceptance; therefore the test of evil was necessary but the fall into sin was not necessary (just as 2/3 of angels never sinned and will never sin).

--We need to remind here that **JESUS ONLY DIED FOR MAN'S SIN, NOT FOR DEMONS Heb2:16**. Some could think God is not fair for not offering demons a way of salvation, however God was not obliged in any way to offer salvation to man either; also, demons' rebellion carries a greater responsibility than man's as their creation and test were different than man's.

2) **GOD COULD STOP EVIL FROM HAPPENING** and at times He does limit evil acts from affecting others, **BUT MAN IS SINFUL AND COMMITS EVIL EVERY DAY**: God cannot intervene every day thousands of times in each of our lives to stop smaller or greater evils in our minds and acts but he has condemned our sinful natures to the cross and has offered us the option of **salvation with a changed heart and a future world without evil Rev20:10.**

3) **ANOTHER CHOICE WOULD BE FOR GOD TO JUDGE AND REMOVE TODAY THOSE WHO CHOOSE TO COMMIT EVIL** acts. The problem with this possibility is that there would be no one left, for God would have to remove us all. We all sin and commit evil acts (Rom3:23; Ecc7:20; 1Jn1:8). While some people are more evil than others, where would God draw the line? Ultimately, all sin (willful or unwilling sin) is evil and causes harm to others.

4) GOD ALLOWS PATIENTLY EVIL PEOPLE TODAY TO DO EVIL ACTS TO DRAW THOSE EVIL PEOPLE TO HIMSELF by offering them grace instead of punishment, see the example of Paul who was killing Christians before accepting Jesus 1Tim1:13-16; 2Pet3:9

5) GOD ALLOWS EVIL MEN TO DO EVIL SO THAT ON THE DAY OF JUDGMENT, THE CONDEMNED WILL HAVE NO RIGHT TO SAY THAT THEIR SENTENCE IS UNJUST see Matt.25

6) GOD ALLOWS EVIL ANGELS to test the saved men, to prove to the demons as in a court of justice that the grace of God works and the love of God motivates Christians to love the unlovable and to forgive Mat5:39; God had to allow Satan to do evil unto Job to prove that Job was motivated by the love of God, not by the material blessings from God 2Cor5:14.

--God will lock Satan and his demons in hell while Jesus will reign on the earth for 1000 years Rev20:1-7; there will be humans with unglorified bodies on the earth who will still sin and be rebellious against God: this way God will prove that man still sins and rebels against God even without demons tempting man to sin; demons are not the only source of evil, the heart of man is a source of sin and evil: Mat15:19, Jer17:9.

--God uses evil spirits to humble Christians 2Cor12:7-10 and to punish rebellious men 2Thes2:9-12, 1Kings22:20

--As for evil people (those that reject Jesus as Savior) and for evil spirits, God has prepared **AN ETERNAL LAKE OF FIRE**

Mat25:41 that God will cast away from His reach, influence or memory for eternity Rev20:10-15

Those who trust in Jesus as Savior will enjoy forever a world without evil:

"And God shall **wipe away all tears** from their eyes; and there shall be **no more death**, **neither sorrow, nor crying**, **neither shall there be any more pain**: for the former things are passed away" Rev21:4

POST 47. THE DOCTRINE OF MARRIAGE

The following outline is compiled from six messages preached by Pastor Stevens on the subject of marriage at Greater Grace World Outreach in Baltimore, Maryland, from February through June, 1995.

The first truth we must understand in the Doctrine of Marriage is that God is our Husband. He establishes this truth in the Old Testament and continues in the New Testament with the "mystery." When we truly understand this relationship between Christ and His Church, we will function in God's love toward our spouse, regardless of the circumstances.

I. GOD IS OUR HUSBAND

A. God is to the believer as a husband, and the believer to God as a bride:
1. Hosea: 2:19-20, “And I will betroth thee unto me forever; yea, l will betroth thee unto me in righteousness, and in judgment, and in loving-kindness, and in mercies. I will even betroth thee unto me in faithfulness, and than shalt know the Lord."
2. Jeremiah 3:14b "...for I am married unto you...”
3. Jeremiah 31:32b "I was an husband to them...”
4. Isaiah 54:5, "For thy Maker is thine husband; the Lord of hosts is his name. "
5. Isaiah 62:5b: ”as the bridegroom rejoiceth over the bride, so shall thy God rejoice over thee.”

B. Jesus Christ is the Bridegroom in Matthew 9:15; 25:1, 6; John 3:29 and Revelation 21:2.
C. The Bride is the body of believers in 2 Corinthians11:2 and Revelation 19:7.

II. THE BASIS FOR MARRIAGE IN THE CHURCH AGE IS:

A. To be a **witness** for Jesus Christ in God's court room.
B. To **reveal the mystery** of God.

A. CAN WE BE USED AS A WITNESS

1. ...Against Satan?

Because Satan was sentenced to the Lake of Fire in Matthew 25:4, he hates God's authority. Satan did not think that God did a good job. He felt that God had made mistakes in heaven. Thus, God's highest angel taught one-third of heaven to go against God's authority.

After being sentenced, Satan asked for an appeal — on the basis that the human race was made lower than the angels and yet was given access to grace and to God's salvation. We see many examples of Satan provoking or misleading men to judge God.

For example, in 1 Chronicles 21, Satan provoked David to number Israel. It was a direct temptation from Satan, and

David fell for it. The reason 70,000 people died was not David's disobedience to God, but his submission to a direct temptation from Satan. Verse one says, “And Satan stood up against Israel, and provoked David to number Israel.” Now, your flesh may tempt you; the world may tempt you; people may tempt you. But it is quite another thing when Satan tempts you.

Genesis 3:1 provides an example of Satan tempting Eve. In Matthew 4:3 he tempted Jesus. In 2 Corinthians 2:11 Paul tells the believers that “Satan [can] get an advantage of us” with his devices. Paul tells us that Satan used "subtlety" to beguile Eve (2 Corinthians 11:3). In l Thessalonians 3:5 Satan is known as the "tempter. ”Satan tempts the believer in order to undermine God's authority. He is after people who will bear witness against the Word, even though they represent Christ. He is before God, asking for appeal on the basis that the believer’s life bears witness against God in some area. Satan wants our lives to bear witness against certain categories so he can charge us before God in the earthly court room setting.

In Luke 22:3l—32, Satan was after Peter's faith. He wanted Peter's faith to be destroyed. He was after what was in Peter’s heart. Why is he after our faith? Because our faith pleases God in the trial, in the examination. in this court room of earth our decisions are played in the presence of God's elect angels, as well as Satan's principalities and powers and the rulers of the darkness of this world. Our faith is the key thing. What is in our hearts and what we confess in the court room in our situations -— this all has to do with our response in the trial, and resisting the Devil in the faith.

2. ...IN OUR FREE VOLITION?

Because free volition is the first institution of God, this is the first area Satan attacks. He goes to God and asks, “Will you allow me to use my circumstances to show you that they will not obey you with their free volition in this area?” When Satan receives permission, the believer has the privilege of living in categories that he has learned, or his free volition may choose negatively toward obeying the doctrine he has learned. When this happens, the believer becomes a witness against God in this earthly courtroom.

3. ...IN OUR MARRIAGES?

God gave marriage as the second institution on earth. Thus, marriage is the second area Satan attacks. It is also the key area of witness in the trial between God and Satan. God has told us about marriage and the family in His Word, and Satan tempts us to step outside of this order so that we will bear witness against God. He tries to bring disorder between the husband and wife. Satan asks God, "Can I test them in their marriage?”

Ephesians 6:18b states that if the couple is watching with all perseverance and prayer, Satan finds no place to tempt them. They resist him steadfast in the faith (I Peter 5:9). They are watching with God, lest they are tempted (Matthew 26.-41). They stand in the Lord and in the power of His might (Ephesians 6:10), resisting the Devil and the Devil flees James 4:7).

The third institution of God is the Family, the fourth is His institution of the Church, and the fifth is National Entity. These five institutions are under constant attack from Satan. This is
why the Lord Jesus Christ is pleading our case (Lamentations 3:58, Isaiah 51:33). This is why He is our Advocate and our Attorney (1 John 2:1). As our Advocate in the court case, Jesus helps us follow the instructions from the pulpit and provides personal instructions. He informs us how to live on the earth, the scene of the great courtroom.

B. MARRIAGE IS A MYSTERY:

1. It reveals God's relationship to His Church. The subject of

marriage is a very important topic, because it has to do with testifying to the faithfulness of the Lord Jesus Christ, or being a testimony for Satan's kingdom.

The divine understanding of the institution of marriage can only be fulfilled when God's order is honored. God's order is established as a witness to the mystery of Christ's relationship to the Church.

