



LOVE IS THE GREATEST

JUNE 2011 – JUNE 2012

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LOVE IS THE GREATEST

JUNE 2011

Why does one sacrifice rise to pre-eminence?

- 1.) One perfect sacrifice.
- 2.) One remits sin.
- 3.) One man fulfilled the prophecies concerning the Messiah.



Other than Jesus' sacrifice, one of the most meaningful acts of love given for me was: someone taught me the truth, someone raised me and I was forgiven.

*What is the most meaningful act of love I can offer one who doesn't know Jesus?
Teach the truth: The teachings of Jesus and his apostles from the New Testament*

Am I sometimes uncomfortable talking to others about Jesus? Does the prospect of preaching or evangelizing make me fearful or uncomfortable?

Is fear in love? I John 4:18 There is no fear in love; but perfect love casteth out fear.

How can fear affect love? Fear can limit our ability to teach the truth.

Jesus' life was given for sinners because God SO LOVED the world. Would I be prepared to die for Christ, as Stephen did? If it cost me some extra effort, would I be willing to teach the gospel to a stranger? Would I be fearful or loving?

Given "Love" is the motive for living Christianity (reference Matt 22:37-40), how can men with other motives influence the receptiveness of unbelievers? See II Peter 2:2, Matt 23:15, Acts 20:29-30, II Cor. 11:13-15

Is it possible I have not reached my greatest potential?

Could God use me in an effort greater than I thought possible? What scripture defines what is possible with God? (See Matthew 19) Have I placed limitations on God's power?

God is love: I John 4:8 God's love resulted in the greatest sacrifice. My love for Christ should be a love including sacrifice. What one sacrifice can I offer that I hesitate to offer?

"THE MEANING" of Life

The Son of God, Jesus, is the authority: [Colossians 1:13-19]
This authority was given by The Almighty God of Heaven, Jehovah

How is my "meaning" of life different from the meaning assigned by Jesus?

LOVE - SACRIFICE - BLOOD - REDEMPTION - SALVATION - GOSPEL - POWER

THE MEANING OF LIFE: [REV. 4:11]

Philippians 2: 12-15 / II Thessalonians 1:11-12

The "meaning" may be a subjective definition tailored to my own pleasure.
"Meaning" may define my own pleasure and my own will.

The two great divergent meanings:

- 1.) Loving the will of God / Loving God's pleasure
- 2.) Loving my own will / Loving my own pleasure

My will can be brought into accordance (unity) with God's will. (God's intended meaning.)
When one loves something enough, one gives his or her life for it, willing to sacrifice all. Therefore, he who loves God gives up his own will. God's will becomes my own.

Luke 22:42 Father if thou be willing, remove this cup from me: nevertheless not my will, but thine, be done.

What is the meaning of life? Answer: The Love of God.

Our life goal is to understand the love of God, believe it, attain it, live it and sacrifice all to keep it.

Jesus' Love for a New Convert: Peter

Matt. 16:16 Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God.

Matt. 16:22 Be it far from thee Lord: this shall not be unto thee.

Matt. 17:4 Let us make here 3 tabernacles; one for thee and one for Moses and one for Elias

Matt. 18:21 Lord, how oft shall my brother sin against me, and I forgive him? Till 7 times?

John 13:8 Thou shalt never wash my feet.

John 18:10 Then Simon Peter having a sword drew it, and smote the high priest's servant...

Matt. 26:35 Though I should die with thee, yet will I not deny thee.

Matt. 26:70 I know not what thou sayest.

Matt. 26:72 And again he denied with an oath, I do not know the man.

Matt. 26:74 Then began he to curse and swear, saying, I know not the man.

Matt. 26:75 And he went out, and wept bitterly.

John 20:19 The doors were shut where the disciples were assembled for fear of the Jews

John 21:15 Yea, Lord; thou knowest that I love thee.

John 21:16 Yea, Lord; thou knowest that I love thee.

John 21:17 Peter was grieved because he said unto him the third time, Lovest thou me? And he said unto him, Lord thou knowest all things; thou knowest that I love thee.

John 21:21 Lord, and what shall this man do?

Acts 10:14 Not so, Lord; for I have never eaten anything that is common or unclean.

Acts 10:16 This was done thrice: and the vessel was received up again into heaven.

Acts 11:17 What was I, that I could withstand God?

Galatians 1:12 ...When they were come, he withdrew and separated himself, fearing them which were of the circumcision. And the Jews dissembled likewise with him; insomuch that Barnabus was also carried away with their dissimulation.

[Romans 12:9 Let love be without dissimulation.]

Why is history important? Confronting the historical record allows an honest comparison to scriptural law, inference and example. An invaluable window of discovery illuminates a more complete, informed understanding of current belief systems.

The Church of Christ: A Timeline of Apostasy – AD 33 to 2,000

AD 33 CHURCH OF CHRIST IS ESTABLISHED ON EARTH

What is truth? That which is true. A fixed or established principle, law, etc.; proven
(John 18:37-38) doctrine. That which is true, real or actual; reality: *find truth in God*
[Thorndike-Barnhart Advanced Dictionary, 1979]

By definition, the truth is unique, cannot be imitated and has no equal. The truth cannot be negotiated, revised, adjusted or plural. The truth is singular. The truth is one.

1st - 5th Centuries Gradual changes occur in church government:

- Movement to unite church and state
- Empowerment of city bishops, then one bishop to rule the church
- Increased persecution and sanctioned crimes by church authorities

606 First "Pope," Boniface III - Universal Church of Christ (primacy of the bishop of Rome)

Protestant Reformers 16th – 18th Centuries (Reformers sought to correct specific errors.)

1517 Lutheran, Martin Luther (rejection of indulgences)

1520's Anabaptist (re-baptizers)

1534 Episcopalian, King Henry VIII, England (supreme governor on earth)

1536 Mennonite / Menno Simons, Switzerland (service, peacemaking, baptism a sign)

1541 Presbyterian / John Calvin, John Knox, Scotland (predestination)

1609 Baptist / John Smythe (believer's baptism)

1647 Quaker / George Fox

1729 Methodist. John & Charles Wesley

1774 Unitarian, Theophilus Lindsey, England (Jesus was entirely human and not divine)



U.S. Constitution Ratified 1789 / 1st Amendment Guarantees Freedoms

"Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof; or abridging the freedom of speech, or of the press; or the right of the people peaceably to assemble, and to petition the Government for a redress of grievances."

American Religions 18th – 20th Centuries

1829 Mormon, Joseph Smith (baptism by proxy)

1863 7th Day Adventist / William Miller, Hiram Edson, Ellen White (Sabbath observance)

1870 [1931] Jehovah's Witness, Charles Taze Russel, Pennsylvania (World to end in 1914 – saints live on paradise earth forever, 144,000 witnesses eligible for heaven)

Christ is Lord and Savior, but not God (Jehovah) incarnate, not a God-man but inferior to God, not part of a Godhead. He was a created spirit being, God's only begotten son, sent to Earth as a perfect human.

1879 Church of Christ, Scientist, Mary B. Eddy (God is not a personal being but a principle)

1901 Pentecostal, Kansas USA (manifestation of spiritual gifts)

20th Century U.S.: Billy Graham / Jerry Falwell / Pat Robertson / Jimmy Swaggart
Evangelicals and Politics "The Moral Majority"



The Prince of this World Loves only Himself

What is Satan's chief tool? (Jn 8:44)

John 16:11 Of judgment, because the prince of this world is judged.

Luke 10:18 And he said unto them, I beheld Satan as lightning fall from heaven.

John 12:31 Now is the judgment of this world: now shall the prince of this world be cast out.

Rev. 12:9 And the great dragon was cast out, that old serpent, which deceiveth the whole world: he was cast out into the earth, and his angels were cast out with him.

Rev. 12:15 And the serpent cast out of his mouth water as a flood after the woman, that he might cause her to be carried away of the flood.

Rev. 12:17 And the dragon was wroth with the woman, and went to make war with the remnant of her seed, which keep the commandments of God, and have the testimony of Jesus Christ.

(Review) What is Satan's chief tool? (Jn 8:44)

DECEIT

II Cor. 11:14 And no marvel; for Satan himself is transformed into an angel of light. Therefore it is no great thing if his ministers also be transformed as the ministers of righteousness; whose end shall be according to their works

II Thess 2:3 Let no man deceive you by any means: for that day shall not come, except there come a falling away first, and that man of sin be revealed, the son of perdition; Who opposeth and exalteth himself above all that is called God, or that is worshipped; so that he as God sitteth in the temple of God, shewing himself that he is God.

II Peter 5:8 Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about, seeking whom he may devour...

Galatians 1:6-8 I marvel that ye are so soon removed from him that called you into the grace of Christ unto another gospel: which is not another; but there be some that trouble you, and would pervert the gospel of Christ. But though we, or an angel from heaven, preach any other gospel unto you than that which we have preached unto you, let him be accursed.

OPPOSITION

LOVE - SACRIFICE

JOHN 3:16

For God
so loved
the world

that he gave
his only
begotten son,

that whosoever
believeth in him
should not perish

but have
everlasting
life

ROMANS 1:16

[the gospel] is the power
of god unto salvation
to everyone that believes

***LOVE - SACRIFICE - BLOOD - REDEMPTION - SALVATION - GOSPEL - POWER
(TRUTH)***

False Teaching Opposes The Love of God

What can replace the gospel? What doctrine is equal to the gospel?

Rev. 12:15 And the serpent
cast out of his mouth water
as a flood after the woman,
that he might cause her to be
carried away of the flood

II Cor. 11:14
his ministers transformed
into angels of light

Matt. 7:15
Beware of false prophets which come
to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly
they are ravening wolves

LOVE

I Tim 6:20
...avoid profane and vain
babblings and oppositions
of science falsely so called

Acts 20:29
...grievous wolves enter in
among you not sparing the flock

II Peter 2:3
...through covetousness shall
they with feigned words make
merchandise of you...

Matt:24:24
There shall arise false Christs
and false prophets, and shall
show great signs and wonders...
they shall deceive the very elect

II Cor. 11:13 False apostles, deceitful workers...

II Peter 2:1 False teachers among you
who privily shall bring in damnable heresies

SACRIFICE
BLOOD
REDEMPTION
SALVATION
GOSPEL
POWER

SOULS

Identifying the Adversary

Where does Satan reside?

Who does Satan "make wars" with?

Describe the appearance of Satan's ministers.

