

Burke
COMMUNITY CHURCH

gathergrowgo

Welcome to *Discover Burke*

We're glad you've chosen to find out more about Burke Community Church (BCC). *Discover Burke* serves as an introduction to our leadership, vision, strategy, and church family. Since we have members from many different church backgrounds, *Discover Burke* will help clarify who BCC is and what we believe God has called us to. BCC is different from a club or society that you might join. Our desire is to be a family on a mission as Paul talked about in Ephesians 2:19: "*Consequently, you are no longer foreigners and aliens, but fellow citizens with God's people and members of God's household.*" Thanks for joining us as you consider whether or not to join this family of believers.

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Where We've Been

The History of Burke Community Church

Burke Community Church [BCC] began in an adult Sunday school class of a Presbyterian church in Springfield, Virginia. The class members felt that the true nature of Christianity was becoming dimmed in their current church setting. So they established a new church under the leadership of Mike Winship, their teacher and an ordained minister.

On July 27, 1975, 57 people held the first BCC service in Burke Elementary School at the intersection of Burke Lake and Lee Chapel Roads. The congregation grew and attracted members from a variety of Christian denominations. On September 28, 1975, an overwhelming majority of the congregation voted to become an unaffiliated, non-denominational community church. A month later, 83 members signed the charter commitment of BCC, with Mike Winship serving as the first Senior Pastor. The emphasis of this new church was to worship God, learn to follow Him, and serve others by witnessing of the Lord Jesus Christ. The newly formed BCC featured Bible-centered teachings for all levels in Sunday school classes, as well as weekly study groups which met in homes.

BCC soon outgrew Burke Elementary School, and we moved to the more spacious Cardinal Forest Elementary School. The fledgling church bought 4 to 5 acres of property in 1978 and began planning for the building. The church continued to grow, making another necessary move to Lake Braddock Secondary School in June of 1978. During the next six years, we worked together to set up and tear down equipment every Sunday. Everyone had a job, and everyone used his or her gifts. We learned how to operate as a church family and work together as the Body of Christ. On October 1, 1984, Paul Hansen and his family came to us from the Terrace Shores Evangelical Free Church of Green Lake, Wisconsin to be the second Senior Pastor at BCC.

As time passed, it became obvious that we should move out of the county school facilities and into our own building. The 4 to 5 acre property owned by BCC would not accommodate the growth we were experiencing. After careful and prayerful consideration, we bought our current facilities and moved to our new location on Old Keene Mill Road in September of 1986. Since 1986, the church facility has grown alongside the church body. The education wing was completed in 2000. On May 1, 2002, Jack Elwood began serving as the third Senior Pastor. The church continued to grow, and we completed the students' and children's auditoriums and additional classrooms through the Making Room for More building campaign.

In October of 2007, Jack accepted a call to Steamboat Springs, Colorado. Our current Senior Pastor, Marty Baker arrived from Stockton, California on November 1, 2008.

As we look forward, we have the unique privilege of looking back on a rich heritage based on a clear sense of vision. We also look to the future with eager expectation because of the mission God has given us to know Christ and make Him known.

What Is Our Mission

Our Mission Statement: A church's mission statement expresses what a church hopes to accomplish and defines its key ministry objectives. After much prayer and guidance from the Holy Spirit, we believe our vision at BCC has been defined in this simple, easily memorized phrase:

To know Christ and to make Him known

The first half of this equation, derived from the Great Commandment, deals with the believer's responsibility to God (*discipleship*). The second half of this equation, derived from the Great Commission, deals with the believer's responsibility to non-believers (*evangelism*).

The Great Commandment: *Jesus replied: "Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind. This is the first and greatest commandment. And the second is like it: Love your neighbor as yourself. All the Law and the Prophets hang on these two commandments"* (Matthew 22:36-40).

The Great Commission: *[Jesus said,] "Therefore, go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age"* (Matthew 28:19-20).

As a church, we are constantly and passionately committed to fulfilling these mandates of Jesus Christ. How do we realize this lofty, God-honoring vision? Our process is simple. God has given us His presence and His power in order for us to join Him to accomplish His mission.

We achieve our mission by actively engaging in three different aspects of walking with God: gather, grow and go. The next section of the book will describe what we mean by those terms. Simply stated we gather for worship, we grow in study and community, and we go as we serve our neighbors and the world.

Where Are We Going?

Written By
Pastor Marty Baker

Did you ever see *The Blues Brothers* movie with Dan Aykroyd and John Belushi? It's an American classic, and it has some classic, never-to-be-forgotten lines. One I'll never forget is this:

We're on a mission from God.

Mission is a crystallizing thing, isn't it? With a crystallized mission, troops are victorious in battle, a football team wins the Super Bowl, a once struggling company moves from the red to the black, an out of work professional sees the importance of attaining a second Master's degree to head in a new, profitable direction, a troubled couple learns what they need to do to guide their marriage to health and wholeness.

Mission isn't just a key life pursuit. It's the main pursuit. He who has it accomplishes much. He who lacks it lives, but doesn't live life to the fullest as God designed.

We, as shepherds and leaders of Burke Community Church, understand the importance and relevancy of mission, especially when it is divinely articulated and mandated. We are not content to just be a church providing a plethora of ministry venues for you to tap into, like we are some kind of spiritual smorgasbord or something.

We aren't here to plan programs for the sake of programs, nor are we desirous of filling the church calendar to keep all of us busy for God. Far from it. We, conversely, are working hard at building a church around mission, at crafting a ministry which knows what it is about, where it is going, and how it plans on getting there.

Bill Curry, who used to be the center for the Miami Dolphins under the leadership of Coach Don Shula, said these words we readily identify with as spiritual coaches:

“Coach Shula could turn the tiniest spark of a player's desire to contribute into a flame. I know, because he did it with me” (The Ten Men You Meet In The Huddle: 196).

We want to lead like that. We want to so know our mission that we can effectively and enjoyably fan the flame of faith in your life so you will join us in realizing our mission.

How do we go about realizing this worthy goal? By pulling out the old chalk board, as it were, and having a chalk-talk to make sure we are all on the same page, that we all collectively know what we are trying to achieve prior to the return of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ.

We are glad you are here. Perhaps you've been on the team for a while, or perhaps you have just been recently added in a free agent draft. Either way, we can all benefit with a restatement of the passionate mission which pulsates within this local church. Restatement is good. Why? Older players tend to get enmeshed in all the small details of the functioning of a growing church. Old players also lose brain cells quicker than newer, younger ones; hence a little repetition is warranted. Newer players who've just joined us may like what they see and sense; however, they are probably clueless as to why we do what we do.

So today we invite you to pull up a chair and focus your eyes on the chalk board as we get up close and personal with our God-given mission, and how we see it being implemented and achieved by this local team of believers.

Our Mission Articulation

Church mission should be something each of you knows well. I'm sure you are familiar with the mission statements of many secular businesses because you are constantly exposed to it in a variety of ways. They typically hit you in the form of a pithy motto:

- Adidas: Impossible Is Nothing
- Apple Computer: Think Different
- Microsoft: Where Do You Want To Go Today?
- Nokia: Connecting People
- Toyota: Moving Forward

Sound familiar? How about giving me the company if I give you the motto?

- It Does A Body Good ... Milk Board
- We Bring Good Things To Life ... GE
- Leave The Driving To Us ... Greyhound
- The Art Of Performance ... Jaguar
- We Try Harder ... Avis
- Good To The Last Drop ... Maxwell House

I'm sure there is more intricate wording behind these memorable mission statements; however, as they are presented to the employees and the public they are couched in a form anyone can get at the first pass. This is so important because it lets everyone know right up front what you are about, and what drives you. We are glad that our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ, left His Church with a mission statement like this, one we can't forget, one we can easily share with others, and one which keeps us on track with what He wants us to always stay focused on as His team members.

What Is Our Mission?

I'm sure you've heard it before from other churches you've attended, and I'm confident you've seen it in some Christian para-church organizations. You should see it because, from our perspective, it represents our Lord's final game plan for all of us. Here it is:

To Know Christ and To Make Him Known

Where did it come from? Christ's last words before His glorious ascension into heaven serve as the basis for this statement:

"All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth. ¹⁹Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, ²⁰teaching them to observe all that I commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age" (Matthew 28).

At the core of this command is the call to "make disciples" on a perpetual basis. In addition to this, we are summoned by the Lord to evangelize the world with the good news of His victory over sin and death, coupled with His ability to give forgiveness and eternal life to all those who chose to follow Him in faith. This is what we are about. This is what drives us. This is what impassions us. This is what goes into everything we plan ministry-wise. Making disciples for Jesus Christ and reaching non-Christians for Him is our main goal. Yes, we are on a mission from God and that mission is, and always will be, zeroed in on maintaining a perfect balance between discipleship and evangelism.

All of this, of course, leads to a logical question: Just what is a disciple?

- They are a person in love with Jesus more than anything and anyone else.
- They are a person who strives, more often than not, to conform their life to His holy life.
- They are a person who is an avid, loyal, consumed student of Jesus.

- They are a person who is ready and willing to make hard personal sacrifices for the advancement of the gospel.
- They are the person who governs their life by the Word of God, not what they feel is true or culturally importance and acceptable.
- They are the person who isn't afraid of saying what needs saying in a decadent culture.
- They are the person who understands and practices the spiritual disciplines like prayer, confession, meditation and Bible study.
- They are a person who daily attempts to make their holy position before God (1 Corinthians 1:30) match their daily, pragmatic walk (Galatians 5:16; Ephesians 2:10; Colossians 2:6).

A disciple is a person who is being transformed, in every facet of their life, into the likeness of Jesus Christ. Paul puts it this way:

“But we all, with unveiled face, beholding as in a mirror the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from glory to glory, just as from the Lord, the Spirit” (2 Corinthians 3:18).

I guess, in light of all of this, the question needs to be asked: “Do these words describe you? Are you a disciple? Does your life illustrate you are sold out to Him?” I hope so because we want you to be prepared to meet Him when He appears. To that end we are purposefully building a church which uses biblical information to lead to spiritual transformation. Exciting.

In addition to building and growing disciples, we are all about evangelism, about using a variety of means to publish and broadcast the gospel the Lord has entrusted to our care, and about training each of you to be a viable, powerful evangelist in our Christless, everything-is-truth, decadent culture. In a sermon series I did back in 2009 we studied the book of Acts. We named this study *Road Trip*, and during it we focused heavily on evangelism because of the evangelistic thrust of the early Church. Whether it was Peter on the Temple Mount, or Paul on trial before a Roman governor, sharing their faith with anybody and everybody consumed these ancient saints and that is why the Church grew. Why did they do this? Because they knew the mission Christ had left to them, a mission He stated right before His glorious ascension into heaven:

“but you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be My witnesses both in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and even to the remotest part of the earth” (Acts 1:8).

‘Witnesses’ is just another word for evangelists, which are what we are supposed to be. And we have our work cut out for us. According to one national study on healthy versus non-healthy churches, they concluded that “any healthy church should be reaching at least one person with the gospel every two weeks” (Thom Rainer, *Breakout Churches*: 20). My question, therefore, to you is simple: What are you doing in your personal and public life to help us become a healthier church? There is a whole lost world out there which needs a saving faith in Jesus, coupled with loving, caring life-long mentoring in what it means to follow hard after Him.

Believe me. Everything we do around here is measured against our mission. We aren’t going to involve ourselves in things which do not promote and advance this mission. We are going to purposefully and strategically build a local church on just two Christ-mandated concepts: help saints mature in Christ by means of discipleship and never miss an opportunity to share the good news of the gospel with non-Christians.

Yes, our mission couldn’t be clearer. God wants us all to be disciples and evangelists. Everything else on top of that is gravy. Ostensibly, the question we must now entertain is this: How do we plan on making sure we fulfill our mission I’m glad you asked. The answer is as simple as the question: We purposefully build this ministry around three, short, and memorable strategic words: *Gather, Grow, and Go*.

What Is Our Mission Method?

Evangelism and discipleship starts as we ...

Gather

For us, this important word speaks of our desire to meet corporately for worship of the living God. We do this because we love Him and because it is His command. Many verses from the Bible illustrate these truths.

David, who had a vibrant life of worship, calls us in the Psalter to join in the worship of God:

⁶Come, let us worship and bow down, Let us kneel before the LORD our Maker. ⁷For He is our God, And we are the people of His pasture and the sheep of His hand. Today, if you would hear His voice, do not harden your hearts as a Meribah, as in the day of Massah in the wilderness (Psalm 95).

Do you see the corporate nature of the command in the phrase “let us”? Those who love God love to approach Him together. This same thought is echoed in Psalm 132:7:

“Let us go into His dwelling place; Let us worship at His footstool.”

Again, you can't help but seeing how worshippers are called to come together in a specified place to worship. Worship is exactly what the New Testament saints did when the Lord formed the Church:

⁴²They were continually devoting themselves to the apostles' teaching and to fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer.

⁴³Everyone kept feeling a sense of awe; and many wonders and signs were taking place through the apostles (Acts 2).

This is just another way of saying they were in corporate worship together, just like Word of God commands all of us:

²⁴and let us consider how to stimulate one another to love and good deeds, ²⁵not forsaking our own assembling together, as is the habit of some, but encouraging one another; and all the more as you see the day drawing near (Hebrews 10).

Show me a healthy, vibrant, growing, maturing church, and I'll show you one which places a premium value on corporate worship. We believe we are that kind of church and we intend on keeping that status as devoted disciples.

What are some of our goals where worship is concerned? Here's a sampling of a few of them:

To usher you weekly, and corporately, into the unseen presence of the living God. Throughout the Scriptures, God calls us, His creation, to worship Him above all things and above all else. When God proposed to save Israel from Egyptian bondage, which became a fantastic word picture of our salvation from the bondage of sin, His words to Moses are most instructive about His intended goal for this operation:

“Therefore, come now, and I will send you to Pharaoh, so that you may bring My people, the sons of Israel, out of Egypt. But Moses said to God, ‘Who am I, that I should go to Pharaoh, and that I should bring the sons of Israel out of Egypt?’ And He said, ‘Certainly I will be with you, and this shall be the sign to you that it is I who have sent you: when you have brought the people out of Egypt, you shall worship God at this mountain” (Exodus 3:10-12).

Ah, there is it. God desired to bring His redeemed people, His followers to a special mountain in the Sinai desert so they could collectively worship Him there. Later He had His people build a portable worship center called a tabernacle (Exodus 25-40), and under King Solomon they constructed a permanent Temple in Jerusalem. In both worship settings God specifically designed His priests to carry out a well ordered, highly organized, sensory and auditory worship service on a perpetual basis. Their goal? To get God's people into God's presence as they came to worship.

In the New Testament times nothing has changed. God still wants maturing disciples to come before Him in a corporate environment, and for us that all occurs on Sunday mornings. We will use everything at our disposal to realize this goal from the types of songs we sing, to the prayers we pray, to videos we'll interweave throughout the service. And as we commit ourselves to these ventures, the Lord will show up in the most amazing, awe-inspiring ways, ways you'll sense but not be able to readily describe to someone else.

A second goal for gathering the saints together is this ...

To help you learn how the Scriptures, and the spiritual principles they reveal, are relevant to your daily life so you can grow up in the faith. As we see it, the service is first and foremost for believers. During this time we don't just worship the Lord, we place ourselves under the teaching of His Word, seeking to learn from it so its timeless truths can impact us and change us into His holy likeness. Once more, the emphasis is upon the idea of life transformation, as the Scriptures teach us:

“like newborn babies, long for the pure milk of the word, so that by it you may grow in respect to salvation, if you have tasted the kindness of the Lord” (1 Peter 2:2,3).

Just as a baby is transformed physically by drinking milk, believers are transformed spiritually by drinking of the milk of the Word of God as they read from it, study it, and hear it taught. Paul describes the power of the Word of God as well:

“All Scripture is inspired by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for training in righteousness; so that the man of God may be adequate, equipped for every good work” (2 Timothy 3:16,17).

Again, you can't miss how the inspired Word from God has the ability to fashion you into a holy, godly person. No other book on earth can do this. Thus, we will be known as a church which teaches this book. Sometimes the series will be topical, sometimes our study will be textual where we will cover an entire book, but in the final analysis they will all be biblically based. They will also be structured and delivered to show you how the life-giving principles from God are pertinent and applicable to your life. By the use of personal analogies, DVD movie clips, *YouTube* clips, drama, stage props, historical illustrations, modern quotes, and so forth, we will seek to make the Word not just relevant to you, but challenging so you can grow up in Jesus.

A third goal is a logical outcropping of the last one...

We desire to challenge all those who do not follow Christ to place their faith in His ability to save them from His coming judgment and to give them an amazing life here and in the hereafter. Granted, we will not work Jesus's life-giving gospel into every message, because the text in question may not warrant it; however, you can rest assured that when appropriate we will showcase the power and life transformative power of His gospel for sinful creatures who turn to Him in faith. At times, we will even provide an altar call, or a time at the close of a message where non-Christ followers can come forward and place their faith in Him as their personal Saviour. When we give one of these, please be in prayer for those who are making a decision to be born into God's eternal family (John 3). Also, make it a point to go up to the person in question to let them know you'll be praying for them. Body life is so important for these new believers in Jesus. So make sure you do your part.

Gathering for worship is, well, just the highlight of a believer's week, isn't it? As many have said before: Sunday's public worship should just be a culmination of a believer's private worship. How true. You should come expectant because God will show up and speak. You should come with a spirit of confession, knowing there are areas where you need to work on in your life. You should come with a focused purpose of getting to know others and seeing how they are going. You should come to learn how to conform your life to His perfect life. You should come, period, because it is just what Jesus ordered for vibrant, committed, growing followers.

I don't know about you, but I am personally humbled by what the Lord has done in and through this church as we've gathered for worship. He has blessed us spiritually with changed lives. I can't forget the young woman who came up to me several years ago and said, "Pastor Marty, I am an atheist and I just wanted to let you know I don't believe half of what you teach." Over the next year she didn't miss too many services, nor did she miss too many opportunities to debate me concerning questions which naturally arose from the morning message; however, in the end, she came face to face with the living Savior and Lord who died for her sin and rose from the grave. So, what did she do? She bowed before Him in faith and today she gathers among us as a sister in Christ. Simply amazing.

God has given us a wonderful church family. I thank Him for that. It was worth leaving friends and family in California in November of 2008 to come and invest my life here with you for His kingdom. I now look, with great anticipation, for Him to do some amazing things in the years ahead. How exciting it is to be with you right now, watching His Spirit work among us. Worship Him who is, indeed, worthy of great praise and adoration.

A second way we seek to pragmatically realize the mission our Master has given us is summed up in this word ...

Grow

Jesus saves us from our sins in order to conform us to His holy image as we submit to His leading and teaching. I remember when I first encountered this important spiritual-life truth as a new believer. My pastor gave me, along with other new converts, a packet of verses to memorize and one of those texts came from the apostle Paul:

¹⁷Therefore if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creature; the old things passed away; behold, new things have come (2 Corinthians 5).

This is awesome news, is it not? Before you came to Christ in faith you were dead in your sins and you lived according to the lusts and desires of the old, godless man. After you came to faith in Christ, you were now made spiritually alive so you could live a life according to the new man God, in His holiness, wants you to be. But before we get too excited about the personal ramifications of Paul's words here, let's analyze the text a little further.

Being "in Christ" grammatically speaks of being within the sphere of Christ. Philipp Hughes opens up the meaning of this crucial prepositional phrase with this comment:

The expression “in Christ” sums up as briefly and as profoundly as possible the inexhaustible significance of man’s redemption. It speaks of security in Him who has Himself borne in his own body the judgment of God against our sin; it speaks of acceptance in Him with whom alone God is well pleased; it speaks of assurance for the future in Him who is the Resurrection and the Life; it speaks of the inheritance of glory in Him who, as the only-begotten Son, is the sole heir of God; it speaks of participation in the divine nature in Him who is the everlasting Word; it speaks of knowing the truth, and being free in that truth, in Him who Himself is the Truth. All this, and very much more than can ever be expressed in human language, is meant by being “in Christ.” (Emphasis added. As quoted in Kent Hughes, 2 Corinthians: Power in Weakness. Wheaton: Crossway Books, 2006: 182)

The day you trust Christ as your personal Savior and Lord is the day you become “in Christ,” never to become “out of Christ” again in your lifetime. Membership in His family is the eternal consequence of personal faith, and as a family member the power of the living Christ is made available to you for godly living. So, I must ask you, “Are you ‘in Christ?’” The day you verbally ask Jesus to be your Savior and Lord is the day you experience the wonder of this statement.

Note carefully what happens after that moment of redemptive, saving faith: “the old things,” your old sinful life is passed away and now you are no longer enslaved to the old sinful man, but are equipped (by the Spirit) to become the new man who will, by default, experience God’s power to become a saint in ever since of the word. Translated, old sinful attitudes will be traded for new godly attitudes. Old temptations will be defeated by new empowerment. Old immoral actions will be sidelined by new moral and God-honoring actions. Yes, because you are a new person in Christ at the moment of conversion you are now placed on a daily course of becoming a new person by growing up in Him by means of your obedience to His Word and way.

Theologically, scholars call what Paul speaks about here in 2 Corinthians 5:17 positional and practical sanctification or holiness. At the moment of faith, the sinner is forgiven their sin and given the positional holiness only Jesus, the perfect sin-sacrifice, could provide to them. We are placed “in Christ” because we are holy because of perfect work of Christ on the cross in our behalf.

Many other biblical texts support this concept of positional holiness. Here’s another to think about:

³⁰But by His doing you are in Christ Jesus, who became to us wisdom from God, and righteousness and sanctification, and redemption... (1 Corinthians 1).

Once more, we encounter that key prepositional phrase “in Christ,” but here its meaning is opened up even more. Paul informs us how our childlike faith in the person and redemptive work of Jesus positionally gives us God’s righteousness, His sanctification or holiness, and His redemption. What love and grace. God takes your sin, your spiritual ugliness, your godless mistakes, and replaces it with a high and lofty position you could never secure.

All of this assumes, of course, that the believer’s practical life will be daily impacted by their unique and lofty position in Jesus. Put another way, because your old sinful man has been replaced by the new spiritual man, positionally speaking, you will naturally desire to match your practical walk with that position, or you will move onto maturity.

You cannot read the New Testament and not encounter repeated calls and commands for us to spiritually grow up by yielding all of our hearts and minds to the transformative power of the Spirit of God. Here are just a few of some of those key texts we should all know well and seek to follow and implement in our lives.

Once more, we defer to the Apostle Paul:

¹⁸But we all, with unveiled face, beholding as in a mirror the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from glory to glory, just as from the Lord, the Spirit (2 Corinthians 3).

Remember when ol’ man Moses came near to God (Exodus 34:35). What happened to him? When he came down the holy mount his face reflected the shining, brilliant glory of the living God. The same is true of us as we draw near to God, as we spend time in His presence ... privately and publically, as we are with others who are developing an intimate relationship with Him: we are transformed, meaning we move from one state of holiness to a brighter state.

All of this moves me to ask some important questions. How are you doing? Look around you. Know anyone who has the glory of God around them? Seen anyone in your walk with Jesus who has moved from one level of spiritual brightness to another? I’m sure you have. Yet, the most important thing we can, and should, constantly ask ourselves is this: “Is my life reflecting, more and more, the Savior I serve?”

Now, back to the text at hand.

Greek grammar helps us here. The word for transform is in the passive voice and it is a present tense verb. What does this mean? Everything. The passive nature of the verbal idea means the subject, viz., you, the believer, are being acted on, and the present tense denotes you are perpetually being acted on. By whom? By God as you submit more and more of your life to His teachings, principles, and commands. How exciting. We are in a state of moving from one level of glory/maturity to another. Where are you on that spectrum?

Additionally, I must point out the rich meaning of the word Paul employs to describe the process of growing up in Jesus. It's called transformation and it comes from the Greek word metamorphosis. Sound familiar? It should. What does this word mean? It denotes changing the basic nature of something, to alter its core structure into something altogether different. If your children are into The Transformers, or if you've seen The Hulk change from one form to another, then you have a good handle on what this word means. And if you are not into movies, then just think of how a butterfly starts out as an ugly, slow-moving worm. Each of these changes is, indeed, a radical metamorphosis, and this is exactly what positional holiness is all about: It's about being constantly and radically changed into a deeper and more devoted follower of Jesus Christ.

Are you growing? What is the proof? Everything we do will be geared toward helping you mature and develop in the faith. We are not committed to just making you smarter Christians. No, we are committed to making you Christians who are smart in the Word and who, in turn, live to apply that Word to their lives in the most practical fashion so they will look more and more like Jesus Christ as the years go by.

Another tremendous passage about practical holiness is tucked away in Romans 6:

¹⁴For sin shall not be master over you, for you are not under law but under grace. ¹⁵What then? Shall we sin because we are not under law but under grace? May it never be! ¹⁶Do you not know that when you present yourselves to someone as slaves for obedience, you are slaves of the one whom you obey, either of sin resulting in death, or of obedience resulting in righteousness? ¹⁷But thanks be to God that though you were slaves of sin, you became obedient from the heart to that form of teaching to which you were committed, ¹⁸and having been freed from sin, you became slaves of righteousness.

As a follower of Christ, you now have the choice of pursuing the things of God or falling back into your old ways. Prior to faith in Jesus, you simply lived life based on the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life. Now, however, you have the ability to live a life free from your old sinful chains.

Robert Mounce, author of *The New American Commentary: 2 Corinthians*, skillfully describes the import of Paul's words here to the saints in Rome:

6:15 At the beginning of the chapter we encountered the question, Shall we go on sinning so that grace may increase? (v. 1). Now we meet a second and similar rhetorical question, Shall we sin because we are under grace rather than law? The first draws from 5:20 the mistaken inference that since law was added to increase the trespass, we ought to continue sinning so as to make grace increase all the more. The second mistakenly assumes that if we are not under law it does not really matter if we sin. The answer to both questions is a resounding, "By no means!" Grace does not free us to do anything we want. It does not provide the opportunity to live apart from all restrictions. Freedom is not the exercise of unlimited spontaneity. It means to be set free from the bondage of sin in order to live in a way that reflects the nature and character of God. The rhetorical question probably arose among Jews who felt that to be released from the jurisdiction of law would encourage the removal of all moral restraint. The answer to that fearful expectation is, By no means!

6:16–17 People obviously are the slaves of the one to whom they offer themselves to obey (v. 17). Paul set forth two masters: one is sin, and the other is obedience [to God]. There is no possibility of living without an allegiance to one or the other. "There is no absolute independence for man," writes J. Denney; "our nature requires us to serve some master." Unbelievers may think they are free and would have to give up that freedom should they accept Christ. Such is not the case. They are servants of sin right now. In coming to Christ they simply exchange one master for another. Servitude to sin is replaced with servitude to God. The master we obey is clear evidence of whose slaves we really are. There is no room for compromise. As Jesus taught, "No one can serve two masters" (Matt 6:24). We also are reminded of Joshua's challenge to the Israelites at Shechem, "Choose for yourselves this day whom you will serve" (Joshua 24:15).

There is a dramatic difference in the outcomes of choosing one or the other of these masters. To choose sin as a master leads to death. To choose obedience to God as master leads to righteousness (v. 16). The contrast in v.

16 is between sin and obedience. From this we may rightly infer that the essence of sin is disobedience. Sin is not simply something that we can't help doing but something we choose to do in direct violation of it is not something that is excusable due to extenuating circumstances. The righteousness to which obedience leads is the righteousness of personal growth in spiritual maturity.

That last sentence is so important. As we chose righteousness, as we submit to the voice of God through the Word, as we seek to make appreciable life changes because of what we've learned in a sermon or a Bible study, we move onward and upward to Christian maturity ... and that is what life is all about.

Moving toward spiritual maturity is also what our church is all about, and rightly so, for it is just another expression of what it means to make disciples from all the nations. Ostensibly, then, you can expect everything we do to be tied to this quest. Whether it is challenging you to be part of a home group, or being an active part of some facet of our thriving women's program, we will purposefully be calling and challenging you to grow up in Christ. We are not here to make you a smarter saint but a godlier one. We are not here to entertain you in a morning worship service, but to introduce you to the presence of the living God so you can worship Him with others, and so you can hear the Word of God so you will know what your Lord wants from you that day. We don't plan outings, retreats, or service opportunities just so you can get to know others, as important as that is, but so you can get more information on how to shape your life to reflect that of Jesus.

Yes, if you are serious about spiritual maturity then you are in the right place with the right group of people. We love Christ, first and foremost, and we collectively and individually are building a church known for its Christlikeness. Sure, we are not perfect. No church is. We have weaknesses, and we trip and fall. We, however, are not content with being static, but dynamic with our faith by pursuing holiness.

A third concept we focus on to make sure we are fulfilling our Lord's Great Commission is one simple, monosyllabic word:

Go

What does it mean to "go"? For us, it points to two concepts.

One, going from Matthew 28:19 speaks of our responsibility to share our faith with those who don't know the Savior. Think of an artesian well for a moment. My Uncle Buck (that's really his name) took me out to see one on a trip my family took to South Carolina one summer. In the middle of this well-watered, green field bubbled the freshest, cleanest water I've ever tasted, and it, by its nature and positioning, couldn't help but just bubble to the surface, bringing life wherever its streams carried it. In many respects, this is a metaphor, a picture of our lives. When we've tasted and know that the Lord is good (Psalm 34:8), when we know the power of the cross in our own lives, when we know the value of having the Spirit of God working in and through our lives, in spectacular, refreshing ways, we can't help but let the value of the faith bubble over from our lives to those we come in contact with.

Isn't this how Jesus lived? Indeed. To read through the gospels is to see him setting the example of bringing the life-giving water of the gospel to spiritually dry, parched souls. Think about His purposefully and strategic encounter with the Samaritan woman at a well one day:

⁵So He came to a city of Samaria, called Sychar, near the parcel of ground that Jacob gave to his son Joseph; ⁶and Jacob's well was there. Jesus therefore, being wearied from His journey, was sitting thus by the well. It was about the sixth hour. ⁷There came a woman of Samaria to draw water. Jesus said to her, "Give Me a drink." ⁸For His disciples had gone away into the city to buy food. ⁹The Samaritan woman therefore said to Him, "How is it that You, being a Jew, ask me for a drink since I am a Samaritan woman?" (For Jews have no dealings with Samaritans.) ¹⁰Jesus answered and said to her, "If you knew the gift of God, and who it is who says to you, 'Give Me a drink,' you would have asked Him, and He would have given you living water." ¹¹She said to Him, "Sir, You have nothing to draw with and the well is deep; where then do You get that living water? ¹²"You are not greater than our father Jacob, are You, who gave us the well, and drank of it himself, and his sons, and his cattle?" ¹³Jesus answered and said to her, "Everyone who drinks of this water shall thirst again; ¹⁴but whoever drinks of the water that I shall give him shall never thirst; but the water that I shall give him shall become in him a well of water springing up to eternal life." ¹⁵The woman said to Him, "Sir, give me this water, so I will not be thirsty, nor come all the way here to draw." ¹⁶He said to her, "Go, call your husband, and come here." ¹⁷The woman answered and said, "I have no husband." Jesus said to her, "You have well said, 'I

have no husband'; ¹⁸for you have had five husbands, and the one whom you now have is not your husband; this you have said truly." ¹⁹The woman said to Him, "Sir, I perceive that You are a prophet. ²⁰"Our fathers worshiped in this mountain, and you people say that in Jerusalem is the place where men ought to worship." ²¹Jesus said to her, "Woman, believe Me, an hour is coming when neither in this mountain, nor in Jerusalem, shall you worship the Father. ²²"You worship that which you do not know; we worship that which we know, for salvation is from the Jews. ²³"But an hour is coming, and now is, when the true worshipers shall worship the Father in spirit and truth; for such people the Father seeks to be His worshipers. ²⁴"God is spirit, and those who worship Him must worship in spirit and truth." ²⁵The woman said to Him, "I know that Messiah is coming (He who is called Christ); when that One comes, He will declare all things to us." ²⁶Jesus said to her, "I who speak to you am He" (John 4).