IN THE OLD TESTAMENT:

(a) Hosea 2-19-20 ”And I will betroth thee unto me forever; yea, I will betroth thee unto me in righteousness, and in judgment, and in living-kindness, and in mercies. I will even betroth thee unto me in faithfulness, and you shall know the Lord.”

(b) Jeremiah 3:14 ”...for I am married unto you..."

(c) Jeremiah 31:32b "...I am an husband to them...”

(d) Isaiah 54:5, “for thy Maker is thine husband; the Lord of hosts is his name."

(e) Isaiah 6225b, "As the bridegroom rejoices over the bride, so shall thy God rejoice over thee.”

IN THE NEW TESTAMENT:

(a) Jesus Christ is the Bridegroom in Matthew 9:15, 25:l,6, John 3:29 and Rev. 21:2.

(b) The Bride is the Body of believers in 2 Corinthians 11:2 and Rev. 19:7.

2. It is called ”a great mystery” in Ephesians 5:32 because of its association with Christ and the Church. Therefore, marriage is God's definition of the Royal Family on earth and the Royal Law of Love.

God wants to use marriage in this Church Age to reveal the relationship of His royal family. When the Saduccees asked Jesus about marriage in heaven, Jesus answered them, “In the resurrection they neither marry, nor are given in marriage, but are as the angels of God in heaven."

Our marriages will not continue into heaven. We will not be married to our husband or wife for all eternity. When we get to heaven, there will be something far greater than that. There will be an intimate family of God, an entire royal family that will be closer and more real than any relationship we have on earth today. God wants us to learn to live in this royal family principle while we are here. He wants us to learn to live with our partners according to the Royal Law of Love. He desires that parents have this attitude toward their children. Children should also manifest this attitude toward their parents.

This is the difference between a marriage as a human institution and a Christian marriage that glorifies God.

The human institution of marriage refers to a husband and wife who are married, but do not honor God's principles of marriage as they are set forth in the Word of God. They may even be saved, but all they do is honor the human institution, not the divine institution. There are many Christians who do not have a Christian marriage. We see in the Old Testament that Sarah called Abraham, ”lord," but she and Abraham didn't have a Christian marriage. They had a believer’s marriage, because they were both saved. But in the days of the Old Testament people didn’t have any idea how a Christian marriage worked.

A Christian marriage consists of a man who is saved and a woman who is saved, who treat each other according to the Royal Law of Love, according to God’s order. The wife does not manipulate the husband, and the husband does not lord it over his wife, but they honor one another. She submits to him, and he submits to his Head, Jesus Christ. They have the right resources. If it takes patience, they have more than they need. If it takes kindness, they have an abundance. If it takes forgiveness, it's inexhaustible. That's what the Royal Law of Love is. The wife doesn't pick and nag and manipulate, and the husband doesn't ask for performance. He blesses the wife into responding. She blesses the husband into initiating properly.

They bless each other into receiving a favor that they don't deserve.

This takes humility in the sight of God. The Holy Spirit will give us what it takes, as we trust God to understand what no one ever understood in the Old Testament —- the mystery of a Christian marriage: the Royal Law of Love (with all its virtue) and divine integrity operating in spiritual light.

But you say, "He doesn't deserve it" or, "She doesn't deserve it." Well, neither do you. Instead of criticizing, you bless, instead of finding fault, you build up and edify, instead of disrespecting, you start having respect. That's what 1 Peter 3:9 is saying. Honor this and you'll be surprised how you will bring favor upon your marriage. In the process, you will be transformed in your soul.

III. GOD'S ORDER FOR MARRIAGE:

1 Corinthians 11:3, "But I would have you know, that the head of every man is Christ; and the head of the woman is the man; and the head of Christ is God."

A. THE WIFE

1. A HELPMATE

The first thing God made woman to be, in Genesis 2:20, is a help mate. What does that mean? She was formed by God out of Adam to be a corresponding part of him. She is a corresponding helper for him. The Hebrew words for "help meet" (as it appears in KIV) are EZER, "help" and NEGED, "a counterpart" or "mate." The word EZER was used of someone who is a supporter, an ally in war, one who gives personal assistance, a helper. The word "meet" means literally, "to be before" or "in front of."

A help mate is a person who dies to herself without the participation of the old sin nature in her submission. A help mate is a person who has died to herself in co-crucifixion, without the old sin nature being personally involved. Her voluntary subordination to her mate releases God's life in both parties. A help mate lifts up her husband willingly and gladly to bless him with a special blessing. In other words, a help mate submits. And with that submission, she dies to herself to find herself in the proper relationship to win Christ. Even if her husband doesn't win Christ, she does. Thus, she fulfills the eternal purpose for which she was created as an individual: being conformed to the image of Jesus Christ. As she wins Christ by dying to herself through faith, she enters into the qualities of a godly wife.

If she blesses her husband in every area, not rendering evil for evil but a blessing instead (1 Peter 3:9, 1 Thessalonians 5:15, Romans 12:17), she herself will inherit a blessing. In Luke 6:28 "blessing" means "to call favor down upon someone so they can be changed by God's grace." She blesses him in the nature of God, giving them a benefit that perhaps they have never had from anyone else but Jesus.

This is an example of the marriage of the royal family of God. This is a revelation in the Church Age of the highest demonstration of truth through the manifestation of Christ's life before the Devil. You become God's witness in the court case. And you become a phenomenal ministry of Jesus Christ to deal a devastating blow to Satan's appeal case.

When a woman has this understanding of being a help mate she is not driven by her old sin nature and she finds herself rightly related in her marriage. When her old sin nature isn't involved in submitting, honoring, respecting, appreciating, and edifying her husband, she has won Christ in the marriage. She has learned the meaning of Philippians 3:7, counting all things but loss that she may win Christ. She is blessed by God, and she passes on the blessing. Nobody deserves it. Nobody can earn it. She just receives, then gives, and divine favor comes upon their lives.

2. SHE SUBMITS

In Ephesians 5, God addresses the wife before He addresses the husband. In verse 22, “Wives, submit yourselves unto your husbands, as unto the Lord.” The word “submit” is HUPOTASSO. It is from two words: HUPO, “under,” and "tasso, "to order." It means "to place in an orderly fashion under something". The verse says to ”submit to your own husband”. She is not to submit to someone else’s husband, just her own.

God mentions the women first, because in marriage the woman has to give permission to the leader to lead. She is not a follower unless she wants to be, and she will submit to what she desires to submit to. She gives her husband the authority, in the sense that she willingly submits. It is not something involuntary, or outside of her will. She gives him the authority by choosing to submit to him.

The Word says she should submit to her husband. HUPOTASSO means to arrange her life under the leader, who is her husband. Every organization has a leader. Every country has a leader. Every city has a mayor. Every team has a coach. In every organization or country, those who follow will choose who will lead them. They must give them the right to have the authority over them. In marriage, the woman must give the man his authority. This will make God’s order fruitful. God never intended marriage to be a partnership. Marriage is not a partnership. The two are equal with God, but they are not equal in authority. You see, Jesus Christ was equal to the Father, but he wasn't equal in authority. He did submit to the Father in everything he did. Likewise, the Holy Spirit was equal to the Son, but He wasn’t equal in authority. All three are God and all three are one, but they are not all equal in their authority.

In the same way, the wife is not equal to the husband in the authority structure. The woman should consider this before she ever gets married, and she should never say "yes" to a man she knows she cannot submit to. In Ephesians 5:24 the word "subject” is a form of the word HUPOTAXIS. This relates to a specific category of submitting. When she submits, she chooses to honor the authority of her husband. She makes him the leader.

As she subjects herself, she submits to him in a specific Way, in the details of the order of the home.

If the wife submits, always honoring the Word of God with an attitude of love, God will chastise the husband if he is not right. He will honor her submission, and He will do a good job of it. You don't have to wait for it to happen —— it will.

3. SHE RESPECTS

In Ephesians 5:33 the wife is told to "reverence" or to "respect" her husband. In Titus 2:4-5 she treats her husband with respect. This means that she respects his call, his position and his decisions. If he says, “Let's pray about this,” she respects him and prays. If he decides to go to the mission field, she respects his decision and goes.

To "reverence" him means she respects the office God has given him. She respects the person he is in Christ. She honors his relationship to the Word over her.

3a. SHE APPRECIATES

She sees him as he is in Christ, and she appreciates him. She doesn't see him after the flesh. She doesn't manipulate her husband's role to resolve a problem. She doesn't nag. She isn't negative. Negativity and nagging have done more to separate husbands and wives than adultery. Solomon said it is better for a man to dwell in a little corner of the roof than to live with a nagging wife (Proverbs 21:9).

4. WHEN HE FAILS

When the husband is weak, the wife is graciously strong and encourages her husband out of his weaknesses. She doesn't criticize him, but she helps him. When he suffers and fails, she is a help mate to him. When he makes a wrong decision, she

stands and prays and is kind and tender and loving. While she walks in the light of God's Word, she remains understanding.