Define "falling away" (II Thes. 2:3)

Who was "so soon removed" unto another gospel?

Is love altered or affected in the apostate church? Provide examples.

In a study on love, how is apostacy relevant?

Identifying Motives Other than Love

Teaching and Preaching the Gospel: Define Motives Eph. 4:15...speaking the truth in love...

Envy and Strife (Phil 1:15) / Covetousness (II Peter 2:3) / Preeminence (III John 9) / Tradition, Orthodoxy (Mark 7:7-8) / Creed, Opinion, Self-Will (Rev. 2:15)

Proving the Divinity of Jesus Christ

Victory over Satan Gen 3:15

Divinity of Christ -Psalm 45:6-7, Psalm 110:1

The sceptre shall not depart from Judah -Genesis 49:10

Root of Jesse -Isaiah 11:10

A prophet will prepare the way -Isaiah 40:3

The virgin birth of Christ -Isaiah 7:14

Birth in "Bethlehem Ephratah" -Micah 5:2

The slaughter of innocents -Jeremiah 31:15

Jesus returns from Egypt -Hosea 11:1

Preaching in Naphtali, at Galilee -Isaiah 9:1-2

Countenance, way of life -Isaiah 53:3-4

Betrayal -Psalm 41:9 / Zechariah 11:12

Betrayal money used to buy the potter's field - Zech 11:13

He opened not his mouth -Isaiah 53:7

Vicarious sacrifice -Isaiah 53:4-5

Numbered among transgressors Isaiah 53:12

Crucifixion -Psalm 22

No broken bones -Psalm 34:20

Burial with the rich -Isaiah 53:9

Intercession for sinners Isaiah 53:12

Resurrection -Psalm 16:10, 49:15, Isaiah 25:8, Hosea 13:14

The Church beginning at Jerusalem -Isaiah 2:2-3

Authority -Col. 1:13-19, I Cor. 15:27

Proving the Divinity of Scripture

Speaking the truth in love Ephesians 4:15

All scripture is given by inspiration of God. II Timothy 3:16-17

Shape of the earth and its oceans Isaiah 40:22 / Proverbs 8:27 / Job 26:10

He hangs the earth on nothing Job 26:7

The earth turns as clay to a seal Job 38:14

The stars are without number Jeremiah 33:22 / Genesis 15:5

(Greek astronomer and Geographer Claudius Ptolemy numbered stars at 1,056)
(Johannes Kepler counted 1,005)

The moon is a witness Psalm 89:37 / The moon "shineth not." Job 25:5

A covering on the upper lip. Leviticus 13:45

All nations of men made of one blood Acts 17:26

Weather patterns / Evaporation and precipitation Ecclesiastes 1:6-7 / Job 36:27-29

Paths in the sea Psalm 8:8

Matthew Fontaine Maury (1806-1873) He entered the US Navy in 1825, disabled by an accident in 1839. He was appointed superintendent of the US Naval Observatory in Washington, and also of the US Depot of Charts and Instruments. Determined that if the Bible said there were "paths in the seas," then there must be paths. He set out to find them.

Mapping the courses of weighted "drift bottles," he charted the ocean currents- the "paths" of the seas -- which greatly aided the science of marine navigation.

In 1855 Maury wrote the first textbook on modern oceanography, *The Physical Geography of the Sea and Its Meteorology*. A monument still stands on Monument Avenue, Richmond, Virginia with an inscription reading: "Matthew Fontaine Maury, Pathfinder of the Seas, the genius who first snatched from the oceans and atmosphere the secret of their laws. His inspiration, Holy Writ, Psalm 8:8; Ecclesiastes 1:6"

Destruction of Babylon Jeremiah 50 & 51 / Isaiah 13 & 14

Destruction of Tyre Ezekiel 26:1-14

Destruction of Jerusalem / Daniel 9:26 / Luke 19:42-44, 21:20-24 / Matthew 24:1-2

Destruction of the earth II Thessalonians 1:8-9 II Peter 3:10

LOVE / RELATIONSHIPS

- Marriage
- Brethren
- Parents

Who gets to decide what a marriage is? Answer: God

What is a marriage?

Answer: A man leaves his parents and cleaves unto his wife. They become one flesh.

What makes a marriage relationship work well?

What makes a marriage relationship difficult?

Ephesians Chapter 6

"Hollywood" portrayal of a "good" relationship:

Novelty / Romantic / Fun / Exciting / Entertaining / Daring / Dangerous / Adventurous

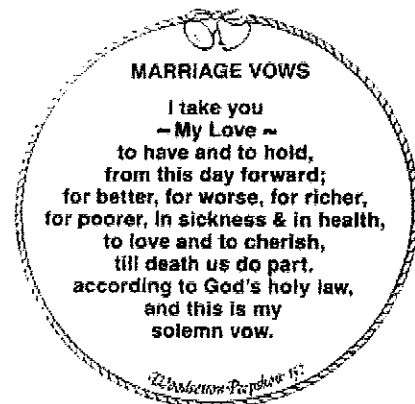
How long does "novelty" last? Is "novelty" a realistic expectation for a lifetime?

Perceptions: Is there a "bad" marriage? Is there a bad baptism? Is there a bad day?

Unity	Division
Forgiveness	Grudge
Self Restraint	Self Indulgent
Contentment	Covetousness
Loyalty	Desertion, Dereliction of Duty
Sacrifice	Unwilling
Generosity	Selfishness
Industry	Laziness
Kind	Grumpy
Intimate	Distant
Hopeful	Surrender
Friendly	Spiteful
Order	Disorder

Marriage Relationships in Scripture

Abraham and Sarah	Abraham and Hagar
Isaac and Rebecca	Ahab and Jezebel
Priscilla and Aquilla	Ananias and Sapphira



A common "fairy tale" ending: *"And they lived happily ever after."*

What does this phrase mean to you? Is it realistic?

What expectation might this build in the mind of a child?

Define the curses received by Adam and Eve. Did Adam and Eve live "happily ever after?"

Do these curses still affect us today? If so, how do they affect our marriages?

What is a "storybook" marriage?

Marriage Relationships in Scripture

I Corinthians 7 describes a man who “keeps his virgin.”
Provide an exegesis.

A married man cares for the things of the world, how he may please his wife. (Explain)

Discuss Proverbs 30:19
Three things which are too wonderful for me...

Proverbs 19:13 The contentions of a wife are a continual dropping



Proverbs 21:9, 21:19, 25:24, 26:21 Did Solomon have extensive experience with marriage?

Ruth and Boaz: After Ruth's first husband died, what did Ruth want? Ruth 1:16

What is distinctive about Ruth, a Moabite woman? What events define Ruth's humility?

Describe the suffering in Ruth's life.

What did Boaz need to accomplish prior to taking Ruth as his wife? Ruth 4:4-9

What important great grandson came from the marriage of Ruth and Boaz?

Jacob, Rachel & Leah: Which wife was prettiest? Genesis 29:17 Did he love them equally?

How long did Jacob serve Laban for his wives?

What did Rachel trade Leah for an evening with Jacob? Genesis 30:15-16

Describe Rachel's deceit – what was she hiding? Genesis 31:34-35 (See Genesis 35:2)

Did Rachel's marriage end in “happily ever after?” Genesis 35:17-19

Anger and Hatred Oppose Love

I Peter 4:8 Above all things have fervent charity among yourselves

Deut. 19:21 An eye for an eye

Luke 9: 52-56 Should we command fire to consume them?

Matt 5:43-48 Love your enemies

I Peter 2:19-24 When you do well and suffer for it... patiently, this is acceptable with God

I Peter 3:8-11 Not rendering evil for evil

II Tim 2: 24-25 The servant of the Lord must not strive

II Tim 3:12 All that will live godly shall suffer

Ecc 7:9 Be not hasty in thy spirit to be angry: for anger resteth in the bosom of fools.

Prov. 14:17 He that is soon angry dealeth foolishly...

Prov. 22:24 Make no friendship with an angry man: and with a furious man thou shalt not go: (25) lest thou learn his ways, and get a snare to thy soul.

Prov. 29:22 An angry man stirreth up strife, and a furious man aboundeth in transgression.

What kinds of events inspire anger in you? Provide examples.

Matt: 21:12-13 Jesus overturning the exchangers' tables: was it anger?

When is anger justified?

When is vengeance justified? Romans 12:19-21

What methods have you found to successfully control anger?

Prov. 19:11 The discretion of a man deferreth his anger; and it is his glory to pass over a transgression
Love and Anger (continued) Sept. 11, 2011

I Cor.13:4-5 charity suffereth long, vaunteth not itself, is not puffed up/is not easily provoked

James 1:19 – 21 Wherefore, my beloved brethren, let every man be swift to hear, slow to speak, slow to wrath: for the wrath of man worketh not the righteousness of God. Wherefore lay apart all superfluity of naughtiness, and receive with meekness the engrafted word, which is able to save your souls.

Numbers 22:27 Balaam's anger was kindled, and he smote the ass with a staff.

Numbers 22:28-34 Why is Balaam's discourse with an animal unique? Why is it ironic? Balaam is headstrong. Why? What does he savor? What honor does he desire? (Num 22:17)

I Peter 2:15-16 ... Balaam ...who loved the wages of unrighteousness; but was rebuked for his iniquity: the dumb ass speaking with man's voice forbad the madness of the prophet.

Anger and Wrath

A PATHWAY TO ANGER: pride / motivation to honor / opposition / anger / sin

I Samuel 18:8 And Saul was very wroth, and the saying displeased him... What does Saul savor? What honor does he desire? (I Sam. 15:24,30) (I Sam. 20:30) See "pathway" (above)

II Chron. 26:19 Then Uzziah was wroth, and had a censer in his hand to burn incense... What does Uzziah savor? What honor does he desire? (II Chron. 26:16) See "pathway"

Even the righteous are subject to anger. (Ex: Moses - Numbers 20:10-12)

In your own words, what is intimately satisfying about an angry outburst?

Prov. 15:18 A wrathful man stirreth up strife: but he that is slow to anger appeaseth strife.

Prov. 16:32 He that is slow to anger is better than the mighty; and he that ruleth his spirit than he that taketh a city.

Prov. 27:4 Wrath is cruel and anger is outrageous...

Prov. 8:13 The fear of the Lord is to hate evil: pride, and arrogancy, and the evil way, and the froward mouth, do I hate.

Prov. 11:2 When pride cometh, then cometh shame: but with the lowly is wisdom.