See how the gospel just bubbled out of the life of Jesus? See how it spilled over into the life of a woman with a sordid, sinful spiritual past? See how easily and naturally Christ poured the water of life into the sandy soil of her spiritually destitute life? He has given us a great model to guide us in our quest to fulfill the great commission, and this encounter at the beginning of the gospel of John is most instructive. In fact, I'd dare say it is so instructive, so important we need to slow down a bit and study it more carefully.

From my study of this passage, I clearly see six sound principles we can identify and emulate to make sure we are successful with Christ's gospel. Drop down through the verses with me and you'll see them, too. Each one of these biblical concepts will give us some much needed and timely insight into how to go and then lead someone into God's kingdom by our witness, coupled with the power of the Spirit.

Evangelism Concept #1: Live Near the Lost (v. 6).

What could be simpler? If you want to reach non-Christians for Jesus, friend, you've got to know non-Christians, be where they are, do some of the things they do, hang out with them, make sure you bump into them more than once a month. Note: It is not enough to talk about them, take classes to know how to share with them, to read books on what makes them tick. Sooner or later, if you want to be spiritually effective, you've got to let your life purposefully intersect with theirs. Yes, I said, purposefully. It must be part of your life-plan.

Take your lead from Jesus. We talked in our last study how he could have by-passed the wicked soil of Samaria like a good Jewish Rabbi of His time would have by crossing east over the Jordan River and heading due north to His destination. But He didn't. He chose to purposefully go where no ceremonially clean Jew would dare go ... through Samaria, that nation of cultist who watered down the law of Moses, and who blasphemed the most holy Jewish faith. And he didn't just go through Samaria; He parked Himself at a location where He knew He was bound to bump into a Samaritan.

Jesus went looking for contact. What courage. Do you have what He had? Take stock of your evangelism model for a moment. What do you do to assure you'll run into really godless people? Here's another question: Where will you find them? The sky is the limit, isn't it? They'll be part of Pop Werner Football, Little League, soccer, or your local swim team. They'll be the fourth guy you add to your golfing team next time you play Twin Lakes golf course. They'll be the group bowling next to you. They just might be the waitress who brings you some food to snack on. They will be members of the PTA, Women's Club, Lion's Club, Kiwanis, etc. Get the picture? Folks who don't know Christ as Savior are everywhere, but you must be somewhere near their location to rub shoulders with them. Are you working at it?

The house across the street from me foreclosed in 2013. One day a man drove up in a truck, parked, and then walked over to talk to me in my driveway.

"Hi, my name is Ted and I just wanted to let you know I just bought that house on auction and I'm going to flip it. But you can rest assured I will make it look really good." He talked a little more and then started stumbling over his words. At that point he said, "Hey, man, I'm sorry it was a rough night of drinkin' last night."

I replied, "That's OK, I'll forgive you because I am a Christian and a pastor."

He gulped hard, smiled, and then laughed before he walked away and got to work. That started a talking relationship, and it also caused him, unbeknownst to me, to tell his plumbing contractor, Bill, I was a pastor.

Over the next few weeks, I started talking to Bill across the street. Nothing heavy duty. Just some questions about what he was doing and what kind of materials he used. One day when I went home for lunch, I headed back out to my car, which was parked on the street by my mailbox.

Standing there with my Mac in my hands, along with some books, and a drink, I was struggling to pop my trunk when I heard Bill say across the street, “Hi, Marty. Ted told me the other day that you were a pastor. Is that true?”

“Yes, it’s true,” I replied.

Walking over to me, he then said, “Well, that’s great. You are just the guy I need to talk to. You see, I wasn’t raised in a religious home, and I don’t really know anything about God, but the older I have gotten I just know there is something more to my life than making money by flipping homes. My problem, however, is I don’t know what questions to ask to find the answer to my problem, and I realize my problem is probably religious. Could you help me?”

At that point, you don’t say things like, “Uh, let me think about it,” or “Could we talk later ‘cause I’m busy.” No. I dropped everything and began to talk to him about the problem of sin and the provision for sinners through the person and work of Jesus Christ. I’d say within twenty minutes he bowed his head in the street and prayed to trust Jesus as his personal Savior and Lord. Talk about low hanging fruit! Talk about a thirsty soul! And to think his spiritual need was met because I was faithful to plant myself near him.

Let me give you a challenge, you who hold tight-fisted to your love of isolation: Pray this prayer today, “Lord, show me where I can personally plant myself this week so I can make some spiritual contact for you.”

Evangelism Concept #2: Receive The “Rejects” (John 4:7, 16-17).

Jesus did, at times, attempt to win people of status, but His primary method for evangelism was to go after folks who we’d classify as the down-and-outers, the social misfits. In fact, He was so friendly toward the seedy people of life; the overly pious of His day looked down their long noses and said on one occasion:

“The Son of Man has come eating and drinking; and you say, ‘Behold, a gluttonous man, and a drunkard, a friend of tax-gatherers and sinners!’” (Luke 7:34).

The religious types of Christ’s day wouldn’t dare contaminate themselves with the likes of Jewish people with leprosy, prostitutes, tax collectors, let alone a Samaritan woman with a sordid, salacious past. Christ thought and did otherwise. He lovingly embraced those society discarded as useless, worthless people for God’s kingdom, and it was through His unconditional for them He was enabled to win an audience.

What about you? Who are the rejects you veer around or away from? A man with enough tattoos to tell a story? A young man with a long history of trouble with the law? A girl who loves all the week-end parties? The whiskered man with the proverbial “I need help?” sign in front of his chest? The shut-in who can’t get to church even if she wanted to? A guy who talks too much? A woman who really does have a past? A divorcee? A person of another ethnic group? A girl who didn’t make a team cut? A truly ugly person? An emotionally unbalanced individual? An illegal immigrant?

I’d dare say we’d all be more powerful in the hands of Jesus if we’d all purposefully set out to reach out to the societal rejects because they are the ones who tend to know they need Him in a big way. The majority of the others are tied up with their stock portfolios, boats, clubs, and sports activities. No doubt we can and should reach out to them, but we learn from Christ in this passage who is usually more open to Him.

Taylor Field is a man who emulates Christ’s method. In 1986, he took his young wife and lovely little children and moved them to New York’s Lower East side where he took over the East Seventh Baptist Church. He might as well have moved to downtown Bogotá. Drug dealers were more plentiful than mailboxes, addicts roamed the streets, beggars lived anywhere and everywhere, toothless people were so pervasive it could keep thousands of dentists busy for millennia, and one local thug, named Luis, basically ran the entire economy of this area, providing drug jobs and security. Obviously, it wasn’t like taking a pastorate in La Jolla or Pacific Palisades. But this is where Christ called Taylor, so he willingly went, choosing to sit by this well for a while.

He said the first time he had a prayer meeting at the church, which he eventually changed its name to Graffiti ... and you can guess why ... fifteen people showed up. They looked more like escapees from a local asylum, but they were who God sent him. When he asked them to pause for quiet meditation, one man misunderstood him and said jubilantly, “It’s medication time!” Still, the pastor forged ahead.

Many years later, countless people, whom the world had thrown away, are now saints and eternal members of the kingdom of God because of the Christlike love of one man and his wife. He not only went where they were, he purposefully pursued those most in higher society chooses to drive past. Do you really love the down-and-outers? Do you love the lost no matter who they are? Jesus did and does. If you want your evangelism quiver full of souls at the end of this exciting spiritual journey, then you know what you must do. No, don’t pull up stakes and move to New York. Your New York may be closer than you think.

Evangelism Concept #3: Launch from the Language (John 4:7, 10).

By this I mean, use common, everyday words, which have a spiritual counter-part or lead-in, to direct any given conversation toward God and the concepts of sin and salvation. This is exactly what Jesus did here, and on many other occasions. Listen and learn, won't you?

First, Jesus appears to ask for a drink of physical water:

⁷“There came a woman of Samaria to draw water. Jesus said to her, ‘Give Me a drink.’”

The Samaritan woman obviously thought He was speaking about physical water because she said:

⁹“How is it that You, being a Jew, ask me for a drink since I am a Samaritan woman?” (For Jews have no dealings with Samaritans.)

With Christ's next comment, it is quite clear He has taken the concept of drinking water to a whole new level:

¹⁰“Jesus answered and said to her, ‘If you knew the gift of God, and who it is who says to you, ‘Give Me a drink,’ you would have asked Him, and He would have given you living water.’”

Quite obviously He's speaking about water that's not at the bottom of Jacob's well, but water from a different sphere altogether. According to verse 11, the woman was still stuck on the idea of literal water; much like Nicodemus was stuck on the concept of physical birth while Jesus was speaking about spiritual birth. In verses 13 through 14 our Lord ups the ante by revealing that the water He offers is capable of granting a thirsty soul eternal life:

¹³Jesus answered and said to her, ‘Everyone who drinks of this water shall thirst again; ¹⁴but whoever drinks of the water that I shall give him shall never thirst; but the water that I shall give him shall become in him a well of water springing up to eternal life.’”

Once more, He has taken an ordinary object of everyday life, i.e., water, and has impregnated it with wondrous meaning in order to guide the sinner's thinking toward salvation. Point is, you and I can and should do the same at every opportunity which comes our way. How can you go about using language in this fashion? Well, just let your imagination run wild. Better yet, ask the Spirit of God to help you at the beginning of each day to have some creative juices and He will.

Just in case you need a jump start, I hope you don't mind if I give you a few ideas of how to turn any conversation toward a discussion of eternal truths. To the friend who has asked you to help him work on his car you can somewhere along the line say when he keeps grabbing the wrong socket size, "Isn't that just like man's search for spiritual truth. He tries one size after another, but what the world has to offer never seems to fit. Have you ever felt that way?" I bet with that comment he'll come out from under the car.

- To the eye doctor who's dropping various lenses in the machine to help you find the right prescription you could say, "You have a wonderful job. Not only do you get to meet many new people each day, you get the pleasure of helping those who can't help themselves see. Your job reminds me of what Christ does for mankind."
- To the plumber who's working on the pipes in your kitchen, you could say, "It amazes me how nice the sink looks but how disgusting the pipes underneath can be once you open them up. Wouldn't you say that's a snapshot of man's spiritual being?" Again, I'll bet he'll come out from under the sink on this one, or at least bump his head.
- To the neighbor who comes over to your house wondering why you don't have any weeds in your beds, you could say, "Well, George, I use a pre-emergence called Amaze, and it inhibits the growth of weeds seeds which are resident in the soil around here. If you use this product you'll get wonderful results." He'll probably thank you for your help, but before he turns and walks back to his house, why not put out this probing question: "Say, George, have you ever given thought to the fact that your yard and my yard might just be a picture of the two types of spiritual lives? Would you be interested in some pre-emergence which get rids more than just weeds?"

I could go on, but that would take the fun out of it. Listen to me, what Jesus did, you can do too. Just start paying attention to what people are saying and then look for innovative ways to put a bridle in the mouth of the discussion and lead it to where you want it to go. You'll be shocked at the results, believe me. Too often, I fear, we let fantastic opportunities slip through our fingers like fine grains of sand. Let us collectively work to close those fingers so we can reach that person at the well of life like Jesus did.

Evangelism Concept #4: Preview the Promise (John 4:13-14).

By this I mean make sure you, like our Lord, tell the spiritually parched non-Christian just what this awesome water of God will do in their life. Jesus emphatically tells her that she should receive the water He's offering it will become a virtual geyser of eternal life giving water to her soul. He didn't just say, "Here, try this new spiritual elixir I've got here. It just may cure your spiritual ills." He wasn't politically correct either. We know this because He didn't say, "Here, dear, try some of the water I've got to offer you, it is just one of plethora of religious waters you can drink from in today's world." No. He offered her eternal life solely through the spiritual water He was offering.

This is what makes Christianity so different from the religions of the world. It guarantees you eternal, fresh, flowing life the moment you believe in the source of the headwaters, Jesus Christ. All other religions, from Hinduism to Islam can only give you a weak promise of life before God based upon your small faith plus a whole lot of performance to the god or gods in question.

Promises of never-ending life permeate the gospel story:

27My sheep hear My voice, and I know them, and they follow Me; 28 and I give eternal life to them, and they shall never perish; and no one shall snatch them out of My hand" (John 10:27-28).

"Truly, truly, I say to you, he who believes has eternal life" (John 6:47).

Note, Jesus didn't say, "You might have eternal life," or "You might get lucky and live forever." No. He said, "He who believes has eternal life." What greater message can you give mortals who are stalked by death each day, who are constantly reminded of their own finiteness? If you will but give this promise, it will open up a well of water in their life which will meet their deepest needs while giving them inexorable hope. Are you ready to share the promise?

Evangelism Concept #5: Prove THE Point (John 4:16-19).

In this exchange Jesus moves to demonstrate that He's not just any Jewish Rabbi, He's THE Rabbi, even God himself. He does it by expressing His omniscience. Bear in mind, she didn't tell him she was currently living with

a man outside of marriage and that she had been divorced five times. He told her what He already knew about her underscoring His divinity. No doubt, it was this revelation which moved her later to make a faith decision to follow Jesus. Remember what she joyously proclaimed as she ran into Sychar a new woman, “Come, see a man who told me all the things that I have done; this is not the Christ, is it?” (v. 29). She was well on her way to cognitively and emotionally embracing the fact of Christ’s true identity.

Makes you ask, “How do we prove His identity in our day and time?” I’ll share with you a story which gives you an excellent answer. Of the sixty exact prophecies of Christ foretold in the Old Testament, it would be mathematically impossible for a man to fulfill just eight of the sixty. Peter Stoner, in his book *Science Speaks*, definitively demonstrates that for one man to fulfill eight of the ancient prophecies would be 1 in 10 to the 17th power, or 1 in 100,000,000,000,000,000. For one man to fulfill 48 would be 1 in 10 to the 157th power. You can add the zeroes if you like for affect. For a man to fulfill eight prophecies it would be equivalent to burying the state of Texas in silver dollars three feet deep, choosing one coin, placing a dot on it, and then throwing it arbitrarily somewhere in the state. Then, ask one man to reach down and pick up that one particular coin without missing. The bottom line is, it could NEVER be done, regardless of chance and how much time you gave the individual. This is why mathematicians have concluded that anything past the 50th power is improbable of ever occurring.

Who, then, is Jesus? He alone is God. Crunching the ancient prophetic numbers more than proves the point. So, the next time you use conversation to guide the thirsty soul to the well of life, make sure you give them adequate reasons for believing in Jesus as the Lord of heaven and earth. Prove the point. You have plenty of proof.

Evangelism Concept #6: Focus the Foggy (John 4:20-24).

Christ has made great headway with this woman, but still she’s not quite sure about Him. She knows He acts like a prophet because He knows things only a prophet who walks with God knows. However, there is still a gray fog around her thinking. Remember, she was raised in the false theology of Samaria, probably her whole life. All she has ever known is the fact that they accepted the first five books of Moses, while rejecting all of the rest, that Abraham has supposedly tried to sacrifice Isaac on Mount Gerizim, that Melchizedek, the great “eternal” high priest, had supposedly appeared to Abraham on Mount Gerizim, that Moses had built an altar and sacrificed to God on Mount Gerizim when the Israelites entered the promised land, that obedience to the law was the requirement for eternal life. She grew up being told that the place to worship God was Mount Gerizim, that the place was just as important as the person.

Yes, she was steeped in a false religious system that had conveniently adjusted history to suit their man-centered thinking. She had been given a kernel of truth, but the rest of the cob was eaten through and through with false teaching. Abraham didn't attempt to sacrifice Isaac on Mount Gerizim and Moses never built an altar on Mount Gerizim, but rather on Mount Ebal (Deuteronomy 27:4). These were religious lies meant to deceive and keep people drinking from the well of error.

Enter Jesus. In verse 21, He clears the fog away by telling her the time is coming when the place you tap into God won't matter. In verse 22, He hits her false thinking head-on by telling her she is dead wrong in thinking that her belief system will save her soul, when salvation can only come through the Jewish faith based in its proper teachings about sin and sacrifice. In verse 23 through 24 He clears the last bit of fog away by telling her that since God is spirit and truth He can be worshiped by anyone, anywhere, at any time. Why, He can even be accessed at a dirty old well at high noon on a very hot day.

Again, what do we learn from His effective method for leading the lost into the kingdom? We learn that we must be prepared to say what needs to be said. We must be willingly to loving point out that there is salvation in no other belief system but that of Christianity. We must be willing to tell the Muslim that adherence to the five great pillars will not save a man. We must be willing to tell the person who believes that it doesn't matter what you believe religiously as long as you believe in something, that their "faith" will not save them.

Listening to nine miners, who were rescued in from a mine collapse in Pennsylvania in 2002, I was struck by one part of the conversation as they were interviewed on ABC's *Dateline*.

One young man said, "When the water started rising to our necks, I asked everyone that since I had never been baptized, I wondered if I would go to heaven."

Another tough-looking, seasoned miner said at that point he spoke up and said, "I told him, and 'My belief is that if you are a good person and have lived a good life that you will most certainly go to heaven.'"

Had you been the lone Christian in that dark, dank, dismal hole 240 feet down facing the jaws of death, would you have said something? Would you have piped up with a ray of truth? Christ would have, and did, and that's why He single-handedly led so many people into the kingdom. He wasn't afraid to tell them they erred by attempting to worship God in their own way. Nor was He afraid to tell them how to properly know and walk with God. Can we do any less?

What do we learn from this? We learn that the Lord shows us the importance of telling people who He is. He was not just a good man, a great rabbi from the past, or a mythological concoction of the Jewish Christians. No. He was/is the one and only living God who came to earth to save us from our sins. How can *that* message not bubble up from your life? Better yet, how can it not just gush forth?

Here at Burke Community Church we are, well, just full of the water of life. And there are many who have joined us simply because we have been individually and corporately faithful to allow that life-giving water to flow out of our lives into their spiritually parched lives. You are sitting in this class because you, too, know how amazing this water is for your own soul. We are glad you are with us to help us bring the gospel water to our city, our nation, and our world. We also want to make some commitments to you.

For one, we will make sure this water, this gospel is showcased at every level of our church on a continual basis. Your children will learn about it through the Bible stories they'll study, your teens will hear about it from our leaders when they gather, our Men's and Women's ministries will openly talk about it, and we'll build it into our worship services so that those who are spiritually thirsty will find the one "drink," Jesus, which/who can, and will, satisfy the soul.

For another, we will do our part in training and giving you the tools to know how to effectively share your faith, coupled with how to defend it. Whether it is a class designed to teach you how to contagiously be Christ's witness, or apologetic concepts which will be purposefully woven into a given sermon, we will do our best to equip you to reap a great harvest of souls for the Lord.

A second concept we glean from the "go" motif has to do with service.

Concerning this, Mark 10:45 teaches us well:

"For even the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life a ransom for many" (Mark 10:45).

What Christ-follower could ever forget these profound words?
Christ's illustration here is from the greater to the lesser, you and me. Simply put: Since He, the Lord of glory and King of Kings, became a humble servant to others, we, as His disciples, must follow in His footsteps. The logical outcome is clear:

- Disciples are selfless, not selfish.
- Disciples are givers, not getters.
- Disciples are open handed, not white-knuckled
- Disciples are here to serve others, not to be served by others.
- Disciples are concerned about inter-dependence, not independence.
- Disciples sit and serve; they don't sit and soak on Sundays.
- Disciples aren't consumed with who they are at work, but who they are as saints.
- Disciples don't fight for the top, but for the bottom.
- Disciples don't have to be constantly asked to serve, they serve by nature.
- Disciples do what has to be done, even if it's not pleasant, or won't bring them time in the limelight. They are content with obscurity.

Ostensibly, the question has to be posed. Where are you serving right now? And don't forget that service should occur inside and outside the church. Where will you go and be the hands and feet of Christ? Where will you go to help alleviate needs? Where will you show up to use your gifts to advance the health of this local body of Christ?

As you know, our church is growing and because of this, coupled with our size, we need to be a church where God's people don't just "Sit & Soak," but where they "Sit, Soak In, & Serve." Show me a serving church and I'll show you a contagious church. Show me a church where Christ-followers are actively getting plugged into meeting the various needs of the church and I'll show you a church giving God the glory. Show me a church where service is not a by-word but the key-word, and I'll show you a church which runs smoothly and effectively, allowing it, by definition, to accomplish its divinely appointed mission.

So what about it? Where are you going to serve? Where will you allow God to use you? Where can you step in and alleviate a ministry need? Who can you come alongside of for support and encouragement? Believe me, there are numerous places where you just might be needed. Here are a few:

- Serving as a deacon or deaconess to meet practical needs of our body.
- Serving as an usher or a greeter for worship.

- Serving on our coffee team for worship.
- Serving in some capacity in our children's program which needs around 240 servants in order to function well.
- Serving on a men's or women's ministry team.
- Serving on our parking team, making sure people get in and out of the lot safely and quickly.
- Serving by making meals our deacon team can freeze to give to people & families among us experiencing tough times.
- Serving as a teacher of an adult Sunday school class.
- Serving in our children's department during our Sunday evening service.
- Serving Well ... I'll let you fill in the rest of the blank.

It's true. A servant is not greater than his master. Jesus, our master, has set the pace for how we are to go forth. It's called servant hood. I'm glad you are more than ready to join Him.

May the Great Commission never be called the Great Omission among us as a church. Jesus has told us what we are to be about until His glorious return: discipleship and evangelism. We keep things simple around here because Christ made them simple. We might be busily doing many things as a local church, but you can always rest assured we are always concerned that what we are doing is deeply and perpetually committed to realizing these two divine challenges.

And just how will we go about making disciples and reaching the lost? By focusing on three key, concise concepts. You should know them by now. Say them with me: We are called to ... Gather, Grow, and Go. Time is a wastin', as my family would say down south, so let's get to work while it is still day. Jesus is coming soon. Let's make Him proud of our performance.

Making sure we nail these ministry essentials is so crucial, especially in our present cultural church environment. With only 41 percent of American's baby boomers (those folks born between 1947 and 1964) attending church on a given Sunday, and with that number decreasing every year (it used to be 51% for those born before 1946 and it is now 34% of the busters born ... those people born 1965 to 1976; Rainer, *Surprising Insights From The Unchurched*: 33), we must be a church which gathers, grows, and goes. Some churches are great at gathering, but not going; therefore, they don't grow. We must not ever fall into that trap, but must be committed to these three proven concepts for turning non-Christ followers into ardent, lifelong disciples of the Master.

Additionally, according to a recent study by Thom Rainer, “More than two-thirds of young churchgoing adults in America drop out of church between the ages of eighteen and twenty two” (Rainer, *Essential Church*: 2). Why do they drop out? Here are their top ten reasons:

1. Simply wanted a break from church.
2. Church members seemed judgmental or hypocritical.
3. Moved to college and stopped attending church.
4. Work responsibilities prevented me from attending.
5. Moved too far away from the church to continue attending.
6. Became too busy though still wanted to attend.
7. Didn't feel connected to the people in my church.
8. Disagreed with the church's stance on political or social issues.
9. Chose to spend more time with friends outside the church.
10. Was only going to church to please others.

See what I mean about the important of making sure the Gather, Grow, and Go concepts are realized among us? They will be the glue which will grow up another generation who are in love with Jesus Christ and who would never think, for one moment, of not being with His people corporately for spiritual growth and support. We have much work to do, don't we? Well, we are at work, and we are encouraged you are here to stand with us in this all-important endeavour at such a critical time in our nation's history.

Before we leave this discussion about our church mission and our method for vision implementation, I would like to acquaint you with our ten to fifteen year short term vision plan. Land-wise and building-wise we have measurable limitations. Our current building project will double the square footage of our existing facility, giving us enough room to accommodate upwards of 3,000 worshippers; however, we all sense God wants us to reach even more people for Him. To do that calls for a paradigm change, thinking which doesn't tie our ministry to just this particular site. What does that change, that particular vision look like? Let me share it with you:

BCC is one church with many campuses glorifying Jesus Christ by transforming lives and impacting culture with God's timeless truth and life-giving gospel in northern Virginia and around the world.

What we propose is to continue to build a strong and solid spiritual hub on our current location with the goal using this hub for the launching of video venue churches in key target areas around the northern Virginia area. By doing this, we will carry our Lord's divine mission mandate, coupled with our ministry distinctives, to even more spiritually thirsty lives. How exciting.

Leadership does not know when this new vision will be implemented, but we just know it will be ... when the Lord shows us the timing is right. Prior to that revelation, we will work in various ways to make sure we are ready to go when the Spirit begins to move in this direction

What Are Our Values?

Granted, we value the Great Commission because this represents our Lord's final words to us, and it also constitutes the perpetual mission of His Church. We, therefore, place great emphasis upon these words.

On a more personal local church level, there are things which we value, things which set us apart, things which make us distinct. From our perspective, there are twelve items which populate this important list, and these are not just the things which make us different as a church, but they are what typically draw people, like you, to us. Here's that list:

- *Prayer.* I can safely say, after spending my entire life in the local church, that this is the prayingest (if that is a word) church I've ever been in. This is a church which takes Paul's prayer mandate in Ephesians 6:18 seriously. We have prayer teams on Friday nights, prayer teams before and during worship services, a large prayer ministry for various needs, special lengthy prayer venues during the year, prayer on the spot when you need it (who hasn't seen two people praying somewhere on the campus while surrounded by lots of people?), prayer given by key deacons and deaconess for those in the hospital, and so on. Yes, we firmly believe we can do nothing except through prayer and approaching God's throne. Will you join us?
- *Caring, loving relationships.* The New Testament Church grew because they loved each other, meaning they helped meet real life needs. Just study the book of Acts and you'll see what I mean (Acts 2:42ff). A teaching church without caring, loving relationships is a cold, unfriendly, lifeless place. On the contrary, a church, like ours, which is committed to truly reaching out and showing concern and meeting needs is a place where the Spirit of God is sensed and where joy is present. The bigger we become the more important it is for us to be deeply committed to this biblical value. As you come on board with us, we have to ask, "Whose need(s) will you meet? Whose load will you lighten?"
- *Local & global outreach.* Through our missions team, coupled, at times, with the leadership of pastoral staff, we purposefully plan to reach the lost in locally, nationally, and globally through our various efforts and missionaries. Currently, thirteen percent of our budget goes toward funding these evangelistic efforts. Locally, we stand

arm and arm with groups like the Sanctity of Life Ministries, the Officers Christian Fellowship, Young Life, plus a host of others. Nationally, we support Cru leaders like Randy Newman as he reaches out to professors at George Mason University and Bob Harmin as he seeks to take the gospel into prisons. Globally, we focus primarily on taking the gospel to the Muslim world, and it is amazing how God has sovereignly blessed our pursuits.

- *Building Strong Families.* Whether you are a single mom, or you've been married for thirty years, we are passionate about creating a church program where godliness, holiness, and strength are built into your family relationships. The family is under attack in our day, so we make sure those families are equipped with stand strong and true for Christ. For those families who need help getting healthy but don't have the financial means to realize this goal, we stand ready to assist. For those couples desirous of learning how to grow a stable and exciting marriage, we offer classes based on the Love and Respect series. These are just some of the things we do to breathe life into our families.
- *Christ-like service.* We are a serving church, a group of people who don't waste time reaching out to meet needs, be what they may. When hundreds of chairs need to be set up for worship, volunteers step in and get the job done. When a young military mother has a life crisis while her husband is in a battlefield theater, people will show up to watch her children to give her some breathing room. When a car is needed because someone has a short-term issue with theirs, someone steps forward with a loaner. Yes, when there are needs inside and outside the church you will quickly see self-less servants showing up to meet those needs without drawing undue attention to themselves. As you join us, remember that God is calling you to be looking for places where you might serve or for people who might need His loving touch.
- *In-depth, practical teaching.* In another study by church growth expert Thom Rainer, he discovered by polling formerly unchurched people that a staggering 91% of them felt strongly that powerful, clear, uncompromising Bible teaching and doctrine were the primary factors of why they chose to attend church! (Rainer, *Surprising Insights from the Unchurched*: 45-46). Jaw dropping, isn't it? We take our cue from stats like this, plus the leading and teaching of the Spirit of God to make certain Bible teaching is ... and remains ... one of our key values. Along these lines, Paul reminds us that there is the milk and the meat of the Word (1 Corinthians 3:2), stressing how some Bible teaching should be geared for the newer believers while other teaching should stretch the thinking of the older saints. We strive for this balance, seeking to explain the Scriptures in a lively, creative fashion for the newer saints, while also going into

more intricate discussions to enable more mature Christians to grow in their understanding of the Word and how it should interface with their lives and culture. And, as with any Bible study, we are serious at asking, “What does the text mean to me?” When you leave study with us, you should know exactly what God wants from you so you can grow in Him.

- *Expository Bible Teaching.* While a lot of churches are concerned with four to six week sermon series, we are concerned with understanding the Word of God by studying entire Bible books. Sure, we will get into topical series every now and then, but even those will be expositional and exegetical in nature. As we see it, there is just nothing better than moving (slowly) through a given Bible book or passage to teach people what it says and how this message relates to life. In-depth, practical teaching. In another study by church growth expert Thom Rainer, he discovered by polling formerly unchurched people that a staggering 91% of them felt strongly that powerful, clear, uncompromising Bible teaching and doctrine were the primary factors of why they chose to attend church! (Rainer, *Surprising Insights from the Unchurched*: 45-46). Jaw dropping, isn't it? We take our cue from stats like this, plus the leading and teaching of the Spirit of God to make certain Bible teaching is ... and remains ... one of our key values. Along these lines, Paul reminds us that there is the milk and the meat of the Word (1 Corinthians 3:2), stressing how some Bible teaching should be geared for the newer believers while other teaching should stretch the thinking of the older saints. We strive for this balance, seeking to explain the Scriptures in a lively, creative fashion for the newer saints, while also going into more intricate discussions to enable more mature Christians to grow in their understanding of the Word and how it should interface with their lives and culture. And, as with any Bible study, we are serious at asking, “What does the text mean to me?” When you leave study with us, you should know exactly what God wants from you so you can grow in Him.
- *Authenticity & accountability.* BCC is a contagious church because at its core we have folks who evidence these two godly and culturally forgotten traits. We are real, open, and honest with each other because that's just how growing Christians behave, that's how they treat each other, and that's the biblical model. Check out the words of Paul to the new Thessalonian Jewish converts, converts who had heard Paul teach for three weeks before Law-loving Jews ran him out of town. After he found out how they were doing from Timothy, he wrote them his first letter, sprinkling it with words of openness and honesty:

For you yourselves know, brethren, that our coming to you was not in vain, ²but after we had already suffered and been mistreated in Philippi, as you know, we had the boldness in our God to speak to you the gospel of God amid much opposition. ³For our exhortation does not come from error or impurity or by way of deceit; ⁴but just as we have been approved by God to be entrusted with the gospel, so we speak, not as pleasing men, but God who examines our hearts. ⁵ For we never came with flattering speech, as you know, nor with a pretext for greed-- God is witness-- ⁶nor did we seek glory from men, either from you or from others, even though as apostles of Christ we might have asserted our authority. ⁷But we proved to be gentle among you, as a nursing mother tenderly cares for her own children. ⁸Having so fond an affection for you, we were well-pleased to impart to you not only the gospel of God but also our own lives, because you had become very dear to us. ⁹For you recall, brethren, our labor and hardship, how working night and day so as not to be a burden to any of you, we proclaimed to you the gospel of God. ¹⁰You are witnesses, and so is God, how devoutly and uprightly and blamelessly we behaved toward you believers; ¹¹just as you know how we were exhorting and encouraging and imploring each one of you as a father would his own children, ¹²so that you would walk in a manner worthy of the God who calls you into His own kingdom and glory (1 Thessalonians 2).