The wife obeys Acts 5:29 (”it is better to obey God rather than man") when she has to, but she does it without a judgmental or accusing spirit. And she doesn't use it to be subjective or hyperspiritual or to usurp her husband's authority -- all in the name of her spirituality. if the husband is not what he should be, she uses God's provisions of love and grace and power and wisdom to
stand before God.

Now, the wife may think the she knows how her husband should be, but she doesn't really know the details of what her husband has been given by God. She may think he is not doing it right and that she could do it better, but she can't prove that.
What she should do is honor God's order, and if God needs to change the head, let Him change him. When she honors God's order, she is strengthening the institution of marriage.

4a. WHEN HE IS OFF

A woman should not submit to her husband if it means becoming irresponsible to God. Let me illustrate this. Ananias and Saphira were honoring the "Submit Only" doctrine that some people teach women today: whatever the husband says, the wife does. This doctrine is totally wrong — it is not in the Bible. It is not proper teaching on the doctrine of submission. When Ananias told his wife to lie about what they gave, his wife submitted to him. When she did, she became irresponsible to God's Word, which says "Do not lie.” So just as God brought him home early, she died just a few minutes later. It was the judgment of the sin unto physical death for the believer. You don't submit to anybody: your pastor, your husband, or your friend if it means irresponsibility to God. God did not intend that anyone become a puppet.

If a man is a representative authority, he must never abuse his representation. The husband's position is that of representing Jesus Christ in the institution of marriage. His function is to sacrificially love his wife. When his position does not reveal his function, the husband isn't right with God. In other words, if my wife's life depends upon my making correct decisions, as her representative authority I will function in that position to lay down my life for her.

5. SHE HONORS HIS AUTHORITY IN FRONT OF THE CHILDREN

A wife does not submit to her daughter over her husband. Submission is to be to the husband, not to the children over the husband. She honors him in front of the children, or her children will not be blessed by God. She honors his authority in the home because, as she does, she makes him stronger. The more she does to build him up in front of the children, the more he is strengthened and the more security there will be from his leadership. Therefore, happiness will be part of her reward for submitting to him, and the family will experience incredible security together.

It is a great thing for children to understand (when they are old enough to grasp it) how to build up the authority of their father. The more they honor him in a legitimate way, the more security they experience in the home. Inasmuch as a child will build up and honor his father, he will have a very secure, happy childhood, as a rule.

5a. PARENTS HONOR THE AUTHORITY OF THE TEACHER

The same thing goes for the school and the teachers. When the parents honor the authority of the teacher in front of their children, even if there is a disagreement, what have you done? You have strengthened the school system and the image of the teacher. Now, I'm not saying that you don't listen to your children if there is rightful cause. if you need to, you go to the

teacher alone to discuss the matter — not with your children. You do pray with your children and encourage them, but you deal with the situation without hurting the authority of the teacher.

The moment you attack the authority of the teacher in front of your children, you have weakened the whole school system. And you've weakened your child's position under authority in the future. The reason is it your child can get away with something today in the school, he or she will try to get away with it with you, or her father, or her pastor, or the police later on. We need to do everything we can to strengthen those who are over us in the Lord. lt provides great security, and it provides Jesus a place to work if there is a problem.

5b. IF THERE IS REBELLION AGAINST AUTHORITY

If there is rebellion against authority, it brings confusion and the home is weakened.

Perhaps the wife says, "I don't like the way my husband dealt with my daughter last night." I have heard this many times as a pastor. She may be right. But the worst thing that a mother can do is to let the daughter know that she feels that way [unless it is very obvious and something that can harm the daughter]. The wife should speak to her husband alone, not in the presence of the daughter. This way she doesn't weaken his headship. She wants to strengthen his image as the little girl's father and as the head of the house. The daughter may not lie to you, but she may not tell you the whole truth just so that she can get her way. She may try to manipulate the mother to go against the father's authority in the home.

When the husband or father is built up, and his position is recognized unconditionally, you strengthen his position. Then God is free to use that husband and his prayers to bring things to pass for his family. God says, "l can answer his prayers because the order is right in that family." It sets the husband free to have an authoritative prayer against the supernatural works of Satan. It strengthens his position to believe that God will use his delegated position in the family.

For example, what if the NBA decided there would be no authority and left the game in charge of the players? You know what would happen. There would be mass confusion. All the players would not agree on how to play the game. They must have a coach. In the same way, when people start doing what is right in their own eyes, the strength, protection and provision of God are taken away. They may not go all at once, but there will be a gradual breakdown in the institution involved, such as marriage or family.

5c. IF SHE USURPS HIS AUTHORITY

As I said before, the wife may think she can do a better job.

But, how does she know that? She doesn't know that in God's eyes her husband is not doing a good job. She can't be sure what kind of a job her husband should be doing. After all, she doesn't even know her own heart. So, the best thing she can do is honor God's order of things. When she doesn't submit, her nervous system can be short-circuited and her emotions can play havoc in her life. Because she is not honoring God's order, her own physical order will be affected. If she usurps her husband's authority, she places herself under the supernatural kingdom of Satan. And that is why she can't get delivered from certain things. If she stops usurping his authority, security is brought back into the authority structure of God's order for the family.

B. THE HUSBAND

1. HIS POSITION AS HEAD

la. HIS AUTHORITY IS GIVEN TO HIM BY GOD

It was said of Jesus in Matthew 7:28 that they were astonished at his doctrine. They realized that He was a man under authority and having authority, and not as the scribes (who usurped the authority they had). Jesus had authority. Why? He always submitted to the Father. He only spoke the words His Father gave him to say. All the works he did was through His Father. The key to Jesus' miracles and success over the Devil was His position under that authority from the day He was born until the day He ascended. He was successful because He submitted to His Father's authority. He was perfect, of course.

But I'm talking about his humanity. The Father strengthened Jesus' authority constantly because Jesus was constantly submitted to the Father.

Now, in the divine order of marriage God makes the husband head of the wife and family. In 1 Corinthians 11:3, God establishes His order of authority: Jesus Christ is head of the man, the man is head of the woman, and God the Father is head of Jesus Christ. The man has authority because it has been given to him by God. But he only has authority in the measure that he submits to the authority of Jesus Christ, his Head. When the man recognizes Jesus Christ as his absolute authority in his decision-making and in his life, this makes God free to cover him completely, and it gives him a wonderful provision and protection and happiness as head. He honors Jesus Christ's authority in his life and, in return, God honors his authority that has been given to him as head of the home. Thus, because his authority is derived from his Head, he exercises it with the nature and impartation of the One who gives it.

lb. THE WIFE'S ROLE IN HIS AUTHORITY

As was mentioned under the heading of "The Wife," the woman is mentioned first because she has to give her permission to her husband as leader. She is a follower, and she submits to what she desires to submit to. For example: every country has a leader. In the democratic process, the people choose who will govern them. They choose who they will follow and allow them to lead them. The people must give the leadership their authority. In marriage, the wife gives her husband the right to have authority over her. She chooses to follow him. The husband cannot have any authority that the wife doesn't give him.

lc. HE DOESN'T USE HIS AUTHORITY TO CONTROL HER

Jesus Christ was submitted to the Father. And this submission led Him to give His life. He did not use his authority to control people or to manipulate people. He loved people.
The husband must be the right kind of representative of God's headship. If he denies this, he is giving Satan's kingdom and government an opportunity to utilize what they know
about his weaknesses. And that will tear down any relationship that man has to the authority of God's Word.

The husband cannot have authority by coercing his wife with knowledge. He must love her and give his life for her without compromising the Word. If he uses his authority to control her, he nullifies his right in his God—given authority. The husband must never say, "You have to submit to me." When she is right, he submits to tier ideas, while she submits to his final decision.

A husband protects his wife with his leadership, he doesn't control her with it. He does not use his position in the home to manipulate his wife or children, nor to express his insecurity.

ld. THE HUSBAND AND WIFE ARE A TEAM IN

THE HOME

One of the great problems in the moral decay of this society is the breakdown of authority. Children rebel against the authority of the parents and use manipulation to divide the parents' authority. If they can get the mother to be sympathetic with them when they want to do wrong and to agree with them that the father isn't what he ought to be — that weakens the home. The measure in which this happens is the measure in which Satan has a place to use supernatural forces against God's order in the home. Then, Satan goes against the natural makeup of the people in that home and there is some measure of division. The husband's position no longer has any strength, and the mother has no strength, because she has allowed the child to have authority over her.

The mother must reinforce the authority of the father to the children, and the father must reinforce the authority of the mother over the child. He must make sure he builds her up. As he builds her up, they don't compromise their authority with their children. If the parents have a problem or difference, they deal with it quietly. The children are never told. They deal with it together in unison in the Spirit of God. Thus, there is a unified authority in that home.