Prov. 16:18 Pride goeth before destruction, and an haughty spirit before a fall.

Mark 7:21, 22 ...out of the heart of men, proceed evil thoughts, adulteries, fornications, murders, thefts, covetousness, wickedness, deceit, lasciviousness, an evil eye, blasphemy, pride, foolishness: all these things come from within and defile the man.

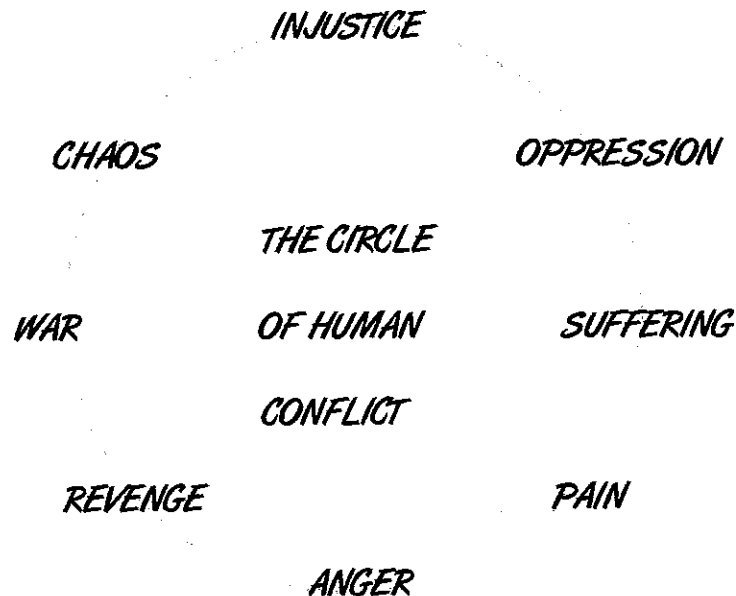
I John 2:15, 16 If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him...the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life, is not of the Father, but is of the world.

Pain Opposes Love

Is your love strong enough to overcome the most heinous evil?

Why are people angry? • PRIDE • PAIN • OPPRESSION • OPPOSITION • INJUSTICE

As a Christian, where can you exercise power in your own life to break the circle (below)?



Emotional Pain

Consider painful events in Joseph's life:

- Loss of his mother • Rejected by his brothers • Captured and sold into slavery
- Sold again and enslaved to Potiphar • Betrayed, falsely accused and imprisoned

How did Joseph endure traumatic, painful events? How did Joseph confront his brothers?
Did Joseph's brothers deserve swift and severe punishment? Was Joseph angry and bitter?
Consider Joseph's faith in God and love for others: do I have the faith and love this man had?

Take a moment to consider: did Joseph's pain "go away" when he forgave his brothers?

In private thought, what was the most *emotionally* painful event (or time) in your life?

Were you betrayed, cheated or accused falsely? Was someone cruel? Were you oppressed?

Does your pain result in anger, sorrow or distress? Can the effects of pain be forever erased?
Job 2:10 Shall we receive good at the hand of God and shall we not receive evil?

Consider painful events in Job's life:

- Servants slain • Livestock slain • Sons and daughters killed • His body covered with boils
- Advised by his wife to "curse God and die" • His grief was very great Job 2:13
- Job is counseled by "miserable comforters" Job 16:2

The Effects of Pain in Scripture - Nourishing Pain - Overcoming Pain

Job 16:20 My friends scorn me: but mine eye poureth out tears unto God

Job 42: 3 Who is he that hideth counsel without knowledge? therefore have I uttered that I understood not; things too wonderful for me, which I knew not. (5) I have heard of thee by the hearing of the ear: but now mine eye seeth thee. (6) Wherefore I abhor myself, and repent, in dust and ashes.

Did Job's pain "go away" after he was healed? Would he still miss his children and servants?

After all his suffering, Job was repentant. Job prayed on behalf of his accusers.

Do we sometimes "hold on" to pain? Do we find satisfaction in the feeling of "being hurt?" Can we "nurture" emotional pain to keep it alive and strong?

Consider events in Absalom's life:

- Absalom is born third, after Amnon and Chileab; all three are born of different mothers.
- Absalom's mother is daughter of the king of Geshur, a land conquered by David.
- Amnon forces Absalom's sister, Tamar
- Tamar remained desolate in her brother Absalom's house
- Amnon goes unpunished
- II Samuel 13:32 by the appointment of Absalom this [murder of Amnon] hath been determined from the day he forced his sister Tamar

How did Absalom address his pain? How did he keep his pain alive and strong?

Did Absalom have other avenues to pursue justice? Could he appeal to the king or elders?

If pain is kept alive and strong, how can it affect our judgement?

Am I nurturing any pain because bitterness? Did I ask for help or seek counsel? Did I allow my hurt feelings to get out of control? When my feelings are hurt, who gets hurt the most?

James 4:1-4 From whence come wars and fightings among you? come they not hence, even of your lusts that war in your members? Ye lust, and have not: ye kill, and desire to obtain: ye fight and war, yet ye have not, because ye ask not. Ye ask amiss, that ye may consume it upon your lusts. Ye adulterers and adulteresses, know ye not that the friendship of the world is enmity with God? whosoever therefore will be a friend of the world is the enemy of God.

What does James mean by "adulterers and adulteresses? Who was betrayed in this adultery?

Study Matthew 5:2-12 - How do love and pain apply to these verses?

James 5:9 Grudge not one against another, brethren, lest ye be condemned...

Love and War: Can we injure, kill and love simultaneously? Does the gospel require killing?

Matt 5:39 Resist not evil. Matt 5:44 Love your enemies.

Matt 26:52 Put up again thy sword into his place: for all they that take the sword shall perish with the sword. / Provide an explanation of Luke 22:36-37.

Isaiah 2:4 Provide a context and exegesis for "they shall beat their swords into plowshares"

Luke 3:14 And the soldiers likewise demanded of him, saying, And what shall we do? And he said unto them, Do violence to no man, neither accuse any falsely; and be content with your wages. / Romans 12:14-21 Review scriptures and provide an exegesis.

Luke 9:55-56 Ye know not what manner of spirit ye are of. For the Son of man is not come to destroy men's lives, but to save them.

II Corinthians 10:3 For though we walk in the flesh, we do not war after the flesh: for the weapons of our warfare are not carnal, but mighty through God to the pulling down of strong holds; Casting down imaginations and every high thing that exalteth itself against the knowledge of God, and bringing into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ; And having a readiness to revenge all disobedience, when your obedience is fulfilled.

James 4:1-4 From whence come wars and fightings among you? Come they not hence, even of your lusts that war in your members? Ye lust, and have not: ye cannot obtain: ye fight and war, yet ye have not, because ye ask not. Ye ask, and receive not, because ye ask not. Ye ask, and receive not, because ye ask amiss, that ye may consume it upon your lusts.

John 18:36 My kingdom is not of this world: if my kingdom were of this world, then would my servants fight, that I should not be delivered to the Jews: but now my kingdom is not from hence.

Do U.S. representatives wage war on godly or spiritual terms? Are their objectives *of Heaven, or of this world?*

The Church is the kingdom of Christ. Christians are collectively the body of Christ. Jesus prayed, "They are not of the world (John 17:16)."

God gives leaders authority, but their actions are not necessarily authorized by Heaven.

All governments including the U.S. Government are not righteous; they are worldly governments in Satan's kingdom

Covetousness is Opposed to Love

Love and Money I Cor. 13:4 Charity doth not behave itself unseemly, seeketh not her own...

What is covetousness? Colossians 3:5 covetousness is idolatry / Why is covetousness defined as idolatry?

Am I content with what I have?

Joshua and Achan / Joshua 7:21 When I saw among the spoils a goodly Babylonish garment, and two hundred shekels of silver, and a wedge of gold of fifty shekel weight, then I coveted them, and took them; and, behold, they are hid in the earth in the midst of my tent and the silver under it. / How did Achan's covetousness affect others? How was he punished?

Elisha and Gehazi / II Kings 6:26 Is it a time to receive money, and to receive garments, and oliveyards, and vineyards, and sheep, and menservants, and maidservants?

Gehazi lied to acquire silver and garments. He hid his gain and lied again to conceal it. Why was Gehazi so careful to hide his actions? How was Gehazi punished?

Ananias and Sapphira / Acts 5:2 And kept back a part of the price, his wife also being privy to it, and brought a certain part, and laid it at the apostle's feet. / What was Ananias lying about? Who was Ananias trying to impress with his gift? What was the punishment?

Judas Iscariot: Why did Judas criticize Mary's actions in John 12: 3-5? Judas was the treasurer. Judas was a thief. John 12:6, John 13:29 / Judas was an eyewitness to Jesus' great works. After Jesus was captured, why was Judas sorry? In Matthew 27:3-10 a great conflict is revealed in Judas. He returned the betrayal money. Why?

I Timothy 6:6-10 But they that will be rich fall into temptation and a snare, and fall into many foolish and hurtful lusts . . . For the love of money is the root of all evil: which while some coveted after, they have erred from the faith...

How does "the love of money" affect people? What actions fulfill the love of money?

Matthew 6:19-24 The light of the body is the eye: If therefore thine eye be single, thy whole body shall be full of light. / How can the eye be "single?"

Proverbs 18:11 The rich man's wealth is his strong city...as an high wall in his own conceit.

Why did Egyptians bury their kings with a multitude of possessions? How was it unrealistic?

Read Job 27:18-22. Discuss the end of "the rich man." / James 5:1-6 Describe the "rich man."

Luke 18:22-25 Why was the ruler sorrowful? Didn't riches give him happiness and security?

What are rich brethren instructed to do? I Timothy 6:17-19

Psalms 49:6-14 In these verses, what is the "folly" of the wealthy?

Love and Pre-Eminence I Corinthians 13:4 Charity vaunteth not itself

Genesis 3:5 ye shall be as gods...

Pride is Opposed to Love

I Samuel 15:30 Yet honor me now before the elders...
(Did King Saul want to "save face?")

How is a king inherently tempted? Give an example.

Isaiah 14:11-14 ...I will exalt my throne above the stars of God.

Daniel 4:30 -33 After Nebuchadnezzar said, "...the might of my power...", what happened?



Did Belshazzar learn from his forefather's mistake? How did Belshazzar anger the Lord?

See Daniel 5:18-23. What was "the writing on the wall?" What was his punishment?

