



# **EQUIP**

*Why Theology Matters*

## Why Theology Matters

### 1. Theology of Superman

#### 2. It's God's World – Gen 1-3

Created by God's Word (Gen 1-3)

It is good. it has order and purpose.

It is a world where man is a special creation. Man has a special vocation.

It is a world corrupted by sin

It is a world that has hope due to the promise and provision of God

This is God's world. Everything we have comes from him and by his design.

#### 2.1. Understanding God's World

To live in this world without knowing the God who owns it and runs it is a sentence to a life of frustration and confusion.

*"The world becomes a strange, mad, painful place, and life a disappointing and unpleasant business, for those who do not know about God. Disregard the study of God, and you sentence yourself to stumble and blunder through life blindfolded, as it were, with no sense of direction and no understanding of what surrounds you."<sup>1</sup>*

### 3. There is no more enjoyable task

Matt 13.44; Psalm 34.8-10

### 4. Everyone is a Theologian

#### 4.1. Common as Breathing

Inhale events, process them, exhale actions

*"People have presuppositions, and they will live more consistently on the basis of these presuppositions than even they themselves may realize. By presuppositions we mean the basic way an individual looks at life, his basic worldview, the grid through which he sees the world. Presuppositions rest upon that which a person considers to be the truth of what exists. People's presuppositions lay a grid for all they bring forth into the external world. Their presuppositions also provide the basis for their values and therefore the basis for their decisions."<sup>2</sup>*

BLINK Illustration – why taller people are more likely to get hired than shorter people. blondes than brunettes.

I actually believe there is no more important task you can engage in than theological study because it immerses us in knowledge of our creator. As A.W. Tozer says *"because we are the handiwork of God, it follows that all our problems and their solutions are theological."*<sup>3</sup> We are God-designed beings. Looking anywhere else but God to understand the way the world works would be absurd.

<sup>1</sup> J.I. Packer, *Knowing God* (IVP Downers Grove, IL 1973) 19.

<sup>2</sup> Francis Schaeffer, *How Should we Then Live?* L'abri 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary edition (Crossway Wheaton, IL 2005) 19.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid, 27.

\*Illustration: When I changed the coupling on my washing machine in our house. I consulted 3 places: My owners manual, the manufacturer's site, and a website where people had done the same repair I was trying to do. Because if anybody knew how the thing was supposed to work, it was the maker of it.

Same thing comes to how you process your entire life. Why would you look to anyone other than the designer & those who've come to understand the design?

#### 4.2. Bottom line

The big questions in life are being answered all of the time. There are many, many different ways of thinking today. Naturalism, Oprahism, consumerism, sensualism, prosperity gospel, syncretism, panentheism. All of these and more attempt to offer an understanding of the world around us. Why are things the way they are? and how I live is completely based on what I believe about that. This is a worldview. The lens through which we interpret the world & make decisions about it.

**In theology we find the answer to WHY the world is the way it is & how to live in response to it.**

My hope is to wed those two together tonight. In a world in which people's lives are filled with crying needs, why teach doctrine? Because doctrine has the answer to those needs. We all need to learn how to deal with worry in our lives. One of the keys to dealing with worry is an understanding of the doctrine of the hope of heaven. Couples do need to know what the bible says about how to have a better marriage. They also need a deeper understanding of the doctrine of God as Father where the assurance of God's love for us is set as the foundation upon which all healthy relationships are built. Parents need to know the bible's practical insights for raising their kids. They also need to understand the sovereignty of God, a certainty of the fact that God is in control that will carry them through the inevitable ups and downs of being a parent.

"A right conception of God is basic not only to systematic theology but to practical Christian living as well. It is to worship what the foundation is to the temple; where it is inadequate or out of plumb the whole structure must sooner or later collapse. I believe there is scarcely an error in doctrine or a failure in applying Christian ethics that cannot be traced finally to imperfect and ignoble thoughts about God."<sup>4</sup>

#### 4.3. 2 Caveats

Tonight we are going to dig into theology. Well, in all honest we are just going to scratch the surface. I hope we create intrigue that will spur you deeper into your own theology. Two words of caution before we go any further that J.I. Packer gives in the opening of his acclaimed book *Knowing God*:

One can know a great deal about God without knowing him

One can know a great deal about godliness without knowing him.

Our quest is to know our God. Believing that if we actually gain knowledge of Him, it will drive us to live for Him. So let's begin our walk towards the deeper end of the pool.

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<sup>4</sup> A.W. Tozer, *Knowledge of the Holy* (Harper Collins NY, NY 1961) 2.

# GOD

## PSALM 19

### A. Revelation

*“He is there, and He is not silent.” - Francis Schaeffer*

We can see God revealed through what Francis Bacon called “His Two Books”: the Book of Nature (**General Revelation**) and the Scriptures (**Special Revelation**).

#### 1. General Revelation

*“... for the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who suppress the truth in unrighteousness; because what may be known of God is manifest in [the heavens], because God has shown it to [us]. For since the creation of the world, His invisible attributes are clearly seen, being understood from the things that are made, even His eternal power and Godhead . . .” - Romans 1*

God is the creator of all, and he has left his “fingerprint” on the things that he has created. We can examine the things that he has made, and where we use our capacity for reasoning (rationalism) and scientific investigation (empiricism) correctly, we can discover deductively and inductively some things about God. Theologians have often disagreed in the details about just what can be known about God through “general” revelation, but here are some frequent candidates:

What can be known from **General Revelation**?

