



Preaching the
Whole Counsel
of God to the
Whole World

Volume 4

Sermon Outlines

Louis Rushmore

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**Cover: Two Buddhist monks
and three cows on a jungle road in
Burma, also called Myanmar (2008)**

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Preface

Preaching the Whole Counsel of God to the Whole World, Volume 4 seems like an exceedingly long title, and of course, it is. Obviously, the first half of the title is borrowed from Acts 20:27, which reads, “For I have not shunned to declare to you the whole counsel of God” (NKJV). The passage also implies the second half of the title, which corresponds to the Great Commission given by our Lord Jesus Christ (Mark 16:15-16).

Since October of 1973, I have been teaching and preaching the Gospel in the United States as well as overseas in the Asian countries of India, Burma, Sri Lanka, Singapore plus Guyana, South America. I’ve been doing my best to participate with those who have gone before, contemporaries and those who in the future also will **preach the whole counsel of God to the whole world**.

The motivation for this series of full-sentence sermon outline books is to provide an intelligible resource and reference collection of homilies. Experienced teachers and preachers as well as novice teachers and preachers can glean valuable insights on a wide variety of topics in the preparation and the presentation of their own lessons. Certainly, anyone using the material within this series or anything else I make available (tracts, books, *Gospel Gazette Online*, *The Voice of Truth International*, etc.) needs to adapt, extract and modify any of these resources to mold their own declarations of God’s inspired Word to individuals and to groups. In most cases, there is more text in any of the sermons than may be prudent to present in one sitting of a worship assembly or Bible class. In all cases, the Bible must be the sole textbook from which God’s holy message is derived. This title and every other resource are merely tools to aid one’s personal Bible study or sermon and Bible class preparation.

Preaching the Whole Counsel of God to the Whole World, Volume 4 emphasizes the Christian home, Christian living and Christian service. There are 85 full-sentence sermons herein. May our Godhead (God the Father, God the Son and God the Holy Spirit) be glorified over and over as this title circulates across continents and every time a lesson is presented to a person or to persons. May this volume as well as the contents herein be a blessing and an edification to every reader and to everyone who hears these lessons taught and preached. Through these sermons, a piece of me also goes beyond where my footprints have dimpled the face of the earth, and perhaps even after my form returns to dust, a piece of me will live on in sermons read and preached across the planet. Humbly, I present this volume for confirmation of your faith and for emboldening you in its proclamation.

~Louis Rushmore, Evangelist

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National Treasure

Psalm 127:3-5

Thesis: To emphasize that the true national treasure (for any nation and every family) is children.

Introduction:

1. The 2004 movie, *National Treasure*, starring Nicolas Cage was a fanciful escape into imaginary adventure.
2. *National Treasure* was about a mythological treasure of great material wealth.
3. Our real national treasure, though, is our children.
4. Children are the true treasure of every nation and every family.

Body:

I. Psalm 127:3-5 refers to children as one's heritage.

- A. "Heritage" pertains to inheritance.
 1. However, "heritage" also means a possession.
 2. No house, no car or truck, no boat, no hobby, no job, or all of them together are more important than one's children.
- B. Children are a source of great happiness.
 1. Psalm 127:3-5 essentially says regarding children, "The more, the merrier!"
 2. Especially anciently, families unable to have children were greatly distressed, Genesis 30:1.

II. Psalm 128:3-4 refers to one's family as a good crop.

- A. Especially children need special attention so that they make a joyful harvest.
 1. Sometimes that special attention is a reward for little successes, e.g. a kind word, a hug, a treat.
 2. Sometimes that special attention is negative, e.g. discipline of some sort, Proverbs 23:13-14.
 3. As parents, we must train up children in the way that they should go, Proverbs 22:6.
- B. Reverence for God in the family helps make the entire family

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a good crop.

1. Children need more than food, clothes and shelter.
2. They need God in their lives, and that begins with God being in their mothers and in their fathers.
3. With determined effort, mothers and fathers can help their children acquire some of the admirable traits characteristic of youthful Jesus, Luke 2:40, 52.

Conclusion:

1. Both Psalms 127:3-5 and 128:3-4 speak of family members and especially children as fruit, i.e. the good harvest or reward.
2. Like any garden or farmer's field, careful and prolonged attention should result in a good harvest.
3. However, irresponsible farming in the physical world or in spiritual matters results in folly and misery instead of a bumper crop, Galatians 6:7-9.