Luke 9:46 / 22:24-27 ...a strife among them, which of them should be accounted the greatest

Mark 9:33-37 Why didn't the disciples answer Jesus' question?

Mk. 10:35-45 James & John asked to sit by Jesus in his glory. How did this affect the others?

Acts 8:18-23 Why did Simon want to buy spiritual gifts? Describe Simon's prior history.

I Cor. 5:2, 6 Explain why Corinthian brethren were "puffed up." What did they "glory" in?

I Cor. 14:12 ...forasmuch as ye are zealous of spiritual gifts, seek that ye may excel to the edifying of the church. (Paul writes of zeal with two directions. What are the two directions?)

II Cor. 5:12 ...them which glory in appearance and not in heart. (See verses 17 & 18.)

Galatians 2:11 Peter is blamed for withdrawing himself. Who else could be blamed? Why?

Galatians 6:12-13 As many as desire to make a fair shew in the flesh, they constrain you to be circumcised; only lest they should suffer persecution for the cross of Christ. For neither they themselves who are circumcised keep the law; but desire to have you circumcised that they may glory in your flesh. (How did these brethren feel "above" others?)

II Thess. 2:4 Who opposeth and exalteth himself above all that is called God...

Some religious "titles" are not good. Why not? Examples: "reverend" "rabbi" "father"

What could be possible pitfalls in attaining to a degree such as, "Doctor of Divinity?"

III Jn. 9 ...but Diotrophes, who loveth to have the preeminence among them, receiveth us not. ...neither doth he receive the brethren, and forbids them that would, and casts them out of the church. (Give an explanation of Diotrophes' character. How did he serve the church?)

Love and Indecision

Joshua 24:15, 19, 21-24 Choose you this day whom ye will serve...

I Kings 18:21 How long halt ye between two opinions?

Rev. 3:16 thou art lukewarm and neither cold nor hot, I will spue thee out of my mouth...

Matt 6:22 If therefore thine eye be single, thy whole body shall be full of light...

Matt. 6:24 Ye cannot serve God and mammon.

II Kings 17:27-32 So they feared the Lord, and served their own gods, after the manner of the nations whom they carried away from thence...

I Kings 13:14-26 The disobedient prophet (see verses 7-9)

Numbers 22:5-35 / Nehemiah 13:2 Balaam loved the wages of unrighteousness

Ephesians 4:14 That we henceforth be no more children, tossed to and fro, and carried about with every wind of doctrine...

James 1:8 A double minded man is unstable in all his ways...

How is a double minded man unstable?

James 4:8 Cleanse your hands, ye sinners; and purify your hearts, ye double minded.

We make choices every day: Regular or Premium / Sooner or Later / Door #1 or Door #2
Work or Play / Poverty or Riches / Activity or Leisure

Why did you choose your spouse, or, what would you look for in a relationship?

"On the fence" / Not thorough / Waffling / Vacillating / Unreliable / Indecisive / Wavering / Reluctant / Unresolved / Uncommitted

Do I meet up to the standard I would like to see in my wife or husband?

What qualities does God desire in me? What kind of commitment does God require?

II Kings 13: 14-19 Joash king of Israel: How many times did he hit the ground with arrows?

What do we see lacking in Joash? Why was Elisha displeased with his performance?

Do I lack enthusiasm? Am I "on the fence" at times? Do I need more zeal?



Love, Action, and Greatness

Greatness comes in two categories. What are the two categories? Ponder this question.

I Kings 17:10-11 ...a handful of meal in a barrel, and a little oil in a cruse: I am gathering two sticks, that I may go in and dress it for me and my son, that we may eat it and die.

The widow lived in Zarephath of Zidon. What is implied by her nationality?

Consider the following about the widow: 1.) Not a Jew 2.) A Widow 3.) Desperately Poor

In her position, what is improbable about this widow taking action to sustain a prophet?

II Kings 5:13 If the prophet had bid thee do some great thing, wouldest thou not have done it?

Naaman took action in II Kings 5:14. What action did he take? What is his nationality?

The servants spoke of "some great thing." Did Naaman's action become greater than anything the servants referred to? if so, why? Do you see ambiguity in the word, *great*?

When does action achieve greatness? Have I ever felt reluctant to do something "big?" What if something *big* is not required? Does greatness always reach the status of "heroic?"

How is Jesus' example antithetical to classic, heroic figures?

"The Good Samaritan" Luke 10:30-37 In the first century, what could be considered revolutionary about this teaching? The Samaritan treated wounds and delivered the injured man to an inn. This is the "spoken" portion of Jesus' lesson. Describe the unspoken lesson.

Luke 7:31-48 A sinner washes Jesus' feet with tears and wipes them with her hair. She anoints his feet with ointment. This event is extraordinary in several ways. Why?

How are these words incongruous, yet bursting with love: sinner, tears, hair, ointment, feet?

Luke 7:39 Simon said something "within himself," assuming Jesus would not discover his thoughts. Simon is incredulous, disregarding Jesus as a phony prophet. Simon immediately dismisses one of the greatest acts of repentance the world has ever seen. Why?

Simon was a Pharisee. He achieved *greatness*. He invited Jesus to his house, possibly his greatest action. Why was the sinner's action *far greater* than the action taken by Simon?

Jesus and Simon both knew the law. Why do Jesus and Simon have polarized views of the woman's action?

Jesus describes Simon's lack of action in detail. Describe his opportunity and lack of action.

Zaccheus was a wee little man, the chief publican, and also rich. What made him great? See Luke 19:1-10. What actions did Zaccheus take? Were his *actions* great? In whose eyes?

Love, Action and Greatness

What is the common thread among the widow, the Syrian, the Samaritan, the sinner and Zaccheus?

Luke 7:1-9 The Centurion's servant is dear unto him. What does this mean? Why does he ask for help? As a centurion, he could have demanded Jesus come to him. Why didn't he ask Jesus face-to-face? In his deference to Christ, do we see any similarities between the Centurion and the woman at Simon's house?

What is great about the Roman Centurion? Why is *greatness* difficult to define?

a.) his authority b.) his rank c.) his wealth d.) his faith e.) his love

The Centurion submitted a petition to Jesus. Was his action *great*? Many people made demands and petitions to Jesus. In your own thoughts, what made this man's action great? What was different about this great man?

What is *different* about me? What action should I take? Do I see greatness the same as God? If we make a simple petition to God with the right attitude, the results could be far beyond our expectations.

One man gave 100 sermons. Most sermons were forgotten. The same man stayed late one night after class to help a youngster complete a class assignment. This was never forgotten. One small action may have a great impact, perhaps greater than 100 others. We may not realize the impact of one simple action.

Which are true? Dorcas:

- a.) conquered the enemy
- b.) gave a great speech
- c.) earned a Ph.D.
- d.) ran a marathon
- e.) made garments
- f.) rose from the dead

Lots of people made coats and garments. What was different about Dorcas' garments?

Acts 9:36-40 Dorcas was full of good works and almsdeeds....she made coats and garments...

We know what Dorcas did. Do we know what the great men did throughout the centuries – the czars, popes, the emperors, kings, queens, and presidents? Which U.S. president held a degree from Stanford in geology? Which president suffered the "Teapot Dome Scandal?"

If someone custom-made a handmade garment for you, would you remember it?

One man remarked his band was more famous than Jesus. Is being famous a *big thing* or a *little thing*? What is the importance or significance of *being famous*?

Why does the world assign greatness, importance and significance to things God does not?

What is *great* in the eyes of God?

Love and Time

What is time?

The period between two events or during which something exists, happens or acts; measured or measurable interval.

Time: The duration of Opportunity Ecc 3:8 [There is] a time to love...

The many demands for our time: Church, friends, work, kids, travel, study, sleep, meals, prayer, shopping, meditation, cleaning, financial responsibilities...how do we fit it all in?

If I spend time on the things of God, does that mean something else has to be sacrificed? Should a sacrifice be easy?

How much time is required to love the Lord God? How much time is required to love a husband, a wife, a son, a daughter, or a brother?

Is there often a direct relationship between how much I love and how much time I spend?

Mt. 22:37 Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind.

Solomon spent time building the temple and his own house. Which house was larger? How much time did he spend doing each task? Can we infer anything from comparing the two numbers? See I Kings 6:2, 38 / I Kings 7:1-2 Who else did Solomon build a house for?

During the time of Nehemiah, Ezra, Haggai and Zechariah, the Jews started to rebuild after 70 years of captivity. In the following verses from Haggai, what is said about the Jews?

Haggai 1:4 Is it time to dwell in your ceiled houses, and this house lie waste?

Haggai 1:9 mine house that is waste, and ye run every man unto his own house.

Solomon built a *physical* temple. What is my temple? How much time does it take to build?

How strong is my love for God? How do we demonstrate our love for God? As God defines it, how much time do I have in my lifetime?

James 4:14 Whereas ye know not what shall be on the morrow. For what is your life? It is even a vapor, that appears for a little time, and then vanishes away.

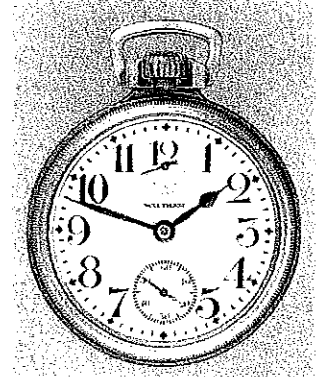
Eph. 5:16-17 See then that ye walk circumspectly, not as fools, but as wise. Redeeming the time, because the days are evil. Wherefore be ye not unwise, but understanding what the will of the Lord is.

What does "redeem" mean (literally)? How can I *redeem the time*?

II Cor. 6:2 For he saith, I have heard thee in a time accepted, and in the day of salvation have I succored thee: behold, now is the accepted time; behold, now is the day of salvation.

Why is "now" the accepted time? Why not *later*?

Matt 16:3 O ye hypocrites, ye can discern the face of the sky; but can ye not discern the signs of the times? (vs. 4) A wicked and adulterous generation seeketh after a sign; and there shall no sign be given unto it, but the sign of the prophet Jonas.



Love and Time

Romans 13:10-11 Love worketh no ill to his neighbor; therefore love is the fulfilling of the law. And that, knowing the time, that now it is high time to awake out of sleep: for now is our salvation nearer than when we believed. The night is far spent, the day is at hand; let us therefore cast off the works of darkness, and let us put on the armor of light.

Mark 13: 33 Take ye heed, watch and pray: for ye know not when the time is.