- That God **exists**.
  - Helen Keller: Miss Sullivan, in a most dedicated ministry of love, reached through the darkness and silence to the soul of that dear girl and brought her into the knowledge of man and the earth and all that man knows. Thus, Helen Keller became one of the greatest women of modern times. She recorded that there came a time when Miss Sullivan, being a very godly woman and a wonderful Christian, wanted to impart to her some truth about God. So Miss Sullivan went to Dr. Philip Brooks and asked him to come and tell Miss Keller about God. As Dr. Brooks sat there, he talked to Miss Sullivan, and she translated the words to Helen Keller through the finger pressures that she used for communication. As she got across the idea about God, suddenly a light broke out on Miss Keller's face, and she answered back in her way, "Oh, I know Him. I've known Him a long, long time. (I just didn't know what to call Him." I think this is a wonderful confirmation that -- even in the heart of someone who has no eyes to see, nor ears to hear -- there is a written revelation of God in the human heart. And, if we but listen to this revelation, there is much knowledge about God that we can know.  
<http://www.raystedman.org/romans1/0006.html>
- That God is all **powerful** and **eternal**
- That God is **the judge**
  - We are given a conscience. The animals do not have that conscience. A lion never feels bad for eating someone.
  - That conscience tells us that there is a God. It's like when you go to Sam's club and you are always being told to “keep your receipt.” That is a strong indication that someone will soon ask you for that receipt.

God is not only creator, but he has also acted in history, therefore history does, in some limited way, tells us something about God and his nature. When we investigate historical events: e.g. Israel in Egypt, the life of King David, the empty tomb of Jesus, the founding of the Church, we have an open line of inquiry to investigate the nature and ways of God.

Most theologians and philosophers agree, however, that there are some truths about God that cannot be known through the study of nature and history because:

Our perception is **flawed**, because of a heart of sin.

- Romans says that our hearts do not see clearly<sup>5</sup>

Our perception and knowledge of history is **incomplete**.

- We need an interpreter! History never reveals **truth**; it only reveals **fact**. We need a word from God to properly interpret the meaning of those facts before we know the truth of them. We can know that Jesus, an innocent Jewish man, was crucified by the Romans (fact), but God must tell us that that was his son, dying for the sins of the world (truth). This leads to...

## 2. **Special Revelation**

*The Bible is God's official interpreter of life and history.*

**Special** revelation" is required to know God **fully, authoritatively, and correctly**.

### a. **Jesus Christ, the Revelation of God.**

Jesus is called the "Word of God." (**John 1:1**). There is no distinction between hearing/seeing Jesus and hearing/seeing God.

**Illus.** To hear my words is to hear me! there is no distinction.

But how do we know what to believe about Jesus...

### b. **The Bible, the Revelation of God.**

The Bible is also called "the Word of God." It is the most inclusive and complete revelation of God to man. It is through the Bible that we see God's moral will revealed, and the Bible is the only **inspired** (by God) and **authoritative** source for knowing about Jesus and the Gospel for those of us who did not see him for ourselves.

c. God is...

## **B. How the Bible "sees" itself**

How the Bible "sees itself":

**2 Timothy 3:14-17:** *But as for you, continue in what you have learned and have firmly believed, knowing from whom you learned it <sup>15</sup> and how from childhood you have been acquainted with the sacred writings, which are able*

<sup>5</sup> Postmodern philosophy: William James, the "will to believe"; Blaise Pascal, "the heart has its reasons of which reason knows nothing."

to make you wise for salvation through faith in Christ Jesus. <sup>16</sup> All Scripture is breathed out by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness, <sup>17</sup> that the man of God may be competent, equipped for every good work.

- The **nature** of the Bible:
  - **Theopneustos: “God breathed.”**
  - **Pasa Graphe** (pasa= all; graphe=the writings)
    - a lot of people are like, ‘how’? ‘Carried along’) Can’t Peter have made mistakes? Yes. But God cannot.
    - The Bible is like Jesus, the other word of God—it is 100% of man and 100% of God. Men can make mistakes, God cannot.

## C. What the Bible Tells us about God

### 1. God is Transcendent: The incommunicable character of God

- Traits that emphasize his transcendence, are **unique** to him, and are not characteristics of his **creation**
- **Aseity**  
Scripture: Ps. 115:3; John 5:26; Dan 4:35  
God is not **dependent** upon anything but himself for His being. He is independent and self-existent. While He is independent of everything, everything in creation is dependent upon Him.
- **Immutable-**  
Scripture: Ex. 3:14; James 1:17; Is. 48:12; Mal. 3:6  
He is **unchangeable**. Since he only depends upon His own being, there can be nothing that changes Him.
- **Infinite**
  - In Time: Eternal. God has existed forever before a temporal creation and will exist forever in the future. Scripture: Ps. 90:2; Eph. 3:21; Ps. 102:26
  - In Space: Omnipresence. God is spiritually present in all places in His fullness and power. Scripture: Acts 17:24-28; Jeremiah 23:23-24
  - In Power: Omnipotence. Otherwise known as almightiness, omnipotence refers to the ability God has to literally do everything that in His rational and moral perfection He wills to do. Scripture: Ps. 18:1-2; Ps. 46:1
  - In Knowledge: Omniscience (*knowing everything*). This doctrine refers to God having complete knowledge of everything about everything and everybody all the time. His knowledge is complete in the future, present, and past. His knowledge is linked to his plan. Scripture: Job 24:23; 1 Sam. 16:7; Eph. 1:11

### 2. God is Immanent: The communicable character of God

Traits that emphasize God’s immanence with his creation in that His creation can **share** the traits

- **Knowledge:** God is perfect in His knowledge and in His revelation. God has given man the ability to have knowledge of Him through His revelation. Deut. 7:9; Phil. 3:8-11; 2 Cor. 4:6
- **Wisdom:** God is perfect in His wisdom in that He chooses the best and noblest end at which to aim. His eternal decree and in His command He is perfectly wise. According to scripture to “fear God” is the root of all wisdom. For man to be wise, He must know the truth and wisdom of the

ultimate source of truth and wisdom. Scripture: Proverbs 1:7; 1Corinthians 1:18-2:16

- **Love:** God is love is most commonly used in reference to the revelation of Jesus Christ and His life and work. This aspect of God is usually cataloged under God's *Goodness*. It is through His sovereign plan and execution of salvation for sinners that scripture calls God's love *Goodness* (Ps. 100:5). Further, God is faithful to His purposes, promises, and people. This also displays God's love and Goodness to mankind. Because He first loved us, man is capable of true love. Scripture: 1 John 4:8; John 3:16; Joshua 23:14-15

### 3. God as Trinity

Three Essential Truths

1. There is Only One True God. Deuteronomy 6.4

2. The Father, the Son, and Spirit are equally declared throughout scripture to be God. Matt. 28:19

3. Though one God, The Father, Son, and Spirit are distinct persons. Jesus is not the same person as the Father and the Spirit. John 3:17; Luke 3:22

## MAN

### 1. God Created man in His image

Scripture: Genesis 1:27; Genesis 2:7

Because Man is made in his image, he has inherent value.