Angry Jews were saying all kind of mean-spirited things about Paul to discredit him and his gospel message, so here he opens his heart and shares about his true motivations. Can you sense the transparency, the vulnerability, and the candidness? One of the reasons Paul was so effective for God is because he wasn't fake and phony, but real, real about himself, and real about sin and the truth of the Word of God. Look, when you encounter someone like Paul, you know they walk with God, that they are someone you just have to know, and that you can be open with them about your life, and that, in turn, will truly care for you. Here at BCC we strive, individually and corporately, to live out this significant spiritual trait. Will you? When you practice the Christlike trait of authenticity realize that accountability typically and logically follows thereafter. How could it not? By sharing your life openly and honestly with another saint, by letting them know your successes and your failures, and by letting them know your dreams and your fears you place yourself in a relationship where the other person will naturally and lovingly begin to hold you accountable to gain victory over the troublesome, sinful areas and actions which are brought to light. Again, this is a Christ-

like trait as well, one we find modeled by many New Testament saints. We also find it is a command we are called to implement in our lives:

“Let us consider how to stimulate one another to love and good deeds” (Hebrews 10:25).

“Therefore, confess your sins to one another, and pray for one another ...” (James 5:16).

Of course, all of this can only occur when there is accountability between believers, and when there is there is spiritual growth and maturity, the very things disciples are called to pursue. As you join us, then, know we commit to grow with you by means of authenticity and accountability. We will be looking for the same commitment from you as well for this is what the Christian walk is all about.

- *Reaching the poor and needy.* The entry on “the poor” in the Collins Thesaurus of the Bible puts this BCC value in biblical perspective:
 - a. God helps the poor
The Lord maintains justice for the poor (Psalms 140:12); he lifts up the poor from the dust (1 Samuel 2:8); God saves the poor (Job 5:15); God stands at the right hand of the needy to save him (Psalms 109:31); God lifts the poor from the dust (Psalms 113:7); God provided for the poor (Psalms 68:10); God saves the poor man by his poverty (Job 36:15); the cry of the poor came to God (Job 34:28); he raises the needy out of affliction (Psalms 107:41); the Lord gives light to both the poor and the oppressor (Proverbs 29:13).
 - b. People helping the poor
Turn from your iniquities by showing mercy to the poor (Daniel 4:27); if you lend to the poor, do not charge interest (Exodus 22:25); return the poor man’s pledge by sunset (Deuteronomy 24:12–13); support a poor man (Leviticus 25:35); let your land lie fallow that the poor may eat (Exod. 23:11); leave gleanings for the poor and alien (Leviticus 19:10; Leviticus 23:22; Deuteronomy 24:19–21); do not be stingy with the poor (Deuteronomy 15:7–8); sell your possessions and give to the poor (Matthew 19:21); sell all you have and give to the poor (Mark 10:21); when you give a feast, invite the poor (Luke 14:13); bring in the poor (Luke 14:21); send portions to those

who have nothing (Nehemiah 8:10; Nehemiah 8:12); we should continue to remember the poor (Galatians 2:10); why was this perfume not sold and given to the poor? (John 12:5); they thought Jesus was telling Judas to give something to the poor (John 13:29); visit orphans and widows in their affliction (Jas. 1:27); bring the homeless poor into your house (Isaiah 58:7); if he keeps his hand from [harming] the poor (Ezek. 18:17); do not deny justice to the poor (Exod. 23:6); may he defend the cause of the poor (Psalms 72:4); the Levite, alien, orphan and widow will eat the tithe (Deuteronomy 14:28–9; Deuteronomy 26:12–13); whenever you wish you can do good to the poor (Mark 14:7).

c. Those helping the poor

She stretches out her hand to the poor (Proverbs 31:20); I was a father to the poor (Job 29:16); was not my soul grieved for the poor? (Job 30:25); half of my possessions I give to the poor (Luke 19:8); they sold their possessions and shared with any who had need (Acts 2:45); I delivered the poor (Job 29:12–13); he delivers the needy (Psalms 72:12–14); he gives to the poor (Psalms 112:9; 2 Corinthians 9:9); the righteous knows the rights of the poor (Proverbs 29:7); the firstborn of the poor will eat (Isaiah 14:30); the poor have good news preached to them (Matthew 11:5; Luke 7:22); anointed to preach the gospel to the poor (Luke 4:18).

Both testaments teach us either through maxim or model that we, as saints, need to evidence God's love and compassion towards the less fortunate among us. Such is the heart of God. Such is portrayed in the life of Jesus as He walked among us. Such is reflected in the life of great saints like Paul, Peter, and James.

It is one thing to be a Bible teaching church, but quite another to put that teaching into selfless, sometimes costly action, especially where the destitute are concerned. We are this kind of church because it is the essence of spirituality and discipleship. Whether it is doing our part to help the homeless who live in the woods near Potomac Mills (this ministry is called the 25th Project), or providing benevolent monies to the financially hurting among us or who happen to come in off the street for assistance, we desire to meet the needs of the helpless and the hurting. As you come alongside us to realize this ministry value we know you'll not just feel good inside, but you'll know you are doing exactly what the Lord has called you do to prior to His glorious return (Matthew 25:31ff).

- *Vibrant, Spirit-filled worship.* Ever been in a worship service when you just knew that God was present? Isn't that an awesome,

memorable experience? When you experience this you don't just know it, you want more of it. How does it occur? That's God's business, but we can work hard at setting the environment so He feels comfortable "showing up." Our worship teams pray toward this end. Our worship leader chooses songs, sometimes they are choruses and at other times they are old, familiar hymns, which draw us into God's holy presence. Our lives can also be so connected to God during the week that it's just natural for us to sense His presence as we seek to glorify Him and His great name. You as a worshipper are encouraged to pray along with us for God's presence to descend upon us as we worship Him corporately each week. This is all so important because there is just nothing like connecting with Him as you worship, and there is nothing like showing Him how much you adore and love Him as you actively participate in a given service. What growing Christian wouldn't want more of this?

- *Apologetic training for all.* Learning how to defend the faith, learning how to take the faith on the offense without being offensive so our culture is positively impacted with the person and work of Jesus is a driving factor here at BCC. Yes, we take seriously Peter's charge to us as believers:

"... but sanctify Christ as Lord in your hearts, always being ready to make a defense to everyone who asks you to give an account for the hope that is in you, yet with gentleness and reverence" (1 Peter 3:15).

Our culture is in a state of moral, spiritual decay, and darkness is descending at an alarming rate in all sectors where once Judeo-Christian values were valued and showcased. To slow the spiritual slide into the abyss, the Church must be the Church. Dr. Martyn Lloyd-Jones understood this in his day and that's why he wrote these words, words which are still applicable:

"The business of the Church, and the business of preaching---and she alone can do this --- is to isolate the radical problems and to deal with them in a radical manner. This is specialist work, it is the peculiar task of the Church. The Church is not one of a number of agencies, she is not in competition with the cults, she is not in competition with other religions, and she is not in competition with the psychologists or any other agency, political or social or whatever it may chance to be. The Church is a special and a specialist institution and this is a work that she alone can perform" (Lloyd-Jones, *Preaching & Preachers*, 43).

Christ has called each of us to be salt and light to our world (Matthew 5:13-16), and to do that effectively we must be trained in the techniques of

apologetics. Here at BCC we will provide that much needed training. Sometimes it will be available in a classroom setting, while at other times it will be woven carefully into a morning sermon, but regardless of how it is offered just know it will be part of all we do here because so much is at stake, spiritually speaking.

- *Unity.* Jesus prayed for our unity in His High Priestly Prayer before His crucifixion:

“¹⁹For their sakes I sanctify Myself, that they themselves also may be sanctified in truth. ²⁰“I do not ask on behalf of these alone, but for those also who believe in Me through their word; ²¹that they may all be one; even as You, Father, are in Me and I in You, that they also may be in Us, so that the world may believe that You sent Me” (John 17).

Since He prayed for us to be unified, we must do our part in protecting unity. How do we go about that? We don’t pass on gossip; we don’t assume the worse about people when, not if, we hear negative remarks; we lovingly and quickly confront those who would fracture our coveted unity; we resolve personal disputes with others in a godly, humble fashion; we confess our sins to each other; we actually restore those who have hurt us and seek forgiveness; we follow where leaders are leading ... realizing they have much more information about a given situation, goal, etc., than we do ... just to name a few important methods.

Unity is so important because of a variety of factors: it keeps us from being distracted from the primary matters God has called us to; it creates peace in the body and peace, by default, breathes life and joy among God’s people; it enables us to follow the Spirit’s leading quickly; it makes the local church a safe place to be in a culture known, all too often, as combative and dysfunctional; and it brings us to a state of maturity because maturation happens as we hear and obey the commands of Scripture (Ephesians 4:3; James 1:22).

So there you have it: a detailed list of what we value. Granted, there are other things which we see as important in order to build a God-honoring church; however, at our core these are concepts we see as utterly primary. By formally joining us as a member, you are saying, “You can count on me to share and support not just your ministry vision, and to be actively engaged at living out these significant and highly biblical values.”

As I've said before, I'll say it again: I'm glad you are here. Christ is coming soon and there is much work to do before His magnificent arrival (1 Thessalonians 4:13-18). Your gifting and personal presence is going to build us into an even greater ministry, and we, in turn, will do our part in helping you become the person Jesus wants you to be. Together we shall not only cut deep into Satan's kingdom, but we will purposefully and strategically give God all the glory.

gathergrowgo

gather

- We begin to Gather

By worshipping with other believers on Sunday morning.

grow

- We Grow

Where we connect and build relationships with others in life groups and we participate in various studies that equip us to know Christ.

go

- We Go

To serve in our church and our community.

To share Christ with our neighborhood, our nation, and our world.

gather

Gather

We “gather” together as believers in Christ engaging with God and with each other in song, prayer, and hearing the preaching of God’s Word. Someone new to our church first typically engages our church family during this time of worship. In the creative, comfortable worship environment we are establishing, people are instructed and inspired by our journey with God and others. During the Sunday morning hour, the church models the actions we are to live as “living sacrifices” (Romans 12:1) which is our very worship.

What Is Worship?

The worship of God is a vast subject that has been defined in various ways. Worship is...

- The overflow of a grateful heart, under a sense of Divine favor.
- The outpouring of a soul at rest in the presence of God.
- The occupation of the heart, not with its needs, or even with its blessings, but with God himself.
- The upspring of a heart that has known the Father as a Giver, the Son as Savior, and the Holy Spirit as the indwelling Guest.
(Gibbs, A. P., *Worship*. Kansas City: Walterick Publishers).

At BCC, we are invited to personally encounter the living, transcendent, creative, loving and redeeming God Who takes pleasure in the worship of His people. As we gather, we encounter the God who is in the business of changing lives, and we are compelled to respond to Him passionately with every fiber of our being.

God’s desire is that we give Him our worship. Worship far transcends simply music or all that goes into a Sunday service at BCC. Our worship is actually our lives. God wants to be at the forefront of everything we do and who we are. He is looking to encounter true worshippers, those who will worship Him with their whole hearts, minds, souls, and strength. As we gather, we are invited to encounter God—and respond with our lives.

Worship is a tremendous opportunity and one we should never enter into lightly. As we gather for corporate worship, we should first enter into a time of prayer for ourselves before the beginning of the worship service, seeking the Lord’s forgiveness of personal sins so we will be spiritually fit for the time. This is how the Old Testament saints were counseled by the Lord to enter His presence (Leviticus 1-7).

At BCC, we realize we are participants, not spectators, in the worship time. We gather together not for entertainment but to engage in worship of our Creator and Savior. We focus on Christ and sing as joyously as we can to Him. At BCC, we want our worship to be:

- **Authentic** (Psalm 51:6)
Who we are on the outside should match who we are on the inside. We are real.
- **Dependent** (Psalm 145:14-19)
We are learning to totally rely on God, Who takes great pleasure in each of us. We realize that only He can satisfy all our needs.
- **Creative** (Genesis 1:1, 26)
The creative God Who created everything in the universe has made us in His image. We strive to express His love and grace in new and fresh ways, so that He may be glorified and our Savior Jesus Christ will be made known to our world.
- **Passionate** (Mark 12:30)
Because our worship is a response to God's love toward us, we should worship Him with every fiber of our being.

Worshipping God means keeping in our mind's eye a graphic picture of us standing before the very throne of God Almighty, giving Him our praise and adoration. We maintain silence when there are times of silence, and we train our children who are old enough to be in worship to respect God and those around them who are trying to praise Him. Worship is a high and holy privilege which we should never enter into lightly. The Bible gives us some great snapshots of what it's like to be in the Lord's ominous and magnificent presence, through men like Moses (Exodus 3), Isaiah (Isaiah. 6), or Ezekiel (Ezekiel 1- 2).

Our Sunday worship is tied intrinsically to three things (Singing, Teaching, and Giving):

Singing

During our corporate times of worship, we seek to glorify God through singing a variety of contemporary worship songs mixed with some traditional hymns. We value sound doctrine in the lyrics of our songs, and strive to choose ones that are theologically accurate as well as easy to sing. At BCC, our worshippers are encouraged to participate through clapping and the raising of hands and some choose to do so (Psalm 141:2). We incorporate modern technology such as projectors and LED lighting to enhance our worship experiences, helping foster an environment where everyone can passionately and sincerely respond to God for all He has revealed Himself to be.

Teaching

The purpose of the sermon is to teach us how to think biblically so we can live for Christ. The main goal of the sermon is to move the sinner to the cross and the saint to greater holiness and spiritual maturity. Concerning this latter goal, the apostle Paul says:

And He gave some as apostles, and some as prophets, and some as evangelists, and some as pastors and teachers, for the equipping of the saints for the work of service, to the building up of the body of Christ; until we all attain to the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to a mature man, to the measure of the stature which belongs to the fullness of Christ. As a result, we are no longer to be children, tossed here and there by waves and carried about by every wind of doctrine, by the trickery of men, by craftiness in deceitful scheming; but speaking the truth in love, we are to grow up in all aspects into Him who is the head, even Christ, from whom the whole body, being fitted and held together by what every joint supplies, according to the proper working of each individual part, causes the growth of the body for the building up of itself in love (Ephesians 4:11-16).

As the phrase “grow up” alludes to, the goal of all teaching and preaching, whether it occurs in a small or large group setting, is to grow us up to maturity in Christ. This growth can only occur when we are daily obedient to what we hear in God’s Word. Mere Biblical knowledge can make people proud (1 Corinthians 8:1). Biblical knowledge followed by obedience makes God proud (John 10:2-27). Understanding the Word of God was an important objective of the New Testament church and a key imperative in the Lord’s Great Commission to the Church:

*Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and **teaching** them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age (Matthew 28:19-20).*

Many churches in America today are watering down the Word of God, replacing it with light, fluffy teaching. The doctrine of sin and eternal punishment are downplayed, and more emphasis is given to psychological topics like “How to Win over Depression”, “How to Battle Fatigue”, “How to Overcome Worry”, and so on. By making God’s Word more palatable, these churches grow big congregations by tickling people’s ears and telling them what they want to hear; however, this method is not what God wants His church to be using. God’s teachers and leaders spoke both the negative and positive side of God’s revelation. Men like Moses, Abraham, Daniel, Joshua, Micah, Jeremiah, Peter, Paul, and John were not afraid to say, “Thus says the Lord!” BCC’s biblical teaching’s purpose isn’t to make us feel warm and cozy, but to help us understand who Christ is and what it means to serve and live for Him. This mandate involves sound, consistent, honest teaching of the whole Bible.

The Apostle Paul advises us about the Christian behavior needed for our time in history:

I solemnly charge you in the presence of God and of Christ Jesus, who is to judge the living and the dead, and by His appearing and His kingdom: preach the word; be ready in season and out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort, with great patience and instruction. [Here’s the reason for being devoted to teaching. For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine; but wanting to have their ears tickled, they will accumulate for themselves teachers in accordance to their own desires, and will turn away their ears from the truth, and will turn aside to myths. But you, be sober in all things, endure hardship, do the work of an evangelist, fulfill your ministry (2 Timothy 4:1-5).

We are witnessing this preference for compromised truth more and more today. We will benefit, therefore, from strengthening our resolve to be known as a church and a people devoted to teaching God’s inspired Word. Paul encouraged Timothy with words we should heed today:

“Be diligent to present yourself approved to God as a workman who does not need to be ashamed, handling accurately the word of truth” (2 Timothy 2:15).

We are only able to victoriously deal with sin and grow in Christ by studying the Bible (Hebrews 4:11-12).

Giving

Giving speaks of the believer's responsibility to release, as the Lord leads, what he has been given to help this local ministry. During the worship hour, we pass a basket to provide an opportunity to give back what He has given or entrusted to us. Whether you place money or a check in the basket or give online or by text, this moment in our service allows us to worship God as our Provider. For God alone is the sole and sovereign owner of all things. All creation and all this encompasses are His (Deuteronomy 10:14). The physical body and life of the Christian belong to Him (1 Corinthians 6:19-2). The Christian is a steward of what God has given: life (Romans 12:1), time (John 9:4), and our talents and abilities (1 Peter 4:10). Everything we are and have comes from Him. So on Sundays we set aside time to reflect on the truth and place our responses on the connection card or reflect on our monetary gift we have given. This time of giving is also a celebration of what He has entrusted and our gratitude from Him. Therefore, God expects His sovereign ownership to be cheerfully acknowledged by presenting our life's gifts to Him (2 Corinthians 9:7). Giving is a unique form of worship just like singing and listening to the preaching of the Word of God (Colossians 3:17).



Grow

Once followers of Christ regularly participate in “gathering” with us in worship, we encourage participation in “growing with us”. Here we challenge people to build deeper and more meaningful relationships within the church. We want to empower each other to have the best relationships possible. Therefore our call to relate to one another is summarized by love:

“Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind.’ This is the first and greatest commandment. And the second is like it: ‘Love your neighbor as yourself.’ All the Law and the Prophets hang on these two commandments” (Matthew 22:37-40).

Life Groups

Followers of Christ need each other in our fragmented society. We are not created to live in isolation. It is a punishment around the world to be placed in isolation. In order to live the abundant life which Christ desires for us to live, we must engage with other Christians. Therefore, we encourage all followers of Christ to engage in life groups. Each life group consists of 8 to 16 people and who meet in a members’ home each week with breaks during the holidays. We encourage each group to invite new people to attend and to possibly join the group at different transitional points in the year. The standard life group format is loosely time-structured, purposing to encourage closer relationships with one another and God:

- 20 minutes of connecting with one another (dessert, current life stories, events, etc.)
- 30 minutes of sharing what God is doing in each life and praying for each member’s concerns
- 30 minutes of serving and evangelism updates; planning of service and/or evangelism opportunities; prayer
- 30 to 40 minutes of studying God’s Word together

In light of the limited time available, life groups begin informally and ease into deeper topics. The essential task of group members is to ask each other what God is doing in and through them each week. Often we overlook God’s hand in our lives, and our life group helps us see the bigger picture. As God’s “workmanship” (Ephesians 2:10), we each are at work in God’s mission. In life groups, we encourage one another to see God’s mission in the midst of all the work. In each meeting, we encourage:

- The group to pray about where group members are serving, inside and outside of the church.
- Each group member to be in prayer for three others, who are in close proximity either to the individual or the group, who do not trust in Christ.
- Each group to “adopt” a missionary, thereby supporting one of the church-sponsored people who are reaching others the group cannot normally reach.

Each group chooses the Bible study they will pursue together, although we recommend that studies not exceed 12 meetings. The study portion should be a place where deeper discussions about spiritual truths and realities connect pragmatically to life. It should not, however, be the primary place for followers of Christ to study God’s Word. Other Grow areas are available specifically for Bible study. Our goal is to have members of our life groups encouraging each other to participate in each part of Growing at BCC. In this way, the life group helps each member focus on the whole of BCC’s discipleship focus: worship, fellowship, study, service, and witness.

Why is it important to invest in each other’s lives in fellowship? In his book *Building Up One Another*, Gene Getz lays out the different scriptural responsibilities believers have toward each other. These commands call for perpetual, daily activity. When we exhibit these lofty traits in our lives and in our church, the world will take note and come to Christ. Christ will also bless us greatly for following His Word.

- Be devoted to one another (Romans 12:10).
- Honor one another (Romans 12:10).
- Be of the same mind (Romans 15:5).
- Accept one another (Romans 15:7).
- Admonish one another (Romans 15:14).
- Greet one another, or be friendly! (Romans 16:3-6, 16).
- Serve one another (Galatians 5:13).
- Bear one another’s burdens (Galatians 6:2).
- Bearing with one another (Ephesians 4:2).
- Submit to one another (Ephesians 5:21).
- Encourage one another (1 Thessalonians 5:11).

While these “one anothers” illustrate our responsibility to each other, different actions will tear down instead of build up the unity and effectiveness of the local church. Cancerous sins which should not be allowed in our body include bragging (Proverbs 27:2); complaining [which is a real problem in churches!] (Philippians 4:11-12); careless talking (Proverbs 13:3); slander and gossip (James 4:11); jealousy (Proverbs 6:34);

and anger (James 1:19-20). On the front burner of our minds should always be this thought: *What is my motive for doing what I am doing in church or for saying what I am going to say about the people at church?* Remember that the Lord will judge our motives at His judgment seat (1 Corinthians 3:11-23; 2 Corinthians 5:10).

Our sole goal is expressed by one pithy and powerful statement in Ephesians 4:3:

“...being diligent to preserve the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace.”

Think of all the issues which potentially divide us: Should Christians always have church before noon? Should Christian women have long or short hair and wear make-up or not? Should we pass a collection plate each Sunday? Should we have communion every Sunday? Can a Christian be godly even though he/she smokes? Is it all right for a Christian to drink alcohol every now and then? Can a divorced person be an elder? Should a divorced person lead a junior high Sunday school class? The potential issues causing division are endless. No wonder Paul calls us to strive for unity at all costs! He knew that various issues would seek to undermine our unity.

Concerning church unity, we should always be asking ourselves, *“Is what I am doing or saying building up or blowing up the unity of this local church?”* Our attitudes as well our actions can disrupt and destroy the church’s unity if we don’t allow the power of the Holy Spirit to control them (Ephesians 5:18).

1. Why Should I Join a Life Group?

We’re created for community. Senator John McCain, who spent many years as a prisoner of war in a Vietnam prison cell, tells us how important community is in his book *Faith of My Fathers*:

“I was overwhelmed by the compulsion to talk nonstop, face-to-face with my obliging new cellmate. I ran my mouth ceaselessly for four days ...One of the more amusing spectacles in prison is the sight of two men, both just released from solitary, talking their heads off simultaneously, neither one listening to the other, both absolutely enraptured by the sound of their voices” (Faith of My Fathers, p. 209).

Being with people is utterly important for each of us because that is how God created us. The Bible validates this conclusion over and over again:

- God Exists in a Community.

- Plural Pronouns Describe God:

“Then God said, ‘Let Us make man in Our image, according to Our likeness; and let them rule over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the sky and over the cattle and over all the earth, and over every creeping thing that creeps on the earth.’ God created man in His own image, in the image of God He created him; male and female He created them” (Genesis 1:26-27).

- God’s Name Is Plural:

“In the beginning God (Elohim) created the heavens and the earth. The earth was formless and void, and darkness was over the surface of the deep, and the Spirit of God was moving over the surface of the waters” (Genesis 1:1-2).

- The Trinity Was Present at Christ’s Baptism:

“After being baptized, Jesus came up immediately from the water; and behold, the heavens were opened, and He saw the Spirit of God descending as a dove and lighting on Him, and behold, a voice out of the heavens said, ‘This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well-pleased’” (Matthew 3:16-17).

Since God exists in community, His people MUST exist in community. We are individuals, but we must be part of each other’s lives in a most intimate, relational fashion. To do so is to bear the image of God to our decadent, needy world. To do so is to be in God’s perfect will for how He has created us. We are created in God’s community bearing image. To compromise community in the church, therefore, is to compromise our essence as created persons.

- Jesus Expressed Community in His Daily Life:

“Jesus withdrew to the sea with His disciples; and a great multitude from Galilee followed; and also from Judea, and from Jerusalem, and from Idumea, and beyond the Jordan, and the vicinity of Tyre and Sidon, a great number of people heard of all that He was doing and came to Him. And He told His disciples that a boat should stand ready for Him because of the crowd, so that they would not crowd Him; for He had healed many, with the result that all those who had afflictions pressed around Him in order to touch Him. Whenever the

unclean spirits saw Him, they would fall down before Him and shout, 'You are the Son of God!' And He earnestly warned them not to tell who He was. And He went up on the mountain and summoned those whom He Himself wanted, and they came to Him. And He appointed twelve, so that they would be with Him and that He could send them out to preach ...” (Mark 3:7-10).

For Jesus, community was experienced through small group relationships. This community is where He loved to be. He met the needs of the crowd, but He spent the majority of His time with His small group of hand-picked men. Jesus transformed a small group who transformed the world. Jesus also fulfilled the divine pattern for how we are made as humans.

- Jesus Expressed Community in His Prayers:

“I ask on their behalf; I do not ask on behalf of the world, but of those whom You have given Me; for they are Yours; and all things that are Mine are Yours, and Yours are Mine; and I have been glorified in them. I am no longer in the world; and yet they themselves are in the world, and I come to You. Holy Father, keep them in Your name, the name which You have given Me, that they may be one even as We are” (John 17:9-11).

Christ’s prayer focused on His small group, then the rest of the disciples, and then us. His deepest passion and hope for them and for us was that we would experience an intimate relational oneness—something akin to that which exists in the Trinity. Christ knew that if the small community of disciples were truly transformed by their small group and lived in godly, holy unity with each other; they would mature in Christ and reach their world. Since Christ’s final prayer for us was for us to be part of an intimate, unified small group of saints, desirous of growing to look like Him, then how can we keep from fulfilling this most holy prayer? How can we not be part of a small group?

- God Created Us to Be Interdependent:

God said to Adam, *“It is not good for the man to be alone. I will make a help suitable for him...”* (Genesis 2:18ff). Marriage is the first small group, created because man desperately needed it. The evidence abounds that God wants us to be part of a small, intimate, spiritually oriented group.

2. *What's the Value of Being in a Life Group?*

- Welding

Within a small group setting it is much easier for our lives to be welded to other lives. In a small group setting, instead of being alone, or being welded to all the wrong people, we are closely associated with a person or persons who really care about us and want the best for us. Solomon addressed this concept thousands of years ago:

“Two are better than one because they have a good return for their labor. For if either of them falls, the one will lift up his companion. But woe to the one who falls when there is not another to lift him up” (Ecclesiastes 4:9-10).

Scripture proves to us again and again that two are, indeed, better than one. David had Jonathan, Elijah had Elisha, Naomi had Ruth, and Paul had Timothy. Who do we have?

- Wisdom

Solomon was wise, saying many things which just make sense:

“Without consultation, plans are frustrated. But with many counselors they succeed” (Proverbs 15:22).

The word “many” needs heavy emphasis here. A small, godly group is an excellent source of “many counselors.” Who do we turn to when we have key, pivotal life questions: a group of people who love the world, the flesh, and the Devil; or a group of people who love and honor God?

- Warning

We have a problem, but we don't remember well what we should remember. James touches upon this truth in the first chapter of his letter:

“For if anyone is a hearer of the word and not a doer, he is like a man who looks at his natural face in a mirror; for once he has looked at himself and gone away, he has immediately forgotten what kind of person he was. But one who looks intently at the perfect law, the law of liberty, and abides by it, not having become a forgetful hearer but an effectual doer, this man will be blessed in what he does” (James 1:23-25).

A small group can serve as an early warning radar in our lives. We've all made some unbelievable bad life choices, choices we could have bypassed if we were part of a solid small group. Small group members, out of love for us, will tell us what we need to hear so our lives can be protected as you fly from destination to destination. We all need this input in our lives.

- Welcome

There is just something about being accepted by a small group of people, of being loved unconditionally, of being welcomed for who we are, how we look, what we drive or don't drive, where we work or don't work, and how God has made us. This acceptance doesn't happen readily in the secular world. Non-Christian groups, while friendly, tend to be surface and shallow. A Christian small group is just the opposite: it is deep like the ocean. When we walk in, we know that everyone in the group is under the mandate from the Lord to welcome us, no matter what. Here's how Jesus puts it:

“This is my commandment, that you love one another as I have loved you. Greater love has no one than this, that someone lay down his life for his friends” (John 15:12-13).

Koinonia is a Greek word that has been around the Church since its inception. Acts 2:44-45 tells us what the word means:

“All the believers were together and had everything in common (koina—a root word related to koinonia). Selling their possessions and goods, they gave to anyone as he had need.”

Koinonia speaks of selfless sharing, caring, and open generosity. It doesn't speak of the old hippie concept of communalism, where everyone was supposed to live together in harmony with no private possessions. *Koinonia* speaks of the action the Christian takes to build and maintain relationships with other Christians by meeting their needs—whether emotional, physical, or spiritual—with no strings attached (1 Corinthians 1:9; 2 Corinthians 8:4, 9:13, 13:13).

When the Philippian church dispatched Epaphroditus with a gift to help Paul in his ministry, they were practicing *koinonia*—or lovingly relating to the apostle. Paul speaks of their sacrificial gift at the close of his letter to them:

“But I have received everything in full, and have an abundance; I am amply supplied, having received from Epaphroditus what you have sent, a fragrant aroma, an acceptable sacrifice, well-pleasing to God” (Philippians 4:18).

The church saw a need and did what they could to alleviate the need. What a beautiful picture of koinonia.

As members of BCC, we need to work hard daily at being koinonia-minded Christians, of stepping out and meeting the needs of those people around us, especially the saints of God. When we see someone touched by our help, there is nothing better because when we are Christ to them, we are being responsible for building up and strengthening this local body of Christ.

BCC relates to people by ministering to them in practical ways. Speaking about this type of living, Jesus says:

“A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another, even as I have loved you, that you also have love for one another” (John 13:34).

Growing is where we love one another in life groups and become equipped through study as well. BCC provides four ministries for encouraging spiritual growth through Bible study: equipping core classes, men’s ministry, women’s ministry, and adult Bible studies.

Equipping Core Classes

After someone attends *Discover Burke*, we encourage, but do not mandate, the following path toward discipleship and spiritual maturation. These classes are progressive and occur in a two-year cycle.

- *Your Life Mission*: How we share the love of Christ by committing our lives to a relationship with Him.
- *Character Formation*: How we become the person that acts like Jesus.
- *How to Study Your Bible*: How we engage the Word of God so that it comes to life.
- *Home Life*: How we live for Christ at home, especially with our spouses and with our children.
- *Old Testament Tour*: How we can better understand the Hebrew Scriptures.
- *Financial Wisdom*: How we can be wise with the finances God has given us.
- *New Testament Tour*: How we can better understand the new promises of God.
- *Defending Your Faith*: How we reasonably explain our trust in Christ.