As described in Acts 17, how did the Athenians spend their time? Was their time wasted?

Acts 17:21 For all the Athenians and strangers which were there spent their time in nothing else, but either to tell, or to hear some new thing.

Hebrews 5:12 For when for the time ye ought to be teachers, ye have need that one teach you again which be the first principles of the oracles of God; and are become such as have need of milk, and not of strong meat.

The Hebrew writer criticizes brethren for slowness in growth. What was expected of them?

What does the Hebrew writer mean by, "...for when for the time ye ought to be teachers...?"
How does the subject of *time* relate to teaching God's word?

Galatians 6:10 As we have therefore opportunity, let us do good unto all men, especially unto them who are of the household of faith.

Heb. 11:15 And truly, if they had been mindful of that country from whence they came out, they might have had opportunity to have returned.

II Tim 4:2 Preach the word; be instant in season, out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort with all longsuffering and doctrine.

Romans 12:12 Patient in tribulation; continuing instant in prayer. (Define "instant.")

Why were the Romans instructed to be patient in one respect yet, act quickly in another?

Sometimes I worry about time. I have said, "I don't have enough time." If we trust in God, we know our efforts in righteousness will result in blessings returned to us.

Ecc 11:1 Cast thy bread upon the waters: for thou shalt find it after many days.

How is patience related to time?

How are longsuffering and forgiveness related to time?

How would my relationship with God change if I had more time (say, 2 hours more per day)?

How would my relationship with God change if I had less time?

Matt. 24:50-51 The lord of that servant shall come in a day when he looketh not for him and in an hour that he is not aware of, and shall cut him asunder, and appoint him his portion with the hypocrites: there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth.

Love and Time

Would I do anything different if I had only:

- a.) 1 year left to live?
- b.) 1 week left to live?
- c.) 1 day left to live?

Of all the things I do with my time, what is the most important thing? Do I need more time to accomplish the most important thing? This week, what will my most important priority be?

Is there enough time in the day to do all the things I need to do?

Am I often “pressed” for time, feeling I need to rush or “squeeze in” additional commitments?

In the following scripture, what does it mean to be “entangled with the affairs of this life?”

II Timothy 2:4 “No man that warreth entangleth himself with the affairs of this life...

When people in the world expect too much from me, should I be comfortable saying, “No”?

If there was 1 change (any change) I could make about myself overnight, what would it be?

Regarding the one change I would like to make, is this a change also desired by God?

What is the one change I think *God* would most like to see in me? What is that one area I know God wants to see me improve? How much time do I spend working on this one area?

Do I spend enough time on the things that would really make a difference in my life?

I’ve struggled, battled and endured in trying to be transformed by the renewing of my mind. I haven’t reached my goal. I’m not yet the example God desires. Should I be frustrated? Should I just accept the way I am? What is the one obstacle I want to remove?

Should I only hope for something to happen or should I endeavor to *make* it happen?

Matt.19:26 With men this is impossible; but with God all things are possible.

With God all things are possible.

Love and Patience

What is patience? Why is patience more *loving* than impatience?

Romans 2:7 and 2:8: Compare *patient continuance* and *contentiousness*.

Genesis 18:24 Peradventure there be fifty righteous...forty five...forty,,,thirty...twenty...ten

God would spare a city for the sake of ten righteous. What does this say about his patience?

Abraham interceded for Sodom and Gomorrah five times. Was God patient with Abraham?

Genesis 19:15 Did Lot leave Sodom promptly? Describe God's patience for Lot's family.

II Peter 2:6-9 Was Lot's soul affected by Sodom? Why do we linger in tempting situations?

I Samuel 10:8 Saul was instructed to wait for Samuel. What did Saul do in I Samuel 13:9?

Waiting requires patience. What circumstances tested Saul? How did Saul's fear affect him?

Consider the recent acceleration of travel and communication: does it affect my patience?

When have I felt others should move faster or "get out of my way?"

What is "fast food?" When is "fast food" not fast enough?

For centuries, men traveled on foot or on horseback at a maximum of about 25 miles per hour. Today, do I get upset when drivers are not moving at maximum freeway speed?

20 years ago, most people did not carry "mobile" phones. Phone conversations did not routinely occur in autos, airplanes or on foot. Am I anxious if my cell phone is not with me?

Prior to 1990, most people depended on regular, two day mail to send letters. Do I get irritated when an e-mail message takes more than 5 minutes?

"Overnight delivery" became available with "Federal Express." Most business experts thought overnight delivery was impractical – it would be a failure. Today, many carriers will deliver packages overnight, anywhere in the country, or other places around the globe.

Speed and money: we observe an incredible acceleration in our society, on many levels. How do we feel when people don't act as fast as we expect them to? Read I Timothy 6:6-11

Do I give children enough time to finish their sentences? Can I endure patiently while a child learns a new task? If I can do something faster and better, why should I let a child do it?

Heb. 12:1 Is Christianity a *sprint* or a *marathon*? If someone keeps making the same mistake, but is willing to keep trying, am I willing to keep helping? Consider Matt. 18:21-35

Ecc 7:8-9 Is impatience related to pride? If so, how is it related? Consider I Peter 2:20-24

Love and the World

I John 5:19 And we know that we are of God, and the whole world lieth in wickedness.

II Cor. 4:4 ... the god of this world hath blinded the minds of them which believe not...

Who is the God of the world and how does he blind people's minds?

Matt 4:8 Again, the devil taketh him up into an exceeding high mountain, and sheweth him all the kingdoms of the world, and the glory of them; And saith unto him, All these things will I give thee, if thou wilt fall down and worship me.

How can the devil "give" kingdoms to someone? Does he possess kingdoms?

I Peter 5:8 Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about, seeking whom he may devour: whom resist steadfast in the faith...

What happens to people when they are devoured by Satan? How are they devoured?

Rev. 12:9 And the great dragon was cast out, that old serpent, called the Devil, and Satan, which deceives the whole world: he was cast out into the earth, and his angels were cast out...

I Jn. 2:15-17 Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world. If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him. For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life, is not of the Father, but is of the world. And the world passeth away, and the lust thereof: but he that doeth the will of God abideth forever.

What actions or behavior would show when someone loves the world?

James 4:4 Ye adulterers and adulteresses, know ye not that the friendship of the world is enmity with God? Whosoever therefore will be a friend of the world is the enemy of God.

Why is a friend of the world described as an adulterer?

II Tim. 4:10 For Demas hath forsaken me, having loved this present world and is departed...

Mt. 13:22 He also that received the word among thorns is he that hears the word; and the care of this world, and the deceitfulness of riches, choke the word, and he becomes unfruitful.

How is Demas' departure similar to one that *received the word among thorns*?

Mt. 16:26 For what is a man profited, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul? or what shall a man give in exchange for his soul?

What actions would show when someone makes an exchange? (Consider Esau's trade.)

Romans 12:2 And be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God.

I John 5:4 And whatsoever is born of God overcometh the world: and this is the victory that overcometh the world, even our faith...

Jn. 16:33 ...ye shall have tribulation: but be of good cheer; I have overcome the world.

Love and the World

How did Jesus overcome the world? Why do we need to “overcome” the world?

Gal.6:14 our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom the world is crucified unto me, and I unto the world

I Cor. 3:19 For the wisdom of this world is foolishness with God.

John 17:14 ...they are not of the world, even as I am not of the world.

How were Jesus’ disciples *not of this world*?

Matt 5:14 Ye are the light of the world. A city that is set on a hill cannot be hid.

What actions must we take to provide light to the world?

Love and the Soul

Man is a 3 fold being: Flesh, Soul, Breath See Genesis 2:7

Ecc. 3:21 Who knows the spirit of man that goeth upward?

Ps.49:15 God will redeem my soul from the power of the grave; for he shall receive me...

Matt 10:28 ...rather fear him which is able to destroy both soul and body in hell.

Acts 2:41 ...the same day there were added unto them about 3000 souls (How are souls added?)

Luke 12:19-20 This night thy soul shall be required of thee. (Explain *required*.)

In Rev. 2:1-5, the Ephesians were described as having lost their first love? What is the *first love*?

How can we tell when our *first love* is not adequate? How can we identify weakness in our *first love*?

What are the "*first works*" described in Revelation 3:5?

Consider things people love: Soul, Flesh, Body, Mind, World, Passion, Play, Lust, Fun, Sin

II Pet. 2:8 Lot's righteous soul was vexed. What kind of environment vexes the soul of man?

WORD James 1:21 receive with meekness the engrafted **word** which is able to save your souls

HEAR Romans 10:14 ...how shall they **hear** without a preacher?

INSTRUCT Prov.15:32 He that refuses **instruction** despises his own soul but he that hears reproof gets **understanding**.

BELIEVE Heb.10:39 We are not of them who draw back unto perdition; but of them that **believe** to the saving of the soul.

OBEY I Peter 1:19-22 ye have purified your souls in **obeying** the truth through the Spirit...

COMMIT I Peter 4:18-19 **commit** the keeping of their souls to him in well doing

WISDOM Prov. 19:8 He that gets **wisdom** loves his own soul: he that keeps **understanding** shall find good.

LABOR I Thessalonians 1:3 Remembering without ceasing your work of faith and **labor** of love
Compare the two phrases: "*love of labor*" / "*labor of love*" Is one phrase more secular?
II Cor. 5:9 Wherefore we labor, that, whether present or absent, we may be accepted of him.
Heb. 4:9-11 labor ...to enter into that rest, lest any man fall after the same example of unbelief.

PATIENCE Luke 21:19 In **patience** possess ye your souls.(How does patience help us *possess our souls*?)

Explain I Cor. 6:17 ...he that is joined unto the Lord is one spirit.

I Cor 6:19 Your body is the temple of the Holy Spirit. (When does the body become a temple?)

Hebrews 4:12 dividing asunder of soul and spirit (How does the word *divide asunder soul and spirit*?)

Matt.16:26 ...what shall a man give in exchange for his soul?

Love and Commitment

Do I expect others to keep their commitments to me?

Define commitment. What are my lifelong commitments? Are some commitments greater or lesser?

Luke 16:11 If therefore you have not been faithful in the unrighteous mammon, who will commit to your trust the true riches? And if ye have not been faithful in that which is another man's, who shall give you that which is your own?

Do we take commitments lightly? Should a Christian take any commitment lightly?

Consider: Are my commitments built on love? How is obligation different from love?