God breathed life into mankind making man with an intimacy that was unique in all of creation. God made man in His image, which constituted the ability for man to be in relationship. The image of God was not a physical image since the Spirit of God is not a physical body.

### 2. Man's Relationship to the Universe.

Scripture: Gen 2.15

Man is a co-regent and developer.

- **Regent:** We are made in the Image of God and to have rule or dominion over the world (Psalm 8:6; Heb 2:8).
- **Developer:** Creation is good, but not perfect. Perfect would mean complete. We are co-creators, more like a "broker" than a "security guard." (a security guard only watches your money, giving it back to you exactly as you gave it to him. A broker is supposed to take the "raw materials" of your money and make more money with it.) As brokers on the earth, we are to develop the creation. Thus, there is no division between sacred and secular—artists and architects are taking the raw materials of the earth and making something out of it—something to God's glory and the benefit of human.

"Work & Keep" which Hebrew scholars tell us the same word we have for "worship & obey" is in that "work & keep" phrasing. Worship has been man's purpose from the beginning. Some break that down to say Man was to act as Prophet, Priest, and King. The Prophet was to interpret the world through the lens

of God. The Priest was to dedicate the world to God. And as king, he was to rule over the world for God. The key thing, is that man had a purpose. He was never without purpose. "Worship & Obey." Making Doctrine Personal: Work was pre-fall. You are created to work & your work is worship.

## The Fall

Scripture: Genesis 3; Romans 3.19-20; 1 Cor. 15.22

God made the first man as representative for all mankind. Likewise, He makes Christ representative for all that are in Him. God put the first man in a state of happiness and promised to keep Him in such a state if man obeyed Him. Adam, led by Eve, who was herself led by the serpent, defied God by eating of the forbidden fruit. The result of such disobedience gave them first an anti-God mindset and second gave both a sense of shame and guilt. They were then cursed with pain and death, and were expelled from the garden. Therefore, as his descendants, we are born with a sin nature & the desire to follow self, not God.

### 1. The NATURE of sin:

- Sin is two things: **rule-breaking** and **rule-making**. Sin is the great "I" problem. I do what I want to do because I want to do it, and ultimately I am the point and in charge, not God.
- Often seen as an action. **Sin is not primarily an action, but an attitude of rejection.**

### 2. The ANATOMY of a sin (Gen 3:1-10):

#### (a) Unbelief:

- Satan's first question: Has God *indeed* said? ("Really?") He asks with a sneer implying, "Isn't God unreasonable?" Satan is not trying to convince you that there is no God... He tries to convince you that God is not good.
- Eric Erickson *Childhood and Society*: The main thing a little kid needs is not to be dropped. He needs to be able to trust the big dominant power figures in his life. If he doesn't learn to trust, it's the taproot of any number of psychological problems in the future. Our spiritual problems all begin because we don't really believe God—that He is good, that He is sufficient for us, and that His ways are best.
- Martin Luther, "*Every sin begins with an evil heart of unbelief.*"
- V. 6, She saw that it was "good..." up until this moment God is the one who determines what is good. But because God can't be trusted, I'll have to make the rules. She says, "I'll choose what is good. I'll make my own rules. I'll decide what is good." And then she acted...

(b) Idolatry: we choose something in place of God that we think will make us happier. It becomes our "functional god."

- Paul makes the case in Romans 1:23 that the original sin was idolatry, "They worshipped and served the creature rather than the Creator." You may ask, "How was Adam and Eve's eating of the forbidden fruit worship? I don't see them bowing down or praying to the tree..." Adam and Eve thought a certain type of knowledge would make them happier than God would. They "worshipped the tree" as an all-satisfying object rather than God as the all-satisfying object, and thus traded the "glory of the invisible God" and worshipped a tree.
- You worship whatever gives your life meaning. It is what you have to have to be happy. That thing which, if you had it, no matter what else falls apart, you'll be OK. It is what you turn to when the chips are down to tell you everything is going to be OK. It is what you dream about and are working to obtain. It is what you obsess about obtaining or worry about losing. You prize it above all other things. You give ultimate allegiance to it.
- Examples:
  - Love

- A certain lifestyle
- Certain job
- Admiration of your friends
- Your belief in yourself
- We were created with a capacity to worship. We can't turn off the drive to worship any more than we can turn off our sexual drive by remaining single. You will find something to worship. All people, religious or not, are worshippers. Idols are "functional gods." That's what the tree was for Adam and Eve: "I'd rather have this."

(c) **Rebellion**

- She acted on her unbelief and idolatry.

*Every sin will progress through these 3 stages... We always try simply to correct the behavior. But until we correct the heart of unbelief and idolatry, all changes will be superficial. The heart must learn to trust in and delight in God first. Rebellion must be surrendered. Sin requires a heart change.*

3. The **RESULT** of sin:

(a) **Ashamed of their nakedness:**

- The result of Adam and Eve's rejection of God was that they felt naked and exposed. Before they sinned, they were naked. It just didn't bother them. The early church fathers said the reason was that they were clothed in the love of God—they were naked but felt loved and accepted by the One who really mattered. So, what did Adam and Eve do when they were stripped of that assurance, that sense of acceptance and importance? They covered themselves with fig leaves. We have a deep sense that we are not lovable the way we are and so we feel like we must "cover" ourselves by working to please people or God.
- No better illustrated than in a book by author Franz Kafka's *The Trial*: Modern man who no longer believes in sin still finds himself in a state of guilt. We have a deep profound sense that if we were examined, we wouldn't pass. You don't feel right. We have a deep sense that we are not lovable the way we are so we have to work and work and work to please people. We can never say "no" because we can't stand somebody disapproving of us or being disappointed in us, because we have no inward validation of our worthiness. We overwork and burn ourselves out so somebody will look at us and respect us, because we have to live in someone's pleasure. It was supposed to be God, now we turn toward people. Blaise Pascal, "Our hearts have a God-shaped vacuum."
  - Life is like a Survivor or Apprentice episode, in which we're trying to convince everyone we're the ones who shouldn't be thrown off the island.