Invitation:

1. God invites you to allow Him to be an integral part of your families as you rear your children, Ephesians 6:1-4.
2. We can be the mothers and fathers that God wants us to be, first by being Christians, Mark 16:16.
3. Second, we can be the mothers and fathers that God wants us after becoming Christians by being faithful Christians, 1 John 1:9.
4. Childrearing isn't for the faint of heart, we need God's help!

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Heritage of the Lord

Psalms 127:3-5

Thesis: To prompt parents and grandparents to love their young children enough to groom them with godliness.

Song: “How Shall the Young Secure Their Hearts?”

Introduction:

1. Psalm 127:3 says that “children are an heritage of the Lord.” Children are a gift from Jehovah God.
2. Sometimes, children may grow like bad weeds, but Psalm 127:3 says really they are “the fruit of the womb” and a “reward.”
3. Psalm 127:4-5 compares the children of young families as arrows that fill the archer’s quiver: “Happy is the man that hath his quiver full of them.”

Body:

I. The Bible places a great responsibility on parents as to how they rear their children.

- A. Especially fathers have the responsibility to rear their children “in the nurture and admonition of the Lord,” Ephesians 6:4.
- B. Especially mothers are expected to demonstrate love toward their children, Titus 2:4.
- C. Despite weariness over a number of years that may be associated with motherhood, every right thinking mother is “a joyful mother of children,” Psalm 113:9.
- D. Some godly mothers about whom one can read in the Bible determined before their children were born that they would dedicate their children to the service of God, Judges 13; 1 Samuel 1.

II. The Bible also notes the valuable participation of grandparents in the successful upbringing of children.

- A. Regarding grandparents, Proverbs 17:6 says, “Children’s children are the crown of old men; and the glory of children are their fathers.”
- B. The young, first century evangelist, Timothy, was in part the

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godly man that he was due to the influence of his grandmother, Lois, 2 Timothy 1:5.

Conclusion:

1. The Bible teaches that babies are born into this world pure, Ezekiel 18:20.
2. Jesus Christ used small children as examples worthy of imitation for those who would be citizens in the kingdom of Heaven, Matthew 18:3-4.
3. Little children are sponges that absorb everything put before them.
4. These are the years when parents, grandparents and the church need to begin molding their pliable minds to become faithful children of God someday.

Invitation:

1. Before we can be all that we can be as parents toward our children, we need to become the children of God, 2 Corinthians 6:14-18.
2. Erring Christians need to repent, and unbaptized believers need to be immersed into Jesus Christ, Romans 12:1-2; Colossians 2:12.

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What the Home Owes Its Children

1 Timothy 3:4, 12

Thesis: To note some good and bad influences the home may have on its youth and to encourage Christians to provide a Christian home environment for its children.

Introduction:

1. The home is the basic unit of any society.
 - a. Truly, societies, nations and the church depend on the home for their survival.
 - b. As goes the home, so go society, the nation and the church.
 - c. Lamentably, the home is in crisis!
2. The home is one of two divine institutions (the church is the other).
 - a. The Bible is God's handbook for the home; nothing else can improve upon it or dare be supposed could replace it.
 - b. The Bible is the divine handbook for the successful operation of the home and the rearing of children.
 - c. The operation of the home and childrearing includes instilling God's Word in the hearts of the home's occupants.
3. Among other things, the Bible teaches what the home owes its children.
 - a. The qualifications for elders and deacons include the highest ideals toward which every Christian should strive to include in his or her lives as well.
 - b. Both qualifications for elders and deacons include high ideals regarding the home and childrearing that are noble goals for godly parents to acquire, 1 Timothy 3:4, 12.

Body:

- I. **The home owes its children the stability and security afforded through a loving mother and loving father.**
 - A. Irresponsibly contracted marriages bring hardship on parents and children, meaning that they are less likely to result in happy, productive and functional homes.