II Timothy 1:12 ...I know whom I have believed, and am persuaded he is able to keep that which I have committed unto him against that day. Hold fast the form of sound words which thou hast heard of me...

Why do we need a long commitment such as marriage? Why can't we be just boyfriend and girlfriend?

What is my definition of love? What do I love? Who do I love the most?

Is marriage too difficult? – too big a commitment? If difficulty comes, do I fight for commitment, or run? Could something else be better? Could I escape?

Consider a prophet's commitment to God: was Jonah committed? Why did he run? Did other prophets make excuses, succumb to distraction or "run away?" When did I consider running away? What made me stay? Is it possible to escape God?

Do I need to love God more than a physical husband or wife? Explain the answer.

Many people feel they love God. What is the difference between a feeling and a commitment?

Psalms 37:5 Commit thy way unto the Lord; trust also in him; and he shall bring it to pass.

Proverbs 16:3 Commit thy works unto the Lord, and thy thoughts shall be established.

I Peter 4:19 ...let them that suffer according to the will of God commit the keeping of their souls to him in well doing, as unto a faithful creator.

How is God my husband?

How do I describe my marriage to God: figurative, literal, physical, spiritual or other?

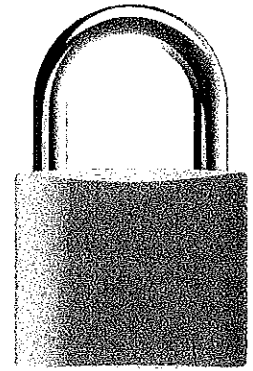
In a marriage to God, what are the terms and conditions? How do I keep my commitment?

II Cor. 11:2 ...I have espoused you to one husband, that I may present you as a chaste virgin to Christ.

Romans 7:4 ...my brethren, ye also are become dead to the law by the body of Christ; that ye should be married to another, even to him who is raised from the dead, that we should bring forth fruit unto God.

Isaiah 54:5 For thy Maker is thine husband; the Lord of hosts is his name; and thy Redeemer the Holy One of Israel; the God of the whole earth shall he be called.

Jeremiah 3:8-17



Love and Commitment

Why did God make a commitment to save sinners? What is the single, most important reason?

Concerning my commitment to God, is my single, most important reason the same as His?

II Cor 5:19 ...God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them; and hath committed unto us the word of reconciliation.

I Timothy 1:15 Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners, of whom I am chief.

II Peter 2:23 When he suffered he threatened not; but committed himself to him that judgeth righteously: who his own self bare our sins in his own body on the tree, that we, being dead to sins, should live unto righteousness...

Jesus honored his commitment unto death. He kept his commitment without complaint. His commitment was to die in place of mankind, to deliver all from death. What is the commitment I made to Christ? Am I honoring my commitment?

Consider Jacob's commitment to Laban. What does his 14 years of service say about his character? How does his commitment to Laban foreshadow his lifelong commitment to God?

Jacob was committed to four women. Describe the term, *overcommitted*. When have I felt overcommitted and what caused this condition? Does "over-commitment" imply an inability to meet my commitment? What is paradoxical about the term, "over-commitment?"

I Timothy 6:20 O Timothy, keep that which is committed to thy trust, avoiding profane and vain babblings, and oppositions of science falsely so called: which some professing have erred concerning the faith.

Love and Peace

When love prevails, should there be strife? When people fight, is love “on hold?”

Sometimes fighting stems from bitterness, hurt feelings or injured pride. (See Hebrews 12:15)

Grudges were forbidden in both Old and New Testaments. Why was it so important to resist a grudge?

According to Leviticus 19:17, what was the commandment for resolving a potential grudge?

Consider the Christian attitude presented in II Timothy 2:22-25. What might result from foolish questions?

In the context of II Timothy 2:24, how could teaching be affected by striving?

In I Cor. 3:3, Paul wrote about strife. When strife is revealed, what is revealed about spirituality?

According to James 3:14-16, what is the result of bitter envying and strife?

If strife comes from carnality, sensuality and devilish motives, can I conclude anything about my last fight?

How often do I raise my voice or strive with others? Am I easily angered? Do I store things and boil over?

How does a mature Christian avoid shouting matches, heated arguments and temper tantrums?

Galatians 6:21 ...idolatry, witchcraft, hatred, variance, emulations, wrath, strife, seditions, heresies...

I Cor. 14:33 For God is not the author of confusion, but of peace, as in all churches of the saints.

Was the Corinthian Church in a state of confusion? What were the roots of this confusion?

Find commonalities: Cain and Abel / Saul and David / Joab and Abner / Pharisees and Jesus

Galatians 6:22 But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith...

John 14:27 Peace I leave with you, my peace I give unto you. Let not your heart be troubled, [nor] afraid.

Contrast Matthew 10:34-36 with John 14:27 (above). How does Jesus bring both *peace* and the *sword*?

According to Colossians 3:12-15, how is peace accomplished?

Hebrews 12:14 instructs us to follow peace with all men. What about angry, bitter, vengeful men?

James 3:17-18 The fruit of righteousness is sown in peace of them that make peace. Provide an exegesis.

II Cor. 13:11 Finally brethren, farewell, be perfect, be of good comfort, be of one mind, live in peace and the God of love and peace shall be with you.

I Timothy 2:2 ...prayers...that we may lead a quiet and peaceable life in all godliness and honesty.

Romans 12:18 If it be possible, as much as lieth in you, live peaceably with all men. See verses 19-21

Love Beareth all Things

I Corinthians 13:7 discusses bearing, believing, hoping and enduring all things. How can bearing, believing, hoping and enduring be related? Describe some parallels.

Moses was charged with bearing a complaining, disobedient people. How did Moses respond when God wanted to destroy his people? Did Moses persuade God to change his mind? (Exodus 32:11-13)

Did Moses reference his concern for the people, or, was he more concerned with God's reputation before the enemies? Describe Moses' love for God and for his people.

King Saul was David's enemy. Did David treat Saul as an enemy? Why did David bear with Saul for so long? (1 Samuel 24:10) Did David have superior skills as a warrior? Why didn't he quickly dispatch Saul with the sword? In this case, did David love his enemy?

Nehemiah had a big job to do but he already worked for someone else. Who did he work for? (Nehemiah 2:1) What did Nehemiah do before he made his request to the king? (Nehemiah 2:4)

Nehemiah was charged with rebuilding Jerusalem's wall. Nehemiah's enemies, Sanballat and Tobiah tried to stop him with threats, fear and conspiracy.

The "nobles" refused to participate in rebuilding (Nehemiah 3:5)

The nobles exacted usury on loans against the Jews' land, causing them to lose their inheritances and surrender their own children to become servants (Nehemiah 5:7-8) Did Nehemiah buckle under pressure?

Review Nehemiah 5:8-11 and Nehemiah 13:23-30. In addition to Nehemiah's skills as a construction manager, describe his capability as a disciplinarian.

Do we see Nehemiah yielding to pressure? In Nehemiah's time, how did the people profane the Sabbath?

What actions did Nehemiah take to stop this? (Nehemiah 13:15-21) Describe any parallel to something that occurred in Jesus' ministry.

Does Nehemiah "give in" to resistance? Consider the last verse of Nehemiah: he wants to be remembered – by whom? Why? Describe Nehemiah's love for God and for his people.

Jesus builds church (Matthew 16:18) / Jesus' enemies tried to stop him with threats, fear and conspiracy.

The Pharisees refuse Christ. What did the Pharisees fear Jesus would take away from them? (John 11:48)

Jesus was on a mission of love and sacrifice, yet he had extraordinary powers; he was capable of unfathomable destruction. Describe Jesus' ministry in the context of "bearing all things."

Do we ever see Jesus "losing his temper" or striking back? When Jesus cleared the temple of moneychangers (Matt. 21:12 / John 2:14-16), was he "bearing with them?" Did he show mercy? Did he have capability to exact a greater punishment?

From the time of Moses to the time of Christ, the prophets and leaders of God's people encountered intense resistance. At times, transgressions were swiftly judged, yet God extended many opportunities for the people to repent. In Paul's admonishment to love (1 Cor. 13), how is God the standard-bearer in "bearing all things."

Review Matthew 6:14-15 / Luke 23:34

Love Beareth All Things: The Sufferings of an Apostle

II Corinthians 1:5 For as the sufferings of Christ abound in us, so our consolation also aboundeth by Christ. **6** And whether we be afflicted, it is for your consolation and salvation, which is effectual in the enduring of the same sufferings which we also suffer: or whether we be comforted, it is for your consolation and salvation. **7** And our hope of you is steadfast, knowing, that as ye are partakers of the sufferings, so shall ye be also of the consolation. **8** For we would not, brethren, have you ignorant of our trouble which came to us in Asia, that we were pressed out of measure, above strength, insomuch that we despaired even of life...

II Corinthians 4:7 But we have this treasure in earthen vessels, that the excellency of the power may be of God, and not of us. **8** We are troubled on every side, yet not distressed; we are perplexed, but not in despair; **9** Persecuted, but not forsaken; cast down, but not destroyed; **10** Always bearing about in the body the dying of the Lord Jesus, that the life also of Jesus might be made manifest in our body. **11** For we which live are always delivered unto death for Jesus' sake, that the life also of Jesus might be made manifest in our mortal flesh. **12** So then death worketh in us, but life in you.

Certain Corinthians made observations about Paul. What do these remarks tell us about the source?

II Cor. 10:10 For his letters, say they, are weighty and powerful; but his bodily presence is weak, and his speech contemptible. Was Paul respected by the brethren he referenced in II Corinthians 10? If not, explain why not. What would hurt me the most, my enemies despising me or my brethren despising me?

II Cor. 11:5 For I suppose I was not a whit behind the very chiefest apostles. **6** But though I be rude in speech, yet not in knowledge; but we have been thoroughly made manifest among you in all things. **7** Have I committed an offence in abasing myself that ye might be exalted, because I have preached to you the gospel of God freely? **8** I robbed other churches, taking wages of them, to do you service. **9** And when I was present with you, and wanted, I was chargeable to no man: for that which was lacking to me the brethren which came from Macedonia supplied: and in all things I have kept myself from being burdensome unto you, and so will I keep myself. Why did the Macedonian brethren support Paul, yet the Corinthians didn't? Were the Corinthians poor?

II Cor. 12:14 Behold, the third time I am ready to come to you; and I will not be burdensome to you: for I seek not yours, but you: for the children ought not to lay up for the parents, but the parents for the children. **15** And I will very gladly spend and be spent for you; though the more abundantly I love you, the less I be loved.