2. HE PROTECTS HER

The husband protects the wife. He protects her person. He protects her body, her mind, her emotions, her will. He protects her property. He protects her freedom in Christ to make decisions. He provides for her physical needs, for her spiritual needs, for her emotional needs, for her sexual needs.

He provides for her financial needs under God's headship. He is the provider, not just physically but spiritually as well. He prays with her. He doesn't just leave in the morning and go out and do his thing. He is a good head for his wife by praying with her and being a good spiritual covering for her.

When the wife speaks out of need to the husband, and when she speaks out of tremendous wisdom, the husband has to listen to her. She is giving him a signal and not usurping authority.

3. HE LOVES HER

The kind of love he has toward her is AGAPE love. This is the Greek word mentioned in Ephesians 5:25. It is the kind of love Jesus has toward the Church. The verse says, "Husbands, love your wives, even as Christ also loved the church, and gave himself for it. "

Jesus says, "I want you to love your wife as I love the Church." So few husbands understand this. Love is supernatural in its patience. Love is supernatural in its kindness. Love is not puffed up. It is not arrogant, it does not worship self, it is not jealous. It does not behave itself unseemly. It is not easily provoked. It does not think evil. It bears all things, and it believes all things, and it hopes all things.

A husband who understands this kind of love will give his wife a blessing in every single area she needs it. He will call down God's favor by being Christ to her. In every area of her weakness or her need he is a blessing to her. He makes her the object of God's Royal Law of Love, and all the barriers are removed because performance isn't an issue any more.

If a husband loves his wife, it won't matter if she gets breast cancer and has to have a breast removed. if he enters into the Royal Law of Love toward her, it won't matter. Even if she is overweight, God wants him to be a blessing to her - to bring down favor toward her that she has never experienced. He should see the beauty that is inside her. He should never embarrass her or speak unkindly to her, because she is precious.

Beauty is within, and he can be a tremendous blessing to her as God gives him the power of the Holy Spirit to love her. His love first is nonsensual love. He loves her first without sex, and he doesn't legislate sex to her. If his wife is frail and weak, he sacrifices to make her comfortable. If she has an emotional wound or is damaged from her past, he loves her and loves her. He doesn't compromise, but he loves her and doesn't put her under any authoritative bondage. He just loves her and ministers to her.

A husband should study to see where she is coming from, what her soul is like. He should study her disposition and where she is with God. Then he sacrifices for her as Christ died for the Church. He dies for her to bring her through, without putting on any unnecessary pressure. In this way, he makes being a wife easy for her.

The worst thing in the world is when the husband is selfish and doesn't love his wife with AGAPE love. The husband must understand what this AGAPE love is. It is a love that is not earned, and she is not required to return it. The wife does nothing to earn it, and she is not required to return it.

When a wife is abandoned and this kind of love is not expressed to her, she is left unprotected. If this happens, she has to have doctrine and be hid completely in the Body. She needs to be protected because of her design, and God will use the Word and the Body to do it.

4. HE SANCTIFIES HER

Ephesians 5:26. ”Sanctify” means “to beautify” or "to adorn.” He is to beautify his life with decent clothes and personal care, as well as providing for his wife's beauty and clothes and personal care. He understands that her value depends on her character in the Finished Work, and that is how he sees her.

5. HE CLEANSES HER

Ephesians 5:26. The Greek word is the aorist active participle of KATHARIZO, "to cleanse of the guilt of sin.” He frees her from any guilt because of the quality of his love for her. His
love is personally directed toward her, and when she fails he loves her.

The wife has to leave her family for him. She has to leave her mother, her father, her sisters and brothers. Therefore, he has to have total love for his wife. He replaces all that she has had to leave. He has the love of a mother towards her, the love of a brother or a sister, the love of a father. At the Bema Seat he will be judged to see if he loved her with the totality of his
being. He sees no wrong in her, and when she fails he sees her as complete in Christ.

6. HE WASHES HER

Ephesians 5:26. This means that he gives her the Word daily. Or, he makes it possible for her to have doctrine every day. The Greek term RHEMA is used when it says, "with the washing of water by the word.” RHEMA refers to "the spoken Word" while LOGOS refers simply to the "Word."

7. HE PRESENTS HER

Ephesians 5:27, -"That he might present it to himself a glorious church, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing; but that it should he holy and without blemish." The word for "present" is PARISTEMI. It is a compound verb from PARA, "beside" and HISTEMI, "to stand.” This means that the husband always stands by her side with a Finished Work love that she doesn't have to earn or return.

8. WITHOUT SPOT OR WRINKLE

He presents her as not having spot or wrinkle. It means

that his love makes her complete and perfect when she is not.

"Spot" is SPILO in the Greek, a verb which means "to stain." He doesn't see her stains, or her weaknesses, or her wrongs.

He does not see her wrinkles. This means that he does not see any physical defects in her, even when she is 90 years old.

He doesn't see her aging. He only sees her need to be loved. We often think of the bride in Song of Solomon as almost perfect in her beauty, but in studying it, I've discovered what the woman really looked like. When he talks about her beauty in verse 2 he says, "Thy belly is like a heap of wheat. " In the original language this means that she had a little front on her, she was a little heavy. ll was a thing of beauty to him, although this wouldn't make her beautiful in the external sense. There was beauty in her soul.

God designed the soul of the woman to be the most beautiful part of her. No one's soul has been designed to love like a woman — only Jesus Christ. The reason is, the man initiates love in his humanity and the woman responds. When she responds she magnifies what is, so it is more than what came in.

It is God's love being reflected in her love. it is God, the man, and then her love, so it is a three-fold magnification.

9. WITHOUT BLEMISH

The Greek word for "without blemish" is AMOMETOS, an adjective which describes "the absence of anything amiss in a sacrifice, of anything which would render it unworthy to be offered." In the Old Testament, this word was used to denote the unblemished condition of the sacrificial animal.

This is a picture of Jesus Christ as being the perfect sacrifice. And because He was, we have been accepted. His love was sacrificial and without blemish. There wasn't a thing unworthy about the sacrifice. My love should be the same. I am in debt to love her with a love that is nothing less than this kind of sacrificial love.

10. HE LOVES HER AS HIS OWN BODY

Ephesians 5:28, "So ought men to love their wives as their own bodies." "Love" is a present active infinitive of AGAPAO. "Ought" is a present active indicative of OPHEILEO, "to be under obligation" or "to be indebted to."

"As their own bodies" uses the little word HOS, which has a qualitative force and should be translated "as it were" or "as being." He is obligated as a husband to love his wife "as she were" his own body.

It is not a love of duty but of nature.

11. HE NOURISHES HER

Ephesians 5:29, "...but nourishes [her]. . . " To "nourish" her means that he cares for her like God does to provide grace; like a mother nourishes her baby; like a nurse taking care of a patient. He cares for her needs. The Greek word is EKTREPHO, an it points to the careful, continued nourishing of one's physical and spiritual needs.

12. HE CHERISHES HER

Ephesians 5:29, "...and cherishes [her]" The word "cherishes" is THALPO in the Greek. It was used literally in early Greek of "keeping someone warm" or of "comforting." It was also used to describe the act of defending someone from the cold. Another meaning is "to cherish something that is your very own, to hold dear to it, to embrace it."

The husband warms and covers his wife and he is right there to cherish her. If he is a good leader, he will protect her and not gratify himself in the headship.

These 12 things for the husband are what true headship and authority are. Charity never gives up. Charity never fails. Even if my love is rejected and not returned, I treat them with God's love. They don't have to earn it or return it.

IV. GOD HAS A PROVISION

In marriage, just like in every institution upon the earth, God has a provision for every need. Whatever problem comes up in the marriage, God has a provision. There isn't a single wife for whom God does not have a provision. If an immoral husband leaves his wife, God has a special provision for that wife. lle will reveal it to her day after day, as she is the innocent victim. She shouldn't live in condemnation if she is an innocent victim.

There isn't a single husband for whom God does not have a provision as well. If he has the right resources he will get more patience than he needs. If it takes kindness, he will have an abundance. If it takes forgiveness, he finds an inexhaustible supply. Because he is humble, he receives his resources from the Lord Jesus Christ, and he loves his wife with God's love.

Jeremiah 10:23 says, "The way of man is not in himself. It is not in man to direct his steps." So, the first thing to understand about marriage is that we cannot make it work in the flesh. God does not want our self-righteousness in place of our giving ourselves for our partners. This is what He means in Isaiah 61:8 when He says, "Far I the Lord love judgment, I hate robbery for burnt offering." A burnt offering is when I give myself to God for somebody else. Robbery would mean that you reserve certain rights and certain provisions for yourself and, when you have problems, you do not go to a divine provision for mercy.

God says, if you would do it my way, l would direct your steps."

In Jeremiah 9:23, "Let not the wise man glory in his wisdom, neither let the mighty man glory in his might, let not the rich man glory in his riches. " "Glory" means that you reflect that you are wealthy, or you reflect that you have strength, so that everybody can see your strengths. Or you reflect that you have knowledge based upon intellectualism. But it is just a pseudo intellectualism that is contrived and not from the Holy Spirit.