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1. Immaturity among grooms and brides contribute to failure in the home.
 2. Irresponsibility with finances ruin marriages and homes.
 3. Weddings of necessity begin on the wrong basis for producing a happy marriage and home life.
 4. Marrying purely because of physical attraction lacks the basis for a permanent, happy marriage and home into which children may be born.
 5. Marrying to get away from home or for some other defective reason hobbles the marriage and the home.
- B. Divorce destroys the divine ideal of the home, and it hurts its members, especially children.
1. God instituted marriage for keeps, Genesis 2:18-25; Matthew 19:4-6.
 2. When Jesus reestablished God's original marriage law, He provided a single reason for which the innocent spouse of a marriage ruined by adultery could divorce and remarry, Matthew 19:9.
 3. God intended marriage to last a lifetime, Romans 7:1-3.
- C. Rampant divorce, unwed mothers and fathers, and fornication evidence human disdain for God's divine plan for marriage and the home.

II. The home owes its children the assumption of divinely appointed parental roles.

- A. God assigned fathers and husbands to rule (i.e., take responsibility for) the home, Ephesians 5:23; 6:1-4.
1. Fathers and husbands have the responsibility to satisfy the physical needs of the family, 1 Timothy 5:8.
 2. Fathers have the primary responsibility for discipline and spiritual instruction in the home, Ephesians 6:4.
 3. Husbands have a responsibility to love their wives, which has a material affect on children in the home, Ephesians 5:25.
- B. God assigned mothers and wives to guide the home, 1 Timothy 5:14.

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1. She is supposed to make the house into a home, Titus 2:3-5.
 2. Under ordinary circumstances, it is not the primary responsibility of wives and mothers to support the family, though she may work out of the home as long as she does not neglect her divinely appointed work in the home, Proverbs 31:10-31.
 3. **Note:** Fairness demands that if a wife helps support the home that the husband helps the wife in her domestic duties as well.
 4. Sadly, half of all mothers work outside the home and half of those working mothers have children six or under.
- C. Role reversals in the home are not supported by biblical references and confuse God's scheme for the home and its children.

III. The home owes its children love and discipline.

- A. Love and obedience (or discipline) are inseparably linked, John 14:15.
1. God decreed that children need nurture and admonition, Ephesians 6:4.
 2. The parent who claims that he or she loves his or her child too much to discipline does not really love that child, Proverbs 13:24; Hebrews 12:5-11.
- B. Discipline may be providing the proper example, instruction, correction or punishment (including spanking).

IV. The home owes its children OJT (on the job training) in godliness and faithfulness.

- A. Parents should teach their children proper priorities.
1. The children should have no doubt that mom and dad seek spiritual things first, Matthew 6:24, 33.
 2. Children early should come to know the true purpose for living one's life, Ecclesiastes 12:13-14; 2 Corinthians 5:10-11.
- B. Parents should exhibit and teach Christian living.
1. Can your children see the Christian virtues in their parents, 2 Peter 1:5-9?
 2. Have your children learned to wear the Gospel armor from your example, Ephesians 6:11-17?

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3. Have your children learned to pursue the fruit of the Spirit because they see the fruit of the Spirit in the lives of their parents, Galatians 5:22-23?
- C. Parents should exhibit steadfastness in the faith.
1. Have you showed your children that you intend to acquire a crown of life even if it kills you, literally, Revelation 2:10; 2 Timothy 4:8?
 2. Do your children have good role models in their parents for stability in the Christian faith, 1 Corinthians 15:58?

Conclusion:

1. Parents have an immense responsibility toward their children's acquisition of the Christian faith in their lives.
2. The home is a divine institution with a divine operator's manual.
3. The home contributes to either the success or the failure of its product — its children.
4. As goes the home, so goes society, the nation and the Lord's church.
5. Whatever else a father or a mother does, if he or she fails his or her divinely appointed roles in the home, that father or mother miserably fails.

Invitation:

1. Each mother and each father must strive to be the best parents they can possibly be, which includes leading their children to true salvation.
2. God pardons penitent sinners and penitent saints, Acts 2:38; 8:22.

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Rearing Children

Proverbs 23:13-14

Thesis: To address biblical and practical aspects of rearing children.

Introduction:

1. Recommended readings: *Jesus Christ: The Hope of the Home* and *Christ in the Home* (both by Robert R. Taylor, Jr.), and the unparalleled childrearing encyclopedia — the Bible.
2. To be certain, there are obstacles to rearing children.
3. However, there are also rewards in rearing children.
4. We live in a largely undisciplined society.
 - a. Church discipline is not often practiced like it should be, and, many times, discipline is sadly lacking in the home.
 - b. If nothing else is remembered about this lesson today, please hear this: Parents have a God-ordained **obligation** to exercise discipline (control) in the home over their children, Proverbs 23:13-14.