(b) **Cursed:**

- With death. God said, "the day you eat of it, you will surely die." Did that actually happen? Yes, in at least 4 ways:
  - Our rule on the earth died: We fail to rule ourselves or the earth as God intended
  - Our bodies began to die
  - We died spiritually: We were put out of God's presence
  - Our relationships began to die: "*Sin is a poisonous weed that throws the whole nature out of order. The inner life disintegrates. The flesh lusts after the forbidden pleasures. The moral judgment is destroyed so that good appears evil and evil good. Time is chosen over eternity, earth over heaven, and death over life.*" A. W. Tozer
- With guilt and defilement

- **Guilt:** the law brought a penal curse. We are legally guilty and the righteous law demands a penalty.
- **Defilement:**
  - Habakkuk 1:13- *You are of purer eyes than to look upon evil, and you cannot behold injustice.*
  - Jonathan Edwards: *“The slightest sin has an infinite hatefulness in it so that the smallest sin outweighs the greatest loveliness in the creature.”*
  - Imagine a glass of milk in front of you. If I said, “That milk is only 4% urine” would you drink it?
  - Romans 3:23- *For all have sinned, and fall short of the glory of God.*

### Where the Fall leaves us

- The essence of sin is the refusal of the authority of God (I), and it severs the relationship (II), leaving us **dead, guilty, and defiled.**
- When we see the **root** of sin, we will recognize why only **radical** (at the root) salvation works. **Sin is the problem; Jesus is the answer.**
- **The Gospel begins here: 1 John 1:8** *If we say we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us. 9 If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness. 10 If we say we have not sinned, we make him a liar, and his word is not in us.*
- This is revealed back in **Genesis 3:**
  - God provides a **covering**... God would re-cover us in His love. It will be through death.
  - God promises to absorb the **curse**. *And God said to the serpent, “And I will put enmity between your seed and the woman’s seed; he shall bruise your head, and you will bruise his heel.”*
  - The tree in the Garden you see again in Jesus’ life. Jesus is struggling with going to hang on the tree. God came to the first Adam and said, “Obey me about the tree and you will live.” To the second Adam he said, “Obey me about the tree and you will be crushed and they will be saved.”
  - Because He would remove the curse, you and I would be able to **know God** again. Jesus used phrases like “eat my flesh” and “drink my blood.” I am going to restore God to you. Jesus was, and is, the tree of life.

### FOR FURTHER STUDY:

- Andy Stanley, *How Good is Good Enough?*

**Christ**

## A. Why Is It Important?

All religions claim salvation from something and to something by means of something. This is the point at which Christianity most sharply diverges from other world religions.

## B. Key Concepts

### 1. Jesus

*(These first two points are in one of the oldest Christian creeds, the Nicene Creed, and have been believed by Christians for centuries.)*

- Jesus was fully man:
  - **Hebrews 2:14–15** says that Jesus was in every way just like us, except for the fact He had no sin. Jesus lived under God’s rules, obeying them fully. He lived the life we should have lived, and then died the death we were supposed to die.
  - The full humanity of Jesus is very important. Had Jesus not been just like us, He could not have been our substitute
- Jesus was fully God:
  - **John 1:1, 14** says that Jesus, “the Word” was God Himself and that He became flesh for us.
  - The Trinity is an essential Christian doctrine. If Jesus is not God, then He could not be our Rescuer.
    - If He were not God, He couldn’t have overcome sin and death.
    - If He were not God, His death could not have satisfied infinite justice.
    - **Objection:** Why an infinite punishment for a finite sin? Because the finite sin is against an infinite God and requires an infinite punishment. So, it required the finite death of an infinite God to satisfy the infinite righteousness of God. “The righteousness He requires is the righteousness His righteousness requires Him to require.”
    - If He were not God, wouldn’t that mean that God created someone else to die for our sins? Is that fair for God to do? And wouldn’t we be more grateful to the one God created to do that than we would God Himself? God will not relinquish the right to be our Savior. **Isaiah 43:10–11**

*(For the next 3 key concepts we’ll use this verse):*

**Romans 3:24** ...and are justified by his grace as a gift, through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus, 25 whom God put forward as a propitiation by his blood, to be received by faith. This was to show God’s righteousness, because in his divine forbearance he had passed over former sins.

### 2. Propitiation: Anger Absorbed

- The question: Why can’t God just forgive us?
- **Illus. Wrecked Car:** We demand satisfaction if our car is wrecked. Our anger and loss is dealt with when you “show me the money.” It is the same with God. His justice has been violated and He is appropriately angry. When God’s holiness meets sin it looks like wrath.
- **OT sacrifices: Leviticus 1:4**  
The sacrifice was killed as the hand of the head of the family was on his head. Blood poured on the “mercy seat” (in Hebrew, “place of propitiation”) of the Ark of the Covenant between two cherubim.
- **Jesus is our substitute:**

- **Baptism:** though He had no sins to repent of, He went through a “baptism of repentance.” He was being baptized in my place.
- **Trial:** He was tried in my place: At the trial, He stood before His accusers silent, which is a clear concession of “guilt.”
- **Death:** “*He was wounded for our transgressions and bruised for our iniquities; the price that bought us peace was laid upon Him.*” **Isaiah 53:5.**
- **Resurrection:** At His resurrection, there were 2 angels seated beside the place where His body had lain (similar to at mercy seat on ark of covenant which was surrounded by two angels). Jesus is the new mercy seat!