What examples demonstrate the Corinthians lack of love? Explain how I Corinthians 12:14 defines many issues discussed in both epistles to Corinth.

Paul's Sufferings

Whipped - 39 lashes:	5x
Beaten with rods:	3x
Stoning:	1x
Shipwrecked:	3x
Lost at Sea:	1x

Discuss Paul's suffering with reference to "love bearing all things."

II Corinthians 11:23 Are they ministers of Christ? (I speak as a fool) I am more; in labours more abundant, in stripes above measure, in prisons more frequent, in deaths oft. **24** Of the Jews five times received I forty stripes save one. **25** Thrice was I beaten with rods, once was I stoned, thrice I suffered shipwreck, a night and a day I have been in the deep; **26** In journeyings often, in perils of waters, in perils of robbers, in perils by mine own countrymen, in perils by the heathen, in perils in the city, in perils in the wilderness, in perils in the sea, in perils among false brethren; **27** In weariness and painfulness, in

watchings often, in hunger and thirst, in fastings often, in cold and nakedness. **28** Beside those things that are without, that which cometh upon me daily, the care of all the churches. **29** Who is weak, and I am not weak? who is offended, and I burn not? **30** If I must needs glory, I will glory of the things which concern mine infirmities. **31** The God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, which is blessed for evermore, knoweth that I lie not. **32** In Damascus the governor under Aretas the king kept the city of the Damascenes with a garrison, desirous to apprehend me: **33** And through a window in a basket was I let down by the wall, and escaped his hands.

II Timothy 3:12 Yea, and all that will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution.

Why did Paul “boast” about his suffering?

What lessons can we learn from Paul’s suffering?

Am I prepared to suffer as a Christian? Am I willing to suffer disapproval or be mocked, and endure it without reprisal?

What tells me most about Paul’s love for his brethren?

Love and Affection

Colossians 3:2 Set your affection on things above, not on things on the earth.

A study on love compels me to ask questions of myself: “Do I love the same things God loves? Do I love some things I shouldn’t? Is my love adequate?”

Consider “tests” to demonstrate what I love most. How do I spend most of my time? What occupies my thoughts? How much time do I spend in prayer and observance of God’s word? What are my priorities?

Even when occupied with secular duties, is God in all my thoughts? Is my conscience just as active outside of the assembly?

Love involves sacrifice. The love of God includes great effort, struggle and patience. What does the carnal mind love? - Fun, Leisure, Entertainment, Money, Power, Possessions? The carnal mind hopes for worldly comfort and possessions ahead of spiritual goals.

Describe the “end game” of the carnal mind. Example: “He who dies with the most toys wins.”

In the end, what comfort does the worldly mind hope for? Would it be a nice “nest egg,” or a life of travel and entertainment? What is the world working so hard to achieve? What is the reward?

The rich man went away sorry because his possessions were great. What did he love? What did Ananias and Sapphira love?

Provide an exegesis: The rich man’s wealth is his strong city. (How long can it last?) Proverbs 10:15

James and John hoped for position. How did Jesus help them adjust their understanding of “being the greatest?”

Why is God’s “greatness” (definition) opposite to man’s greatness? Mk. 10:35-45

“You will never wash my feet.” John 13:8 In Peter’s mind, why was it unthinkable for Jesus to wash his feet?

How could Jesus' will be opposite to Peter's will, even though Peter was one of his closest disciples? Did Peter not understand the one he followed?

Man's thoughts are so often opposed (directly opposite to) God's thoughts. Isaiah 55:7-9 Why?

Consider scriptures:

Many that are first shall be last. Mt. 19:30

He that is least among you the same shall be great. Lk 9:48

He that saves his life will lose it Lk. 17:33

He that lives by the sword will die by the sword. Mt. 26:52

Let your laughter be turned to mourning. Ja. 4:9

If you were blind you should have no sin. Jn. 9:41

A man must become as a child. Mt. 18:3

If any man think he knows anything, he knows nothing yet as he ought to know. I Cor. 8:2

You say you are rich and do not know you are wretched, miserable, poor, blind and naked. Rev. 3:17

Consider different explanations for why man's thoughts are so different than God's.

I Corinthians 13 addresses love. Who was Paul writing to? Did the Corinthian church have a good understanding? Some are described as "puffed up," "drunken," and "divided." Before receiving the letter, did they understand their condition the same way it was described by Paul? How can I be more honest and realistic about the way God sees me?

In Revelations 3 and 4, five churches were in serious trouble with the one they would appear to serve. Did they know the trouble they were in? How can followers of Christ be so mistaken about their devotion when they have the truth in their own hands? Even true Christians can be sorely in error, yet not realizing their condition. How can this occur with individuals who live for truth?

Love and the Law

Jesus taught the "first" and "second" commandments. What are they? What is common to both commandments?

Mark 12:30 And thou shalt **love** the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind, and with all thy strength: this [is] the first **commandment**.

Mark 12:31 And the second [is] like, [namely] this, Thou shalt **love** thy neighbour as thyself. There is none other **commandment** greater than these.

Joshua 22:5 But take diligent heed to do the commandment and the **law**, which Moses the servant of the LORD charged you, to **love** the LORD your God, and to walk in all his ways, and to keep his commandments, and to cleave unto him, and to serve him with all your heart and with all your soul. When man is commanded to love God, is this primarily to *feel* a certain way or *behave* a certain way? In scripture, love is often in the same context with "keeping commandments." Why? Where law is concerned, why is love so important? Can we not have laws without love? Are there some laws we dislike?

All laws have some inherent authority. Many different authorities exist in the world. Describe the term, "authority" and how it affects our lives. What are some effects when authority is not recognized?

According to Judges 21:25, every man did that which was right in his own eyes. What does this imply about authority? Does this passage relate to existing conditions?

I Samuel 13:14 David was "a man after God's own heart." Why would David be described this way?

What was different between David and his predecessor? During his reign, what was Saul's greatest concern?

Virtually every verse in Psalms 119 references the law of God. In the verses below, how does David describe his relationship to God's law?

Psalms 119:97 O how **love** I thy **law**! it *is* my meditation all the day.

Psalms 119:113 I hate [vain] thoughts: but thy **law** do I **love**

Psalms 119:163 I hate and abhor lying: [but] thy **law** do I **love**.

Psalms 119:165 Great peace have they which **love** thy **law**: and nothing shall offend them.

Rules can be strict and confining. How can we love a "law?" Is this a forced love?

There is much debate over God's law. Is New Testament law difficult to understand, or do men typically have difficulty when they refuse to set aside personal opinions?

The U.S. Congress makes laws. The Supreme Court decides whether laws are "constitutional." The court routinely overturns laws. Consider the difficulty of lawmakers not legislating what is lawful.

Over centuries, many religions developed diverse traditions and rules. Why are men prone to contradict established laws? Who possesses authority to change the law of God?

In a household with multiple children, what happens if there are conflicting rules for each of the children?
Romans 13: 8 Owe no man any thing, but to **love** one another: for he that loveth another hath fulfilled the **law**.

How can we fulfill the law by loving another? When someone truly loves God, how will they treat others?

Romans 13:10 Love worketh no ill to his neighbour: therefore **love** is the fulfilling of the **law**.

Galatians 5:14 For all the **law** is fulfilled in one word, even in this; Thou shalt **love** thy neighbour as thyself.

James 2:8 If ye fulfil the royal **law** according to the scripture, Thou shalt **love** thy neighbour as thyself, ye do well

John 13:34 A new **commandment** I give unto you, That ye **love** one another; as I have loved you, that ye also **love** one another.

John 14:31 But that the world may know that I **love** the Father; and as the Father gave me **commandment**, even so I do. Arise, let us go hence.

Romans 13:9 For this, Thou shalt not commit adultery, Thou shalt not kill, Thou shalt not steal, Thou shalt not bear false witness, Thou shalt not covet; and if there be any other **commandment**, it is briefly comprehended in this saying, namely, Thou shalt **love** thy neighbour as thyself.

Describe how abstinence from sin equals loving my neighbor, and thus, loving God's law.

I John 3:23 And this is his commandment. That we should believe on the name of his son Jesus Christ, and love one another, as he gave us commandment

I John 4:21 And this commandment have we from him. That he who loveth God love his brother also.

II John 1:5 And now I beseech thee, lady, not as though I wrote a new **commandment** unto thee, but that which we had from the beginning, that we **love** one another.

II John 1:6 And this is **love**, that we walk after his commandments. This is the **commandment**, That, as ye have heard from the beginning, ye should walk in it.

John defines love as walking after God's commandments. How can the definition of love be fully described in all aspects?

Love and Teaching

Nehemiah 8:8 So they read in the book in the law of God distinctly, and gave the sense, and caused them to understand the reading. Describe how the priests did more than simply read the law.

Matthew 5:19 ...whosoever will do and teach [commandments] shall be called great in the kingdom of heaven.

Matthew 28:19 Go ye therefore and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit: teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world.

Jesus spoke to his disciples in Matthew 28. Who would take out the gospel after they died?

I Corinthians 12:31 But covet earnestly the best gifts: and yet show I unto you a more excellent way.

Coveting is prohibited. As an exception, when is coveting authorized?

What is the "more excellent way?" What are the best gifts? Why was prophesying more profitable than speaking in an unknown tongue? I Cor. 14:1-5

In Corinth, Christians practiced their gifts out of order. How did disorderly speaking benefit others? What was the purpose for speaking, if it did not profit others? What should be the main goals in teaching others?

Prophecy is often associated with forecasting future events. Paul writes about a different purpose for prophesying. What is this purpose and why does Paul promote it? I Cor. 14:4, 24-25, 31

Why was prophesying a better form of teaching than "speaking in tongues?"

Hebrews 5:12 For when for the time ye ought to be teachers, ye have need that one teach you again which be the first principles of the oracles of God; and are become such as have need of milk, and not of strong meat. For every one that useth milk is unskillful in the word of righteousness: for he is a babe. But strong meat belongeth to them that are of full age, even those who by reason of use have their senses exercised to discern both good and evil.

Why were the Hebrews told, "ye ought to be teachers?"

II Timothy 2:2 And the things that thou hast heard of me among many faithful witnesses, the same commit thou to faithful men, who shall be able to teach others also.

How can a "faithful man" be described? What makes him faithful?