Body:

I. Mission of rearing children.

- A. The TV series *Mission Impossible* began with the familiar line, “Your mission, Jim, should you decide to accept it...”
 1. Sometimes, it may seem that childrearing is an impossible mission, and we may wonder if we will survive.
 2. Nevertheless, I assure you that we can survive and accomplish the mission.
 3. Every parent has opted to accept the mission of childrearing by his or her voluntary participation in sexual intercourse without the use of contraception. (It is true, though, that parents may not **realize** the mission they have espoused by their actions or may be ill-suited for the task.)
 4. From the point of conception onward, however, there is **no turning back** from the mission of childrearing for the faithful child of God.

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- B. The mission of childrearing is not unlike the overall mission of the church.
 - 1. Benevolence, evangelism and edification must begin at home.
 - 2. Our children must be impressed foremost with spiritual values, Ecclesiastes 12:13-14; Matthew 6:33.
 - 3. Our children must not only learn how to make a living but **more importantly** how to live.
 - 4. Our children must be taught to seek spiritual maturity in adulthood, Hebrews 5:12-14; 1 Peter 2:2.
 - 5. Our children must be taught **spiritual productivity**, John 15:1-8.
- C. Children need to be groomed for spiritual service.
 - 1. Children should be instructed and shown how to be good mothers and fathers, 1 Timothy 5:14; Titus 2:3-5.
 - 2. Children should be instructed and shown how to be good Christians, Romans 12:1-2; 2 Corinthians 8:5.
 - 3. Our children should be groomed for future teachers, elders, deacons, preachers or wives of elders, deacons and preachers.
- D. The mission of childrearing is too important to take lightly or to fail.
 - 1. Our children must be taught to be true to the Book — the Bible, including salvation, worship, service and Christian living.
 - 2. In whatever other areas of rearing our children we may succeed, if we fail to instill in them spiritual values, we fail our childrearing mission.

II. The responsibilities of childrearing.

- A. Obviously, there are **parental responsibilities** involved in rearing children.
 - 1. These responsibilities include physical care, 1 Timothy 5:8.
 - 2. These responsibilities also include spiritual care, Ephesians 6:4.

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3. However, parental responsibility ceases where the child's responsibility begins, Ezekiel 18:20.
- B. Children must cooperate in their own rearing in order for it to be biblically successful.
 1. Children must learn and practice obedience to parents, Ephesians 6:1; Colossians 3:20; 2 Timothy 3:2; Deuteronomy 21:18-21.
 2. Children are forbidden to strike their parents, Exodus 21:15.
 3. Children are obligated to show respect to their parents, Exodus 20:12; Ephesians 6:2.
 4. This manifests itself later in life by the children's care of their parents, 1 Timothy 5:4.
 5. Very importantly, children must obey the Gospel for themselves.
- C. The disposition of children themselves plays a significant role in childrearing.
 1. Every child is different, even in the same family.
 2. Young children are biblically innocent — without sin — not responsible for themselves, Ezekiel 28:15; Matthew 18:3.
 3. Children have pliable minds, Proverbs 22:6.
 4. Accountable children have freewill, Ezekiel 18:20.

III. The negative side of rearing children.

- A. There are several obstacles to rearing children.
 1. The fact that each child is different presents a theoretical problem; just when parents begin to figure out how to rear children, another child comes along who does not respond to one's newly acquired parental skills.
 2. Parental imperfection is bound to lead to mistakes in childrearing; probably most of us wish we could undo something in our lives that has potentially affected our children adversely.
 3. Parental lack of experience, which largely only disappears after a substantial amount of OJT (on the job training), is a certain obstacle.