The Lord says not to let this happen. Don't reflect yourself. Why? Because in 1 Corinthians 11:7, the woman is the glory of the man, The husband's sacrificial love elevates her to a glorious woman. The love of God in him is reflected through her and Jesus Christ is revealed through that marriage.

Verse 24 says, "Let him that glorieth glory in this, that he understands and knows me." If you want to reflect something, reflect that you know and understand God, It then goes on to say why: "For the Lord exercises loving-kindness, judgment, and righteousness to the earth." And then He says, "For I delight in these things. "

Don't glory in getting your own way. Glory in this: that you know God. No matter what happens you understand God and you exercise loving-kindness. I don't care what the partner is like. You can exercise judgment and righteousness toward them by submitting to the righteousness of God. When you leave this and establish your own righteousness, you become ignorant of God's righteousness and start demanding the other party to get on a treadmill of performance. Your approach to them is no longer loving-kindness. It is not "no condemnation." Your approach is not Spirit and Truth (John 6:63), and thus the flesh profits nothing.

What did God do for us? In His divine goodness He paid for everything we ever did wrong before we even cared. He removed every barrier before we even accepted Christ. That's what divine goodness is. It's my removing anything between us if you've done anything against me. I remove the barriers and

love you like you have done nothing wrong. I exercise loving-kindness, finished work judgment, and God's righteousness toward you, even if you don't deserve it.

Next, in Isaiah 6118b, it says that God delights in loving us and making a covenant with us that He will never break. It is a little strange that God has never left one single person one time, yet people forsake each other every day. Is it God's nature that forsakes people? Never! God never leaves and never forsakes us (Hebrews 13:5).Therefore, there is not a sickness or a financial or emotional, mental, domestic or marital need for which God doesn't have a perfect provision. He has a provision, and I must not leave His provision to go into the accusing realm or the attack of the world. If I delight myself in the Lord, he will give me the desires of my heart (Psalm 37:4). If I commit my way unto the Lord — and that means my attitude, my conversations, my decisions — and trust also in Him, He shall bring it to pass (Psalm 37:5).

So, I have a promise that He will meet my desires, and the Word of God says He will bring all of my desires to pass, even if I have a terrible marriage in which the man is not God-centered and the woman is not centered in humility and meekness. God has a provision for the wife to be a winning wife and the husband to be a winning husband. The husband doesn't have to say, "I am the head". He doesn't throw his authority around the house. If he is a real man he doesn't have to be "macho". He already IS, in a godly way. He loves his wife with God's love. He lays down his life for her. He prays with her. He nourishes her and cherishes her. He builds her up and elevates her to a glorious woman. He makes her feel significant and gives her security. He honors her.

When a woman is God's woman, the man trusts her (Proverbs 31:11). In verse 12, she does good to her husband all the days of her life. She gives him divine goodness as God's provision.

V. JESUS CHRIST IS OUR EXAMPLE

The Bible says very clearly that Jesus Christ is our example, that we should walk in His steps (1 Peter 2:23). "When he suffered, he threatened not; but committed himself to him that judgeth righteously" (1 Peter 2:2311). Then verse 24 says, “For he bore our sins in Hid own body on a tree, that we should live unto righteousness.

Jesus Christ did everything to purchase a wife. He purchased her out as the One Body. The Bible makes it very clear that Jesus purchased a wife with His own blood (Acts 20:28).

We are the Body now, but in the rapture we will be His wife or His bride.

So, the Lord is the only example for every institution on the earth today. When those who would be His bride reviled Him, He reviled not. When He suffered for us, He threatened not. Wives, don't threaten your husbands in your marriage. Submit to the government of God and respect your husband (Ephesians 5:24,33).

VI. A MESSAGE

The following is a transcription of the message Pastor Stevens preached at the Marriage Seminar, Saturday morning, February 18, 1995.

Proverbs 7:14: "I have peace offerings with me this day have I paid my vows. "

Psalm 15:2: "He who walks uprightly and works righteousness and speaks the truth in his heart, does not back bite with his tongue but speaks the truth in his heart.” That's a tremendous verse.

Proverbs 20:25 — a very, very important verse: "It is a

snare for a man to devote rashly something is wholly and afterward to reconsider his vows."

Marriage seminar on: incompatibility; compatibility; poor relationships; good relationships; unconditional love; conditional love; draw near to God; draw near lo the flesh to have it fulfilled. One of the great lessons to be learned regarding problems that people face in marriage is this: no understanding of the word "hate," or the word "love," of rejection, reaction, passivity, or response.

Let's deal with hate first. When hate was first defined, it did not mean hostility. It simply meant that I prefer not to give you an important place in my life. “Hate” originally meant "1 will not take responsibility for you.” Some deny that God hates. Some might say that's anthropopathic, but it isn't. God did hate Esau. He loved to die for Him, but hated him because he wouldn't take the responsibility for Esau’s life when Esau rejected grace. Everybody in hell is hated by God. God loves and hates everybody in hell. The reason they are in hell is God would not take responsibility for their actions when they rejected His action of love. That's what hate is.

Many husbands in Christian circles hate their wives. As friends, they are not into hostility or bitterness, but they will not take the responsibility of loving her properly. That's the original meaning of the word "hate." Children hate their parents when they will not take on their responsibility as teenager with mom and dad. It may not be hostility, but according to the original meaning, it is hate.

When a person continues to hate, the hatred leads to rejection, a practice of dis-allowance towards the object. I disallow your person in my presence to be supremely important. When David did not allow Absalom to come to the palace for two years, he rejected him. Absalom failed the grace of God and turned bitter and rejected his dad all the way, adding sin to sin. When David did not allow Absalom in his presence, that was hatred.

The Lord loves righteousness and hates iniquity, therefore, the Father anoints him with oil of gladness above all his fellows. He will not allow iniquity to have anything to do with his life — He hates it, disallows it, rejects it. He will not consider anything that produces iniquity to have any value in his life. After rejection and hatred comes reaction. Reaction is going against someone’s action. What does it mean? God entered into covenant with men. God almighty entered into an unconditional covenant based upon a sacrifice of blood, efficacious blood on Calvary in Matthew 26:27 and 28. His covenant was based upon who He is — loving mercy. And loving mercy is a much better word in the original than ”loving-kindness.” God who is, in reality, Loving Mercy, enters into a covenant with His enemies, who are all going astray, turning to their own way and are continually sinning and don't desire him. The motivation for the Covenant was loving mercy. Loving mercy reaches out and down as far as people will allow it to. It reaches out and down to the gutter.

While it was in the Greek dictionary, loving mercy was never used until Jesus came. Even more than PHILEO, the word that was used was EROS. And eros did not mean what people say it means, except in certain circles. People say it means sex, sensuality. It deteriorated into that through the phallic cults, but it didn't refer to that originally. EROS means that I am after the best and the most beautiful and the highest ideal I can attain. That is the real original meaning. And that is the only word that was used all the time until Jesus came.

”I love you with all my heart,” says the EROS lover. “You are beautiful." Then she has rheumatoid arthritis and is placed in a wheelchair, and he leaves her before she dies - Eros. I love her when she is beautiful and slim and sexy, but if she loses all of that appearance, although you would never admit it, you hate her. You don't hate her in vindictiveness. You don’t hate her in hostility or in vengeance. You hate her because the word "hate" means she doesn't have the proper place in your life

and you won't take responsibility for the vows you made on your wedding day. Did you know that wedding vows came from the original Covenant of Christ on Calvary? All wedding vows relate to the many covenants in the Bible.

God will let it rain on the just and the unjust. He will give logistical grace to both the good and the bad. He will die for everybody, for the sins of the whole world. His name is Loving Mercy. And as He does this, people will get to know what He is like. When He goes and sheds His blood and takes upon Himself the sins of the whole world, that should let people know what He is like. He is loving mercy. Just "love" is not correct.

Both words are words of action. Reaction is taking God's action and throwing it right back against him: "I will not accept you. This 'saved' stuff — no, I will not receive you as my Savior. I'm reacting to your love."

Men are suspicious of love and of grace because of their training, their genetics and what they've experienced in their environment. So, they are suspicious of love and grace and mercy. And because they are suspicious, they reject Jesus Christ in dis-allowance and hate God by not giving him a place in their life. When it comes to the things of the Lord Jesus Christ, they become passive. And that spirit extends into marriages: rejection; dis-allowance of someone's importance and value and esteem; hate, not giving them the proper place, or a place; then familiarity and passivity.

In so many marriages people are missing the whole point — integrity. You see, the things that change people are not the little sermons on "communication." Integrity is what brings about change. I go beyond those books.