Men's Ministry

BCC's men's ministry meets weekly on Tuesdays at 6:00 a.m. and Wednesdays at 7:00 p.m. At *Basecamp*, we study God's Word with a 30-minute lecture followed by a 20-minute discussion in table groups. The men's ministry also provides different connection events such as Saturday breakfasts and different sporting events. These events encourage men to connect with other men in our church and to attend the Tuesday morning Basecamp study.

Women's Ministry

BCC's women's ministry meets weekly on Tuesdays from 9:30 to 11:30 a.m. *Breakaway's* normal format includes a 30-minute large group worship session, followed by six to eight different medium-sized Bible study classes for the remainder of the morning. *WOW*, Women on Wednesday, meet Wednesday nights at 7:00 p.m. to meet for an hour study and discussion. The women's ministry provides different connection opportunities such as occasional weeknight salad suppers, game nights, and other fun events throughout the year.

Both the men's and women's ministries provide weekend get-aways for deeper Bible study. The women attend larger gatherings like Beth Moore's *Living Proof Live* and the *Women of Faith* conferences. They also have an annual retreat in the spring. The men attend an *Iron Sharpens Iron* conference in the spring and have a retreat in the fall.

Adult Bible Studies

Sunday morning adult Bible studies provide opportunities for more in-depth study of the scriptures. BCC offers at least one Bible study during each worship service, with subjects ranging from books of the Bible to current issues studied with a biblical worldview. We are a community which is always learning the Word of God so that the Spirit may sharpen us for the work of God.



Go

Each member of BCC is also encouraged to “go”. As followers of Christ we are to follow His example of service. In Mark 10:45, Jesus says He “did not come to be served but to serve, and to give His life as a ransom for many.” Therefore, we encourage everyone at BCC to serve in some capacity. At the end of *Discover Burke*, each staff member explains the different areas where members can serve our various ministries within the church. We also encourage BCC members to serve outside the local church. There are many different areas in the community where we can volunteer our time. We are a light to our local area as we serve in our neighborhoods and communities. Each of us should be faithful to use our spiritual gifts in the church:

Now to each one the manifestation of the Spirit is given for the common good. To another is given through the Spirit the message of wisdom, to another the message of knowledge by means of the same Spirit, to another faith by the same Spirit, to another gifts of healing by that one Spirit, to another miraculous powers, to another prophecy, to another distinguishing between spirits, to another speaking in different kinds of tongues, and to still another the interpretation of tongues. All these are the work of one and the same Spirit, and He gives them to each one, just as He determines (1 Corinthians 12:7-11).

Everyone possesses at least one spiritual gift. A spiritual gift is not a talent like playing the piano or being able to work on computers. A spiritual gift is sovereignly given to us by the Spirit of God when we come to the Lord Jesus in faith (Ephesians 4:11f). We are responsible to use our gifts in this church body to God’s glory.

We should roll up our sleeves and ask, “Where can I serve?” Much ministry in the local church goes undone because saints choose to sit back in disobedience and let others serve them. Gifts are given to be used to build up the church and spread the Gospel of Jesus Christ. When you become a member of this fellowship, be in prayer for how God would desire to use you. Fill out the *Go Form* (see the appendix) so we can know where God might be leading you. You are an important team member, so look for where you are skilled at serving on the team and we will see about getting you into the line-up. The New Testament is clear that saints are to be servants both inside and outside of the church:

“Whoever wishes to be first among you shall be your slave; just as the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life a ransom for many” (Matthew 20:27-28).

“Who then is the faithful and sensible slave whom his master put in charge of his household to give them their food at the proper time? Blessed is that slave whom his master finds so doing when he comes. Truly I say to you that he will put him in charge of all his possessions. But if that evil slave says in his heart, ‘My master is not coming for a long time,’ and begins to beat his fellow slaves and eat and drink with drunkards, the master of that slave will come on a day when he does not expect him and at an hour which he does not know, and will cut him in pieces and assign him a place with the hypocrites; in that place there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth” (Matthew 24:45-51).

“Now after a long time the master of those slaves came and settled accounts with them. The one who had received the five talents came up and brought five more talents, saying, ‘Master, you entrusted five talents to me. See, I have gained five more talents.’ His master said to him, ‘Well done, good and faithful slave. You were faithful with a few things, I will put you in charge of many things; enter into the joy of your master’” (Matthew 25:19-21).

Of these verses, Matthew 20:27-28 lies at the heart of the New Testament because if Jesus was anything, He was a servant of servants, one main reason we are still talking about Him 2,000 years later:

“Have this attitude in yourselves which was also in Christ Jesus, who, although He existed in the form of God, did not regard equality with God a thing to be grasped, but emptied Himself, taking the form of a bond-servant, and being made in the likeness of men. Being found in appearance as a man, He humbled Himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross” (Philippians 2:5-8).

Christianity is, therefore, a fight for the bottom, not the top. It’s about serving, not being served. It’s about selflessness, not selfishness—just the opposite of what our world thinks is important.

Being a servant should always be on the front burner of our minds as we invest our lives at BCC in the things which matter most. Pragmatically, what does a servant do?

A servant:

- Looks for opportunities to help those who have needs.
- Relishes in the thought of doing something others deem menial.
- Doesn't enjoy watching others serve while they sit.
- Focuses conversations on others, not themselves.
- Doesn't draw attention to themselves.
- Doesn't let the negative behavior of others keep them from serving.
- Praises other servants instead of critiquing and criticizing them.
- Gives anonymously and sacrificially to needs (Matthew 6:3).
- Maintains a life of absolute honesty (2 Corinthians 4:1-2).
- Steps in and works without being asked (2 Corinthians 8:3-4).
- is bigger than any offense (Psalms 119:65)
- Harbors no judgmental attitude (Matthew 7:1-5).
- Constantly looking for ways they can live, act, and speak like Jesus.

Are you a servant? One day your Lord will ask you to give account of how your life answered this question. Live so as to be proud to appear before Him (1 Corinthians 3:10-14). Inside and outside of BCC, you'll be given ample opportunities to fulfill this important calling of God upon your life. Seize those opportunities to His glory.

We are called not just to **Go** to serve others but also to **Go** share the good news of Jesus Christ. We want to make Christ known by proclaiming His good news. Christ's last instructions to His disciples were for them to be witnesses as they are equipped by the Spirit: *"But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you, and you will be My witnesses in Jerusalem and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth"* (Acts 1:8). In life groups, we are encouraged to pray for opportunities to share the love of Christ with those we know who are around us. BCC has different large group events to help us share the gospel with those we are praying for in our life groups.

At BCC, we begins with our present relationships, just like the New Testament believers in the Jerusalem church maintained their vibrant witness for Jesus Christ in the public eye:

"Every day they continued to meet together in the temple courts"
(Acts 2:46a).

This meeting at the temple could be understood in two ways: (1) the saints met in the temple courtyard (Acts 5:12), or (2) they actually participated in the daily worship held at the temple (Acts 3:1). It is hard to swallow the idea that the Jewish believers participated in sacrificial worship when The Sacrifice had already been applied to their lives. In both interpretations, the saints of the early New Testament church went public with their faith because this action was and still is the final command the Lord wished for His followers to carry out:

“But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be My witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth” (Acts 1:8).

As the New Testament believers were faithful to share their faith in Jesus, “the Lord added to their number daily those who were being saved” (Acts 2:47). People were being saved daily. So often in today’s church, people get saved on a quarterly or yearly basis. God’s people aren’t typically being faithful to be lights where we are and we aren’t consumed with sharing the life-giving gospel of Jesus Christ.

BCC members want to break that mold by becoming obedient to the Lord’s command to share His gospel wherever we are. A church can have great teaching from the pulpit, in classrooms, and in life groups, and have good fellowship in church gatherings, but if it is lackluster in its commitment to witnessing, it will become a dead and disobedient fellowship. We therefore want to emphasize the need to evangelize.

Many churches grow because they get transfers from others churches, which is good but by no means the best model for growth. The New Testament church grew because people were saved and this MUST be our same mindset. New Christians add joy and excitement to the church, reminding us what it was like to first be in love with Jesus. Their zeal to proclaim His salvation is usually a fire which spreads to other souls.

How can we go about becoming a viable witness for Jesus? Attend *Your Life Mission Class* the next time it is offered. We can let people know just how much Jesus means to us and what He has done for us and our lives. Even when we are just learning how to share the gospel of Jesus Christ, many people will open up and respond to Jesus’ love. We can create many opportunities to share our faith when we:

- Pray for a lost person by name.
- Invite non-Christians to join us for everything, including going to a movie and going to dinner. We can make them a part of our lives by putting them on our schedule.

- Look for viable opportunities to show Christian love to them.
- Send the church web site link to non-Christians. The BCC website contains enough information to introduce them to Jesus.
- Send them a link of a sermon we liked.
- Invite them to get their children plugged into children's activities such as musicals and vacation Bible school.
- Go to a baseball, ice hockey, or football game with them.
- Have a game night at our house and invite them to join us. They'll feel more relaxed in our homes than they will sitting in a worship service. Having fun together can eventually lead to more serious spiritual discussions. Patience will pay off; we don't have to jump right into a spiritual conversation on the first encounter. Love them first.
- Play golf together with non-Christians.
- Go to concerts with those who don't know Jesus.
- Are available when they are hurting or are experiencing a life tragedy. The old adage is true: *People don't care about what you know until they know how much you care.*

The bottom line is the sky is the limit on how we can include the lost in our lives. We can be creative and imaginative, discovering what is important to them and going after them in that area. If we are faithful to build a bridge to them, many of them will eventually come to know Christ as their Savior.

At BCC, we support others who are doing God's mission outside our normal sphere of influence (see our National and International Missionaries listed in the Appendix Resources). We encourage followers of Christ here at BCC to connect with other people on mission so that we may share in their work. With the varying ways this goal can be accomplished, we want to enable church members to follow God's leading, equipping them with opportunities to engage our world and not just our neighborhoods with God. Adopting a missionary provides many possibilities to serve:

- Members can be added to the missionary's newsletter or email list so that they can pray specifically for the missionary's concerns.
- Members can keep in regular contact (such as monthly) to encourage the missionaries and discern needs and how they might help (i.e., housing or loan of a car while on furlough).
- Members can learn of missionary's family's birthdays, and send cards or gifts at Christmas.
- Members can visit a missionary in the field through personal travel or in conjunction with a business trip.

- Members can send a care package to the missionary (possibly of things they can't normally obtain when they are away from home) in appreciation of their work for the Lord.

BCC supports missionaries in Africa, East Asia, and Japan. We are spreading the Kingdom to Muslims through Arabia, the Middle East, and the United Nations in New York, NY. Through Cru, we send out missionaries who minister to professors, students, and military students stateside and abroad. Our military ministry extends Jesus' gospel to soldiers, young recruits, chaplains, and families of deployed soldiers. These missionaries participate in our fellowship through different means. Some are sent out from BCC; some are related to BCC members; some are ordained by BCC; and some choose to be part of the BCC fellowship during their missionary careers.

BCC exists for the glory of God and the betterment of His body of which we are all individually a part. The Gather, Grow, Go motif provides a way to describe how each follower of Christ is to live out his or her walk. A person's initial and essential place of mission is his or her home and his or her workplace. Paul said, "*Whatever you do, work heartily, as for the Lord and not for men*" (Colossians 3:23). We are to practice and live out our God-ordained mission every day. We start by reaching out to people whom we know and then look for how we can reach out to others from there.

What We Believe

The Good News

If you were to ask your friends how to get to Heaven, you would probably receive as many answers as the number of friends you have. Someone would probably suggest that you should keep the Golden Rule; someone else might say that you need to live up to the Ten Commandments; others might advise that you should pray, or give to the church and the poor, or that you should "just do the best you can." But when you are dealing with something as important as eternal life and Heaven, you need more than just the opinions of friends. You need the truth of God's Word!

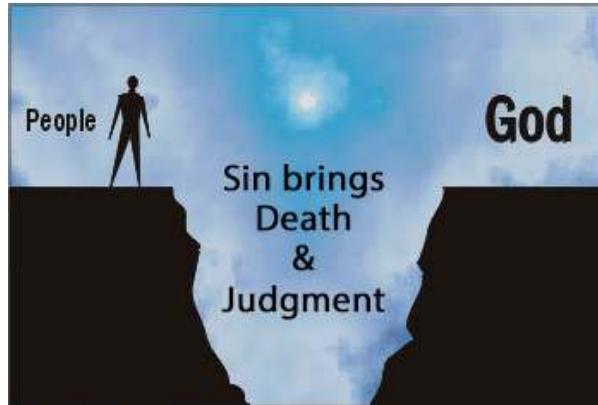
Here's a question we need to deal with right at the outset of this important journey. *Who is good enough to get to heaven?*

God's Word, in the first place, is very realistic. It teaches that no one can gain entrance into Heaven by good works or even religious practices. The Bible reveals our true condition:

"As it is written, There is none righteous, no, not one... For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God" (Romans 3:10, 23).



Our personal experience also teaches us that we all have broken God's laws and have not even "done the best we can do." Can you relate? Admit it. There is not one day where you don't do something which you know you shouldn't be doing. That one misdeed is called sin in the Bible, and all it takes is one of them to cause you to fall short of ever reaching God's presence on your own performance.



All of this leads, logically, to another core question: What is our real spiritual condition before God?

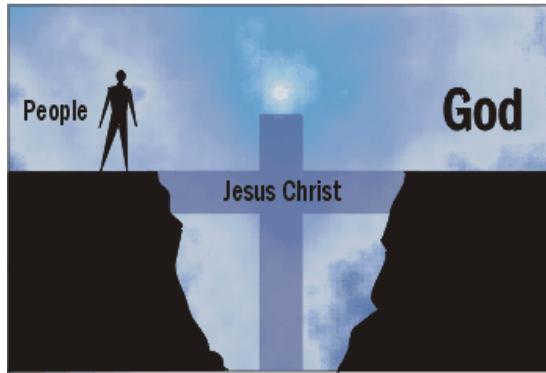
Again, the Biblical diagnosis for our condition cannot be missed. We, by nature, are described as being

"Dead in trespasses and sins;" (Ephesians 2:1) and as "having not life." (Ephesians 4:18).

Just as a body without physical life is declared physically dead, so any person separated from the life of God is described in the Bible as spiritually dead. Separated from God, dead in our trespasses and sins, we cannot hope to enter Heaven. We need new lives, cleansed from sin and its penalty. We need to be restored to fellowship with God as you might guess, this leads to the question of all questions: How can we, who are spiritually dead, be restored to fellowship with a holy God? Thankfully, the Bible gives us the much needed answer: We must be born into a new life - we must be born again. Think of it this way. When you are physically born you are born dead because you are related to the sin of Adam in the Garden of Eden (Romans 5:12-21). Paul puts our condition this way:

"Therefore, just as through one man sin entered into the world, and death through sin, and so death spread to all men, because all sinned" (Romans 5:12).

No one ever born can possibly escape the fact he is born a sinner, and then everyone is spiritually dead and lifeless before God. That's the bad news. The good news, however, is that Jesus Christ came to die for all of our sins and rise victorious over death on the third day so we might have the opportunity to be born spiritually.



This wonderful theme is carefully woven through the inspired pages of the Bible. Listen to what Jesus says about this while He walked the earth:

"I am come that they might have life, and that they might have it more abundantly" (John 10:10).

"For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him shall not perish, but have eternal life. "For God did not send the Son into the world to judge the world, but that the world might be saved through Him" (John 3:16-17).

Amazing, isn't it? He died so you might live. He came down so you might be able to go up. He lived a holy life so you could have a holy life. He conquered death so you might enjoy eternal life. And what's even more amazing is He laid His life down for us while we were His devout enemies. Paul hits upon this in his letter to the Romans:

"But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us" (Romans 5:8).

You could take out the word "us" and put your name in there, couldn't you? Christ died for me. Humbling, isn't it? On that cruel cross Jesus was crucified for my sin, for your sin. He was our substitute. His resurrection three days later served, then, to crush forever the power and sting of death brought about by sin. Now that He lives, He offers eternal life and forgiveness to all of those who will come to Him in faith. Jesus puts it this way:

"Truly, truly, I say to you, he who hears My word, and believes Him who sent Me, has eternal life, and does not come into judgment, but has passed out of death into life" (John 5:24).

You've just heard His word on the matter of salvation. Question now is do you believe He is the Savior? Better yet, are you ready to ask Him, by faith, to be your Savior? How do you do this? How do you enter His family? How do you secure His eternal forgiveness and pass from death to life? No one has stated it better than the Apostle Paul:

"for whoever will call upon the name of the Lord will be saved"
(Romans 10:13).

Underline that phrase "will be." When you ask the Lord to save you, to be your Savior, He will fulfill His word to you. He won't wait a week to think about it, either. No. He will save you the moment you call out to Him. If you haven't done this yet, wouldn't you say right now is a good time to get your spiritual life squared away once and for all? He's waiting to hear from you.

Your part is to ask God to save you - His part is to save you from the punishment of sin and take you to Heaven when you die. If you will do your part, He promises to do His part. You can bow your head right now and sincerely ask Christ to forgive you and save your soul.

What We Believe

Jesus instructed His disciples to remember His death and resurrection. He gave the Church two visible symbols (called “ordinances”) as reminders. These two ordinances are baptism and communion (sometimes called “the Lord’s Supper”).

Baptism

Baptism is the public testimony illustrating the private work Christ does in our hearts at salvation. It is the outward demonstration of the inward transformation. Baptism doesn’t save us; it is merely a way for us to symbolically walk with Jesus through His death, burial, and resurrection:

Don’t you know that all of us who were baptized into Christ were baptized into His death? We were therefore buried with Him through baptism into death in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, we too may live a new life (Romans 6:3-4).

1. Why Should You Get Baptized?

To show obedience to the Lord’s command.

*“Go therefore and **make disciples** of all the nations, **baptizing** them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, **teaching** them to observe all that I commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age” (Matthew 28:19-20).*

2. Who Should Get Baptized?

Anyone who has trusted Jesus Christ as their Lord and Savior and is thereby saved. As you can see from these references, once the person(s) believed in Jesus as their personal Savior they were baptized.

So then, those who had received his word were baptized; and that day there were added about three thousand souls (Acts 2:41).

But when they believed Philip preaching the good news about the kingdom of God and the name of Jesus Christ, they were being baptized, men and women alike (Acts 8:12).

And he took them that very hour of the night and washed their wounds, and immediately he was baptized, he and all his household. And he brought them into his house and set food before them, and rejoiced greatly, having believed in God with his whole household (Acts 16:33-34).

3. When Should One Get Baptized?

Some, for various life reasons, get baptized months or even years after their conversion. This is all right, but it isn't the most biblical position. Read through the New Testament and you'll readily discover that people were baptized immediately after they were saved (Acts 2:41; 8:12-16; 9:18; 16:33). Why did the early saints head quickly into the baptismal waters? For one, they didn't want to waste any time showing the world who they were spiritually. For another, they wanted to be obedient to our Lord's final command (Matthew 28:19-20; Acts 1:8).

4. What Does The Word Baptize Mean?

The Greek words (Note: The New Testament was originally written in Greek) for baptize are "baptizo" and "baptisma." Our word "baptism" is a transliteration of this word, not a translation. Nowhere in the New Testament is this word ever used of sprinkling. Without exception it always denotes immersion in water. Greek has words for pouring, i.e., "cheno" and sprinkling; i.e., "raino," yet these words are never used for baptism nor are their meanings part of the background of baptize. Baptism always suggests that a person is about to get completely wet by going under water. Again, the New Testament usage supports this conclusion.

"But an angel of the Lord spoke to Philip saying, 'Arise and go south to the road that descends from Jerusalem to Gaza. (This is a desert road.) And he arose and went; and behold, there was an Ethiopian eunuch, a court official of Candace, queen of the Ethiopians, who was in charge of all her treasure; and he had come to Jerusalem to worship. And he was returning and sitting in his chariot, and was reading the prophet Isaiah. And the Spirit said to Philip, 'Go up and join this chariot.' And when Philip had run up, he heard him reading Isaiah the prophet, and said, 'Do you understand what you are reading?' And he said, 'Well, how could I, unless someone guides me?' And he invited Philip to come up and sit with him (Acts 8:26-38).

Now the passage of Scripture which he was reading was this: *'HE WAS LED AS A SHEEP TO SLAUGHTER; AND AS A LAMB BEFORE ITS SHEARER IS SILENT, SO HE DOES NOT OPEN HIS MOUTH. IN HUMILIATION HIS JUDGMENT WAS TAKEN AWAY; WHO SHALL RELATE HIS GENERATION? FOR HIS LIFE IS REMOVED FROM THE EARTH.'*

And the eunuch answered Philip and said, 'Please tell me, of whom does the prophet say this? Of himself, or of someone else?' And Philip opened his mouth, and beginning from this Scripture he preached Jesus to him. And as they went along the road they came to some water; and the eunuch said, 'Look! Water! What prevents me from being baptized?' And Philip said, 'If you believe with all your heart, you may.' And he answered and said, 'I believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God. And he ordered the chariot to stop; and they both went down into the water, Philip as well as the eunuch; and he baptized him'" (Acts 8:32-38).

What should you do if you were sprinkled? If Jesus is now your Savior by your profession of faith in Him, then I encourage you to consider following Christ's example of baptism as a testimony of your faith in Him as a believer.

5. What Is The Purpose Of Baptism?

First, to show outwardly what has happened to you inwardly.

"What shall we say then? Are we to continue in sin that grace might increase? May it never be! How shall we who died to sin still live in it? Or do you not know that all of us who have been baptized into Christ Jesus have been baptized into His death? Therefore we have been buried with Him through baptism into death, in order that as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, so we too might walk in newness of life. For if we have become united with Him in the likeness of His death, certainly we shall be also in the likeness of His resurrection, knowing this, that our old self was crucified with Him, that our body of sin might be done away with, that we should no longer be slaves to sin; for he who has died is freed from sin" (Romans 6:1-10).

The imagery is beautiful. As you go under the water you identify with the death of Christ, or His burial. When you rise out of the water you identify with His resurrection to new life. Your old life, which was dominated by enslavement to sin, is now "left behind" in the baptismal waters, and you are now equipped, by the Spirit's presence in your life, to walk in obedience before the Lord Jesus.

Second, baptism shows you are desirous of being identified as a disciple of Jesus Christ. Initially, baptism was drawn from the Jewish model of our Lord's Day. When a new convert to Judaism was baptized, he showed through this act that he was now going to be accountable to grow in his knowledge and obedience to the Law and Word of God. This same emphasis now permeates the New Testament model. You, therefore, are stating before God and men that your life will now be radically different from what it was before. Old sins which easily beset you, old habits that brought shame and sadness to Him, will now be ones you'll seek victory over. Your time will now be committed to serving Him and knowing Him. What you read, where you go, what you watch with your eyes, who your friends are, how you talk, and what you think will now be brought under the scrutiny of the Word of God, all in your quest to live like a disciple of Jesus.

6. Does Baptism Save?

Some claim that one must evidence faith in Jesus plus be baptized in order to be saved. Such is not the biblical model as we shall see:

The Bible's View of Salvation.

- Clearly, the New Testament teaches us unequivocally that salvation is by faith alone and nothing more (John 1:12; 3:16; 3:36; 5:24; 6:40; 11:25; Acts 10:43; 13:39; 16:30-31; Romans 3:22, 28; 4:3, 5; 10:9-13; 1 Corinthians 1:21; Galatians 2:16; 3:26; Ephesians 2:8-10). To add baptism to the means of salvation is to add something totally foreign to the plan and purpose of God.
- The cross is always central to salvation, never baptism (Galatians 2:21) “. . . *if righteousness came by the law then Christ died in vain.*”
- Works righteousness never saves as Paul says in Titus 3:5; “Not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to his mercy he saved us, by the washing of regeneration, and renewing of the Holy Ghost.”
- The blood, not baptism, is what deals effectively and totally with man's sin: “The blood of Jesus Christ, His son, cleanses us from all sin . . .” (1 John 1:7).
- People were saved in the New Testament apart from baptism as we see in Luke 23:43 and Acts 10:47.

7. Those Thorny Passages

“He who has believed and has been baptized shall be saved; but he who has disbelieved shall be condemned” (Mark 16:16).

Note this verse says nothing about a person who is not baptized being condemned. The condemned person is the one who doesn't have saving faith. Lack of baptism doesn't send you to hell, and having it doesn't grant you heaven. Baptism naturally follows belief in Jesus as a person's Sin-bearer; however, if one isn't baptized we aren't to conclude they aren't saved. If this were so then the verse would have read: "He who has believed and has been baptized shall be saved; but he who has disbelieved *and has failed to be baptized* (italics mine) shall be condemned."

"Repent, and let each of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins; and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit" (Acts 2:38).

Regarding this verse, I would offer these salient points for you to consider: Acts 2:38 has long been a theological battleground. Why so? Listen to what it says and you'll readily see what I mean. Responding to the question of post-Pentecost Jews who were at a loss for how to be saved since they had obviously made a mistake in crucifying the Messiah who was and is now resurrected, Peter shouted for all to hear:

"Repent, and let each of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins; and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit" (Acts 2:38).

Do you see the linkage here between repentance and baptism? The linkage is represented by the little word "and." Furthermore, the preposition "for" after the word "Christ," is taken as expressing "purpose or result," which, are viable grammatical options. Thus, taking the preposition as purpose the emphasis would be, "Repent and be baptized for the purpose of obtaining forgiveness." Reading the preposition as "result" would lead to this proposition, "Repent and be baptized with the result that you will acquire forgiveness." Based upon this reasoning, you can see how some have come to believe the New Testament teaches that salvation comes to those who have faith (which is tantamount to repentance) in Jesus and are faithful to be baptized.

Further, grammar alone doesn't prove the point that baptism is equated with repentance and baptism. As I said, it is true that you can grammatically take the preposition "for" as denoting purpose and result. Every student of Greek (which is the language of the New Testament) knows this. Every student of Greek also knows that these are not the only two options for this key preposition. Bauer, Arndt, and Gingrich's *A Greek Lexicon of the New*

Testament and Other Early Christian Literature, reveals there are not two, but seven different ways this preposition “for”, i.e., eis, can be translated. How does one know which translation nuance is the best? Context and the theology of the Bible must decide. Put differently, the translation cannot go against what is taught in the given context. Further, the translation cannot stand diametrically opposed to sound doctrine taught elsewhere in the Bible at large.

What are some other grammatical options for this important little preposition? It is quite logical and appropriate to translate it as “on account of.” When you do this, the entire verse takes on a new meaning, by showing that repentance (i.e., saving faith) and baptism don’t collectively secure salvation. Repentance is given on account of the forgiveness you’ll acquire, and baptism is participated in on account of the forgiveness you now enjoy. You could also just as easily translate “for” as “on the basis of,” and in so doing you arrive at the same theological results. *Thus, grammatically, it is tenuous at best to build an entire doctrine upon how you translate the preposition “for.”*

In addition, grammatically you can demonstrate there is room for understanding the phrase about repentance as being parenthetical. How so? Repent is plural in Greek, the phrase “and let each of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ” is singular, and the phrase “for the forgiveness of your sins” is, once again, plural. We speak like this all of the time, don’t we? We’ll say things like, “Take a left here, and make sure you go slowly because of the groceries in the trunk, and we’ll get to where we are going.” Biblical writers also spoke parenthetically, and the sooner we realize this, the better off we’ll be when we get to interpreting! (For other parentheses in Scripture see Hebrews 2:9 and 2 Peter 1:19).

To this thought I would add this. The punctuation of your Bible, which is based upon the Greek text, is not inspired. Those commas are placed in there by Greek grammarians who, by consensus believe their choice is the best lexical, grammatical choice. Pick up any Greek text and you’ll see at the bottom of the page, as in Bruce Metzger’s UBS Greek Metzger’s UBS Greek text, what is called a punctuation apparatus. Scholars, translators, and students use this to seek to arrive at the best possible translation. Suffice it to say, grammar can just as readily lead us to believe that repentance and baptism are not both necessary for salvation as some would have us believe. What’s the upshot of all of this? Those texts which seem to suggest that faith and baptism are necessary for salvation must be interpreted in light of what the multitude of verses in the New Testament say about salvation by faith alone. To teach otherwise is to teach a different gospel (Galatians), which is forbidden. Baptism has never saved one soul and never will. Salvation comes by way of faith in Jesus.

8. What about Infant Baptism?

Some baptize infants, usually by sprinkling. There is not one reference in the New Testament where infants are baptized. True, there are household baptisms, as in Acts 16, yet even passages like this fail to mention infants. Their presence has to be assumed. Further, the Philippian jailer's household didn't include children, but people old enough to believe (Acts 16:34). Infants should not be baptized because they aren't cognizant of their sin, nor are they capable of seeing their need of the Savior, both which are needed before one can be baptized as a believer.

Communion (The Lord's Supper)

Communion, or the Lord's Supper, is a memorial of Jesus' sacrifice on the cross as a substitute for us.

...and when He had given thanks, He broke the bread and said, "This is My body, which is for you; do this in remembrance of Me" (1 Corinthians 11:24).

Communion is a celebration of our new relationship with God, as His sons and daughters forgiven of our sins and declared righteous in His sight through the new covenant of Jesus' blood shed on the Cross for us:

In the same way, after supper He took the cup, saying, "This cup is the new covenant in My blood; do this, whenever you drink it, in remembrance of Me" (1 Corinthians 11:25).

Communion is a proclamation of the price Jesus paid for our sins when He died on the Cross for us:

For whenever you eat this bread and drink this cup, you proclaim the Lord's death until He comes (1 Corinthians 11:26).

How Do I Prepare Myself for Communion?

- Before observing communion, I need to examine my heart:

Therefore, whoever eats the bread or drinks the cup of the Lord in an unworthy manner will be guilty of sinning against the body and blood of the Lord. A man ought to examine himself before he eats of the bread and drinks of the cup. For anyone who eats and drinks without recognizing the body of the Lord eats and drinks judgment on himself (1 Corinthians 11:27-29).

- I confess my sins to God:

If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness (1 John 1:9).

- I right any broken relationships that I can.

Therefore, if you are offering your gift at the altar and there remember that your brother has something against you, leave your gift there in front of the altar. First go and be reconciled to your brother; then come and offer your gift (Matthew 5:23-24).

What We Believe

Our Statement of Faith

In essential beliefs, we pursue unity.

There is one body and one Spirit...there is one Lord, one faith, one baptism, and one God and Father of us all... (Ephesians 4:4).

In nonessential beliefs, we embrace liberty.

Accept him whose faith is weak, without passing judgment on disputable matters... Who are you to judge someone else's servant? To his own master he stands or falls. So then each of us will give an account of himself to God... So whatever you believe about these things keep between yourself and God (Romans 14:1, 4, 12, 22).

In all our beliefs, we practice charity (love).

If I have the gift of prophecy and can fathom all mysteries and all knowledge, and if I have a faith that can move mountains, but have not love, I am nothing (1 Corinthians 13:2).