### 3. **Redemption: Price Paid**

- One of final words from the cross, “Tetelestai: It is paid.” Found on Tax receipts in ancient Jerusalem.
- **Romans 6:23.** The “wages” of sin: The death penalty has been paid.
  - **Liberal Christianity** often says that **the cross was simply an example of love, and not that God actually demanded satisfaction for sins.** This is otherwise known as the “moral influence theory.” How would the cruel execution be an example of love if there were no benefit? How would flinging myself off a bridge show my love for my family? It would only leave my family fatherless. It only makes sense as an act of love if it **achieves something.** It is an act of love because it achieves what we need!
  - **Example:** “King V”

*An ancient king had the reputation among his countrymen as being the fairest and most loving king that had ever lived. One day he discovered that money was being stolen from his treasury. He made a decree that whoever was caught stealing from his treasury would be whipped with ten lashes. Several weeks passed by. The king declared that money was continually being stolen from his treasury, so he was upping the penalty to twenty lashes. Several more weeks passed by, with money continually be stolen. The king once again doubled the penalty to forty lashes, which was, in essence, the death penalty.*

*Two days after this final declaration the thief was caught. It was the king’s mother. What was the king to do? Some people thought that the king would punish her, but others asked, “How can the most loving king who ever lived kill his own mother?” Some thought that such a loving king would surely pardon his mother, but others declared that this would not be fair. The punishment had been declared. If the king was fair, he must give the punishment.*

*The king declared that because the law was sure the punishment had to be given. The king’s mother was tied up, the back of her shirt ripped open, and the guard raised his whip to bring down the first lash. Just before the lash was brought down across his mother’s back, the king said, “Stop.” The king walked over, took off his own shirt, and wrapped his whole body around his mother’s. He looked at the guard and said, “Now hit her.”*

*The guard objected that he could not strike the king’s mother without striking the king instead. The king said, “I am the king, and I am giving you an order. Give her the punishment.” And as the guard administered the forty lashes, the king received every one in place of his mother.*

### 4. **Justification: Righteousness Obtained**

- Not “just as if I’d never sinned.” Justification is stronger than forgiveness.
  - When you’re forgiven, the penalty has been forgotten. When you are justified, the penalty has been paid. God can’t re-bring up these sins.

- Not just forgiven, but also righteous in Christ. When I come before God, it is not just that He sees me without sin, He sees me as the righteousness of Christ. Doesn't this make stupid the idea that there's something we can do to make ourselves more available to God? What could we add?
- The Gospel is that in Christ we are more wicked than we ever imagined; and more loved and accepted by God than we ever dared hope, *both at the same time*. We are at the same time hopeless sinners and loved children.

### 5. New Life: Curse Reversed

- We are spiritually dead, with the curse of death given in the Garden of Eden still over us.
- **Galatians 3:13** *Christ redeemed us from the curse of the law by becoming a curse for us—for it is written (Deut 21:23), "Cursed is everyone who is hanged on a tree."*
- We are resurrected in Christ when we are joined to Him. **Romans 6:3–4**, *"Therefore we have been buried with Him by baptism into death, that just as Christ was raised from the dead, even so we also should walk in newness of life!"*
- The fact that Christianity is power means that when you meet Jesus, that power begins to be at work within you. Car battery... that means, the question is not, "if I died tonight?" but "if I get up tomorrow...?"

### Conclusion

- All people, whether religious or not, are looking for salvation. In God alone is salvation.
  - God alone can be our satisfaction: *"You have made us for yourself, and our hearts are restless until they find our rest in you."* -St. Augustine
  - God alone can be our righteousness: OT name of God: Jehova Tsidkidzenu—not God gives me righteousness, but He is my righteousness.
- There are two ways people try to be saved: one is spelled "D-O"; the other is spelled "D-O-N-E."

## *Our Response to Christ*

Introduction: There must be a decision, a *moment* of rebirth.

### A. Key Concepts

#### 1. **Repentance**: (very misunderstood concept).

- Not about feeling sorry: **2 Corinthians 7: 10-** *For godly grief produces a repentance (notice grief and repentance are **separate**) that leads to salvation without regret, whereas worldly grief produces death.* Ex. Of worldly grief... feeling sorry over consequences, guilty over a mistake, but having no Godward dimension of your "grief" or "guilt."
- **It is a choice.** Gr. "*Metanoia*": literally, a changing of mind, a turn around.
- Repentance is turning away from something and toward something.
- **1 Thessalonians 1:9–10**, "turned to God from idols." Repentance is the same as answering the call to "follow Jesus" (discipleship).

- This is why we say we are after disciples, not decisions, because if your walk with Christ extends only to the decision you made one night, then whatever decision you made is the wrong one! My wife waking up with me is the best proof that I'm married.
- Use the word "submit." C.S. Lewis, *"We don't come to God as bad people becoming good people, but as rebels to lay down our arms."*

## 2. Faith: (also very misunderstood word.)

### Common Misconceptions:

- Faith is **not** having a positive "feeling" toward God. Ex. "He is a person of faith" often = "He likes God"
- Faith is **not** an exclusively religious term. We show faith every day... listening to the weatherman, starting our car even though we don't understand how it runs, etc. We all have faith. The questions of faith are:
  - "Who do you obey?"
  - "What gives you confidence and hope for tomorrow?"

### What faith actually is:

- Faith is... dependence on God as our salvation
  - What makes you acceptable to God? Is it something you do, or something Christ has done for you? The first one is faith in yourself; the second one is faith in Christ.
  - Only 2 religions in the world:
    - D-O vs. D-O-N-E
    - "I am accepted, therefore I obey; I obey, therefore I am accepted."
- Faith is... a decision, not an assurance of certainty. (Imagine a Harvard Ph.D. in astrophysics and a backwoods redneck standing together on a tarmac, both staring at a plane. The redneck looks at the humongous plane, wondering how in the world the heavy metal beast could float in the air. The Harvard astrophysicist understands everything about the science of flight. But when it comes time to get on the plane, the redneck gets on because his wife tells him it's ok, and the Harvard Ph.D. does not. Who really "believes" in the plane? Belief is a *decision*, not a certainty of understanding. Your "belief" is determined not by how "certain" you are, but upon what you put your weight.)

## Conclusion

Two ways to try and approach God: "I obey, therefore I am accepted;" or "I am accepted, therefore I obey." Which best represents how you are approaching God?