What is integrity? I am a Christian, and the Lord Jesus Christ entered into an agreement with me. I don't reject Him. He doesn't reject me. I don't hate him. I won't be familiar with Him. I receive the very nature of loving mercy that he has toward me through his Spirit. I allow loving mercy through the Holy Spirit and the Word of God to fill me every morning by grace.

When I make vows in my marriage, I understand the origin of the meaning of vows. It is God's covenant language of loving obedience through mercy. So, when the minister says, "Will you take this woman —— to love her, to cherish her, to lay down your life for her, to take care of her — will you take the responsibility for her life," you make a covenant with Him, just like He made a covenant with you, toward your wife. He hears it and witnesses it, and He gives you the grace and the power to keep it.

"Will you be faithful to her"— not just faithful to her in not going out on her. That's not all it means. "Faithful" means that you will practice loving her through your agreement with God by faith. lust like God does with me. It is covenant language —God will never, no never, no never leave me nor forsake me. He will never fail me. He will take the responsibility for my life in failure and defeat. Because He doesn't hate me, He loves me. And when you are down, in Micah 7:8, and sin has dominion, He will take responsibility for you in His relationship with you, and will not change that relationship. You may change, but He will not. He is in it until He perfects you.

Now, will you say that to your wife? Once you say it, don't change. That's Proverbs 20:25. And before you say it, speak the truth in your heart, Psalm 15:2. Work out the righteousness of grace that's given to you and speak the truth in your heart before you confess it to her.

So God says, "In my loving relationship to you I will practice loving mercy." Grace isn't the main theme of the covenant. It's loving mercy. It is because of mercy that He doesn't impute my sin. It's because of mercy that He allows your faith to make you righteous apart from the law. It's because of mercy that He sealed you with the Spirit and made you royalty in the dispensation of the Church age. The thing that makes mercy work is love, AGAPE. That is why it is more

serious than you think when a church teaches the Armenian view. They are missing the whole point of the covenant that Jesus Christ made with sinners, with His enemies. He made a covenant with us and all He asked is that we don't react; that we exercise faith and not hate.

All He asks is that we receive and don't reject Him. Don't be passive toward that which is so noble.

Do you want to give vows? Deuteronomy 23:21: "I will require you to keep them." Ecclesiastes 5:4: "defer not to pay them." Before you make these vows I want to know that you have spoken the truth in your heart. Psalm 1514b — I want you to keep that agreement to your own hurt, because that is God. That is loving mercy. Place no blame upon the recipient, who is undeserving.

Loving mercy says "l will love you for better or for worse. If you have cancer and lose your hair and there is no possibility of sex ever again, my love will not even waver. I will not even consider changing it, because it is loving mercy through the Holy Spirit and Word of God. I will love you exactly the same. Even if you fail me completely -— for better or for worse, to my own hurt. Because this indeed will reveal the nature and sacrifice of Calvary, working its nature of God's grace through me and revealing loving mercy by me because of Him who does the work in me. I will never lose my love for you. It will never change. It will not decrease."

When I say I will be faithful, this is what l mean, that my love will be through the Holy Spirit and through the words of grace, and my love indeed will be divine. It will be totally divorced of EROS, PHILEO will not even be considered.

"I beseech you, brethren"; "beseech" means you go from theology to action, from knowledge to wisdom, from saying you love to loving, from knowing truth to implementing it. You present your bodies a living sacrifice unto God which is your reasonable service, not conformed to this world.

In marriages there is too much hatred, too much rejection. Some men just come home to sleep and use their wives as if they were abstract individuals. They say they love their wives, and they do something once in a while, but it is an impersonal relationship. An impersonal relationship is hate —- not hostility, not vindictiveness, bitterness, resentment or implacability.

In the original language the true meaning is that I do not give you the proper place that God has you in my life. My relationship to you is less than God's love, and therefore it is a godless initiation. If it is anything less than God it is godless. If it's that much less than God it is godlessness. If I don't love you as Christ loved the Church and gave himself for it, I can't involuntarily, in a spontaneous way, lay down my life for you and gladly do it because that's who I am in Christ and who Christ is in me.

I must enter into spontaneous obedience to God. And if I do less than this, I am a godless husband. I don't go out on the town, I don't drink, I don't have pornography, I provide for my wife — but I am godless, because my life is less than God.

The reason Jesus said, "Be constantly filled with the Spirit" is to take care of the institutions of the free volition, marriage, family, and the institution of church. You need that power to reveal the proper nature of God and the divine institutions that He has ordained in an orderly way.

Jacob made a vow to God that he would tithe. He said, "If you bless me, I'll give you 10%," and God really blessed him. Here's what Jacob was saying: "If you care enough and take enough time to bless me, I'll care enough to give back to you every single time". And God cannot fail in his responsibility in any way, because he has entered into a sacrificial covenant that is binding upon his integrity. It is unchanging in character.

A woman who is loved with loving mercy, who is constantly loved with the integrity of grace, whose husband has taken responsibility for her in taking care of her and totally loves her beyond her weaknesses and beyond her frailty —when

she doesn’t respond, she is not giving that initiation a place in her life and she hates her husband. Her husband feels rejected as a leader, and he feels resisted. Then he becomes inadequate in his manhood, insecure in his mission, prohibited in his communication. It’s not a bad relationship, it's just not godly. It’s not an evil relationship — but it is godless. Jesus Christ is in her wanting to give her healthy emotions, and the Holy Spirit indwells her, and she's says "I can't respond to him. He doesn't initiate properly.” His initiations have been paralyzed, never developed. As a help mate, she is to help develop his capacity to be what he is supposed to be.

God is so gracious to all of us because He never sees us in our worst sin. He only sees the potential we have in loving mercy. While other men say, "Look at that person. He is terrible, or she is terrible,” God says, "No they are not. I see them in a different way. I don't know them after the flesh. I see them in the beautiful potential of loving mercy. And when loving mercy is given to them unconditionally and expressed to them continually they will respond. I don’t see them as they are. I see them as they are going to be. And more than that, I see them as I have made them in me while they are still not perfect. My love reaches out and down, and no other love does that. Other love reaches out and then reaches up for the highest ideal on the basis of mutual benefits and needs being fulfilled.”

So, the woman who reflects the glory of God and reveals Christ as a reflection of her relationship with Him, is godly and precious.

Proverbs 20:25 says that when you have entered into something that is holy and sacred, don’t change your mind afterward.

Do you understand why Jesus said, ”It is my will that no one ever gets a divorce?” He said, "Even if adultery is committed and you get a divorce it's because of the hardness of your heart.” Now, if you've had a divorce in the past I don’t want you to get condemned. It's in the past. Forget it. You are brand new today. But I have to bring this up. Do you know what the word “hardness” means? It's from rejecting the provision that would make you just like Him in your marriage - regardless of the other spouse's involvement in adultery. God went to the extreme of letting Hosea's wife, Gomer, become a prostitute. He told Hosea to go the auctioneer and buy her back when she was old and wrinkled and feeble.

He's done everything He can with Israel. He has done everything for me to reveal to me that godliness is not being near to God but being like God. The two disciples said they wanted to be near God in the resurrection, but He said, “Nearness is not what I'm after. Likeness is what I want. I want you to be like me, not just near me.”

So when we turn to the Lord, the veil of Adam is taken away. Then the Holy Spirit has liberty through the Word of God to impart the nature of Jesus Christ to us and to transform us. And we love mercy. He hides us in loving mercy. He follows us with loving mercy. When we leave mercy, He will not let mercy leave us.

So, loving mercy becomes the husband’s initiation and the wife’s response. And the marriage is characterized by loving mercy. We give Christ to each other, morning, noon and night. No hate, no rejection no passivity and no provisions for the flesh. We care for each other and take responsibility for each other. It is an unconditional love.

VII. THE BOUNDARIES OF SEX (from Sunday evenings message, April 30, I995)

2 Corinthians 10:3, Proverbs 20:18, Psalm 57:7, with Psalm 18:2, "The Lord is our stronghold."

A stronghold is a place that is a spiritual fortress where spiritual powers are hiding in activity. In Luke 22:31 and Matthew 5:25 and 26, Satan battles against our souls to gain a stronghold, so that the Lord will have to give us up in that area.

Remember, the only people that will be used in Satan's appeal case are Christians who live in these three categories:
(l) they are mature, or they have God's strongholds;
(2) they are greater grace Christians because of humility;
(3) they have a New Creation image toward themselves. Those who live outside of these categories will not be used on the witness stand.

Satan tries to get us to use carnal weapons of rationalistic reasoning about our own independence. He solicits strongholds. He wants to destroy the Christian before he gets to the witness stand by disqualifying his capacity for God. Therefore, Satan governs their details of life, their sex drive, their ideas, and he controls their plans and purposes. In this way, Satan can get the Christian in a place where God gives him up. In Romans 1:24, 26, and 28, "God gave them up. ” Satan had brought these people to the point of being knocked out of the race. Matthew 4:1-4 shows how Satan tempts so we don't yield to the Holy Spirit. Then, in Matthew 4:5-7, his temptations center around categorical doctrine. In Matthew 4:8-10 he tempts us to go against the purpose and plan of God.