I Corinthians 4:17 For this cause have I sent unto you Timothy, who is my beloved son, and faithful in the Lord, who shall bring you into remembrance of my ways which be in Christ, as I teach everywhere in every church.

Titus 2:3 The aged women likewise, that they be in behavior as becometh holiness, not false accusers, not

given to much wine, teachers of good things, that they may teach the young women to be sober, to love their husbands, to love their children...

What is the basic model for bringing the gospel to others?

II Timothy 2:24 And the servant of the Lord must not strive, but be gentle unto all men, apt to teach, patient, in meekness instructing those that oppose themselves, if God peradventure will give them repentance to the acknowledging of the truth.

Why is it important for teachers to teach with meekness and patience?

Acts 20:20 And how I kept back nothing that was profitable unto you, but have showed you, and taught you publicly, and from house to house, testifying both to the Jews and also to the Greeks, repentance towards God and faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ.

Love and Grace

When someone wins a prize, are they required to accept it? Is refusal an option? Are there often conditions to claiming a prize? Ex: proof of purchase, providing identification/proving age, eligibility, citizenship, etc.

Which is not needed for salvation? a.) Grace b.) Love c.) Hope d.) Faith e.) Works

How do works make faith perfect? James 2:22 Without works, is faith incomplete?

Why are works needed if a believer is saved by grace, and not by works?

James 2:19 ...the devils also believe, and tremble

Who are the devils? Why do they believe in one God? If they believe, why are they not saved?

If someone asks, "How were you saved?" - Do I include "grace" in my answer?

Grace and baptism: My work or God's work? Who did the majority of the work?

God loved all mankind so much, he gave us the best of all that he had to give. He gave us his Son, Jesus Christ, to purchase us with his own blood. While we were yet sinners, he loved us. By his grace, he saved us from death and eternal damnation. We were not forgiven by any works of our own. If we choose to accept God's gift, he provided a plan: we are buried with him by baptism into death. In baptism, God forgives sin. This **forgiveness** is not my work, but God's work. I do not baptize myself. This service is provided for me. When am baptized, I receive forgiveness (God's work, God's grace). My work is believing. John 6:29 This is the work of God, that ye believe on him whom he hath sent. Upon my belief I confess Jesus Christ and obey him in baptism.

Unbelievers may dismiss baptism saying, "Works don't save you." This dismisses **God's work** of forgiveness, which is his grace. When we are challenged with "works don't save you," this begs the question, "Is baptism God's work?" Baptism is a work ordained, commanded and performed by God, along with our faith and cooperation. We do not have to accept God's work. When we do not accept God's work, indeed, his work will not save us. When we do not accept God's work, we do not accept his Son, Jesus Christ. Luke 6:46 Why call ye me Lord, Lord, and do not the things which I say?

Faith and obedience are essential in getting to the waters of baptism. However, God saves us by his grace. The sinner who approaches the water of baptism is saved when God provides forgiveness through the blood of Christ.

Matthew 9:2-6 Son, be of good cheer; thy sins be forgiven thee.

Luke 7:36-50 Thy sins are forgiven.

John 8:3-12 Neither do I condemn thee: go and sin no more.

What if I am unwilling to forgive others? Matthew 6:14-15 Mark 11:25-26

John 1:17 For the law was given my Moses, but grace and truth came by Jesus Christ

Romans 3:20-28 Justified freely by his grace through the redemption that is in Jesus Christ

Romans 4:1-8 Is the reward reckoned of grace or debt?

Romans 5:6-9 being now justified by his blood, we shall be saved from wrath through him

Romans 6:1-15 Shall we continue in sin that grace may abound? Why is grace not a "license to sin?"

Ephesians 1:6-7 In whom we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of his grace.

Ephesians 2:4-9 For by grace are you saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God: not of works, lest any man should boast.

Galatians 2:16-3:5 ...having begun in the Spirit are ye now made perfect by the flesh?

Titus 3:4-8 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 Spirit

I John 2:12 I write unto you little children because your sins are forgiven for his name's sake.

Mark 7:6 Well hath Esaias prophesied of you hypocrites, as it is written, This people honoreth me with their lips, but their heart is far from me. Howbeit in vain do they worship me, teaching for doctrines the commandments of men. For laying aside the commandment of God, ye hold the tradition of men, as the washing of pots and cups: and many other such like things ye do. And he said unto them, Full well ye reject the commandment of God that ye may keep your own tradition.

Matt 23:13 Woe unto you scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites: for ye shut up the kingdom of heaven against men: for ye neither go in yourselves, neither suffer ye them that are entering to go in.

Matt 11:28 Come unto me all ye that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you and learn of me, for I am meek and lowly in heart: and ye shall find rest unto your souls. For my yoke is easy and my burden is light.

I John 5:3 For this is the love of God, that we keep his commandments: and his commandments are not grievous.

For whatsoever is born of God overcometh the world: and this is the victory that overcometh the world, even our faith. Who is he that overcometh the world, but he that believeth that Jesus is the son of God?

What happens when Christians emphasize works over grace?

What archaic Bible language was required of early Christians?

Could "the King's English" be required, based on its accuracy?

Dress code requirements, the color of nail polish, required location of a zipper, swim suits prohibited

Requirement against straddling an infant or toddler / prohibition of sitting on feet

Confessions regarding traffic violations, tardiness, listening to music

Requirement to “re-pray” for forgiveness (by proxy) after a public confession is spoken

“Appearances of evil”

The “holy kiss” and handshake requirements

Sports / extracurricular activities prohibition

Work prohibition for married women

Required class schedule, “personal work,” monthly meetings, holiday meetings

Emphasis on corporal punishment (to include children in the care of babysitters)

Increasing Love

Should my Christianity reach a plateau and stay steady, or should it increase? How can it increase?

Matt 25:14-30 ...Then he which had received the one talent came and said, Lord, I knew thee that thou art an hard man, reaping where thou hast not sown, and gathering where thou hast not strawed: And I was afraid, and went and hid thy talent in the earth: lo, there thou hast that is thine. His lord answered and said unto him, Thou wicked and slothful servant, thou knewest that I reap where I sowed not, and gather where I have not strawed: Thou oughtest therefore to have put my money to the exchangers, and then at my coming I should have received mine own with usury. Take therefore the talent from him, and give it unto him which hath ten talents. For unto every one that hath shall be given, and he shall have abundance: but from him that hath not shall be taken away even that which he hath. And cast ye the unprofitable servant into outer darkness: there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth.

Was Jesus concerned with how much money people earned? Is the parable of the talents about earning more, or is it more likely about increasing spiritually? Why was the unprofitable servant punished? What did he do wrong?

Eph. 4:16 From whom the whole body fitly joined together and compacted by that which every joint supplieth, according to the effectual working in the measure of every part, maketh **increase** of the body unto the edifying of itself in love.

In Ephesians 4:16, does the scripture refer to increasing in numbers or increasing in love?

Love Abounds

I Thes 3:12-13 And the Lord make you to increase and **abound** in love one toward another, and toward all men, even as we do toward you: To the end he may stablish your hearts unblameable in holiness before God, even our Father, at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ with all his saints.

How do we increase in love toward another? What might we do differently? Consider different examples.

I Thes 4:1 Furthermore then we beseech you, brethren, and exhort you by the Lord Jesus, that as ye have received of us how ye ought to walk and to please God, so ye would **abound** more and more.

Abound Definition: Exist in large numbers or amounts. Have in large numbers or amounts

What does Paul mean by “abound?”

Thes 4:9-10 But as touching brotherly love ye need not that I write unto you: for ye yourselves are taught of God to love one another. And indeed ye do it toward all the brethren which are in all Macedonia: but we beseech you, brethren, that ye **increase** more and more.

Col. 2:19 ... the head, from which all the body by joints and bands having nourishment ministered, and knit together, **increaseth** with the **increase** of God.

II Thes 1:3-5 We are bound to thank God always for you, brethren, as it is meet, because that your faith groweth exceedingly, and the charity of every one of you all toward each other aboundeth; So that we ourselves glory in you in the churches of God for your patience and faith in all your persecutions and tribulations that ye endure: Which is a manifest token of the righteous judgment of God, that ye may be counted worthy of the kingdom of God, for which ye also suffer...

Peter 2:1 As newborn babes, desire the sincere milk of the word, that ye may **grow** thereby:

II Peter 3:1 But **grow** in grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.

What does it mean to “grow in grace?”

Love Never Fails

Never give up on those we love: A prophet who would not give up on his people: Exodus 32:7-11

Moses was offered a great nation from his own descendants. Why didn't he accept the offer?

Moses got frustrated at the waters of Meribah. When we get frustrated, does that mean we should give up?

A woman who gave away her last meal: I Kings 17:10-16

Elijah asked her for the meal. Did she have to provide it or was it her choice?

A woman who would not give up trying to save her son: II Kings 4:13-36

The child was already dead. Why did his mother pursue Elisha?

A man who would not give up trying to win the woman he loved: Genesis 29

How many times did Laban change Jacob's wages? Gen. 31:4-7

How long did Jacob work for Rachel? How long did Jacob serve Laban? Gen. 31:41

What does Jacob's service say about his love for Rachel and Leah?

A prophet who would not give up on a congregation: II Cor. 12:11-15

Paul wrote to the Corinthians, often reproving them for errors, even as some of them criticized Paul. Among the Corinthians, there were divisions. Explain this passage: "Are ye not carnal, and walk as men?"

The apostle endured much suffering. How did the church at Corinth add to Paul's many sufferings?

Describe the lengths Paul would go to, in order to bring others to Christ: I Corinthians 9:20-23

What did some of the brethren say about Paul: II Cor 10:10 Did they esteem him?

In the following passage, describe Paul's great love and concern for the church at Corinth: II Cor. 2:1-10

A savior who would not give up on his disciple: Matt 26:33-35

Jesus forgave Peter for denying him. Peter had other failures, including one occasion where Jesus said to him, "Get thee behind me Satan, for thou savourest not the things that be of God, but those that be of men." Mt. 16:23

When Peter was characterized as working through Satan, satisfied by the things of men (not God), does he seem like a good candidate for leading others to Christ?

Luke 22:31-32 What does this passage say about Peter's relationship with Jesus? Consider Matt. 18:21-22.

In Acts 4:13, Peter and John were truthfully described as unlearned and ignorant men. Peter was a fisherman, probably lacking formal education. Why would Jesus choose an uneducated, carnal, headstrong man who savored things of men? When we see faults in others, do we also see their great potential?