People usually won't come to Jesus for one of two reasons: rebellion or pride. The rebellious are "irreligious" people who resist God's authority over their lives. The second group—the "proud"—are religious people who accept God's authority in their lives, and who are, they believe, surrendered to Him. However, they are too proud to admit that they do not deserve eternal life. They are thus too proud to humbly accept Jesus' offer to do for them what they could never do for themselves.

### FOR FURTHER STUDY

- John R. W. Stott, *The Cross of Christ*
- John R. W. Stott, *Basic Christianity*

# The Church

## A. Why Is It Important?

- The plan of God is to dispense his power and salvation through the church (**Eph 3:10**).
- Doctrine of the Church is where all of our other doctrines are brought to action
- Doctrine of the Church informs you of your role as Christian
- You come to the church regularly, you should know what you are a part of
- Right understanding of the purposes of the church will greatly impact how you operate in it.
- It is incredibly misunderstood. To promote unity here, we need to be on the same page w/ why we are here.

## B. What is the Church?

### 1. Definition

- The church is the community of all true believers for all time; those who have been loved and saved by Jesus Christ. (**Eph 5:25**). These believers include the people of God in the Old Testament (Gen 17:8; Deut 7:6; Num 16:13; Heb 2:12). Main emphasis on Hebrew words *qahal* and *edah* are the assembling of the *people of God* not the place they assembled. The people of God, after the coming of Christ, are the church established in the New Testament (1 Peter 2:9).
- Invisible yet visible – Given our definition, we recognize what Paul says in **2 Tim 2:19** that only God knows true believers. So the invisible church is the church as God sees it and the visible church as Christians see it (genuine believers).
- Universal yet local – the NT word *church* may be applied to a group of believers at any level, ranging from a very small group meeting in a private home all the way to the group of all true believers in the universal church.<sup>6</sup> While the scriptures do indicate (Acts, Eph 1:22-23, Col 1) that the church is “scattered abroad”, the clear emphasis in the NT is on the church as a local body of believers. Why is this significant? Because this truth compels every believer to be actively involved in the lives of a local group of believers. We will get into what this looks like later.

### 2. Marks of a true church

The church fathers expressed these and the reformers clarified two marks that have held throughout the history of the church.

- **The Right Preaching of the Word** – This is where some of our other doctrines come into play. For example, the church of latter day saints (Mormon church) doesn’t preach the word rightly, leaving out and/or changing critical doctrines like sin, salvation, creation, etc.
- **The Administration of the Sacraments (Baptism & Lord’s Supper)**

<sup>6</sup> Grudem, Wayne, *Bible Doctrines*. Grand Rapids, MI (Zondervan, 1999) 365.

- **Baptism:** comes from the greek word *baptizo* meaning “to plunge, dip, immerse.” We baptize by immersion based on Jesus’ example (**Mark 1:10**) and we only baptize those who profess faith in Christ. This is commonly called believers Baptism. Why do we do it this way? Because this way seems the most faithful to the practice and teaching of scripture (**Matt 28:19; Acts 2:38**). Important to recognize that baptism is a symbol of the regeneration that occurs at the beginning of the Christian life.

## 2 Alternative views:

- **Roman Catholic:** the RCC teaches that baptism should be administered to infants. Often called “christening.” The church believes this act is necessary for salvation and the act of baptism itself causes regeneration. When you say “but they are infants, they can’t profess faith” the RCC would reply that the faith which infants lack is replaced by the faith of the church. Baptism is one of the sacraments that bring about salvation to those who practice them. Some of you in here were likely christened as a child.
- **Our response:** **Eph 2:8-9** seems clear: salvation by faith alone. And this was really the center of the reformation. Also **Rom 6:23**: free gift.
- **Protestant Infant Baptism:** Common view in many protestant groups, most notably Presbyterian and other reformed groups. It is usually called a covenantal view because it depends on seeing infants born to believers as a part as part of the “covenant community” of God’s people. This view comes from the covenant theology system of thought. Infants were circumcised in the OT as a sign of entrance into the covenant community, in the NT baptism is that sign. Key text: **Col 2:11-12**. Also, this view finds support in the “household baptisms” that occur in the early church. It is assumed in those instances (Acts 16:15, 33; 1 Cor 1:16) infants were likely baptized.
- **Our response:** Important to remember that one became a Jew by being born from Jewish parents. Circumcision was the sign of that. So every male was circumcised. But true circumcision, circumcision of the heart, we know is something inward and spiritual (**Rom 2:29**). In fact the only “covenant community” talked about in the New testament is the church, the fellowship of the redeemed.<sup>7</sup> Also, it seems baptism symbolizes *probable future regeneration* for this system. That is clearly not the teaching on baptism in scripture. Baptism is a sign of being washed clean from sin & born again. So it makes the most sense to reserve that for those to whom this is actually true in their lives. If you were baptized as an infant, perhaps it is best to understand that as a symbol of your parents’ faith. You can take a step toward demonstrating your own! You don’t need to feel like you are disrespecting your parents if you choose to do that. Remember, baptism is a symbol. A symbol celebrates your relationship with Christ. There’s nothing wrong with celebrating twice!
- **Lord’s Supper:** This observed regularly based on the instruction of scripture (**1 Cor 11:25**). What is happening here? Remembrance of Christ’s death.
  - **Participate**- Unity of believers around the table. Affirmation of faith in Christ.
  - **Proclaim**
  - Both fellowship for believers and testimony to unbelievers

<sup>7</sup> *ibid*, 382.

## B. Being the Church

**Hebrews 10:24-25**- *And let us consider how to stir up one another to love and good works, 25 not neglecting to meet together as is the habit of some, but encouraging one another, and all the more as you see the Day drawing near.*

Around the Summit, we say that believers must be **BELONGERS**. I am telling you right now, membership in a local church matters. It is your way of committing yourself to a local body of believers. People often ask, why should I join the church? As if the burden of proof is on our church to provide you a list of “goods & services” you will receive upon membership. That is classic consumerism and must be confronted. The real question is, if the church is the bride & body of Christ and the means for dispensing grace, the means for preaching the word, the vehicle for sending the gospel to world, the very entity the Christian life is designed to live in, **WHY WOULD YOU NOT JOIN THE CHURCH?** My friends, the burden of proof is on those not wanting to commit. Some will say “Well, I can do everything in your church except vote and lead a small group without membership so what’s the big deal?” The big deal is that you want to date the church. You get everything out of the relationship without actually committing to anything. Heck, you’ve been around so long you may even live with the church, but you sure aren’t going to be tied down to any type of commitment.