Every person throughout human history has moral light (John 1:9). We all have God consciousness (Romans 1:20). Thus, every person is accountable to follow these two options that God has given.
The reasons lesbians and homosexuals keep going back to their sin is:
(1) biological. This deals with the chemistry and chemicals that produce the need.
(2) physiological. This deals with the need fulfilled.
(3) psychological. This deals with the mind that has been seduced into the need.

While God has designed us for glory, Satan disqualifies millions of believers in the area of their libido waves and destroys sex in their marriage. They did not like to retain God in their knowledge (Romans 1:28).

Fornication is self-destructive. It disqualifies a believer from the witness stand. In marriage, the mates never coalesce, or grow together in the maturity of oneness.

In Proverbs 23:3, homes are built through skilful wisdom, and again in Proverbs 42:3, "Through wisdom is a house built; and by understanding it is established.” Marriages are established. Homes come alive. Families prosper. Skilful wisdom is the application of preciseness of the Word through the Holy Spirit.

Satan attacks people by destroying their bodies through alcohol, drugs, backbiting and judging. And after God gives them over to what they are doing, Satan never again will have to interfere with them.

In Genesis 1 :26 we were created in God's image to have dominion, to control our own spirit, to live in our divine design, and to experience the fruit of divine temperance (Gal. 5:22). Yet, we face an attorney in opposition: Satan (Eph. 3:10, 6:12). The demons want to get control of teenagers’ bodies so that their marriages will be of no value.

In 1 Corinthians 6:15, our bodies are members of Christ. In Ephesians 5:30 we are members of his body, flesh and bones. The person who is united to the Lord becomes one spirit with Him. Every part of our body is one with God.

Job he made a covenant with his eyes (Job 31:1). ”Why then "he said, “should I think upon a maid?” Shun immorality! Shun even the though of it! Flee from impurity in your thoughts, words, or deeds.

Sex for Adam and live was for recreation first and secondly for procreation.

Christ designed sex ONLY for marriage.

In 1 Corinthians 7:4 the only time a man or woman doesn't have control over their own body is for sex IN marriage.

Sex is the Lord giving two people a very deep, profound coalescence with one another. They become one soul and one

flesh. It is a divinely ordained act of recreation from God.

Degenerate sex refers to any kind of sex outside of marriage. It is the fulfilling of the lust of the flesh.

Evil sex is homosexuality, lesbianism, any form of immorality practiced. The atmosphere has destroyed the soul and the chemicals of the body toward normal sex.

1 Corinthians 7:1 spells it out clearly: NO TOUCH LOVE before marriage.

If you practice degenerate sex or evil sex, these are sins against your own body. In Proverbs 6:32, you will be psychologically destroyed, or "he destroys his own soul."

Our body is the sanctuary of the Holy Spirit. We are not our own. We were purchased with a price (Corinthians 6:19-20).

1 Timothy 5:22 admonishes us to keep ourselves pure.

In Ezekiel 18:21, "if the wicked will turn from all his sins...and do that which is right, he shall surely live, he shall not die. " God will give him a new heart and will heal his psyche (soul).

In Romans 12:1 be transformed by the renewing of your mind.

In Hebrews 13:16, submit to your pastor-teacher in these things.

No man should consider marriage unless he plans to lay down his life in sacrifice, as Christ sacrificed himself for the Church (Ephesians 5:25). And no woman should make a decision to get married unless she can submit to the one she is marrying.

Seeking God's kingdom first is what protects the sacred trust of libido waves and the mental attitude of love. In Jeremiah 24:7 God promises to give us a heart to know Him. This is just one way.

Sex is just one expression of love. God's life expresses His character in a five-fold form, whereas sex just expresses a privilege for recreation. There are pleasures that go way beyond sex.

VIRTUE, HONOR AND INTEGRITY IN A MARRIAGE

James 1:19-25, "Wherefore, my beloved brethren, let every man he swift to hear, slow to speak, slow to wrath: For the wrath of man works not the righteousness of God. Wherefore lay apart all filthiness and superfluity of naughtiness, and receive with meekness the en-grafted word, which is able to save your souls. But be ye doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving your own selves. For if any be a hearer of the word, and not a doer, he is like unto a man lie holding his natural face in a glass: For he beholds himself, and goes his way, and straightway forgets what manner of man he was. But whoso looks into the perfect law of liberty, and continues therein, he being not a forgetful hearer, but a doer of the work, this man shall be blessed in his deed. "

One of the things that James is talking about is individuals who practice the Word. "Doer" is not a good translation. "Let every one that practices the Word, they do not only hear it. One of the most beautiful things today is to keep on growing in grace and knowledge of the Lord Jesus Christ. Decreasing in the flesh and increasing in Jesus.

When the Word of God is received in Channel A, which is the left side of the brain, we become aware of knowledge. It is very important. We become perceptive of truth. Sadly, so often it remains in Channel A. When the Word remains in Channel A and never goes across to Channel B it is very frustrating. These people will sit in a message and strive and do everything in their power, but they are never changed. They are not bad people. They are Christians. But they are only academic in their knowledge.

In 2 Corinthians 1:19 and 20 we say "yes" to whatever comes from Jesus Christ. All of His promises are "in him, yea, and in him, amen. " All of the Word of God in Him is "yea." That means when the Word of God is taught from God's

messengers we don't strive. We simply say "yes" to God and mean it. In that "yes”comes the manifestation of the operation of the Holy Spirit. Then the Word of God is transferred by the indwelling Kingdom. At this stage, the Kingdom goes beyond the left lobe. The Father's plan, the Son's execution of the plan, the Holy Spirit's revelation of the Word producing divine provision and divine guidance: all of this is transferred to Channel B, the human spirit. At that point, the human spirit takes on experiential understanding. From understanding, the memory center is continually converted. The memory center begins to tread brand new pathways of spiritual reality, and as the memory center is converted the Christian has a brand new frame of reference. This new frame of reference takes the believer into a brand new, categorical accumulation of how to think with God in accuracy. Then, it takes him into precise definitions — not just definitions. People today have imprecise definitions. The Holy Spirit gives him precise definition.

At this point, we always have the Cross as our point of reference. This is the Finished Work. Then, we begin to have precise light, which elevates our conscience into God-consciousness.

The elevation of God-consciousness is one of the sweetest things. It means that a person who is under pressure does not internalize it. It does not become stress. He doesn't have to go to the wrong resources to get help. And he or she doesn’t have to enter into verbalizing his emotions.

In 2 Corinthians 12:10 there is a great principle in the little word OUN, which is translated ”therefore." lt is called the elitive conclusion. It is an idiom in the Koine Greek. in this verse two adverbs are used to describe it. They refer to the human provisions, which are wrong. Then, the second adverb refers to God's divine provision, which is precious. So, this elitive conclusion says, "If you want to function and execute properly in your Christian life, you have to understand divine provision.”

What happens when a person cannot enter into the concentration of receptivity through meekness toward God and humility toward men? This is what happens: the right emotion is in total control on the right side of the brain. The right emotion is connected to human provision. It is connected to self-consciousness and self—awareness. Scripturally, as far as it goes is knowledge.

The Lord Jesus said in the Amplified Translation in the Gospel of Luke, "For nothing is impossible with God and with every word is power. ” And in 2 Corinthians 4:20, "The Kingdom of God is not meat and drink but power in the Holy Spirit. ”

This is why many beautiful people never get beyond living in their right emotion. They are very self-conscious. They are very defensive. They live in defeat much of the time, and they live in partial self-deception. On the other hand, when the memory center is converted and the Word of God enters into the B and C channels, the rooms in the right side of the soul are filled with wisdom. This means truth is applied at all times. It means never internalizing stress, never internalizing adversity. instead of internalizing it so that it becomes stressful, depression, reaction, and a negative cycle or guilt, the memory center becomes converted and we become partakers of God's divine nature through His promises.

We do not relate to the lust of this world's system. Every day we have the joy and the glorious freedom and the privilege of adding to our faith. We add to our faith virtue. And virtue is higher than love. We add to our virtue knowledge that we have never experienced before, though we have known it. Knowledge that remained in Channel A, that made us academic students without experiential reality has now been added to a faith experience. Then, to our knowledge we add temperance, a divine disposition based upon a divine proposition. We live in a spiritual frame of reference. We are literally controlled by the power and provision of the Holy Spirit.

And we add to our temperance God-likeness. It means our focus is totally on Jesus Christ. And to God-likeness we add patience. Standing firm in spiritual provisions through the elitive conclusion and accepting God's way for our life.