The Essentials

At BCC, we accept, and hold as the essentials of our faith, those areas of doctrinal teaching on which, historically, there has been general agreement among all true Christians. Because of the unique, open nature of a community church, we desire to allow for freedom of belief on other doctrinal matters, provided that any interpretation is based upon the Bible alone, and that no such interpretation shall become an issue which hinders the ministry to which God has called us. The following represents what we believe to be the essentials of our faith. Among the members of this Body, there should be total agreement on these essentials.

GOD

God has revealed Himself to be the living and true God. There is one God who is the Creator and Preserver of all things. He is one, existing eternally in the three Persons of the Trinity—Father, Son, and Holy Spirit—Who are of one essence, and co-equal. (Deuteronomy 6:4-5; Matthew 28:19-20; 2 Corinthians 13:14; Revelations 1:4-5).

God the Father

God the Father works all things according to His own purpose (Acts 17:24-28). He is sovereign over all (Ezekiel 15:18; Psalms 97:1-5; Isaiah 6:1). His creative purpose and redemptive plan cannot be thwarted (Genesis 50:20; Proverbs 19:21; John 6:44; Acts 2:23).

God the Son

Jesus Christ is God (John 8:58, 20:28), the eternally pre-existent Son and living Word (John 1:1), who became incarnate through His miraculous conception by the Holy Spirit and His virgin birth (Matthew 1:18-24; Luke 2:26-38). He is perfect Deity and true humanity united in one person (Philippians 2:5-11). Both natures are whole, perfect and distinct. He was tempted in all ways, yet lived a sinless life (Hebrews 4:15). He was obedient to God the Father, even unto death (Philippians 2:8). He voluntarily atoned for sinners by dying on the Cross as their substitute and shedding His blood for the forgiveness of their sins (Romans 3:22-26). He thus revealed the divine love and upheld divine justice, removing our guilt and reconciling us to God (Romans 8:1-4). On the third day in the tomb, He rose from the dead in the same body, though glorified, in which He lived and died (Luke 24:31, 36; Philippians 3:21; Hebrews 7:16, 24). He ascended bodily into heaven (Acts 1:6-11) and sits at the right hand of God the Father (Colossians 3:1; Hebrews 1:3), where He, the only mediator between God and man (1 Timothy 2:5), continually makes intercession for believers (Romans 8:34; Hebrews 7:25). He will come again to complete His saving work and to complete God's redemptive purpose (John 14:3; 1 Thessalonians 4:16-18; Philippians 1:6).

God the Holy Spirit

The Holy Spirit reveals and glorifies Christ (John 16:7-15) and applies the saving work of Christ to men (Ephesians 1:17-18; John 3:5-8; Romans 8:14; 2 Corinthians 3:18). He convicts the world of sin, truth, righteousness, and judgment (John 16:8). He draws sinners to Christ (John 6:44), imparts new life to them (John 3:5-8), continually indwells them (Galatians 4:6-7) from the moment of spiritual birth in order to conform them ultimately to the image and likeness of Christ (2 Corinthians 3:17-18), and seals them until the day of redemption (Ephesians 1:13-14). His fullness, power, and control are appropriated in the believer's life by faith. (Ephesians 2:8, 9) The Holy Spirit alone administers spiritual gifts to the Church for the common good of all believers (1 Corinthians 12:7).

THE BIBLE

The basis of our beliefs is the Bible, God's written Word, which includes and is limited to the 39 books of the Old Testament and the 27 books of the New Testament. It was uniquely, verbally, and fully inspired by the Holy Spirit, and it was written free from error in the original manuscripts. It is the supreme and final authority in all matters on which it speaks. It is the only infallible rule in faith and practice. All doctrinal statements must be measured against the full counsel of God in Holy Scripture (Josh. 1:8; Psalms 119; John 17:17; 2 Timothy 3:15-17).

MANKIND

People were created in the image and likeness of God (Genesis 1:26-27) to know, glorify, worship, and enjoy Him forever. Tempted by Satan, mankind willfully disobeyed God and sinned (2 Corinthians 11:3, 14). Thus, people were alienated from their perfect Creator and plunged into a state of sin and separation from God (Romans 3:9-20, 5:12-19). That historic fall brought all people under the sentence of eternal condemnation and death (Romans 5:16, 18). Man's nature is corrupt (Titus 1:15), and he is thus, apart from the grace of God through faith, totally unable to please God (Romans 8 :8), have fellowship with Him, or even enter into His presence (Psalm 5:4; Proverbs 28:9; Isaiah 1:15). Everyone is in need of salvation (Romans 6:23) through the substitutionary death of Jesus Christ as full payment for his sin, and renewal by the Holy Spirit.

SIN

Sin is disobeying God and attempting to live and to meet our needs independently of Him (Romans 3:10-26, 5:12-19; 1 John 1:8-10).

REDEMPTION/SALVATION

Human salvation is wholly a work of God's free grace and is not the work, in whole or in part, of human merit or goodness or religious ceremony (Ephesians 2:8-9; Titus 3:5-7). We believe Jesus died upon the cross as a sinless substitute for sinners of all ages and times (Romans 3:21-28, 5:17-19; John 3:16). Without the shedding of blood, there is no forgiveness of sin (Hebrews 9:22). Therefore, His death perfectly satisfies the demands of God's holy justice and appeases His holy wrath (Romans 5:10; Colossians 1:20-22).

All who receive, by faith, the resurrected Jesus Christ as Savior and Lord are spiritually born into permanent relationship with God by the indwelling Holy Spirit. (Ephesians 1:13-14) Thus, God imputes His righteousness to those who put their faith solely in the substitutionary death of Christ for their salvation (Romans 4:11, 22-24). As a result of this faith, the redeemed sinner receives eternal life and is now freed from the penalty (Romans 8:1) and power (1 Corinthians 15:50; 1 Peter 4:11) of sin and, in heaven, from the very presence of sin (Revelation 21:1-4). Redemption does not, however, promise that we will escape the earthly consequences of past, present, or future sinful acts (Hebrews 12:6, 10; Deuteronomy 8:5; Psalm 94:10). Neither is one's station in life, physical circumstances, financial status, etc., necessarily indicative of the state of one's heart before or after salvation. God may grant physical health and material prosperity to some, but this is because of His specific grace alone in accordance with His sovereign purpose and plan (Philippians 4:10-13).

ETERNAL LIFE

Eternal life is a relationship that begins at the moment of salvation and continues forever. Eternal life is knowing the one true and living God and Jesus Christ whom He sent (John 17:3; 1 John 5:11-13).

The great end, which Christianity sets before us, is the joy of eternal life in the knowledge and presence of the eternal God (1 Corinthians 2:9; Philippians 3:30-21). Whoever rejects the Son will not see life, for God's wrath remains on him (John 3:36; Romans 8:6-8).

When the Holy Spirit indwells the new believer at the moment of salvation, He imparts this eternal life to the believer (1 Corinthians 1:21-22).

Although all die physically, God will ultimately resurrect all believers in glorified bodies that are incorruptible, without sin, decay, illness, pain, or death—finally perfected for eternal life (1 Corinthians 15:35-57; Revelations 21:3-4).

ASSURANCE OF SALVATION

Since human salvation is wholly a work of God's grace and is not the work, in whole or in part, of human merit or goodness or religious ceremony, salvation rests securely with God.

All who are born again of the Spirit can be assured of their salvation from the very moment at which they trust Christ as their Savior and Lord. Nothing can separate us from the love of God (Romans 8:38-39). This assurance is not based upon any kind of human merit or feelings, but on the promise of God and the testimony of the Holy Spirit to the believer through His Word. Further, when a person is born of the Spirit of God, he is a new creation (2 Corinthians 5:17). He now desires to please God. This new inclination, the intent of the heart, is called repentance and is evidence of a changed life (John 10:25-30; Romans 5:1-5, 8:1, 28-39; 1 John 2:19, 5:13). Therefore, the three-fold witness of salvation—the witness of Scripture, the witness of the indwelling Holy Spirit, and the witness of a changed life—is God's assurance that the believer is a child of God.

SANCTIFICATION

From the moment of salvation, every believer is being conformed to the likeness of Jesus Christ by the Holy Spirit (2 Corinthians 3:18; 5:17). This process is called sanctification. God's promise is that He is faithful to complete this process that He began in us (Philippians 1:6).

God created us in Christ Jesus to do good works which He prepared in advance for us to do so that people will see our good works and praise our Father in Heaven (Ephesians 2:10). The Holy Spirit is the active agent in fulfilling these good works (John 15:5); the responsibility of the believer is to obey (1 Samuel 15:22).

CHRIST'S RETURN

Unrighteousness, such as sexual immorality, greed, adultery, homosexuality, or drunkenness is not acceptable in the holy life God desires for His followers.

However, through repentance, obedience to the Word of God, and empowering of the Holy Spirit, the believer is able to grow in holiness and actively participate in the life of the church, becoming more and more like the Lord Jesus Christ (1 Corinthians 6:9-11).

Jesus Christ will come again to the earth—personally, visibly, and bodily—to consummate history and fulfill the eternal plan of God the Father. No man knows the day and time of Jesus' return, but the fact of His return is certain. The Scriptures declare that when Jesus returns to the earth in glory, every eye will behold Him, every knee will bow, and every tongue will confess that Jesus Christ is Lord to the glory of God the Father. Christians are to be about the Father's business and are to maintain an attitude of expectancy (Acts 1:11; Hebrews 9:28; Mark 8:38; 2 Thessalonians 1:10; Revelations 1:7; John 5:28-29; Romans 8:17-21).

JUDGMENT

There will be a day when everyone who has lived must stand before the Judgment Seat of Christ (Romans 14:10; 2 Corinthians 5:10; Hebrews 9:27). Christians—all who confess Jesus Christ as Savior and Lord—have already been judged at the Cross and have passed from death to life, from condemnation to salvation (Romans 8:1). Their names will be in the Lamb's Book of Life (Revelations 3:5, 13:8, 20:12, 21:27), and they will be ushered into God's presence forever. Their works, however, will be judged and each Christian will receive what is due him for the things done while in the body (Matthew 5:12, 10:41-42, 16:27; Ephesians 6:8; Colossians 3:24).

Non-believers—anyone whose name is not found written in the Book of Life—will be thrown into the lake of fire, which is the second death, being punished with everlasting destruction and shut out from the presence of the Lord and the majesty of His power (Hebrews 10:27; 2 Peter 2:4,9, 3:7).

THE CHURCH

Jesus Christ is the Head of the Church, His Body (Ephesians 2:19-22, 4:11-13). The Church is not a building or an institution; rather it is composed of all people who have received salvation. Christ's people are to assemble together regularly to devote themselves to worship, teaching, fellowship, breaking of bread, and prayer. (Acts 2:42) The Lord Jesus Christ commanded His Church to proclaim the Gospel throughout the world and to disciple men of every nation, baptizing them in the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, teaching them to obey all He has commanded. The church is to reflect the love of Christ through its service to others (Matthew 28:16-20).

Two ordinances have been entrusted to the Church: baptism and communion. They are not, however, to be regarded as means of salvation.

Who We Are

The Big “C” and the Little “c”

What Is “The Church”?

The Church is a living organism comprised of all people everywhere who have trusted Jesus Christ as Savior and Lord. The local church is a group of people who seek to bring glory to Christ through how they live, love, learn, labor, lead, and follow in their communities and neighborhoods. The Church is a place where God’s people are ruled by God through the Word and the Holy Spirit. It is not concerned with programs, but with people and it is present wherever God’s people are assembled.

The Church is the earthly manifestation of the family of God (Ephesians 2:19, 3:15), God being the Father, and all family members having been adopted into the family by the new birth upon acceptance of Jesus Christ as personal Savior. This family is a living organism (1 Corinthians 12:12-27) knit and joined together by the Spirit of God which is its life and power. The Church is the earthly dwelling place of God and its purpose is to bring praise and glory to Him.

Burke Community Church is more than just the buildings and offices we see. It is much more than the programs and money we possess. It is a living part of all believers everywhere who have come to Jesus Christ in saving faith.

Many biblical metaphors are employed in Scripture which adequately describe the Lord’s Church: Family (Ephesians 2:19, 3:15), Bride (Revelations 21:9), Vine (Isaiah 60:21), Temple (1 Timothy 3:15), Building (1 Corinthians 3:9), Kingdom (Matthew 16:18-19), and Flock (1 Peter 5:2). Perhaps the most insightful designation:

“The body is a unit, though it is made up of many parts; and though all its parts are many, they form one body. So it is with Christ. For we were all baptized by one Spirit into one body whether Jews or Greeks, slave or free and we were all given the one Spirit to drink” (Ephesians 1:22-23).

This concept of the Church as a body is echoed throughout the New Testament:

For we are members of His body (Ephesians 5:30).

And let the peace of God rule in your hearts, to which also you are called in one body; and be thankful (Colossians 3:15).

Now the body is not made up of one part but many (1 Corinthians 12:14).

Just as a real body has a definite structure, so too does the body of Christ—the Church:

- Christ is the head of the Church.
- Believers are all members of the Body.
- Each believer is an organ in the Body.
- Positionally all believers are equal.
- Practically each member functions differently.

Burke Community Church is indeed a church, but those within Burke Community Church who are believers in the Lord Jesus Christ are also part of the Church—the Body of Christ.

Who We Are

Christian Stewards

A Christian Steward is a person who is ENTRUSTED with a life REDEEMED by Christ.

In the Old Testament, God prescribed two ways for His people to give: (1) required giving, and (2) freewill giving. In Pre-Mosaic times, required giving was 20 percent of an individual's income, designed to help run the theocratic government of Israel (Genesis 41:34). Freewill giving was strictly voluntary. The action of Abram and Jacob in giving God 10 percent was simply an arbitrary choice and not a biblical mandate. God wanted His people to give freely to Him because they loved Him.

In Mosaic times, God still called for required and freewill giving. Required giving amounted to about 25 percent of an individual's income when we take into account the three tithe mandates (Leviticus 27:30-33; Deuteronomy 12:6-7; 14:28). This amount doesn't include the Temple tax (Nehemiah 10:33), nor the care of the disadvantaged (Leviticus 19:9-14). In Mosaic times, freewill giving was voluntary, designed to express the worshiper's love for the Lord by giving Him the best of his earnings (Leviticus 22):

The LORD said to Moses, "Tell the Israelites to bring Me an offering. You are to receive the offering for Me from each man who heart prompts him to give" (Exodus 25:1-2).

God was concerned not with the amount that was given, but with the attitude of the heart.

In the New Testament, nothing changed. Required giving is still present in passages where Jesus told the people to obey the Lord—and ultimately God (Romans 13:1-6)—and pay their taxes (Matthew 17:2, 22:15-22). Required giving in the Old Testament was taxation designed to support the established government, and required giving in the New Testament followed suit.

In the New Testament, we also see the concept of freewill giving unto the Lord. The Old Testament concept of an established tithe is foreign to the New Testament. In fact, the original word for *tithe* occurs only in passages referring to the Old Testament economy (cf. Matthew 23:23; Luke 11:42, 18:12; Hebrews 7:5-9). In our day, the Lord wants each of us to give to Him freely. Some argue that the tithe is ten percent of our gross income, but that thought is foreign to the New Testament.

When we look at the New Testament, we see several principles which guide our freewill giving to the Lord:

- Liberal giving breeds liberal blessings (2 Corinthians 9:6).
- Sacrifice should characterize our giving (Mark 12:41-44).
- When we determine a set amount to give, remember that the Lord is our example in giving of Himself (2 Corinthians 8:9).
- Spiritual responsibility, which is given to us by God, comes as we properly administer our earthly possessions (Luke 16:11).
- God measures our giving not based upon the amount we have given, but upon the amount we have given in proportion to what we possess (2 Corinthians 8 - 9).
- When we see a need in the church body, we should do what we can to meet it (2 Corinthians 8-9; Acts 11).
- Giving should be a planned event (1 Corinthians 16:1-2).
- Our attitude in giving should always be one of cheer (2 Corinthians 9:7).

Do we support the Lord's work? As we will support His work, He will go before us in amazing ways, making the crooked paths straight.

Our Church Budget

We can expect three things from BCC:

1. Individual gifts will be confidential.

We believe giving is between an individual and the Lord. Therefore, we take pains to ensure confidentiality. The elders and staff do not know what anyone gives.

2. There is accountability. There are no secret or hidden funds. No one person makes final budget and spending decisions. Every check written requires two signatures for approval. At least two individuals count offerings. We are audited by an outside organization each year.

3. There is responsibility.

We strive to be good stewards of all the resources God gives us. Each ministry is committed to spend within its budget, and ministry leaders are held accountable by the elders to do so. However, we desire to be sensitive to doors of opportunity the Lord opens to us and must at times respond to unexpected expenses. Therefore, there are times when church leadership will approve additional spending with the goal of remaining within our proposed church budget.

(See Handout – Budget)

Ways to Give

We have a number of ways you can choose to give.

1. Sunday Services

You can give by cash or check during any of our Sunday services. Checks should be made payable to Burke Community Church and please note “General” or “Building” fund on the memo line of your check. Cash donations should be enclosed in an envelope with the following information provided on the envelope: name, address, gift amount and either “General” or “Building” fund.

2. By Mail

You can give by sending a check by mail to Burke Community Church, 9900 Old Keene Mill Road, Burke, VA 22015. Checks should be made payable to Burke Community Church. Please note “General” or “Building” fund on the memo line of your check. Please do not send cash by mail.

3. Mobile Giving

There are now two options to give using your mobile device.

Option 1: Using a mobile app. Download the SecureGive app. Set Burke Community Church as your home organization. Then tap “Make a Donation” to set up a one-time gift or recurring gift with your debit/credit card.* Tap “Next” and designate your donation amount to either the “General” or “Building” fund. Confirm the desired gift amount and tap “Next”. Enter your billing information and tap “Continue”. For final confirmation of your donation, tap “Confirm”.

Option 2: Using Text to give. Text keyword “General” or “Building” and the amount of your gift to (866) 864-8825. For example, you will text “Building 10” for a donation of \$10 to the Building fund. You will then be prompted for the next step. If you do not have a SecureGive account, you will be prompted to register to begin the process. If you have card information saved as a preferred payment account, the donation will be confirmed. If you need to add a card to your account, a link will be provided to do so. You will receive a text asking to you type “Y” to confirm your donation. When it is confirmed, you will receive a text to let you know the transaction was successful. You will also receive an email receipt.

4. Online Giving

You can give online by setting up an ACH transfer or by using a bank/credit card through one of the two following options.

Option 1: For a one-time gift you can make a donation by going to the myBCC page and click the “Give Online” tab located in the upper right corner of this screen. Complete the donation form. You will need to select “General” or “Building” fund. Only debit or credit cards* may be used for this option.

Option 2: A one-time or recurring gift can be made by logging on to myBCC. After entering your user id and password, click the “Give” tab. You can select a one-time gift or repeating gift by using your checking account or debit/credit card*. Complete the giving form making sure you select either the “General” or “Building” fund.

Option 3: You can also set up online giving through SecureGive by going to <https://burkecommunity.securegive.com>. Once on this site you can create an account in order to set up a one-time, recurring or an anonymous gift by using a bank/credit card. Our hope is that this tool will provide another means for you to tithe regularly and support God’s kingdom through BCC. We do not wish people to increase personal debt so please use a credit card only if you can pay your entire card balance on a monthly basis.

5. Gifting Stock

There are great tax advantages to gifting stock. If you would like to know more, please contact our bookkeeper by email bookkeeper@burkecommunity.com or at 703-425-0205.

Who We Are

Our Church Model

God has appointed elders to oversee His Church (Acts 20:28; 1 Timothy 5:17; Hebrews 13:7, 17; 1 Peter 5:1-4). The leadership authority of the Church is specified in the BCC Constitution:

The Council of Elders of the church is constituted by a minimum of six (6) elected elders and the Senior Pastor. All elders serve on the Council of Elders as co-equals. The Council of Elders shall exercise government and discipline, and take the oversight of the spiritual interest of the church by feeding, shepherding, and leading the flock, as described in the Holy Scriptures. To accomplish these responsibilities, the Council of Elders is granted authority to exercise other powers not expressly delegated elsewhere in these by-laws.

If we are a strong, powerful, effective church, then we will be one that supports, follows, and defends our God-ordained leaders. These leaders have our best interests at heart, and they are responsible before God to nurture and mature us in the faith and to reach the lost for Him. Their job is, therefore, a high and holy one, and they take it very seriously because so much is at stake. Hence, when we support them, we make the ministry road easier, freeing our leaders to fulfill their calling.

How should we respond to the leaders within the local church?

- Submit to their God-given authority (Hebrews 13:7, 17). To follow these shepherds is to follow The Great Shepherd: they are His earthly representatives (1 Peter 5:1-4).
- Respect their leadership among us (1 Thessalonians 5:12).
- Pray for them (Ephesians 6:18-20). Why? They are in the front lines of spiritual warfare.
- Don't speak evil of them (Acts 23:5). They are innocent until proven guilty.
- Work with them, not against them (Hebrews 13:17).
- Exhort them (Hebrews 3:13).
- Share with them (Galatians 6:6). Tell them how their work is impacting our lives. A little encouragement goes a long way.

Who Is the Chief?

The Chief Is Not the pastor, elders, deacons, committees, or church members who give a considerable amount of money to the church.

The Chief Is Jesus Christ, our living Lord and Savior! Concerning this designation, Scripture is quite clear: *“And [Jesus] is the head of the body, the church; He is the beginning and the firstborn from among the dead, so that in everything he might have the supremacy” (Colossians 1:18).*

How Do We Know What the Chief Wants?

Jesus Christ gives clear and precise direction and purpose to His Body, the Church, through the inspired and inerrant Word of God. Regarding the primacy of the Word in the individual and corporate life of believers, Paul concludes in 2 Timothy 3:16 and 17:

All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness, so that the man of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work.

Teaching and reading the Scriptures is, therefore, of paramount importance for the local church, for it is through this teaching and reading that the church knows how to best minister to Christ’s glory.

How Do We Operate?

The Role of the Pastor-Teacher (Ephesians 4:11)

The primary role of the pastor-teacher elder is to feed the flock of God by teaching them through precept and example. As Paul told the pastor-teacher Timothy:

Until I come, devote yourself to the public reading of Scripture, to preaching and to teaching. Do not neglect your gift, which was given you through a prophetic message when the body of elders laid their hands on you. Be diligent in these matters: give yourself wholly to them, so that everyone may see your progress. Watch your life and doctrine closely. Persevere in them, because if you do, you will save both yourself and your hearers (1 Timothy 4:13-16).

The pastor-teacher is not to spend the majority of his time in administration tasks, counseling, or in calling. Other believers who possess these gifts are to step forward and employ those gifts so that the church body is working effectively. The pastor-teacher will certainly involve himself in the practical shepherding of the flock, but that is not to be his primary purpose. He is called first and foremost to study the Word so that he can be faithful to equip the saints for ministry (Ephesians 4:11-13). The pastor-teacher is not the head of the local church either. He is merely one of the elders who is responsible for the spiritual feeding, nurturing, and protection of the flock. In addition, the pastor is not a detective. If we have a special need, please let him know so he can be with and pray for you.

Elders

Elders are the key men of the church who have been selected by the flock to care for that flock not because of their professional abilities or financial standing, but because of their level of spiritual maturity. Paul tells us clearly what that level of spirituality needs to be:

Here is a trustworthy saying: If anyone sets his heart on being an overseer, he desires a noble task. Now the overseer must be above reproach, the husband of but one wife, temperate, self-controlled, respectable, hospitable, able to teach, not given to drunkenness, not violent but gentle, not quarrelsome, not a lover of money. He must manage his own family well and see that his children obey him with proper respect. (If anyone does not know how to manage his own family, how can he take care of God's church?) He must not be a recent convert, or he may become conceited and fall under the same judgment as the devil. He must also have a good reputation with outsiders, so that he will not fall into disgrace and into the devil's trap (1 Timothy 3:1-7).

The elders are responsible to rule the church by precepts and example (Hebrews 13:7, 17). The way they live is what makes their precepts believable. Elders are responsible for the spiritual life and direction of the church. They are also responsible to work together as a team. When items are voted on which affect the church, the elders must all be in agreement (1 Corinthians 1:10). Further, based upon Acts 20:28-35, the elders are to be cognizant of five key duties: (1) to keep in fellowship with Jesus; (2) to teach the milk and meat of the Word; (3) to protect the flock from false teachers; (4) to pray and pore over God's Word; and (5) to be free from self-interests.

Burke Community Church is an elder-led church. This leadership model means that the bulk of authority in the church, outside of Christ, rests upon their shoulders. They, not the congregation, make appropriate decisions which affect the life of the church.

Trustees

The Board of Trustees shall consist of three active members of the church who shall be annually appointed or reappointed by the Council of Elders. A current list of trustees shall be submitted by the Clerk of the Council of Elders to the local Circuit Court. The Church Treasurer shall serve as the treasurer for the trustees and the congregation. The trustees shall hold title to all real estate or equities in real estate owned by the congregation. The trustees shall be authorized to execute contracts for goods, services, and real property as consistent with the will of the congregation and the budget approved by the congregation.

Deacons and Deaconesses

According to scriptural texts like Acts 6:2-4 and 1 Timothy 3:8-11, the church should contain deacons and deaconesses. These servants are directly responsible for carrying out the practical service wishes of the body. They are also responsible for meeting the practical needs of people within the body, such as coordinating meals for a grieving family, monies for those in tight circumstances, etc.

The Congregation

The BCC congregation is comprised of people who place themselves under the authority umbrella of the elder team. The congregation is responsible for communicating with the elder board. The BCC congregation votes on the annual budget; calling of the senior pastor; the purchase of land or buildings; the appointment of deacons and elders; and changes in the church's constitution, by-laws, or statement of faith.

Christ has established the structure of the local church by building it into the fabric of the New Testament church. Things like prayer, sound teaching, employment of spiritual gifts, and dedication make this structure work to the glory of our Lord. Perhaps the one key ingredient is submission:

Obey your leaders and submit to their authority. They keep watch over you as men who must give account. Obey them so that their work will be a joy, not a burden, for that would be of no advantage to you (Hebrews 13:17).

The elders are to be submissive to the Lord's authority and servants to the church members (John 13:1-20), and the congregation is to be submissive to the authority God has entrusted to the elders.

We should *not* submit to a leader when he is leading against scriptural truths, or when he is living or leading in an unethical fashion. Other than these circumstances, we should follow our leaders where God is leading them. To follow them is to be obedient to the Word and follow Christ who is the true Leader and Shepherd.

myBCC

Burke Community Church's Online Community

What is myBCC?

myBCC is an internet-based online community created to help people in our church connect with each other. It's designed to help you find groups to get involved in, engage with others in the groups you are currently in, and be informed on what is happening at BCC. It is designed and powered by Church Community Builder.

How Do I Get Started?

- Open up an internet browser.
- Go to www.burkecommunity.com.
- Click on the myBCC page link.
- Click on the myBCC Log in link.
- Click the Sign Up link in the lower left corner. (Your User Name and Password information will be emailed to the address you indicated on the form.)
- Go to your email to retrieve your password.
- Click on the link at the bottom of the email to go to the Login for myBCC.

Once you log in you are ready to start updating your profile!

To help others at BCC get to know you please do the following:

- Add a photo
- Edit your profile
- Review your profile settings

Please check out the *myBCC Introduction Guide* for a step by step introduction on myBCC. This document is located on the myBCC page on burkecommunity.com>Home>myBCC.

What Can I do with myBCC?

- Setup a Friends list:
You can make a custom directory in myBCC of the people you communicate with frequently in the church.
- Interact with members in your current groups
- Stay in touch with members of your life group, study group, leadership group and any other group you are involved in.
- View & register for events
- Use your calendar tab for information on upcoming events.

- Give online
- Set up a one-time or reoccurring gift.
- Find a place to serve
- See what volunteer positions and needs you might want to consider. By setting up your entire profile, you can use the built-in search to “match” you with ministry opportunities we’ve entered that “fit” your profile.
- Share details about yourself
- Share your favorite music, favorite activities, your faith journey and more!
- Join groups
- Search for new groups that you would like to join at BCC.

How Secure Is My Data?

We take securing your privacy very seriously. Although myBCC is internet-based, information is secured through high quality encryption. NONE of the data contained in it will show up in any search engines and can only be viewed by users with a login and password. Therefore, every account that is in myBCC has been defaulted to “friends only” view. This means that only the friends you accept in myBCC can see your information.

We do encourage users to change as many of their privacy settings to “everyone” so that their contact information is visible. Please keep your profile as “listed”. Remember **YOU** have the control on what you want others to see.

Who Can See My Giving Information?

This information cannot be viewed by anyone outside your family profile. Your individual giving can only be seen by you. Family giving can only be seen by the primary contact and spouse. Questions? If you have any questions regarding myBCC, email the myBCC administrator at myBCC@burkecommunity.com.

What is Membership?

Members of BCC

What does it mean to be a member of Burke Community Church? The difference between *attende*e and *member* can be summed up in one word: commitment. At BCC, we recognize the need for a formal membership. We ask regular attendees to commit to membership for four reasons:

A Biblical Reason: Christ is committed to the church.

Christ loved the church and He gave his life for it (Ephesians 5:25).

A Cultural Reason: It is an antidote to our society.

We live in an age where very few want to be committed to anything—a job, a marriage, our country. This attitude has produced a generation of “church shoppers and hoppers.” Membership swims against the current of America’s “consumer religion.” An unselfish decision, commitment always builds character.

A Practical Reason: It defines who can be counted on.

Every sports team must have a roster. Every school must have an enrollment. Every business has a payroll. Every army has an enlistment. Even our country takes a census and requires voter registration. Church membership identifies our family.

A Personal Reason: It produces spiritual growth.

The New Testament places a major emphasis on the need for Christians to be accountable to each other for spiritual growth. We cannot be accountable when we’re not committed to any specific church family.

Next Steps

If you have attended three of the four *Discover Burke* classes or attended the one day class, then you are able to move forward to becoming a member. If you were unable to do so, please contact the teacher of the class to see how you may make up the material missed in order to meet the requirement. We don’t want you to be uninformed and unequipped to make a decision about becoming a member.

Please complete the membership application. They are available at the table when you sign in or as a fillable .pdf application available by emailing membership@burkecommunity.com. Please remember to attach each adult person's faith story who is becoming a member. Please refer to the appendix on who to write your story if you need some help. While you are submitting things, please consider submitting a photo and short biography for inclusion in New Member Recognition insert. (You can do this later if you would like.) Then submit your application and faith story to the church by email to membership@burkecommunity.com or return hard-copy to the Welcome Desk in envelope or to mail slot of secretary in the church office.

Lastly, we will coordinate a private visit with an elder. Our goal is to allow you the opportunity to meet our leadership. As a member, we want to make sure you have a direct connection to the "top" of our organization. Our servant leaders are a great and safe place to ask any questions we did not cover or where you desire more clarity. These men lead our church and take that privilege and responsibility very seriously. Your time with them will be a blessing.

A Final Word

The story is told of a mule who once found himself between two haystacks, completely unable to decide which one to eat first. Because of his indecision he didn't eat either one; he just stood there until he starved.

Many people are like the mule when deciding which church to attend. They wander back and forth, never committing themselves, and meanwhile going hungry. By attending *Discover Burke* you, unlike the mule, are saying that you see the need to find a haystack to call your own. May God bless you, and us, as you feed and work among us.

Appendix Resources

Writing Your Faith Story

My “Life *Before* Christ”

Acts 26:4-11

Section Purpose: To describe or explain your life before coming to know Jesus Christ as your personal savior.