### 4 reasons to join a church and participate in church life:

#### 1. Discipleship: Discipleship happens in relationships

- The reason we stress getting involved in small groups, and getting to know people, is because we truly, truly believe discipleship happens in relationships. Studies show that you retain only 20% of what you retain in a lecture. Discipleship means believers teaching and challenging one another to grow as disciples of Christ. The words “*one another*” are very important here. The same words found in **Hebrews 10:24**. One another does not imply one guy talking to 2000 people on a Sunday morning for 40 minutes. It implies people interacting with each other. It implies RELATIONSHIPS! And guess where your SummitLIFE pastor is going to tell you those relationships occur: in small groups!! That is why we push them so much. Not so that everyone will have something to do on Sunday nights, but so that you are actively developing gospel-centered relationships that will work to “sharpen you” in the faith. These groups mourn / battle with you in tough times and celebrate in the good times.
  - Illustration: Courtney & I start of seminary.
- You become Gospel-centered through involvement. Our small groups must, must, must, be gospel-centered. This is why I’ve become less of a fan of studies that are not based on the scriptures. The scriptures are gospel-centered. Our church must be the same. **The great goal of our small group ministry is simply this: bringing the gospel to bear on the lives of those involved.** Is your small group in the habit of doing this? It will often look different, but it will involve a consistent reflection on the gospel. The whole Bible points to the cross, so if you are always studying the scriptures, you should always be examining yourself in light of the gospel. Did you catch that? DISCIPLESHIP & FELLOWSHIP are Gospel-Centered! When your group studies Ephesians 5, you talk about your marriages and how they are reflecting the love of Christ for his church. It’s all about the gospel!! Dwell on it! And by the way, when you do this you will be doing the same thing your pastors do when they preach on Sunday morning. Bringing the gospel to bear on your lives.

#### 2. Fellowship: a community of friends is the endgame of the church

- Unfortunately for those of you who come from a Baptist background the term fellowship has become a name for a room in your church where Brunswick stew is eaten once a week. But fellowship is so much more! A

church that does “fellowship” well creates an atmosphere of hospitality and friendship. These relationships are deepening in a way that one person is more concerned with another person than himself. This cannot happen without spending time together. So we find it again critical to make our congregation smaller as we grow larger. We have to have relationships. We must share life together. If you don’t know 7 people well after your first year here, you probably won’t be back the second year.

- We believe Jesus died to make a community of friends, a family. In the Bible, this is called “koinonia.” It is the fulfillment of the Gospel!

**John 17:21**- *that they may all be one, just 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 have sent me.*

- In the evangelical community of mega-churches, there is a disintegration of community: We have back porches but not front porches in our homes. Not here. We want to grow smaller and bigger at the same time.
- Fellowship is multi-generational. We talked about this earlier, but a small group of Summit folks should reflect the make-up of our church. That means a couple of things. One, young people and old people. As a 28 yr old pastor, I certainly do not have the market cornered on wisdom from experience. I want someone in my small group with much more experience than I! Let me get real practical. If no one in your group has gray hair, you may have a problem. If everyone in your group has gray hair, you may have a problem.

**3. Ministry:** The church is the body through which Christ ministers

**Ephesians 4:7, 16**- *“Grace was given to each one of us ... 16 From Christ, the Head, the whole body, joined and held together by every joint with which it is equipped, when each part is working properly, makes the body grow...”*

- **People are God’s Plan A**

- E.g.- You decide that your arm itches. Your brain recognizes that, so what does it do? It tells the eye to scratch you. Who scratched you, the brain or the finger? Both! The brain through the finger. This is the body of Christ. Christ most often ministers today through people.
- John Townsend once said that for years he thought there was a “**Plan A**” and “**Plan B**” in how God answered our prayers for change. Say a guy is depressed and says, “God, help me get over being depressed.” Plan A is for him to study the Bible and pray and have God miraculously cure the depression. Plan B was to have the church come alongside of him, minister to him, and help him see the promises of God and get over his depression. That is a false dichotomy. **People are God’s Plan A** (*just like the scratch of the itch...* the brain doesn’t magically take it away, it sends the fingers up to scratch it. The body is the means of grace! It is God through the body. Same for other prayers like, “God, give me direction in life.” He says “Go to church.” You say, “God, Help my marriage.” He says, “Be a part of the church.”

- **A healthy body member is a member contributing to the body.**

- It is not just that we need people to do things, it’s that we believe you can’t experience all God has for you until you become a part of the church. Unless you are involved in ministry, your growth will be stunted.
- **Practically speaking**, involvement=investment and growth in grace. When people are involved in something, they are invested and will contribute to it.

**Ephesians 4:11-12-** *And he gave the apostles, the prophets, the evangelists, the pastors and teachers, 12 to equip the saints for the work of ministry, for building up the body of Christ,*

- **Our role as pastors and elders is to equip the saints for ministry.**

- What is the pastor/elder's role? *Equipper*. Who does the work of the ministry? *You do*.
- We look at it like a PARTNERSHIP: We equip you, we present quality opportunities for you to invite, you are the ministers who work in the lives of people.

Our goal is for all of you to have a job! This church is not for spectators, but for people who want to join a societal revolution.

#### 4. **Worship:** The church is the bride of Christ

- **Eph 5:21-33:** Critical to see how Paul uses the marriage relationship to talk about the relationship between Christ and the church. We want you to know and love Jesus more here. The goal is not being busier, but learning to love Jesus better.
  - Many churches think busy-ness equates growth. That is not true.
  - In **1 Cor 13**, Paul demonstrates that you can be very virtuous, very involved in your church, and even very generous and not have undergone real change.
  - This is activity motivated by moral restraint and fear... fear of not being accepted. If you do enough, then you will be accepted.
  - Real change, heart change is from the Gospel. The Gospel is the only religion that says "I am accepted; therefore obey." It is obedience that is done not to gain security but that flows *from* security.