Once we understand this principle of godliness, then we enter into brotherly kindness. It means we fellowship in life, not with personality. We do not have to fellowship with individuals hiding in their personality and expressing themselves in their human emotions and their human interpretation of life. Our fellowship is in the appreciation of internalized truth in principles, in love, and in life.

After brotherly kindness we enter into charity. But long before we add charity we add virtue. Virtue is the most significant thing in a marital union. In Genesis 6 angels saw that women were very, very attractive. Women were extremely attractive because the genetic pool through the Fall hadn't accumulated to any great extent. So their beauty was still unusually unique. And the women outnumbered the men. Satan's plan was to send angels in human bodies to marry these women. The result would be half-angel, half-man. Thus, the promise of Genesis 3:15 that the Messiah to be born would be totally human and yet totally God, would be corrupted.

The evidence of this truth is some of the ancient heroes. For example, Linus the child of Zeus; Perceus, the child of Zeus; Hercules, the child of Zeus. Then there is Apollos. These were
half-angel and half-men, and they caused a tremendous rebellious spirit. So much so that God said, "I will not always strive with man."

He took Enoch up before the flood as a picture of the rapture of the Church before the Tribulation, as well as Methuselah. Then Noah and his sons were left, with their four marriages. They were the only ones left on earth, because the half-human and half-angel mixture had spread. They all had to die. Those who had not become married to angels would not be saved. These angels were cursed. Then, there were no angels with human bodies ever again, until Revelation 9 when God releases them from the pit in the last half of the Tribulation period.

But God has a beautiful answer to this: "You ruined the human race through marriage, and I'm going to defeat you through marriage." Ephesians 5:23-33 deals with three things a woman must do in marriage: (1) submit to her own husband, HUPOTASSO, because he is God's man in God's place; (2) subject, which means to the governmental doctrine with God's divine provision; and (3) reverence him, which means a very deep respect for him. She never nags but reverences him. The husband is to to twelve things. The woman is never told to love her husband, although she does, because there is something higher for her to experience before she enters into love. It is virtue, honor, and integrity. The man, in order to fulfill the Word of God, must enter into virtue, honor, and integrity.

Virtue means a mind that excels beyond human thinking. A mind that is obedient to God's viewpoint. Virtue means to excel spiritually. It means to enter into the excellence of grace, the significance of spiritual intimacy, and to enter into the magnificence of divine fellowship. Is it any wonder that 2 Peter 1:5 says, "Add to your faith virtue." You excel what others are doing
all around you but you are not aware of it. You have virtue love - a love that goes beyond knowledge in Channel A (Eph. 3:19), a love that has fulfilled your right side with all the fullness of God, a love that has your left emotion on your right side functioning, which is your spiritual emotion that is hooked up with the Holy Spirit and your new heart derived from God through the Holy Spirit.

The greater that virtue love is experienced, the greater the honor, the higher the integrity, and most of all for the man, he lives sacrificing for his wife. He doesn't holler. He sacrifices. It's done through an inward power of the Holy Spirit. His memory

center has been converted. He lives in spiritual understanding. He has a brand new frame of reference. Every morning is a brand new beginning. He has precise light. He has a confession that comes from the words of heaven. His God-consciousness is elevated. He is relaxed, filled with tranquility, because his mind is stayed upon the Lord (Isaiah 26:3).

This man treads brand new pathways for his memory. His memory takes on Psalm 27:11. He is taught and led in God's pathway of life. He knows how to wait upon the Lord (Psalm 27:14) and be courageous. He conquers, because he has been conquered. He seeks the Kingdom first. He doesn't make a commitment on Sunday and forget it on Tuesday. He enters into a brand new honor code, which is the second crucial thing that goes beyond love — honor, the Royal Family Honor Code. This simply means that he loves God with all of his heart and he loves himself deeply because it's God's love that makes him the object of grace. Then he loves everybody else with the same quality of love. Honor. A tremendous honor. Why? The indwelling Spirit, the indwelling Son, the indwelling Father and the indwelling mind of Christ. They are closer to him than air. Intimacy becomes more unique. Manifestation of God's life becomes normal.

Then, there is **Integrity.** This man has an integrity that goes beyond failure and forgives. It is an integrity that goes beyond the memory and forgives. Remember, the memory center has been converted into a grace, mercy and love center. The husband enters into conversion after conversion in his memory center. This man lives in faith-rest. He studies his wife's needs, and he adores her. Regardless of her age or her looks, God designed her on the inside to he beautiful, so, she is most beautiful to him.

Inasmuch as she was designed to respond, Satan look advantage and got Eve in a place where she never should have been. Satan knew that she was a responder by divine design, so he initialed with dialogue and got her to respond to him. And respond she did. There was no need for the Tree of Knowledge of Good and Evil, because everything was life. There was no reason to have to know evil and to have to know sin and desire to experience it, because they had the life of the eternal God, the life of the Creator, the life of Love, the life of Jesus Christ dwelling, filling, fellowshipping. They didn't need to know good and evil. But Eve responded to Satan, and the day she did she reacted to God.

You get a woman reacting and you'll have the Women's Liberation Movement; you'll have abortion; you'll have pre-marital sex; you'll have lesbianism. Get a woman reacting and she will try to dominate through her right emotion, which just gets worse and worse. She uses human rationale to express her opinions without truth. Proverbs 19:2 calls this "foolishness." Woman was never made to react. She was beautifully designed to respond to God. If she is in a marriage that is not a good marriage, God says, "Respond to me, I will make you inwardly beautiful and adorn you with grace" in 1 Peter 3:1 and 2, "and you will win the unsaved man. Respond to me in your left emotion, in your memory center. It will be converted. You'll have a new frame of reference. You will have virtue, an attitude that excels. You will have my honor code, a fixed value on his potential and toward his state. You will have integrity."

If we deny Him, He abides faithful and cannot deny Himself (2 Timothy 2:13). That's His integrity. Our unbelief shall not make the Word of God of none effect. Let God be true and every man a liar. God will stay true, even if I don't believe Him. That's His integrity. That's His honor. That's His virtue — virtue adding to my faith honor and integrity, thinking with God. And then the Holy Spirit sheds the love abroad in my heart. The more I love Him the more I trust Him, and the more I trust Him the more I reveal Him.

If a man or a woman is married to a carnal person or an

unsaved person, the Bible says that if they respond to Jesus Christ, their children are considered "clean," or sanctified in 1 Corinthians 7:14b. Even their children who are growing up with an unsaved member in the household are sanctified, as that person responds to God.

I do not know what you think, but I'll say this: the elitive conclusion is, when a woman responds to God she is everything that eternity designed her to be. She has inner beauty. She has virtue, honor and integrity, and she magnifies the life of Jesus Christ. Her left emotion relates continually to the eternal value system. Her right emotion relates to the temporal value system. Her right emotion takes the human provision. Her left emotion always takes the divine provision. She is extremely healthy. Her central nervous system is blessed; her glandular system is blessed; her female organs are blessed. Her pituitary gland, that receives 23 billion electronic waves, contributes to her absolute health. It even controls the flow of her red and white blood cells with the power of God through virtue and honor and integrity.

There are twelve things the man does. He must make sure that he lays down his life for his wife. He prays with her daily — placing prayer with her as a priority over eating. As her head, he gives her doctrine that he is receiving from the pulpit. It sets her apart to be a better responder. He cleanses her, washes her and sets her apart by his life in Christ so that she can be everything that God designed her to be. He nourishes her. He cherishes her. He sees her without spot, he sees her without blemish -— all because of a mystery never experienced in the Old Testament.

This is how God uses marriage. A couple has supernatural resources that are not altered because of the other party. They have supernatural strength and supernatural virtue that go beyond the dictionary definition of "mental excellence," which is only a primary meaning of the word.

I want the men to read Ephesians 5. Study it until it becomes like breathing. Function in those provisions from God.

A woman that starts reacting will be living the rest of her life in wrong provisions. She must not react. Reaction will make her emotionally disturbed. Her soul will become incompatible to grace and she will frustrate the grace of God. She will get angry, defend, judge, and become loquacious. She'll be hot and cold. Even when she's "spiritual" it will be in the right emotion, as she attempts to use knowledge in the left side. She will be living a phony Christian life.

When a man functions in his right emotion, he has to have human provisions. He has to be independent and very defensive. He has to have approval because the Holy Spirit doesn't give it to him. Therefore, his self-image needs compliments and approval to bolster up who he is in Adam, because he hasn't had the transfer.

Everyone must understand that before you ever experience something you have to know it. But when you know it and don't experience it, it becomes a frustrating obstacle. In James 1 we read about practicing the Word of God. Practice it in Channels B and C. Don't just hear it in Channel A. You'll end up in self-justification, in self-deception, and with a self-defense mechanism. That is not the way to go. And you will make judgments about people that become absolutely negative. Then, to the doctor you go to get your little prescriptions to begin your life of natural dependence and never getting into what you call "serious" sin.

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