1. Many people’s actions spring out of unsatisfied inner needs. What were one or two unsatisfied inner needs before you came to Christ? Consider the examples below.

<input type="checkbox"/> lack of peace	<input type="checkbox"/> desire to be in control
<input type="checkbox"/> no real friends	<input type="checkbox"/> fear of death
<input type="checkbox"/> fear of death	<input type="checkbox"/> loneliness
<input type="checkbox"/> lack of security	<input type="checkbox"/> lack of purpose
<input type="checkbox"/> no motivation	<input type="checkbox"/> no meaning in life
<input type="checkbox"/> lack of significance	

2. Often we seek different experiences or means to fulfill unsatisfied needs. What were one or two solutions you tried? Consider the examples below.

<input type="checkbox"/> marriage/family	<input type="checkbox"/> sports/fitness
<input type="checkbox"/> sex	<input type="checkbox"/> work
<input type="checkbox"/> money	<input type="checkbox"/> education
<input type="checkbox"/> friends	<input type="checkbox"/> hobbies/entertainment
<input type="checkbox"/> drugs/alcohol	

An Example

While I grew up in a good home, I remember distinctly experiencing a lack of purpose and meaning in life. While all my material needs were met, something was missing. Things just weren’t right inside. There was a void I couldn’t fill. My life wasn’t bad but it lacked meaning.

I managed to stay out of trouble during high school but nothing I found filled the longing of my heart. I was a very independent minded type of guy so I tended to keep my needs to myself. My pursuit to fill the void of my life finally landed me in a passionate dedication to sports. My days were filled with training, practicing and playing sports. All that mattered was the next game or match. As I look back now I would say I “lost myself” in sports.

Writing Your Faith Story

My Conversion: “*How Salvation Occurred*”

Acts 26:12-18

Section Purpose: To explain the circumstances that caused you to consider Christ and the specific way you became a Christian.

Explain the circumstances or events that led you to consider Christ as the solution to your inner needs. This could reflect a series of events over time or one or two distinct events or crisis.

Specifically explain how you became a Christian.

An Example

All during my growing up years I had friends who made church a regular part of their lives. While they were not my best friends they were, because of sports, guys I hung around with a lot.

Toward the latter part of my junior year in high school the deep void in my life and lack of purpose began to overwhelm me. My need eventually drove me to seek out a friend who I knew was a Christian.

Stoney and I met the next day for a game of basketball and to talk. Using a simple booklet, Stoney explained to me the crippling effect of my disobedience to God. My disobedience was the reason for the sense of emptiness in my life. He explained to me that disobedience, or sin, created a great chasm between God and me. I soon learned that the only way to breach that chasm was through Jesus Christ. Jesus died on the cross so I could be forgiven of the things I had done wrong; the sins I had committed. Stoney shared how he had accepted Christ by saying a simple prayer and explained that I could do the same.

He then led me through a simple prayer in which I confessed my disobedience to God and acknowledged that Christ died for me. I then placed my trust in Christ by asking Jesus to come into my life and take total control of it.

Writing Your Faith Story

My “Life *Since* Salvation”

Acts 26:19-23

Section Purpose: To explain how a personal relationship with Christ is transforming you personally and in your mission.

Describe one or two specific ways Christ has impacted your life since you gave your life to Him. One option is to tie this back to how your inner needs (described in the “Life *Before* Salvation” section) were filled.

An Example

Since that day my life has taken on a whole new meaning and direction. It wasn't that I was suddenly made perfect or that everything in my life was instantly fixed. As I began to read the Bible and get to know God, a sense of life purpose and inner peace began to replace the confusion in my life. In addition, God began to smooth out the rough edges of my life. But the greatest thing of all is that I know for certain that I have a personal relationship with Christ and that I will spend eternity with Him in heaven.

Writing Your Personal Faith Story

Summary Sheet

My Life *Before* Christ

Briefly describe a deep inner need in your life before you met Christ.

Describe a couple ways of how you tried to satisfy that inner need with unsatisfactory solutions.

***How* Salvation Occurred**

Explain the circumstances or events that led you to consider Christ as the solution to your inner needs.

Explain the steps you took to become a Christian.

My Life *Since* Christ

Describe one or two specific ways Christ has impacted your life since coming to know Him.

Putting Your Testimony Together

1. Compile the information on this page into one story (use the following page if you wish).
2. Add transition statements between sections.
3. Add a brief “Lead In” statement and a brief “Closing” statement.
4. Later transfer the main points to an index card that you can keep with you.

What Is Doctrine?

The word is derived from the Greek, *didaskalia* which is translated “teaching.” You’ll find it used in many places in your New Testament (cf. Matthew 15:9; Mark 7:7; Romans 12:7; 15:4; Ephesians 4:14; Colossians 2:22; 1 Timothy 1:10; 4:1, 6, 13, 16; 5:17; 6:1, 3; 2 Timothy 3:10, 16; 4:3; Titus 1:9, 2:1, 7, 10). The equivalent of this word in the Old Testament, which was written in Hebrew, is the word *lamed*. This particular word referred to teaching the ethical law of God, or the Torah, to the Israelites. In the New Testament the word was used to refer to the content of the Christian message, or that which makes for sound Christian theology (i.e., the virgin birth, the deity of Christ, the reality of the resurrection of Jesus, the acceptance of miracles, etc.). As you might guess, all pastors are commanded by God to know the Word of God so they can, in turn, teach, what Paul calls, sound doctrine to their sheep. We see this reflected in Paul’s words to the young pastor, Timothy:

“Until I come, give attention to the public reading of Scripture, to exhortation and teaching” (1 Timothy 4:13).

This is also why pastors are called pastor-teachers in Ephesians 4:11. Where the English reads that Jesus gave “pastors and teachers” to the church,” the Greek takes them as one word, denoting a two-fold function. Pastors are to “shepherd” the flock (and all that denotes), and they must be devoted to consistently teaching them how to walk with and know God. This and this alone is what brings delight to God’s heart (Jeremiah 9:24).

Why Is Doctrine Important?

Simply put: *You can’t obey what you don’t know.* You just might need to read that again and let it sink deep into your heart and soul. We live in an age where thinking, studying, and learning are downplayed in society and in the church. Our culture is much more interested in being entertained in a variety of ways. Allan Bloom’s national best seller in the 1990s, *The Closing of the American Mind*, merely put our national predicament in print and gave us all a wake-up call. Charlotte Thomason Tserby’s eye-opening book *The Deliberate Dumbing down of America* further pulled back the curtain on what is going on in our country. Point is, when people aren’t trained to think logically and critically anymore, they can be easily led to follow any type of leader anywhere he/she decides to go. And if you will but look around you, can’t you see we are being led nationally down the path to greater immorality and evil?

As the culture becomes lax in its thinking ability, so goes the church. Doctrine is then readily and easily watered down and replaced with whatever keeps us laughing, feeling good, or entertained. And doctrine is carefully re-shaped so we'd dare not offend anyone who happens to believe differently than we do. The result is we grow disciples who don't know how to think their spiritual way across the street, how to address the real ethical/social/scientific issues of the day, how to defend their faith in a powerful fashion, or how to truly follow God. Another result is we fail miserably to impact our decadent, decaying culture for Jesus Christ. Study ancient and you'll see this lackluster approach to doctrine and biblical/spiritual teaching is what led to their national captivity in 586 B.C. Jeremiah's words should be emblazoned on the front page of every paper and magazine in our country:

“For this is a rebellious people, false sons, sons who refuse to listen to the instruction of the LORD; who say to the seers, ‘You must not see visions;’ and to the prophets, ‘You must not prophesy to us what is right, speak to us pleasant words, prophesy illusions. Get out of the way, turn aside from the path, let us hear no more about the Holy One of Israel’ (Isaiah 30:9-11).

Note how the people, who hated moral/spiritual teaching, rose up to tell the “pastors” of their day what they wanted to hear. And what they wanted to hear was a positive, non-confrontive, comfortable, warm-fuzzy message ... even if it was a lie. God responded in the ensuing verses by informing them that judgment was coming (vv. 12ff).

Is this not the mind-set of our culture as they have joined the local church? Indeed. The result is the same with Israel. Spiritual teachers have watered down the Word of God, the magnificent teachings of the Bible, for the sake of the people, and the people, in turn, are failing to walk closely with God as they used to. Another consequence is the church fails to be the salt and light it is supposed to be (Matthew 5).

Teaching, therefore, is key to personal and national life change. When you know what God expects from you, even if it defies or disturbs your cultural thinking, you'll be more apt to obey and follow Him to the higher spiritual ground. You'll also be more fitted to turn many toward the Messiah, Jesus Christ, because you'll know how to guide them to Him. No wonder Paul's letters were filled with doctrine! He knew that powerful and truthful spiritual teaching leads to life-change. Ephesians is a case in point. The first three chapters deal with Christian doctrine, while the latter three chapters deal with Christian practice. This structure is not by accident for, as I have said, you cannot obey what you don't know.

At Burke Community Church, we want you to grow up in Jesus and lead many people into the Kingdom. We also want you to help us do our part in leading this city, this state, and this country to the cross of Christ and the empty tomb where forgiveness and eternal life can be found. To accomplish this we will concern ourselves with doctrine.

How Is Doctrine Organized?

Doctrine, or the teaching concerning the great theological themes of the Bible, can be structured in an organized fashion. By looking, for instance, at what the entire Bible says about God, and presenting this in an organized fashion, we can learn much about God. Scholars call this organizational structure systematic theology.

We are thankful you are interested in God's Word. Our prayer is that He would shape and mold you into His holy image. We also hope your faith will be strengthened and you'll be given a greater desire to share the awesomeness of these wonderful doctrines with those who don't know Jesus.

The Doctrine of the Bible

I. How has God revealed Himself?

A. General Revelation (Romans 1:20).

For since the creation of the world His invisible attributes, His eternal power and divine nature, have been clearly seen, being understood through what has been made, so that they are without excuse.

B. Special Revelation

1. The Lot (Proverbs 16:33).

The lot is cast into the lap, But its every decision is from the LORD.

2. The Urim and Thummim (Ezekiel 28:30).

“You shall put in the breastpiece of judgment the Urim and the Thummim, and they shall be over Aaron’s heart when he goes in before the LORD; and Aaron shall carry the judgment of the sons of Israel over his heart before the LORD continually.”

3. Dreams (Genesis 20:3).

But God came to Abimelech in a dream of the night, and said to him, “Behold, you are a dead man because of the woman whom you have taken, for she is married.”

4. Visions (Isaiah 1:1).

The vision of Isaiah the son of Amoz concerning Judah and Jerusalem, which he saw during the reigns of Uzziah, Jotham, Ahaz and Hezekiah, kings of Judah.

5. Theophanies (Genesis 16:7-14).

Now the angel of the LORD found her by a spring of water in the wilderness, by the spring on the way to Shur. He said, “Hagar, Sarai’s maid, where have you come from and where are you going?” And she said, “I am fleeing from the presence of my mistress Sarai.” Then the angel of the LORD said to her, “Return to your mistress, and submit yourself to her authority.” Moreover, the angel of the LORD said to her, “I will greatly multiply your descendants so that they will be too many to count.” The angel of the LORD said to her further,

“Behold, you are with child,

And you will bear a son;

And you shall call his name Ishmael,

Because the LORD has given heed to your affliction.

*“He will be a wild donkey of a man,
His hand will be against everyone,
And everyone’s hand will be against him;
And he will live to the east of all his brothers.”*

Then she called the name of the LORD who spoke to her, “You are a God who sees”; for she said, “Have I even remained alive here after seeing Him?” Therefore the well was called ^ℓBeer-lahai-roi; behold, it is between Kadesh and Bered.

6. Angels (Daniel 9:20).

Now while I was speaking and praying, and confessing my sin and the sin of my people Israel, and presenting my supplication before the LORD my God in behalf of the holy mountain of my God

7. Prophets (2 Samuel 23:2).

*“The Spirit of the LORD spoke by me,
And His word was on my tongue.*

8. Events (Micah 6:5).

*“My people, remember now
What Balak king of Moab counseled
And what Balaam son of Beor answered him,
And from Shittim to Gilgal,
So that you might know the righteous acts of the LORD.”*

9. Jesus Christ (John 1:14).

And the Word became flesh, and dwelt among us, and we saw His glory, glory as of the only begotten from the Father, full of grace and truth.

II. What Are the Proofs the Bible Is God’s Word?

A. It Can’t Be Destroyed

John Wycliffe. He was the first to translate the New Testament from the Latin into English in 1380. Two years later he finished the Old Testament. The **first hand-written English language Bible manuscripts** were produced in 1380's AD by John Wycliffe, an Oxford professor, scholar, and theologian. Wycliffe, (also spelled “Wycliff” & “Wyclif”), was well-known throughout Europe for his opposition to the teaching of the organized Church, which he believed to be contrary to the Bible. With the help of his followers, called the Lollards, and his assistant Purvey, and many other faithful scribes, Wycliffe produced dozens of English language manuscript copies of the scriptures. They were translated out of the Latin Vulgate, which was the only source text

available to Wycliffe. The Pope was so infuriated by his teachings and his translation of the Bible into English that 44 years after Wycliffe had died, he ordered the bones to be dug-up, crushed, and scattered in the river! (www.great-site.com).

William Tyndale. He was the first man to translate the Scriptures into English from the original languages instead of Latin. His was also the first English translation to be printed on a press. He was betrayed by “friends” while he was working on the Old Testament. He was found guilty of heresy, strangled, and burned at the stake near Brussels, Belgium in 1535. His dying prayer was, “Lord, open Thou the King of England’s eyes,” was eventually answered four years later. He was murdered for the crime of making an English translation. Though he didn’t finish translating the Old Testament, this work was finished by Miles Coverdale in 1539. King Henry VIII liked the translation so much (it was called the Great Bible because of its massive size) he permitted every church in England to have a copy. And this was, as I said, only four years after Tyndale’s powerful prayer. The King had done God’s bidding and the Word of God went forward.

B. It Has An Amazing Unity

1. Written over 1,600 year time span.
2. Written over 60 generations.
3. Written by more than 40 authors from every walk of life: kings (David), peasants, bakers (Hosea), fishermen, farmers, herdsmen (Amos), scholars, rabbis (Paul), etc.
4. Written in different places: Moses in the wilderness of Sinai, Jeremiah in a dark dungeon, Paul while in prison, Luke while traveling on missionary journeys, John while exiled on the lonely prison colony of Patmos.
5. Written on three continents: Asia, Africa, and Europe.
6. Written in three languages: Hebrew (the Old Testament), Aramaic (parts of Daniel and a smattering here in the New Testament), and Greek (the New Testament).
7. Written with a view of covering a wide range of highly controversial subjects, yet with complete harmony in how they were to be addressed. Case in point, the same condemnation of homosexuality one sees in Genesis 18-19), is the same emphasis seen in Romans 1,

which was written thousands of years later.

7. Written with a unified and harmonious aim, that being God's unfolding plan to redeem man from his fallen state. Hence, in Genesis we see Paradise Lost, but thousands of years later we encounter the concept of Paradise regained by John on Patmos, thus climaxing the ultimate goal of God.

Find another book in the world which has impacted mankind like the Bible has, from his laws to how he treats the poor and downcast. No other book even begins to compare.

C. It Foretells The Future Accurately

1. Israel's 400 years in Egypt some 400 years prior to the fact (Genesis 15:13).
God said to Abram, "Know for certain that your descendants will be strangers in a land that is not theirs, where they will be enslaved and oppressed four hundred years."
2. Israel's dispersion (Deuteronomy 28:15-68; Jeremiah 15:4; 16:13; Hosea 3:4).
'So I will hurl you out of this land into the land which you have not known, neither you nor your fathers; and there you will serve other gods day and night, for I will grant you no favor.'
3. Judah & Jerusalem would be rescued from the Assyrians but would be invaded successfully by the Babylonians (Isaiah 39:6; Jeremiah 25:9-12).
'Behold, the days are coming when all that is in your house and all that your fathers have laid up in store to this day will be carried to Babylon; nothing will be left,' says the LORD.
4. Samaria's (the capital of Northern Israel) fall would be final (Micah 1:6-9).
*For I will make Samaria a heap of ruins in the open country,
Planting places for a vineyard.
I will pour her stones down into the valley
And will lay bare her foundations. All of her idols will be smashed,
All of her earnings will be burned with fire
And all of her images I will make desolate,
For she collected them from a harlot's earnings,
And to the earnings of a harlot they will return.
Because of this I must lament and wail,*

*I must go barefoot and naked;
I must make a lament like the jackals
And a mourning like the ostriches.
For her wound is incurable,
For it has come to Judah;
It has reached the gate of my people,
Even to Jerusalem.*

5. Jerusalem's (the capital of Southern Israel) fall would be temporary (Jeremiah 29:10-14).
"For thus says the LORD, 'When seventy years have been completed for Babylon, I will visit you and fulfill My good word to you, to bring you back to this place. 'For I know the plans that I have for you,' declares the LORD, 'plans for welfare and not for calamity to give you a future and a hope. 'Then you will call upon Me and come and pray to Me, and I will listen to you. 'You will seek Me and find Me when you search for Me with all your heart. 'I will be found by you,' declares the LORD, 'and I will restore your fortunes and will gather you from all the nations and from all the places where I have driven you,' declares the LORD, 'and I will bring you back to the place from where I sent you into exile.'"
6. The person who would restore Judah was foretold by name (i.e., Cyrus, King of Persia) some 150 years before he was born (Isaiah 41:4, 21-26; 44:25-28; 45:11, 21; 48:14, 28-45:7).
*"It is I who says of Cyrus, 'He is My shepherd!
And he will perform all My desire.'
And he declares of Jerusalem, 'She will be built,'
And of the temple, 'Your foundation will be laid.'"*
7. The Medes and Persians would overthrow Babylon (Isaiah 21:2; Daniel 5:28), and the city of Jerusalem would be rebuilt in the process (Isaiah 44:28).
A harsh vision has been shown to me; the treacherous one still deals treacherously, and the destroyer still destroys. Go up, Elam, lay siege, Media; I have made an end of all the groaning she has caused.
8. The rise and fall of the Gentile nations are truly amazing prophecies because they are so exact: Tyre, Egypt, Ammon, Moab, Edom, and Philistia (Isaiah 13-23; Jeremiah 46-51). Consider Tyre as a case study in God's ability to prophecy accurately. No other book known to man can do this.
9. The exact year when Jesus' ministry would begin (Daniel 9:24-27).
"Seventy weeks have been decreed for your people and your holy

city, to finish the transgression, to make an end of sin, to make atonement for iniquity, to bring in everlasting righteousness, to seal up vision and prophecy and to anoint the most holy place. "So you are to know and discern that from the issuing of a decree to restore and rebuild Jerusalem until Messiah the Prince there will be seven weeks and sixty-two weeks; it will be built again, with plaza and moat, even in times of distress. "Then after the sixty-two weeks the Messiah will be cut off and have nothing, and the people of the prince who is to come will destroy the city and the sanctuary. And its end will come with a flood; even to the end there will be war; desolations are determined. "And he will make a firm covenant with the many for one week, but in the middle of the week he will put a stop to sacrifice and grain offering; and on the wing of abominations will come one who makes desolate, even until a complete destruction, one that is decreed, is poured out on the one who makes desolate."

10. The precise details of Christ’s sufferings and death (Isaiah 53).
 No other document, sacred or secular, contains such clear prophecies of events affecting the destiny of mankind and the people of God. The Koran and the Book of Mormon make the claims they are direct revelations from God, but neither contains the prophetic accuracy of the Bible. Not even close!

It Claims To Be From God

God Said	Bible Said
Genesis 12:3	Galatians 3:8
Exodus 9:16	Romans 9:17
Matthew 19:4,5	Genesis 2:24
Hebrews 3:7	Psalms 95:7
Hebrews 1:5	Psalms 2:7
Hebrews 1:6	Psalms 97:7
Hebrews 1:7	Psalms 104:4

There are 3,800 references in the Old Testament alone where we read statements like, “Now the Lord spoke,” “The Lord said,” or “Thus says the Lord.”

In the New Testament, the same emphasis is carried forward. Paul claims what he wrote were the commands of God (*1 Corinthians 14:37 If anyone thinks he is a prophet or spiritual, let him recognize that the things which I write to you are the Lord's commandment.*), and that what he preached was the very word of God (*1 Thessalonians 2:13 For this reason we also constantly thank God that when you received the word of God which you heard from us, you accepted it not as the word of men, but for what it really is, the word of God, which also performs its work in you who believe.*). John taught that his testimony was God's (*1 John 5:10. The one who believes in the Son of God has the testimony in himself; the one who does not believe God has made Him a liar, because he has not believed in the testimony that God has given concerning His Son.*), and Peter warned readers to remember "*the words spoken beforehand by the holy prophets and the commandment of the Lord and Savior spoken by your apostles*" (*2 Peter 3:2*).

III. Is It A Credible Book?

What Did Jesus Say? He endorsed the Old Testament fully and without question. He supported...

A. The creation of the universe by God (Mark 13:19).

"For those days will be a time of tribulation such as has not occurred since the beginning of the creation which God created until now, and never will.

B. The creation of man (Matthew 19:4ff).

And He answered and said, "Have you not read that He who created them from the beginning MADE THEM MALE AND FEMALE."

C. The personality and reality of Satan (John 8:44).

"You are of your father the devil, and you want to do the desires of your father. He was a murderer from the beginning, and does not stand in the truth because there is no truth in him. Whenever he speaks a lie, he speaks from his own nature, for he is a liar and the father of lies.

D. The destruction of the world by flood in Noah's day (Luke 17:26).

"And just as it happened in the days of Noah, so it will be also in the days of the Son of Man."

E. The destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah and the rescue of Lot (Luke 17:28-30).

"It was the same as happened in the days of Lot: they were eating, they were drinking, they were buying, they were selling, they were planting, and they were building; ²⁹but on the day that Lot went out from Sodom it

rained fire and brimstone from heaven and destroyed them all. ³⁰“It will be just the same on the day that the Son of Man is revealed.”

F. The revelation of God to Moses at the burning bush (Mark 12:26).

“But regarding the fact that the dead rise again, have you not read in the book of Moses, in the passage about the burning bush, how God spoke to him, saying, ‘I AM THE GOD OF ABRAHAM, AND THE GOD OF ISAAC, and the God of Jacob’?”

G. The Mosaic authorship of the Pentateuch (Luke 24:27).

Then beginning with Moses and with all the prophets, He explained to them the things concerning Himself in all the Scriptures.

H. The giving of manna in the wilderness (John 6:32).

Jesus then said to them, “Truly, truly, I say to you, it is not Moses who has given you the bread out of heaven, but it is My Father who gives you the true bread out of heaven.”

I. The experience of Jonah and the big fish (Matthew 12:39).

But He answered and said to them, “An evil and adulterous generation craves for a sign; and yet no sign will be given to it but the sign of Jonah the prophet.”

Conclusion: If Jesus was/is God, He knew the facts. He could not have accommodated Himself to the erroneous views of the day without compromising His person.

IV. What Does Archaeology Say?

A. Take A Look At The Old Testament

Archaeology has exploded the positions of many scholars who believed the Bible was nothing more than a conglomeration of myth and legend by verifying the historical existence of what it speaks about. Unger, “Acting as a corrective and a purge, archeology has exploded many of these erratic theories and false assumptions that used to be paraded in scholarly circles as settled facts. No longer can higher critics, for example, dismiss the Hebrew patriarchs as mere legendary figures or deny that Moses could write. Archeology has shown the falsity of both these and numerous other extreme contentions. Illuminating evidence is now available that Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob were historical persons, as Genesis describes them. As for Moses, not only could he have written documents in Egyptian hieroglyphics, as his early residence in Egypt would indicate, or in

Akkadian, as the Amarna Letters of the fourteenth century B.C. show, but in ancient Hebrew as well, as the discovery of the Ugaritic literature at Ras Shamra in North Syria (1929-1937) demonstrates” (Archeology and the Old Testament, pp. 15-160.

1. Many cities have been unearthed over the years to lend weight to the Bible’s story, like Shiloh, Gibeah, Megiddo, and Samaria to name a few.
2. For many years, scholars called the Bible into question when it refers to Belshazzar as the last king of Babylon (Dan. 5). They took this position because the Babylonian cuneiform records showed it was Nabonidus, Belshazzar’s father. Evidence was eventually discovered, demonstrating that during the last part of his reign, Nabonidus resided in Arabia and left the rulership of the kingdom in the hands of his eldest son, Belshazzar, just as the Scripture said.

B. Take a Look at the New Testament

1. Authors Were Competent.
2. Authors Were Honest.
3. Authors Were Martyrs. James, the son of Zebedee and relative of Jesus through his mother, Salome, who was a cousin of Mary, was beheaded by Herod Agrippa. Matthew was killed by a halberd (a combination of a battle axe and spear) in Nadabah in A.D. 60. James, the brother of the Lord, was beaten, stoned until his brains spilled out onto the ground at 94 years of age. Mark was dragged to pieces by the people of Alexandria. Peter was crucified upside down under Nero. Paul was beheaded by Nero as well. Jude, the brother of James, was crucified at Edessa in A.D. 72. Luke was hanged on an olive tree by idolatrous priests in Greece. John, the beloved disciple and author of the gospel of John and 1, 2, 3 John was exiled on Patmos. Obviously, these valiant men laid down their lives because they believed in the Lord they wrote about. They had walked and talked with Him before and after the resurrection. How, then, could they not write accurately about Him? Why would they, then, lay their lives down for something they knew to be false? Their deaths, on the contrary, underscore the validity and veracity of the New Testament text you hold in your hand. That took it serious, and so, too, should you and I.

Is It Inspired?

A. What Is Inspiration?

1. Key Texts:
 - a. 2 Timothy 3:16
All Scripture is inspired by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for training in righteousness;
 - b. Acts 1:16
“Brethren, the Scripture had to be fulfilled, which the Holy Spirit foretold by the mouth of David concerning Judas, who became a guide to those who arrested Jesus.
 - c. Hebrews 10:15-17
And the Holy Spirit also testifies to us; for after saying, “THIS IS THE covenant that I will make with them after those days, says the Lord: I will put My laws upon their heart, And on their mind I will write them,” He then says, “And their sins and their lawless deeds I will remember no more.”
 - d. 2 Peter 1:21
For no prophecy was ever made by an act of human will, but men moved by the Holy Spirit spoke from God.
2. Key Thoughts
 - a. It is inexplicable. (We don’t know exactly how God has done what He has done).
 - b. It is limited to the biblical authors.
 - c. It is a study of divine guidance.
 - d. It is a study of protection.
 - e. It is extensive (1 Corinthians 2:13).
“which things we also speak, not in words taught by human wisdom, but in those taught by the Spirit, combining spiritual thoughts with spiritual words.”
 - f. It is limited (to the autographs).

VI. Is It Inerrant?

A. What Does This Mean?

“The Bible is wholly true (true in whole and in part), without error in everything affirmed (not just ‘spiritual’ or ‘redemptive truth’ (Professor Norman Geisler).

Inerrancy means that when all the facts are known, the Scriptures in their original autographs are properly interpreted will be shown to be wholly true in everything they teach, whether that teaching has to do with doctrine, history, science, geography geology, or other disciplines or knowledge” (Professor Paul Feinberg).

B. Is Inerrancy Biblical?

1. What We Learn From God.

a. Major Premise: God is true (Romans 3:4).

May it never be! Rather, let God be found true, though every man be found a liar, as it is written,

*“THAT YOU MAY BE JUSTIFIED IN YOUR WORDS,
AND PREVAIL WHEN YOU ARE JUDGED.”*

b. Minor Premise: God breathed out the Scriptures (2 Timothy 3:16).

All Scripture is inspired by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for training in righteousness;

c. Logical Conclusion: The Scriptures are totally true (John 17:7).

“Now they have come to know that everything You have given Me is from You;”

2. What We Learn From Jesus.

a. Jesus was concerned about every word (Matthew 4:4).

But He answered and said, “It is written, ‘MAN SHALL NOT LIVE ON BREAD ALONE, BUT ON EVERY WORD THAT PROCEEDS OUT OF THE MOUTH OF GOD.’”

b. Jesus was concerned with the verbs (Matthew 22:23-33).

On that day some Sadducees (who say there is no resurrection) came to Jesus and questioned Him, asking, “Teacher, Moses said, ‘IF A MAN DIES HAVING NO CHILDREN, HIS BROTHER AS NEXT OF KIN SHALL MARRY HIS WIFE, AND RAISE UP CHILDREN FOR HIS BROTHER.’ “Now there were seven brothers with us; and the first married and died, and having no children left his wife to his brother; so also the second, and the third, down to the seventh. “Last of all, the woman died. “In the resurrection, therefore, whose wife of the seven will she be? For they all had married her.”

But Jesus answered and said to them, "You are mistaken, not understanding the Scriptures nor the power of God. "For in the resurrection they neither marry nor are given in marriage, but are like angels in heaven. "But regarding the resurrection of the dead, have you not read what was spoken to you by God: 'I AM THE GOD OF ABRAHAM, AND THE GOD OF ISAAC, AND THE GOD OF JACOB'? He is not the God of the dead but of the living." When the crowds heard this, they were astonished at His teaching.

- c. Jesus believed in the historical and supernatural events of the Old Testament (cf. Matthew 10:15-20; 12:40; 19:3-5; 24:38).
"Truly I say to you, it will be more tolerable for the land of Sodom and Gomorrah in the Day of Judgment than for that city. "Behold, I send you out as sheep in the midst of wolves; so be shrewd as serpents and innocent as doves. "But beware of men, for they will hand you over to the courts and scourge you in their synagogues; and you will even be brought before governors and kings for My sake, as a testimony to them and to the Gentiles. "But when they hand you over, do not worry about how or what you are to say; for it will be given you in that hour what you are to say. "For it is not you who speak, but it is the Spirit of your Father who speaks in you.

- d. Jesus recognized the importance of every facet of the Old Testament (Matthew 5:17-18).
"Do not think that I came to abolish the Law or the Prophets; I did not come to abolish but to fulfill. "For truly I say to you, until heaven and earth pass away, not the smallest letter or stroke shall pass from the Law until all is accomplished."

C. Is It That Big Of A Deal?

- 1. If the Bible isn't true, then how can we trust what it says in any way, shape or form? How would we know what it says about Jesus' life, death and resurrection is really true? How would we know what is true and what is not? A denial of inerrancy destroys what one thinks of Jesus ipso facto. And the damage doesn't stop there, either, but touches every major doctrine disclosed in the Scriptures. Point to be considered: If the Bible you hold in your hand contains errors, even of the most seemingly insignificant sort, then all doctrine falls like dominos. Why use a book you don't intrinsically trust? Imagine taking this approach with a Chilton car repair manual. "Oh yeah, I use it to work on my car, but there are parts of it I find questionable and just don't use. I choose, instead, to improvise at those points." Sure. Great. Only a fool would do

this.

2. If only parts of the Bible are true, then it is left to man to pick and choose what is or is not true. When this occurs, one's Christian practice naturally suffers because texts are tossed out which interrupt or condemn your lifestyle or thinking. What then would we think about homosexuality if Genesis 18-19 were called into question? How long would our marriages last if we felt the Word was fallacious in the area of divorce and remarriage?
3. You can't pick and choose. Some do, though. They argue that since inerrancy only applies to the original source documents, and not the copies, from which our translations are made, then the argument is simply theoretical and, therefore, non-essential. To this person we must ask: Do you believe the Bible is the inspired Word of God? If they say, "Yes," then we must ask a follow-up question: "If you believe in inspiration without the originals, then why don't you apply the same logic to the doctrine of inerrancy in relation to the Bible you hold in your hand?"