#### 1 **John 4:19-** *We LOVE because He first LOVED us.*

- We don't want people just to come and get religiously busy, but we want people who are changed. This will happen not by filling up their schedules but by teaching to center their lives in and grow deep in the GOSPEL.

#### **Stop and reflect questions:**

- What ways did your church experience growing up make you busy?
- What ways do we tend to just "make people busy" at our church?
- How do we tend to define a "good" member?
- Might that be a counterfeit for real Gospel change?

Now that all this has been said, many of you could tell me you have been "burned" by the church at some point. I know how you feel. At age 13, I was badly "burned" by the church where I grew up. It hurt and most of the things we talked about today weren't a part of that church. But listen; if you think you are going to bounce around until you find the church that doesn't have problems, you have a sad long journey ahead of you. And it certainly doesn't end here. The Summit Church, like every body of believers, has problems.

#### **How We Deal with Disappointment:**

1. Remember that Christ values the church and highly esteems her.

- If the church is valued so highly by Christ, why do we not value her likewise?
- "You can't love Jesus and hate His bride."
- DON'T DATE THE CHURCH

2. Remember that the church is founded as a GRACE community:

- Grace is unmerited favor. We were not redeemed because we deserved it. Christ died for our sins because he loved us **EVEN THOUGH** we openly rebelled against him. 90% of the disillusionment you experience will be wiped away when you remember your own condition you were loved out of.
- Dietrich Bonhoeffer probably explains this as well as anyone: “Just as surely as God desires to lead us to a knowledge of genuine Christian fellowship, so surely must we be overwhelmed by a great disillusionment with others, with Christians in general, and if we are fortunate, with ourselves. Only that fellowship which faces such disillusionment, with all of its unhappy and ugly aspects, begins to be what it should be in God’s sight, and begins to grasp in faith the promise that is given to it.”<sup>8</sup> St. Augustine said pointedly “The church is a whore, but she is my mother.” So yes, the church has faults.
- Remember, Isaiah is disgusted with the church in Isaiah 1-5, then in Isaiah 6 he learns to be disgusted with himself. We all sin! Acknowledging that adds such great depth to our joy when we speak the gospel into each other’s lives.

So yes, you may be disillusioned at some point. Should you just bail when that happens? When the cable company doesn’t come through, you switch to Direct TV. When Verizon keeps dropping calls you switch to Sprint. So why not switch churches when one lets you down? There sure are plenty in the area.

If the church is the bride of Christ, when do you think Christ would divorce the church? Of course the answer is never. Likewise when do we encourage you to leave your spouse? Never.

What I have loved about my past 4 years at the Summit is that something rare, but I think very good, has happened here. People have looked for jobs based on staying at the church instead of looking for churches based on where their jobs are taking them. Some cannot, but the mindset is nonetheless there and I love it. Marriages go through rough patches and so will the church. Just ask those who have been around the Summit for 7-8 years. But she is still the bride of Christ. Let’s love her well through it.

So how are you the church?

Are you involved in a small group that is practicing gospel-centered discipleship & fellowship? There is a great start. Are you serving the church? We didn’t really single that out, but being a part of the church involves regular service to one another. Its how we “love each other.”

## ***The Last Things***

### **Why it is important**

The doctrine of the last things is what produces hope in Christians. 1 Thess 4.13-18

Throughout the New Testament especially, Jesus, Paul, and others have their eyes set on the afterlife and on Christ’s return. Everything we are doing now is in a sense living in anticipation of the world which is to come.

### **Key Concepts<sup>9</sup>**

<sup>8</sup> Bonhoeffer, Dietrich. *Life Together*. (SCM Press, 1954) 27.

<sup>9</sup> This section borrowed from Wayne Grudem’s *Bible Doctrines* chapters on the future (pp 427-471).

1. Immediate Life beyond Death – Philippians 1.21-26

2. Christ Returns

It will be Sudden and unexpected - Matthew 24.44

It will be Personal (Bodily) - Acts 1.11

It will be Visible – 1 John 3.2

We should eagerly long for Christ's Return – Titus 2.12-13

The debate is really over the order of when this and the other things happen. That they happen is of most importance for us.

3. Final Judgement – Revelation 20.11-15

It will serve the purpose rather of displaying before all rational creatures the declarative glory of God in a formal, forensic act, which magnifies on the one hand his holiness and righteousness, and on the other hand, His grace and mercy.

4. New Heavens and New Earth

We will live eternally with God in New Heavens and New Earth – Rev 21.1-3

The doctrine of new creation provides motivation for storing up treasures in Heaven rather than on earth

The new creation will be a place of great beauty, abundance, and joy in the presence of God. Rev 21.

## *CASE STUDIES*

### **1. The Miscarriage**

Michael and Holly are Summit members, and Holly is 11 weeks pregnant with their 3<sup>rd</sup> child. Two days ago Holly began feeling some pain so they went to the doctor to get checked. There, the doctor informed the couple they had just had a miscarriage. The couple is crushed and begins trying to process what has happened. Questions are swirling in their head about why it happened. They are in a small group that wants to be able to offer comfort and support during this tough time.

What doctrines inform how this couple, and those around them, should react to what has happened? Explain.

### **2. The unethical salesman**

Andy has been at the Summit since his college days at UNC. Now a successful sales rep, Andy has a good chance of being promoted into a prestigious role in his company that has recently come open: Regional Manager. Another rep, Dwight, is also in the running for this job. Recently Andy has learned Dwight is employing clearly unethical behavior to boost his sales and impress hiring committee during this sprint to the promotion finish line. Andy does not have formal documentation of this behavior but has personally witnessed Dwight in action with potential clients (Promising undeliverable service, prices, and perks to get the contract signed). Andy is worried he may lose the job to Dwight because of his shady practices. Does he tell someone? Does he start using similar methods? Does he ignore it and hope for the best?

What doctrines inform how Andy should handle this situation? Explain.