VII. What About Those Problems Passages?

A. The Passages:

1. Who did Cain marry (Genesis 4-5)?
2. How many really died in Numbers 25:9?
Those who died by the plague were 24,000.
3. Who caused David to number Israel (2 Samuel 24:1; 1 Chron. 21:1)?
Now again the anger of the LORD burned against Israel, and it incited David against them to say, "Go, number Israel and Judah."
4. Who really killed Goliath (2 Samuel 21:91; 1 Samuel 17:50)?
Thus David prevailed over the Philistine with a sling and a stone, and he struck the Philistine and killed him; but there was no sword in David's hand.
5. What about the number discrepancies in 2 Samuel 24 and 1 Chronicles 21?

B. The Principles:

1. When handling alleged contradictions in the Bible the burden of proof rests on the critics, not the Bible.
2. Like an American citizen, the Bible is “presumed innocent until proven guilty.”
3. Like a reliable friend, we give the Bible the “benefit of the doubt.”
4. As scientists presuppose the unity of science even in the face of unexplained anomalies, so biblical scholars presuppose the harmony of the Bible even in the face of apparent contradictions.
5. Not all citations are exact quotations. They must be faithful to the meaning not necessarily identical in wording (Psalms 40:6-8; Hebrews 1).

*Sacrifice and meal offering You have not desired;
My ears You have [£]opened;
Burnt offering and sin offering You have not required.
Then I said, “Behold, I come;
In the scroll of the book it is written of me.
I delight to do Your will, O my God;
Your Law is within my heart.”*

6. Not everything recorded in the Bible is approved by it (i.e., David’s sin with Bathsheba, 2 Samuel 11.)

Now when evening came David arose from his bed and walked around on the roof of the king’s house, and from the roof he saw a woman bathing; and the woman was very beautiful in appearance. So David sent and inquired about the woman. And one said, “Is this not Bathsheba, the daughter of Eliam, the wife of Uriah the Hittite?” David sent messengers and took her, and when she came to him, he lay with her.

7. Divergent accounts can be complimentary not necessarily contradictory (Matthew 28; John 20).
8. Unreconciled texts do not necessarily imply irreconcilable truths.
9. Some errors may be in transmission (i.e., in copying as in 2 Chron. 22:2).

Ahaziah was twenty-two years old when he became king, and he reigned one year in Jerusalem. And his mother's name was Athaliah, the granddaughter of Omri.

10. Language about the world is observational, not technical (Isaiah 40:22; Josh. 10:22).

*It is He who sits above the circle of the earth,
And its inhabitants are like grasshoppers,
Who stretches out the heavens like a curtain
And spreads them out like a tent to dwell in.*

VIII. What about Science?

Today, many Christians hold to the view that the Bible is true in areas of doctrine (2 Timothy 3:15, *and that from childhood you have known the sacred writings which are able to give you the wisdom that leads to salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus.*), but sometimes inaccurate in the area of science. They argue that by taking this position we avoid having to defend the Bible from liberal scholars who reject the Bible's claims to truth because of supposed scientific errors. The only problem is the Bible readily comes to us within the fabric of science. From Genesis 1:1 forward the scientific worldview is espoused that either invalidates modern science or supports its observations of the cosmos. In the end, we must come to understand that if the Bible is errant in regards to science, then, by definition, what it says about doctrine (viz., the virgin birth, the deity of Christ, the resurrection of Jesus, etc.) is equally suspect.

IX. What Is The Bible Like?

- A. A Counselor** (Psalms 119:24).

My soul cleaves to the dust; Revive me according to Your word.

- B. A Hammer** (Jeremiah 23:29).

"Is not My word like fire?" declares the LORD, "and like a hammer which shatters a rock?"

- C. A Lamp** (Psalms 119:105)

Your word is a lamp to my feet, And a light to my path.

- D. A Mirror** (James. 1:23-25).

For if anyone is a hearer of the word and not a doer, he is like a man who looks at his natural face in a mirror; for once he has looked at himself and gone away, he has immediately

forgotten what kind of person he was. But one who looks intently at the perfect law, the law of liberty, and abides by it, not having become a forgetful hearer but an effectual doer, this man will be blessed in what he does.

E. A Sword (Hebrews 4:12).

For the word of God is living and active and sharper than any twedged sword, and piercing as far as the division of soul and spirit, of both joints and marrow, and able to judge the thoughts and intentions of the heart.

F. Fire (Jeremiah. 23:29).

“Is not My word like fire?” declares the LORD, “and like a hammer which shatters a rock?”

G. Gold (Psalms 19:9).

The fear of the LORD is clean, enduring forever; The judgments of the LORD are true; they are righteous altogether.

H. Milk (1 Corinthians 3:1-3; Hebrews 5:11-13).

And I, brethren, could not speak to you as to spiritual men, but as to men of flesh, as to infants in Christ. I gave you milk to drink, not solid food; for you were not yet able to receive it. Indeed, even now you are not yet able, for you are still fleshly. For since there is jealousy and strife among you, are you not fleshly, and are you not walking like mere men?

I. Rain (Isaiah 55:10-11).

*“For as the rain and the snow come down from heaven,
And do not return there without watering the earth
And making it bear and sprout,
And furnishing seed to the sower and bread to the eater;
So will My word be which goes forth from My mouth;
It will not return to Me empty,
Without accomplishing what I desire,
And without succeeding in the matter for which I sent it.*

J. Seed (1 Peter 1:23).

For you have been born again not of seed which is perishable but imperishable, that is, through the living and enduring word of God.

K. Meat (Hebrews 5:11-14).

Concerning him we have much to say, and it is hard to explain, since you have become dull of hearing. For though by this time you ought to be teachers, you have need again for someone to teach you the

elementary principles of the oracles of God, and you have come to need milk and not solid food. For everyone who partakes only of milk is not accustomed to the word of righteousness, for he is an infant. But solid food is for the mature, who because of practice have their senses trained to discern good and evil.

L. Water (Ephesians 5:25).

Husband, love your wives, just as Christ also loved the church and gave Himself up for her, so that He might sanctify her, having cleansed her by the washing of water with the word.

X. How Should You Respond To The Bible?

A. See it as awe-inspiring (Psalm 119:120).

*My flesh trembles for fear of You,
And I am afraid of Your judgments.*

B. Cherish it (Psalm 119:53).

Burning indignation has seized me because of the wicked, Who forsake Your law.

C. See its ultimate life value (Psalm 119:105).

*Your word is a lamp to my feet
And a light to my path.*

D. Love it (Psalm 119:167).

My soul keeps Your testimonies, And I love them exceedingly.

E. Meditate on it (Psalm 1:2)

But his delight is in the law of the LORD, And in His law he meditates day and night.

F. Obey it (James 1:22-25; 1 John 5:2-3).

But prove yourselves doers of the word, and not merely hearers who delude themselves.

G. Share it with others (Acts 8:4, 25; Philippians 1:14).

Therefore, those who had been scattered went about preaching the word.

H. Study it (2 Timothy 2:15).

Be diligent to present yourself approved to God as a workman who does not need to be ashamed, accurately handling the word of truth.

The Doctrine Of God

I. How Do We Know God Exists?

Note: The following arguments don't prove the existence of God in a scientific sense. They do, however, definitely demonstrate the reasonableness and plausibility of the existence of the God of the Bible.

A. Non-Biblical Arguments

1. Cosmological Argument:

Every effect must have an adequate cause. The universe, then, is a major effect which demands an adequate cause. This point asks questions as it looks at the cosmos, i.e., the world, like "Where did these things come from?" "How did they originate?" "How did they get here?" Reason insists that whatever was responsible for bringing the world and the things in it into existence must have been greater than the world itself. The first cause, the first mover, must have had enough power to bring the present world into existence. Hence, just as a car speaks of a car maker, so the existence of the universe implies a Creator (Psalm 19:1; Romans 1:20).

2. Theistic argument:

- Every effect has a cause;
- The world (cosmos) is an effect.
- Therefore, the world has a cause.

3. Teleological Argument:

The complex order and design of the cosmos as we know it logically leads one to see the necessity of a first cause, i.e., a Being (God), who created, organized, and oversaw the entire creative process. Return back to the car analogy. Anyone who sees a complex car (especially today with all of its computer components) rationally concludes there must be intelligent designer/designers somewhere who fashioned this marvelous machine. Only a foolish individual would look at the car and assume it assembled itself by random chance. Illustrations of intricate design which implies, by definition, a Master Designer:

- DNA Code
- The Human Body
- The Human Brain
- The "Simple" Cell

- The Planet We Live On
- The Single Enzyme

4. Moral Argument:

“Every man has a sense of obligation, of what is right and wrong, together with an undeniable feeling of responsibility to do what is right and a sense of self-condemnation when he commits what is evil” (Hoeksema). This position presupposes that there is a speaker above man, telling him what is right and what is wrong. The speaker, in this case, would be God. Hence, throughout the world we see that all cultures possess a sense of right and wrong, and typically those standards are very familiar. From this we can suggest there must exist a permanent moral law that is supreme, and has its foundation in a Supreme One, i.e., God. In every situation we all possess concepts of what is correct and incorrect behavior. What tells your conscience how you “ought” to act, or which choice you should make, is an illustration of a standard above the right and wrong choices. This oughtness is implanted in every human being by the Divine Being, God, who tells us internally how to behave and live. The definitive work on this argument was written by C. S. Lewis years ago titled “The Case for Christianity.”

B. Biblical Arguments

At this point we will consider only the aspects of general revelation. Special revelation, which is the Bible, was treated in the last lesson. Its miraculous nature, in and of itself, speaks of a God who has chosen to speak to man, His creation.

1. Romans 1:18-32

For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men who suppress the truth in unrighteousness, because that which is known about God is evident within them; for God made it evident to them. For since the creation of the world His invisible attributes, His eternal power and divine nature, have been clearly seen, being understood through what has been made, so that they are without excuse. For even though they knew God, they did not honor Him as God or give thanks, but they became futile in their speculations, and their foolish heart was darkened. Professing to be wise, they became fools, and exchanged the glory of the incorruptible God for an image in the form of corruptible man and of birds and four-footed animals and crawling creatures.

Therefore God gave them over in the lusts of their hearts to impurity, so that their bodies would be dishonored among them. For they exchanged the truth of God for a lie, and worshiped and served the creature rather than the Creator, who is blessed forever. Amen. For this reason God gave them over to degrading passions; for their women exchanged the natural function for that which is unnatural, and in the same way also the men abandoned the natural function of the woman and burned in their desire toward one another, men with men committing indecent acts and receiving in their own persons the due penalty of their error.

And just as they did not see fit to acknowledge God any longer, God gave them over to a depraved mind, to do those things which are not proper, being filled with all unrighteousness, wickedness, greed, evil; full of envy, murder, strife, deceit, malice; they are gossips, slanderers, haters of God, insolent, arrogant, boastful, inventors of evil, disobedient to parents, without understanding, untrustworthy, unloving, unmerciful; and although they know the ordinance of God, that those who practice such things are worthy of death, they not only do the same, but also give hearty approval to those who practice them.

- The Revelation of His Wrath (v. 18).
- The Reasons for His Wrath (vv. 19-23).
- The Result of His Wrath (vv. 24-32).

2. Psalm 19:1-6

*The heavens are telling of the glory of God;
And their expanse is declaring the work of His hands.
Day to day pours forth speech,
And night to night reveals knowledge.
There is no speech, nor are there words;
Their voice is not heard.
Their line has gone out through all the earth,
And their utterances to the end of the world.
In them He has placed a tent for the sun,
Which is as a bridegroom coming out of his chamber;
It rejoices as a strong man to run his course.
Its rising is from one end of the heavens,
And its circuit to the other end of them;
And there is nothing hidden from its heat.*

The world is evidence of the Creator's knowledge. David stressed this in the following ways in this passage:

- God is continuously revealed through the created order (vv.1-2).

- The arena for this particular revelation about God is the universe as we know and understand it (v. 4).
- The character of this revelation is overt and nonverbal (v. 3).
- The revelation is made known to everyone at all times (vv. 4-6).
- This revelation should cause people to ask logical questions like, “Who made the moon and the stars?” “Where did the sun come?” “How do we account for the various predictable cycles we see in life?”

Bottom line: If God exists, I am responsible to know and walk with Him. I am also accountable in the here and hereafter before Him who sees and knows all things (2 Chronicles 16:9; Jeremiah 23:23; 32:27).

II. Who Is God?

A. What The World Says

- “God is All in all. God is the ever present I am, filling all space, including in itself all Mind, the one Father-Mother.”
- “Infinite intelligence pervades and controls the universe, is without shape or form, and is impersonal, omnipresent, and omnipotent.”
- “God’s personal name is Jehovah. Only Jehovah is from everlasting to everlasting. Jesus Christ is not One God with the Father.”
- “God is an organized being just as we are who are now in the flesh. He is a progressive being, and possesses the capacity of eternal increase.”
- Brahma, the Absolute, other than which there is nothing else—without qualities, unknowable, impersonal, beyond all appearances, changes, differences.”
- “Everything in creation is the manifestation of the unmanifested absolute impersonal being, the omnipresent God.”
- “There is only one God and His name is Allah. He is far above man in every way, meaning he is not personally knowable.”

B. What The Word Says

1. He Possess Definite Character

- a. He is eternal (Genesis 21:33 ... El Olam, the Everlasting God).

Abraham planted a tamarisk tree at Beersheba, and there he called on the name of the LORD, the Everlasting God.

- b. He is free (Isaiah 40:13-14). Question: If He is free, are there limitations to His “freeness?”
*Who has directed the Spirit of the LORD,
Or as His counselor has informed Him?
With whom did He consult and who gave Him understanding?
And who taught Him in the path of justice and taught Him knowledge
And informed Him of the way of understanding?*
- c. He is unchanging (Malachi 3:6; James 1:17). Question: If He is unchanging, how do we account for the fact He repents and changes His mind?
“For I, the LORD, do not change; therefore you, O sons of Jacob, are not consumed.
- d. He is holy (Leviticus 11:44; Psalm 99:3).
‘For I am the LORD your God. Consecrate yourselves therefore, and be holy, for I am holy. And you shall not make yourselves unclean with any of the swarming things that swarm on the earth.
- e. He is love (1 John 4:8).
The one who does not love does not know God, for God is love.
- f. He is omnipotent (Genesis 17:1; Revelation 1:8). Question: Does His power have limitations?
Now when Abram was ninety-nine years old, the LORD appeared to Abram and said to him, “I am God Almighty; Walk before Me, and be blameless.
- g. He is omnipresent (Psalm 139:7-11).
Question: How does omnipresence differ from pantheism which states that god is the universe?
*Where can I go from Your Spirit?
Or where can I flee from Your presence?
If I ascend to heaven, You are there;
If I make my bed in Sheol, behold, You are there.
If I take the wings of the dawn,
If I dwell in the remotest part of the sea,
Even there Your hand will lead me,
And Your right hand will lay hold of me.
If I say, “Surely the darkness will overwhelm me,
And the light around me will be night,”*

- h. He is omniscient (Acts 15:18; Psalm 147:4).
Says the Lord, who makes these things known from long ago.
- i. He is sovereign (Acts 15:18; Ephesians 1:11; Psalm 135:6).
In Him also we have obtained an inheritance, having been predestined according to His purpose who works all things after the counsel of His will,

2. He Exists In Trinitarian Form

That there is but one, true God is the great truth of the Bible. Many texts support this conclusion: (Deuteronomy 4:35-39; 1 Kings 8:60; Mark 12:29-32; John 17:3). That the divine One is undivided and indivisible is hinted at in many texts; cf. Deuteronomy 6:4; Mark 12:29; James 2:19. That there is a unified trinity is clearly taught in both testaments. Consider the evidence of this great mystery:

- a. Plural pronouns are used to describe God (Genesis 1:26; 3:22; 11:7).
Then God said, "Let Us make man in Our image, according to Our likeness; and let them rule over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the sky and over the cattle and over all the earth, and over every creeping thing that creeps on the earth."
- b. The name for God, Elohim, is highly plural (Genesis 1:1-2).
In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth. The earth was ^ℓformless and void, and darkness was over the surface of the deep, and the Spirit of God was ^ℓmoving over the surface of the waters.
- c. The Lord is distinguished from the LORD (Genesis 19:24; Hosea 1:7; Zechariah 3:2).
Then the LORD rained on Sodom and Gomorrah brimstone and fire from the LORD out of heaven.
- d. The Son is distinguished from the Father (Isaiah 48:16; Psalm 45:6f; Isaiah 63:9f).
*"Come near to Me, listen to this:
From the first I have not spoken in secret,
From the time it took place, I was there.
And now the Lord GOD has sent Me, and His Spirit."*
- e. The Spirit is distinguished from God (Genesis 1:2; 6:3; Numbers 27:18).

The earth was [£]formless and void, and darkness was over the surface of the deep, and the Spirit of God was [£]moving over the surface of the waters.

- f. The angel of the Lord is distinguished from the Lord but is also identified with Him (Genesis 16:7-14; 22:11-18; 31:11-13; Exodus 3:2-5; Judges 13:2-25).

Now the angel of the LORD found her by a spring of water in the wilderness, by the spring on the way to Shur. He said, "Hagar, Sarai's maid, where have you come from and where are you going?" And she said, "I am fleeing from the presence of my mistress Sarai." Then the angel of the LORD said to her, "Return to your mistress, and submit yourself to her authority." Moreover, the angel of the LORD said to her, "I will greatly multiply your descendants so that they will be too many to count." The angel of the LORD said to her further,

*"Behold, you are with child,
And you will bear a son;
And you shall call his name [£]Ishmael,
Because the LORD has given heed to your affliction.*

*"He will be a wild donkey of a man,
His hand will be against everyone,
And everyone's hand will be against him;
And he will live to the east of all his brothers."*

Then she called the name of the LORD who spoke to her, "You are a God who sees"; for she said, "Have I even remained alive here after seeing Him?" Therefore the well was called [£]Beer-lahai-roi; behold, it is between Kadesh and Bered.

- g. The Trinity is present at Christ's baptism (Matthew 3:16f).
After being baptized, Jesus came up immediately from the water; and behold, the heavens were opened, and he saw the Spirit of God descending as a dove and lighting on Him.
- h. Jesus prayed that the Father would send the Comforter, the Holy Spirit (John 14:16).
"I will ask the Father, and He will give you another Helper, that He may be with you forever;
- i. The disciples were told to baptize with Trinitarian formula (Matthew 28:19).
"Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit.

- j. The three persons of the trinity are associated together in their work (1 Corinthians 12:4-6; Ephesians 1:3-14; 1 Peter 1:2; 3:18). *Now there are varieties of gifts, but the same Spirit. And there are varieties of ministries, and the same Lord. There are varieties of effects, but the same God who works all things in all persons.*
- k. The Father is recognized as God (John 6:27).
“Do not work for the food which perishes, but for the food which endures to eternal life, which the Son of Man will give to you, for on Him the Father, God, has set His seal.”
- l. The Son is recognized as God: He is eternal (John 8:58). He is omnipresent (John 3:13). He is omniscient (John 16:30; 21:17). He is omnipotent (John 5:19; Hebrews 1:3). He holds the offices of deity like Creator (Colossians 1:16). He exercises the prerogatives of deity like forgiving sins (Matthew 9:2-6), raising the dead (John 5:25-29; 11:25), and exercising judgment (John 5:22). He is called Lord (Matthew 7:22; 8:2; 14:28; Mark 7:28), a term used also of the Father (Matthew 4:7; Luke 2:29).
Jesus said to them, “Truly, truly, I say to you, before Abraham was born, I am.”
- m. The Holy Spirit is recognized as God. He is a person. Personal pronouns are used of Him (John 14:26; 16:13). He is called the Comforter (John 14:16; 15:26). He possesses the attributes of deity like eternity (Hebrews 9:14), omniscience (1 Corinthians 2:10f), omnipotence (Luke 1:35), omnipresence (Psalm 139:7-10), and so forth.
“But the Helper, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in My name, He will teach you all things, and bring to your remembrance all that I said to you.

The Word clearly supports the Trinitarian conclusion. What, therefore, is a working definition? B. B. Warfield gives us this one: “There is one only and true God, but in the unity of the Godhead there are three coeternal and coequal Persons, the same in substance but distinct in subsistence” (The International Standard Bible Encyclopedia, “Trinity,” vol. 5; 3012).

What should our response be to this magnificent Trinitarian God? Worship Him. Study Him. Know Him. Sing to Him! Seek Him! Learn from Him how to live!

"I am the LORD, I have called you in righteousness, I will also hold you by the hand and watch over you, And I will appoint you as a covenant to the people, As a light to the nations, To open blind eyes, To bring out prisoners from the dungeon, And those who dwell in darkness from the prison. "I am the LORD, that is My name; I will not give My glory to another, Nor My praise to graven images. "Behold, the former things have come to pass, Now I declare new things; Before they spring forth I proclaim them to you." Sing to the LORD a new song, Sing His praise from the end of the earth! You who go down to the sea, and all that is in it. You islands and those who dwell on them. Let the wilderness and its cities lift up their voices, The settlements where Kedar inhabits. Let the inhabitants of Sela sing aloud, Let them shout for joy from the tops of the mountains. Let them give glory to the LORD, And declare His praise in the coastlands. Isaiah 42:6-12

"Glory in his holy name; let the hearts of those who seeks the LORD rejoice. Look to the LORD and his strength; seek his face always." Psalm 105:3-4

"Show me your ways, O LORD, teach me your paths; guide me in your truth and teach me, for you are God my Savior, and my hope is in you all day long." Psalm 25:4-5

"For this is what the high and lofty One says—he who lives forever, whose name is holy: 'I live in a high and holy place, but also with him who is contrite and lowly in spirit, to revive the spirit of the lowly and to revive the heart of the contrite. Isaiah 57:15

The Doctrine Of Jesus

I. Who Is Jesus?

“Who do you say that I am?” (Matthew 16:15)

He said to them, “But who do you say that I am?” Simon Peter answered, “You are the Christ, the Son of the living God.”*

II. What Do The Scriptures Teach About Him?

A. He Was/Is God

1. He was pre-existent prior to His incarnation.

a. He claimed a heavenly origin (John 3:13, 31).

“No one has ascended into heaven, but He who descended from heaven: the Son of Man.

b. He worked as the Creator (John 1:3; Colossians 1:16; Hebrews 1:2).

All things came into being through Him, and apart from Him nothing came into being that has come into being.

c. He claimed equal glory with the Father prior to the creation of the world (John 17:5).

“Now, Father, glorify Me together with Yourself, with the glory which I had with You before the world was.”

d. He claimed self-existence (John 1:4; 8:58; 14:6).

In Him was life, and the life was the Light of men.

2. He Possesses Divine Attributes.

a. He exercised authority over nature (Mark 4:35-41).

On that day, when evening came, He said to them, “Let us go over to the other side.” Leaving the crowd, they took Him along with them in the boat, just as He was; and other boats were with Him. And there arose a fierce gale of wind, and the waves were breaking over the boat so much that the boat was already filling up. Jesus Himself was in the stern, asleep on the cushion; and they woke* Him and said to Him, “Teacher, do You not care that we are perishing?” And He got up and*

rebuked the wind and said to the sea, "Hush, be still." And the wind died down and it became perfectly calm. And He said to them, "Why are you afraid? How is it that you have no faith?" They became very much afraid and said to one another, "Who then is this, that even the wind and the sea obey Him?"

Regarding His walking on water, Ravi Zacharis cogently remarks: "Think of this for a moment. In eighteen milliliters of water (about two swallows full), there are 6×10^{23} molecules of H₂O. How much is 6×10^{23} ? A good computer can carry ten million counts per second. It would take that computer two billion years to count to 6×10^{23} . Look at it another way. A stack of five hundred sheets of paper is two to three inches high. How high would the stack be if it had 6×10^{23} sheets? That stack would reach from the earth to the sun, not once, but more than one million times. Yet, in about two gulps of water, God has packed that many molecules. The miracle of walking on water is small for Him who created it in the first place" (*Jesus Among Other Gods*, p. 81).

- b. He reported news when He was far away from the origin of the news (John 1:47-50).

Jesus saw Nathanael coming to Him, and said of him, "Behold, an Israelite indeed, in whom there is no deceit!" Nathanael said to Him, "How do You know me?" Jesus answered and said to him, "Before Philip called you, when you were under the fig tree, I saw you." Nathanael answered Him, "Rabbi, You are the Son of God; You are the King of Israel." Jesus answered and said to him, "Because I said to you that I saw you under the fig tree, do you believe? You will see greater things than these."*

- c. He knew peoples thoughts (Luke 6:8; John 4:16-19).

But He knew what they were thinking, and He said to the man with the withered hand, "Get up and come forward!" And he got up and came forward.

- d. He had power over life and death (Luke 7:11-17).

Soon afterwards He went to a city called Nain; and His disciples were going along with Him, accompanied by a large crowd. Now as He approached the gate of the city, a dead man was being carried out, the only son of his mother, and she was a widow; and a sizeable crowd from the city was with her. When the Lord saw her, He felt compassion for her, and said to her, "Do not weep." And He came up and touched the coffin; and the bearers came to a halt. And He said, "Young man, I say to you, arise!" The dead man sat up and began to speak. And Jesus gave him back to his mother. Fear gripped them all, and they began glorifying God,

saying, "A great prophet has arisen among us!" and, "God has visited His people!" This report concerning Him went out all over Judea and in all the surrounding district.

- e. He is called the Almighty (Revelation 1:8, 17, 18; 22:12, 13; Isaiah 41:4).
"I am the Alpha and the Omega," says the Lord God, "who is and who was and who is to come, the Almighty."
 - f. He is omnipresent (Matthew 28:19-20).
"Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age."
 - g. He is holy (Luke 1:35).
The angel answered and said to her, "The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you; and for that reason the holy Child shall be called the Son of God."
 - h. He is truth (John 14:6).
Jesus said to him, "I am the way, and the truth, and the life; no one comes to the Father but through Me."
 - i. He is the resurrector (John 11:43).
When He had said these things, He cried out with a loud voice, "Lazarus, come forth."
 - j. He is the judge (John 5:22, 27).
"For not even the Father judges anyone, but He has given all judgment to the Son."
 - k. He received worship (John 9:38).
And he said, "Lord, I believe." And he worshiped Him.
3. What was said of Jesus was said of Jehovah.
- a. Creator (Genesis 1:1; John 1:1-3).
In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth.
 - b. First and Last (Isaiah 41:4; 44:6; 48:12; Revelation 1:17; 28; 22:13).
"Who has performed and accomplished it, Calling forth the generations from the beginning? 'I, the LORD, am the first, and with the last. I am He.'"

- c. I AM (Exodus 3:13-14; Deuteronomy 32:39; Isaiah 43:10; John 8:24, 58; 13:19; 18:5).
Then Moses said to God, "Behold, I am going to the sons of Israel, and I will say to them, 'The God of your fathers has sent me to you.' Now they may say to me, 'What is His name?' What shall I say to them?" God said to Moses, "I AM WHO I AM"; and He said, "Thus you shall say to the sons of Israel, 'I AM has sent me to you.'"
- d. Judge (Psalm 96:13; 2 Timothy 4:1; 2 Corinthians 5:10).
*Before the LORD, for He is coming,
 For He is coming to judge the earth.
 He will judge the world in righteousness
 And the peoples in His faithfulness.*
- e. King (Psalm 47; Isaiah 44:6-8; Matthew 2:1-6; John 19:21).
So the chief priests of the Jews were saying to Pilate, "Do not write, 'The King of the Jews'; but that He said, 'I am King of the Jews.'"
- f. Light (Psalm 27:1; Isaiah 60:20; John 1:9; 8:12).
*The LORD is my light and my salvation;
 Whom shall I fear?
 The LORD is the defense of my life;
 Whom shall I dread?*
- g. Savior (Psalm 106:21; Isaiah 43:3, 11; 45:21-23; John 4:42; Acts 4:10-12).
They forgot God their Savior, Who had done great things in Egypt.
- h. Shepherd (Psalm 23; John 10:11; Hebrews 13:20; 1 Peter 5:4).
"I am the good shepherd; the good shepherd lays down His life for the sheep."

4. He Was Prophesied.

Jesus constantly made us aware that He came to fulfill the ancient prophecies about the Messiah. Why? Because these proved hands down that He was, in fact, the Messiah. Read His words and you'll see what I mean: Matthew 5:17; 21:42; 26:56; Luke 24:27; John 5:39, 40, 46, 47.

"Do not think that I came to abolish the Law or the Prophets; I did not come to abolish but to fulfill."

Here's a brief list of some of the outstanding prophecies concerning Christ.

- Born of the seed of woman (Genesis 3:15; Galatians 4:4).

- Born of a virgin (Isaiah 7:14; Matthew 1:18).
- Son of God (Psalm 2:7; Matthew 3:17).
- Seed of Abraham (Genesis 22:18; Galatians 3:16).
- Tribe of Judah (Genesis 49:10; Luke 3:23, 33).
- Family line of Jesse (Isaiah 11:1; Luke 3:23, 32).
- House of David (Jeremiah 23:5; Luke 3:23, 31)
- Born in Bethlehem (Micah 5:2; Matthew 2:1).
- Presented with gifts (Psalm 72:10; Matthew 2:1, 11).
- Herod kills children (Jeremiah 3:15; Matthew 2:16).
- Pre-existent (Micah 5:2; Colossians 1:17).
- Shall be called LORD (Psalm 110:1; Luke 20:41-44).
- Shall be a prophet (Deuteronomy 18:18; Matthew 21:11).
- Preceded by a messenger (Isaiah 40:3; Matthew 3:1-2).
- Ministry with miracles (Isaiah 35:5-6; The Gospels).
- Teacher of parables (Psalm 78:2; Matthew 13:34).
- Betrayed by a friend (Psalm 41:9; Matthew 10:4).
- Sold for 30 pieces of silver (Zechariah 11:12; Matthew 26:15).
- Price given for potter's field (Zechariah 11:13; Matthew 27:7).
- Forsaken by disciples (Zechariah 13:7; Mark 14:50).
- Accused by false witnesses (Psalm 35:11; Matthew 26:59-61).
- Smitten and spit upon (Isaiah 50:6; Matthew 26:67).
- Mocked (Psalm 22:7-8; Matthew 27:31).
- Hands and feet pierced (Psalm 22:16; Luke 23:33).
- Crucified with thieves (Isaiah 53:12; Matthew 27:38).
- Garments parted and lots cast (Psalm 22:18; John 19:23-24).
- Gall and vinegar offered to him (Psalm 69:21; Matthew 27:34).
- Bones not broken (Psalm 34:20; John 19:33).
- Heart broken (Psalm 22:14; John 19:34).
- Side pierced (Zechariah 12:10; John 19:34).
- Darkness over the land (Amos 8:9; Matthew 27:45).
- Buried in a rich man's tomb (Isaiah 53:9; Matthew 27:57-60).

Question: Couldn't Jesus just have fulfilled the ancient prophecies to make Himself into the Messiah? Not quite. Consider what was prophesied plus the law of probability.

In his book *Science Speaks* (Moody Press, 1963), Peter Stoner shows that coincidence in the prophecies of Christ is ruled out by the science of probability. "Stoner says that by using the modern science of probability in reference to eight prophecies ... 'we find that the chance that any man might have lived down to the present time and fulfilled all eight prophecies is 1 in 10¹⁷.' That would be 1 in 100,000,000,000,000,000. In order to help us

comprehend this staggering probability, Stoner illustrates it by supposing that ‘we take 10^{17} silver dollars and lay them on the face of Texas. They will cover all of the state two feet deep. Now mark one of these silver dollars and stir the whole mass thoroughly, all over the state. Blindfold a man and tell him that he can travel as far as he wishes, but he must pick up one silver dollar and say that this is the right one. What chance would he have of getting the right one? Just the same chance that the prophets would have had of writing these eight prophecies and having them all come true in any one man, from their day to the present time, providing they wrote them in their own wisdom ... Stoner considers 48 prophecies and says, ‘we find the chance that any one man fulfilled all 48 prophecies to be 1 in 10^{157} .’ This really a large number and it represents an extremely small chance.

Let us try to visualize it. The silver dollar, which we have been using, is entirely too large. We must select a smaller object. The electron is about as small an object as we know of. It is so small that it will take 2.5 times 10^{15} of them laid side by side to make a line, single file, and one inch long. If we were going to count the electrons in this line one inch long, and counted 250 each minute, and if we counted day and night, it would take us 19,000,000 years to count just the one-inch line of electrons. If we had a cubic inch of these electrons and we tried to count them it would take us counting steadily 250 each minute, 19,000,000 time 19,000,000 times 19,000,000 years or 6.9 times 10^{21} years. With this introduction, let us go back to our chance of 1 in 10^{157} .

Let us suppose that we are taking this number of electrons, marking one, and thoroughly stirring it into the whole mass, then blindfolding a man and letting him try to find the right one. What chance has he of finding the right one? What kind of pile will this number of electrons make? They make an inconceivable large volume.’ Such is the chance of any one man fulfilling 48 prophecies” (Josh McDowell, *Evidence That Demands a Verdict*: 175-176).

B. He Was The Perfect God/Man.

1. He grew intellectually and physically (Luke 2:52).
And Jesus kept increasing in wisdom and stature, and in favor with God and men.
2. He desired food (Matthew 4:2).
And after He had fasted forty days and forty nights, He then became hungry.
3. He became tired (John 4:6).
and Jacob’s well was there. So Jesus, being wearied from His journey, was sitting thus by the well. It was about the sixth hour.

4. He needed sleep (Matthew 8:24).
And behold, there arose a great storm on the sea, so that the boat was being covered with the waves; but Jesus Himself was asleep.
5. He cried (John 11:35).
Jesus wept.
6. He died (John 19:33).
but coming to Jesus, when they saw that He was already dead, they did not break His legs.
7. He was called by human names: Son of Man (over 80 times), Son of David (Matthew 1) *The record of the genealogy of Jesus the Messiah, the son of David,* a man (1 Timothy 2:5) *For there is one God, and one mediator also between God and men, the man Christ Jesus.*

A key text: Philippians 2:5-11.

Have this attitude in yourselves which was also in Christ Jesus, who, although He existed in the form of God, did not regard equality with God a thing to be grasped, but emptied Himself, taking the form of a bond-servant, and being made in the likeness of men. Being found in appearance as a man, He humbled Himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross. For this reason also, God highly exalted Him, and bestowed on Him the name which is above every name, Iso that at the name of Jesus every knee will bow, of those who are in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and that every tongue will confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.

C. He Was the Sinless One

1. He challenged His enemies to show His sin (John 8:46; Matthew 22:15).
“Which one of you convicts Me of sin? If I speak truth, why do you not believe Me?”
2. He said He lived to please His Father (John 8:29).
“And He who sent Me is with Me; He has not left Me alone, for I always do the things that are pleasing to Him.”
3. He was declared innocent during His trials (Matthew 27:4; 24; Luke 23:14, 22; John 18:38; 19:4, 6; Luke 23:15; Matthew 27:19; Luke 23:41; Matthew 27:54).
saying, “I have sinned by betraying innocent blood.” But they said, “What is that to us? See to that yourself!”

4. Paul said “He knew no sin” (2 Corinthians 5:21).
He made Him who knew no sin to be sin on our behalf, so that we might become the righteousness of God in Him.
5. Peter said the same (1 Peter 1:19; 2:22).
but with precious blood, as of a lamb unblemished and spotless, the blood of Christ.
6. John said likewise (1 John 3:5).
You know that He appeared in order to take away sins; and in Him there is no sin.

“How does Buddha measure up against the standard of personal purity that Jesus set? The very fact he endured rebirths implies a series of imperfect lives. When he left his home in the palace, turning his back on his wife and son, it was in search for an answer. He did not start with the answer. His ‘Enlightenment’ was an attainment. Even taken at face value, it was a path to purity, not purity per se” (Ravi Zacharias, *Jesus Among Other Gods*: 41-42).

Question: Why is it important for Christ to be the sinless One? How does this apply to us?

D. He Was Our Perfect Sacrifice.

1. The reality of it (Matthew 20:28; 26:28; Mark 10:45; Romans 5:6-8; 2 Corinthians 5:14).
just as the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life a ransom for many.”
2. The result of it. Because Jesus died in your place, you now have the following aspects of spiritual wealth at the moment of saving faith:
 - a. Reconciliation (Romans 5:6-11).

For while we were still helpless, at the right time Christ died for the ungodly. For one will hardly die for a righteous man; though perhaps for the good man someone would dare even to die. But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us. Much more then, having now been justified by His blood, we shall be saved from the wrath of God

through Him. For if while we were enemies we were reconciled to God through the death of His Son, much more, having been reconciled, we shall be saved by His life. And not only this, but we also exult in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we have now received the reconciliation.

- b. Redemption (1 Corinthians 1:30; Galatians 3:13-14).
But by His doing you are in Christ Jesus, who became to us wisdom from God, and righteousness and sanctification, and redemption.
- c. Propitiation (Romans 3:25; 5:1; Hebrews 2:17).
whom God displayed publicly as a propitiation in His blood through faith. This was to demonstrate His righteousness, because in the forbearance of God He passed over the sins previously committed;
- d. Justification (Romans 10:9).
that if you confess with your mouth Jesus as Lord, and believe in your heart that God raised Him from the dead, you will be saved.

E. He Is Our Resurrected Lord.

- 1. Why is this doctrine so important?
 - a. If He didn't rise, then He's a liar (Matthew 20:19).
"and will hand Him over to the Gentiles to mock and scourge and crucify Him, and on the third day He will be raised up."
 - b. If He didn't rise, then all of His post-resurrection work was just a hoax, and we have no Advocate or Head (Romans 6:1-10; Galatians 2:20).
"I have been crucified with Christ; and it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me; and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself up for me.
 - c. If He didn't rise, then His gospel is worthless and our faith is in vain (1 Corinthians 15:13-19).

But if there is no resurrection of the dead, not even Christ has been raised; and if Christ has not been raised, then our preaching is vain, your faith also is vain. Moreover we are even found to be false witnesses of God, because we testified against God that He raised Christ, whom He did not raise, if in fact the dead are not raised. For if the dead are not raised, not even Christ has been raised; and if Christ has not been raised, your faith is worthless; you are still in your sins. Then those also who have fallen asleep in Christ have perished. If we have hoped in Christ in this life only, we are of all men most to be pitied.

- d. If He didn't rise, then what He said about heaven is false and misleading too (John 14:1-6).

“Do not let your heart be troubled; believe in God, believe also in Me. “In My Father’s house are many dwelling places; if it were not so, I would have told you; for I go to prepare a place for you. “If I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and receive you to Myself, that where I am, there you may be also. “And you know the way where I am going.” Thomas said to Him, “Lord, we do not know where You are going, how do we know the way?” Jesus said* to him, “I am the way, and the truth, and the life; no one comes to the Father but through Me.*

2. What are the proofs?

- a. The empty tomb.
- b. Post-resurrection appearances.
- c. Effects which must have an adequate cause.

Observation: Interesting, isn't it, how the Romans and Jews did everything within their power to keep there from being a resurrection? Had a crucified criminal ever had guards posted outside his tomb? Hardly. What were they afraid of? They were afraid that He was who He said He was. Funny how their own actions to keep the inevitable from happening serve to authenticate the event! For a great treatment of this subject see John McDowell's, "Evidence That Demands a Verdict," pp. 185-271.

II. Closing Question

“What will you do with the Messiah and Savior, Jesus Christ?”

The Doctrine Of The Holy Spirit

I. Who Is The Holy Spirit?

A. He Is A Person & He Is God.

1. His Divine Attributes.

- a. Omniscience (1 Corinthians 2:11-12).

For who among men knows the thoughts of a man except the spirit of the man which is in him? Even so the thoughts of God no one knows except the Spirit of God. Now we have received, not the spirit of the world, but the Spirit who is from God, so that we may know the things freely given to us by God.

- b. Omnipresence (Psalm 139:7).

*Where can I go from Your Spirit?
Or where can I flee from Your presence?*

- c. Truth (John 14:6; 1 John 5:6-7).

Jesus said to him, "I am the way, and the truth, and the life; no one comes to the Father but through Me.

- d. Life (Romans 8:2).

For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus has set you free from the law of sin and of death.

- e. Eternity (Hebrews 9:14).

how much more will the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered Himself without blemish to God, cleanse your conscience from dead works to serve the living God?

- f. Omnipotence (1 Peter 3:18; Acts 2:32; John 2:19).

For Christ also died for sins once for all, the just for the unjust, so that He might bring us to God, having been put to death in the flesh, but made alive in the spirit.

2. His Divine Actions.

- a. Creation (Genesis 1:2; Colossians 1:16-17).

The earth was formless and void, and darkness was over the surface of the deep, and the Spirit of God was moving over the surface of the waters.

- b. Inspiration (2 Timothy 3:16; 2 Peter 1:21).
All Scripture is inspired by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for training in righteousness.
- c. Virgin Birth (Luke 1:35).
The angel answered and said to her, "The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you; and for that reason the holy Child shall be called the Son of God.
- d. Sanctification (2 Thessalonians 2:13).
But we should always give thanks to God for you, brethren beloved by the Lord, because God has chosen you [£]from the beginning for salvation through sanctification by the Spirit and faith in the truth.
- e. Miracles (Acts 8:39).
When they came up out of the water, the Spirit of the Lord snatched Philip away; and the eunuch no longer saw him, but went on his way rejoicing.

3. His Divine Appellations.

- a. "The Spirit of Jesus" (Acts 16:7).
and after they came to Mysia, they were trying to go into Bithynia, and the Spirit of Jesus did not permit them.
- b. "The Spirit of our God (I Corinthians 6:11).
Such were some of you; but you were washed, but you were sanctified, but you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and in the Spirit of our God.
- c. "Another Helper" (Greek speaks of "another" of the same kind. In other words, another one like Jesus, i.e., God).

4. His Divine Associations.

- a. Words Jehovah spoke, He spoke (Acts 28:25; Isaiah 6:1-3 and Hebrews 10:15-17; Jeremiah 31:31-34). And when they did not agree with one another, they began leaving after Paul had spoken one parting word, "The Holy Spirit rightly spoke through Isaiah the prophet to your fathers
- b. Blasphemy of and lying to the Spirit are both done to God (Matthew 12:32; Acts 5:3-4). "Whoever speaks a word against the Son of Man, it shall be forgiven him; but whoever speaks against

the Holy Spirit, it shall not be forgiven him, either in this age or in the age to come

c. He is God's equal (Matthew 28:19; 2 Corinthians 13:14).

“Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit.

II. What Are His Present Ministries

A. He Convicts (John 16:7-11).

“But I tell you the truth, it is to your advantage that I go away; for if I do not go away, the Helper will not come to you; but if I go, I will send Him to you. “And He, when He comes, will convict the world concerning sin and righteousness and judgment; concerning sin, because they do not believe in Me; and concerning righteousness, because I go to the Father and you no longer see Me; and concerning judgment, because the ruler of this world has been judged.

B. He Regenerates (John 6:3).

Then Jesus went up on the mountain, and there He sat down with His disciples.

C. He Seals (Ephesians 1:13-14).

In Him, you also, after listening to the message of truth, the gospel of your salvation—having also believed, you were sealed in Him with the Holy Spirit of promise, who is given as a pledge of our inheritance, with a view to the redemption of God's own possession, to the praise of His glory.

D. He Indwells (1 Corinthians 3:16).

“The Spirit of God dwells in you.”

E. He Baptizes (1 Corinthians 12:13).

For by one Spirit we were all baptized into one body, whether Jews or Greeks, whether slaves or free, and we were all made to drink of one Spirit.

F. He Fills (Ephesians 5:18-19).

And do not get drunk with wine, for that is dissipation, but be filled with the Spirit, speaking to one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody with your heart to the Lord.

G. He Guides (Galatians 5:16; Acts 8:29).

But I say, walk by the Spirit, and you will not carry out the desire of the flesh.

H. He Teaches (John 14:26; 16:13; 1 John 2:20, 27).

“But the Helper, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in My name, He will teach you all things, and bring to your remembrance all that I said to you.

I. He Gifts (I Corinthians 12:11, 18).

But one and the same Spirit works all these things, distributing to each one individually just as He wills.

The Doctrine Of Salvation

I. The Sin Problem

A. Inherited Sin

1. Ephesians 2:3

Among them we too all formerly lived in the lusts of our flesh, indulging the desires of the flesh and of the mind, and were by nature children of wrath, even as the rest. Psalm 51:5 Behold, I was brought forth in iniquity, And in sin my mother conceived me.

2. It effects the intellect (2 Corinthians 4:4).

in whose case the god of this world has blinded the minds of the unbelieving so that they might not see the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God.

3. It effects emotions (Romans 1:21).

For even though they knew God, they did not honor Him as God or give thanks, but they became futile in their speculations, and their foolish heart was darkened.

4. It enslaves (Romans 6:20; 7:20).

For when you were slaves of sin, you were free in regard to righteousness.

B. Depravity

Greek word: adokimos, translated “not standing the test.” Depravity means that man fails the test of please God. (Romans 1:28)

²⁸*And just as they did not see fit to acknowledge God any longer, God gave them over to a depraved mind, to do those things which are not proper.*

C. Direction

1. Inherited sin is transmitted from one generation to the next by our parents (Genesis 4:1; Psalm 51:5; Romans 5:12).

Now the man had relations with his wife Eve, and she conceived and gave birth to Cain, and she said, “I have gotten a manchild with the help of the LORD.

2. Logical implication: Every person is a sinner before God. No exceptions!

D. Imputed Sin

1. Defined

- a. “To impute means to attribute or reckon or ascribe something to someone.”
- b. Illustrations from the Old Testament (Leviticus 7:4, 18).
“...⁴and the two kidneys with the fat that is on them, which is on the loins, and the lobe on the liver he shall remove with the kidneys ... So if any of the flesh of the sacrifice of his peace offerings should ever be eaten on the third day, he who offers it shall not be accepted, and it shall not be reckoned to his benefit. It shall be an offensive thing, and the person who eats of it shall bear his own iniquity.”
- c. Illustrations from the New Testament (Romans 5:13; James 2:23).
for until the Law sin was in the world, but sin is not imputed when there is no law.

2. Delineated

- a. The imputation of Adam’s sin to us (Romans 5:12-21).
Therefore, just as through one man sin entered into the world, and death through sin, and so death spread to all men, because all sinned— for until the Law sin was in the world, but sin is not imputed when there is no law. Nevertheless death reigned from Adam until Moses, even over those who had not sinned in the likeness of the offense of Adam, who is a type of Him who was to come. But the free gift is not like the transgression. For if by the transgression of the one the many died, much more did the grace of God and the gift by the grace of the one Man, Jesus Christ, abound to the many. The gift is not like that which came through the one who sinned; for on the one hand the judgment arose from one transgression resulting in condemnation, but on the other hand the free gift arose from many transgressions resulting in justification.⁷For if by the transgression of the one, death reigned through the one, much more those who receive the abundance of grace and of the gift of righteousness will reign in life through the One, Jesus Christ. So then as through one transgression there resulted condemnation to all men, even so through one act of righteousness there resulted justification of life to all men. For as through the one man’s disobedience the many were made sinners, even so through the obedience of the One the many will be made righteous. The Law came in so that the transgression would increase; but where sin increased, grace abounded all the more, so

that, as sin reigned in death, even so grace would reign through righteousness to eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord.

- b. The imputation of man's sin to Christ (2 Corinthians 5:19).
namely, that God was in Christ reconciling the world to Himself, not counting their trespasses against them, and He has committed to us the word of reconciliation.
- c. The imputation of Christ's righteousness to believers (2 Corinthians 5:21).
He made Him who knew no sin to be sin on our behalf, so that we might become the righteousness of God in Him.

3. Direction

Key passage: Romans 5:12-21. (see above in 2.a)

4. Doom

- a. Matthew 4:1-3
Then Jesus was led up by the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted by the devil. And after He had fasted forty days and forty nights, He then became hungry. And the tempter came and said to Him, "If You are the Son of God, command that these stones become bread."
- b. Matthew 23:33
You serpents, you brood of vipers, how will you escape the sentence of hell?
- c. Romans 1:18
For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men who suppress the truth in unrighteousness.
- d. 1 Peter 4:17-18
For it is time for judgment to begin with the household of God; and if it begins with us first, what will be the outcome for those who do not obey the gospel of God? And if it is with difficulty that the righteous is saved, what will become of the godless man and the sinner?
- e. John 5:28-29
"Do not marvel at this; for an hour is coming, in which all who are in the tombs will hear His voice, and will come forth; those who did the good deeds to a resurrection of life, those who committed the evil deeds to a resurrection of judgment.

f. John 12:47-49

If anyone hears My sayings and does not keep them, I do not judge him; for I did not come to judge the world, but to save the world. He who rejects Me and does not receive My sayings, has one who judges him; the word I spoke is what will judge him at the last day. For I did not speak on My own initiative, but the Father Himself who sent Me has given Me a commandment as to what to say and what to speak.

g. 2 Timothy 4:1

I solemnly charge you in the presence of God and of Christ Jesus, who is to judge the living and the dead, and by His appearing and His kingdom.

II. The Sin Solution

A. The Words

1. Substitution: (Mark 10:45; John 10:11; 1 Corinthians 5:7; 15:3; 2 Corinthians 5:14; Galatians 1:4).

“For even the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life a ransom for many.”

2. Atonement: “To cover over,” “to hide” (Leviticus 6:2-7; Psalm 51:9; Micah 7:19).

“When a person sins and acts unfaithfully against the LORD, and deceives his companion in regard to a deposit or a security entrusted to him, or through robbery, or if he has extorted from his companion, or has found what was lost and lied about it and sworn falsely, so that he sins in regard to any one of the things a man may do; then it shall be, when he sins and becomes guilty, that he shall restore what he took by robbery or what he got by extortion, or the deposit which was entrusted to him or the lost thing which he found, or anything about which he swore falsely; he shall make restitution for it in full and add to it one-fifth more. He shall give it to the one to whom it belongs on the day he presents his guilt offering. “Then he shall bring to the priest his guilt offering to the LORD, a ram without defect from the flock, according to your valuation, for a guilt offering, and the priest shall make atonement for him before the LORD, and he will be forgiven for any one of the things which he may have done to incur guilt.”

3. Redemption:

“To pay a price to emancipate something or somebody who used to belong to the purchaser in question.” Boaz is the great Christ-type as the redeemer in the Old Testament (Ruth 4:1-11). *Now Boaz went up to the gate and sat down there, and behold, the close relative of whom Boaz spoke was passing by, so he said, “Turn aside, friend, sit down here.” And he turned aside and sat down. He took ten men of the elders of the city and said, “Sit down here.” So they sat down. Then he said to the closest relative, “Naomi, who has come back from the land of Moab, has to sell the piece of land which belonged to our brother Elimelech. “So I thought to inform you, saying, ‘Buy it before those who are sitting here, and before the elders of my people. If you will redeem it, redeem it; but if not, tell me that I may know; for there is no one but you to redeem it, and I am after you.’” And he said, “I will redeem it.”*

Then Boaz said, “On the day you buy the field from the hand of Naomi, you must also acquire Ruth the Moabitess, the widow of the deceased, in order to raise up the name of the deceased on his inheritance.” The closest relative said, “I cannot redeem it for myself, because I would jeopardize my own inheritance. Redeem it for yourself; you may have my right of redemption, for I cannot redeem it.” Now this was the custom in former times in Israel concerning the redemption and the exchange of land to confirm any matter: a man removed his sandal and gave it to another; and this was the manner of attestation in Israel. So the closest relative said to Boaz, “Buy it for yourself.” And he removed his sandal. Then Boaz said to the elders and all the people, “You are witnesses today that I have bought from the hand of Naomi all that belonged to Elimelech and all that belonged to Chilion and Mahlon.

“Moreover, I have acquired Ruth the Moabitess, the widow of Mahlon, to be my wife in order to raise up the name of the deceased on his inheritance, so that the name of the deceased will not be cut off from his brothers or from the court of his birth place; you are witnesses today.” All the people who were in the court, and the elders, said, “We are witnesses. May the LORD make the woman who is coming into your home like Rachel and Leah, both of whom built the house of Israel; and may you achieve wealth in Ephrathah and become famous in Bethlehem.

Based upon Levitical law if a man had sold himself into slavery, the obligation to buy back his freedom for him rested upon a kinsman, unless ‘he be waxen rich’ (Leviticus 25:48).

then he shall have redemption right after he has been sold. One of his brothers may redeem him.

Christ paid the costly ransom money for our sin (Galatians 1:4; 2:02; Ephesians 5:2, 25; Colossians 1:14; Titus 2:14).
who gave Himself for our sins so that He might rescue us from this present evil age, according to the will of our God and Father.

Once this was paid we were enabled to be set free from our bondage and enslavement to sin (Matthew 20:28; Mark 10:45; Titus 2:14; 1 Peter 1:18; Romans 3:24; 8:23; 1 Corinthians 1:30).
just as the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life a ransom for many.

The ransom is paid to the Father and frees us from (a) The curse of the Law (Galatians 3:13) *Christ redeemed us from the curse of the Law, having become a curse for us—for it is written, “CURSED IS EVERYONE WHO HANGS ON A TREE”*, (b) from sin as a power (Romans 6:2; Titus 2:14) *May it never be! How shall we who died to sin still live in it?*, (c) from Satan our former captor (2 Timothy 2:26). *and they may come to their senses and escape from the snare of the devil, having been held captive by him to do his will.*

4. Reconciliation:

“The act whereby two parties, who were formerly at odds with each other, are brought together under terms of total peace.” Through Christ’s death sinners are enabled to be reconciled to a holy God (Romans 5:10; 2 Corinthians 5:18f; Ephesians 2:16)
For if while we were enemies we were reconciled to God through the death of His Son, much more, having been reconciled, we shall be saved by His life.

At first man and God stood face to face in the Garden of Eden. After man’s fall, God turned his back on sinful man. Christ’s death satisfied the demands of God and now God has again turned His holy face toward man. It now remains for man to turn his face, in faith, toward God.

5. Propitiation: “to appease anger.” God is wrathful toward sin (John 3:36; Romans 1:18; 5:9; Ephesians 5:6; 1 Thessalonians 1:10).

“He who believes in the Son has eternal life; but he who does not obey the Son will not see life, but the wrath of God abides on him.”

Propitiation settles that wrath at the cross of Christ (Romans 3:25; Hebrews 9:5; 1 John 2:2; 4:10; Luke 18:13). whom

God displayed publicly as a propitiation in His blood through faith. This was to demonstrate His righteousness, because in the forbearance of God He passed over the sins previously committed.

6. *Justification*: “That act of God whereby he declares righteous him who believes in Christ” (Thiessen). “The root idea in justification is the declaration of God, the righteous judge, that the man who believes in Christ, sinful though he may be, is righteous—is viewed as being righteous, because in Christ he has come into a righteous he has come into a righteous relationship with God” (Ladd). In justification, the sinner finds remission of the penalty against sin plus restoration to a new favorable standing (James 2:23; Romans 8:16f; Galatians 3:26; Hebrews 2:11).

and the Scripture was fulfilled which says, “AND ABRAHAM BELIEVED GOD, AND IT WAS RECKONED TO HIM AS RIGHTEOUSNESS,” and he was called the friend of God.

Also, at the moment of justification, the sinner is forgiven and given the imputed righteousness of Christ so he can and will enjoy his new standing (2 Corinthians 5:21; 1 Corinthians 1:30).

He made Him who knew no sin to be sin on our behalf, so that we might become the righteousness of God in Him.

Justification is not obtained through works of the law (Galatians 3:10; James 2:10; Romans 3:20; 7:7) *For as many as are of the works of the Law are under a curse; for it is written, “CURSED IS EVERYONE WHO DOES NOT ABIDE BY ALL THINGS WRITTEN IN THE BOOK OF THE LAW, TO PERFORM THEM.”*, but through grace (Romans 3:24; Titus 3:7) *being justified as a gift by His grace through the redemption which is in Christ Jesus, through the blood of Christ (Romans 5:9) Much more then, having now been justified by His blood, we shall be saved from the wrath of God through Him, and through faith (Romans 5:1). Therefore, having been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ.*

7. *Adoption*: “Regeneration has to do with our change in nature; justification, with our change in standing; sanctification, with our change in character; adoption, with our change in position.” Adoption was secured in eternity past (Ephesians 1:5).

He predestined us to adoption as sons through Jesus Christ to Himself, according to the kind intention of His will becomes personal when Christ is trusted as Savior (Galatians 3:26) For you are all sons of God through faith in Christ Jesus, and is fully realized at the coming of Jesus (Romans 8:23) And not only this, but

also we ourselves, having the first fruits of the Spirit, even we ourselves groan within ourselves, waiting eagerly for our adoption as sons, the redemption of our body.

What are the results of spiritual adoption? Deliverance from the law (Romans 8:15; Galatians 4:4f) *For you have not received a spirit of slavery leading to fear again, but you have received a spirit of adoption as sons by which we cry out, "Abba! Father!"* and the personal inheritance of the Spirit (Galatians 4:6f; Ephesians 1:11-14). *Because you are sons, God has sent forth the Spirit of His Son into our hearts, crying, "Abba! Father!"*

8. Regeneration: Defined as, "The communication of divine life to the soul" (John 3:5; 10:10, 28)

Jesus answered, "Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born of water and the Spirit he cannot enter into the kingdom of God.

"The impartation of a new nature" (2 Peter 1:4).

For by these He has granted to us His precious and magnificent promises, so that by them you may become partakers of the divine nature, having escaped the corruption that is in the world by lust.

By nature all men are "sons of disobedience" (Ephesians 2:2) *in which you formerly walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, of the spirit that is now working in the sons of disobedience. "children of wrath" (Ephesians 2:3) Among them we too all formerly lived in the lusts of our flesh, indulging the desires of the flesh and of the mind, and were by nature children of wrath, even as the rest.*

and "children of the Devil" (1 John 3:10)

By this the children of God and the children of the devil are obvious: anyone who does not practice righteousness is not of God, nor the one who does not love his brother.

For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him shall not perish, but have eternal life (John 3:16).

This new life affects the believer's intellect (1 Corinthians 2:14; Ephesians 1:18)

But a natural man does not accept the things of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness to him; and he cannot understand them, because they are spiritually appraised. will (Philippians 2:13; 2 Thessalonians 3:5) for it is God who is at work in you, both to will

and to work for His good pleasure. and emotions (Matthew 5:4; 1 Peter 1:8) Blessed are those who mourn, for they shall be comforted.

9. Sanctification:

- a. Positional: Refers to the holiness we receive from God at the moment of faith (1 Corinthians 1:2; Ephesians 1:1; Colossians 1:2; Hebrews 10:10)

to the church of God which is at Corinth, to those who have been sanctified in Christ Jesus, saints by calling, with all who in every place call on the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, their Lord and ours.

- b. Practical: Refers to the lifelong process whereby the believer attempts to daily put off the old sinful man and put on the new holy man (Colossians 3:8-13)

But now you also, put them all aside: anger, wrath, malice, slander, and abusive speech from your mouth. Do not lie to one another, since you laid aside the old self with its evil practices, and have put on the new self who is being renewed to a true knowledge according to the image of the One who created him— a renewal in which there is no distinction between Greek and Jew, circumcised and uncircumcised, [£]barbarian, Scythian, slave and freeman, but Christ is all, and in all. So, as those who have been chosen of God, holy and beloved, put on a heart of compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience; bearing with one another, and forgiving each other, whoever has a complaint against anyone; just as the Lord forgave you, so also should you.

Spiritual growth occurs when the saint submits to the Spirit (Ephesians 5:18) *And do not get drunk with wine, for that is dissipation, but be filled with the Spirit* and learns to confess his sin(s) (1 John 1:9) *If we confess our sins, He is faithful and righteous to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.*

That is it a lifelong commitment is supported by texts like Philippians 3:12 *Not that I have already obtained it or have already become perfect, but I press on so that I may lay hold of that for which also I was laid hold of by Christ Jesus.*

That a saint is pursuing holiness can be readily seen in how they live and the fruit they produce (Galatians 5:22f) *But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control.*

But in the final analysis please realize that even the ability to pursue after holiness comes from God (Philippians 2:13) *for it is*

God who is at work in you, both to will and to work for His good pleasure.

A. The Way

1. The Conviction: John 16:8-11
And He, when He comes, will convict the world concerning sin and righteousness and judgment; concerning sin, because they do not believe in Me; and concerning righteousness, because I go to the Father and you no longer see Me; and concerning judgment, because the ruler of this world has been judged.

2. The Call
 - a. It is General (Matthew 22:14).
For many are called, but few are chosen.

 - b. It Is Powerful (Romans 8:30). The elect cannot resist it.
and these whom He predestined, He also called; and these whom He called, He also justified; and these whom He justified, He also glorified.

3. The Content: 1 Corinthians 15:1-4.
Now I make known to you, brethren, the gospel which I preached to you, which also you received, in which also you stand, by which also you are saved, if you hold fast the word which I preached to you, unless you believed in vain. For I delivered to you as of first importance what I also received, that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, and that He was buried, and that He was raised on the third day according to the Scriptures.

4. The Consummation: Faith
 - a. The Meaning of Faith.

 - b. The Necessity of Faith (Ephesians 2:8; John 3:16; 5:24; 17:3).
For by grace you have been saved through faith; and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God.

 - c. Do you believe that Jesus is your Savior? This is the message and challenge of the New Testament (John 1:7, 12; 3:12, 15, 16, 18; 4:21, 39; 41, 42, 48, 50; 6:29, 30, 35, 36, 40, et. al.).
He came as a witness, to testify about the Light, so that all might believe through him. He was not the Light, but he came to testify about the Light.

Missions

The spread of the gospel is at the heart of Christ's mission (Matthew 28:19-20). BCC has a long history of supporting local, national, and international missionaries and seeks to continue that legacy by increasingly exposing others to what God is doing in our area, our nation, and around the world.

BCC supports a number of missionaries who are involved in a variety of activities, including evangelism, father training, marriage building, campus outreach & discipleship, ministry to our military and their families.

We have long-standing relationships with most of these missionaries. BCC is/was the home or sending church for some. As a church, we commit to pray for each of our ministry partners. Please pray for them as you are led, as often as they come to mind.

Once a month, you can take part in First Friday Prayer, led by the BCC Prayer Ministry, and includes time to pray for BCC-sponsored missionaries and ministries. FFP meets the first Friday evening each month, 7-8:30pm. Watch the bulletin for reminders.

Email senders@burkecommunity.com for more information on praying for and/or supporting our missionaries.