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4. Then, the ungodly world is earnestly trying to pull our children into the depths of sin, 1 John 2:15-17.
 5. The pleasures of sin call our children while we are at the same time trying to teach them about righteousness, Hebrews 11:25.
 6. Some sins that are characterized as “youthful lusts” threaten to undo everything for which godly parents work and pray, 2 Timothy 2:22.
 7. Erring Christians and their children can greatly detract from successful childrearing: “Everybody’s doing it,” “Brother so-n-so’s children are allowed to do it.” (This may be an area in which church discipline can also help godly childrearing.)
 8. Secular advice and books can often render more harm than good in rearing children (e.g., the Dr. Spock generation of permissiveness); any advice that conflicts with the Bible must be avoided.
 9. Sometimes, deficiencies in parental childrearing can be traced back to abuses or deficiencies in the rearing of the parents; though hard to overcome such, it can and must be done.
- B. Childrearing faces several additional contemporary threats.
1. Hedonism, entertainment and especially TV pose serious threats to Christian living and rearing children, 2 Thessalonians 2:12; 1 Timothy 5:6; 2 Timothy 3:4; Titus 3:3.
 2. Peer pressure dare not be under emphasized, 1 Corinthians 15:33; Exodus 23:2; Psalm 1:1.
 3. Humanism — self-centered, anti-God, secular religion — has infiltrated government, education and religion.
 4. Materialism causes both young and old to forget God, Proverbs 30:8-9.
 5. Apathy or indifference can render parental attempts at childrearing futile; sometimes children learn apathy from parents who are indifferent toward their jobs, church, responsibilities and other family members, Revelation 3:15-16.

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6. False teachers, some of whom unfortunately may truly wear sheep's clothing as they present themselves as professors in our Christian colleges, subtly threaten our children, Matthew 7:15; 1 John 4:1.
 7. Despair is another serious threat to the well being of anyone, especially young people; unchecked, what to a young person is a crisis resulting in despair sometimes leads to suicide in its worst scenario, Matthew 6:33-34.
 8. Our young people may also be threatened by sex and dating unless both parents and their children exercise caution in this area; while sexual feelings are natural, they must be properly restrained within the bounds of the Gospel, Ephesians 5:3; 1 Corinthians 7:2.
 9. Another threat engulfing our nation and posing a hazard for our children is drug and alcohol abuse, Galatians 5:19-21.
- C. Danger signs tell of developing problems.
1. Persistently unruly children indicate problems with parental guidance, children themselves, outside influences or a combination of these; special attention must be given to the problem areas.
 2. Another danger sign is when a child doesn't like attending worship or classes; this is equivalent to spiritual anorexia, which may prove fatal, 1 Peter 2:2; Hebrews 10:25. (Parents must be careful their children do not learn a dislike for attending worship and classes from them.)
- D. There may be other areas in which parents will experience difficulties in rearing children.
1. For instance, sometimes parents have difficulty adjusting the treatment of their children according to their maturity and age.
 2. Mothers and daughters may sometimes find themselves embroiled in conflicts that appear similar to sibling arguments.
 3. A child may be babied to the point of debilitation.

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IV. The positive side of rearing children.

- A. Successful childrearing helps qualify parents for greater service in the kingdom.
 - 1. Especially elders must rear their children successfully, 1 Timothy 3:4-5; Titus 1:6.
 - 2. Deacons also must demonstrate skills in rearing children, 1 Timothy 3:12.
 - 3. Additionally, preachers and teachers will be greatly hindered in their effectiveness in teaching the Gospel unless their children are credits rather than liabilities to their parents.
- B. Happily, there are rewards in rearing children.
 - 1. Family love — natural affection — is a precious commodity, similar to the love God has for His children.
 - 2. One's dear children also will care for aged parents.
- C. Several positive signs may bolster the confidence of parents endeavoring their best to rear their children.
 - 1. How wonderful it is when people you don't know feel compelled to compliment you on the good public behavior of your children (e.g., restaurants); the successful childrearing in such cases occurred at home and is only on public display otherwise.
 - 2. It must be encouraging to parents when they feel especially thankful for their own children when they see other people's unruly children.
 - 3. It is also a positive sign of good childrearing when children make it easier for parents to be good Christians.
 - 4. Certainly parents can rejoice when their children obey and continue to obey the Gospel.
 - 5. Both children and parents have grown and succeeded when parents value the judgment of their children.
 - 6. It is also a positive sign of successful childrearing when parents trust their children (not blindly, but based on evidence — the children have demonstrated trustworthiness).

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V. Tools for good childrearing.

A. Childrearing tools include:

1. Parental patience may very well be the product of several trials through which children put their parents, James 1:2-4.
2. Time — duration — has a way of giving parents the experience they once lacked and convincing children that their parents actually know something after all, Hebrews 5:12.
3. Perhaps distasteful for both parent and child, corporal punishment is biblical and sometimes absolutely necessary, Proverbs 23:13-14. (beat = strike, to us, spank.)
4. Sometimes chastisements are sufficient correction of children, Hebrews 12:5-11.
5. Additionally, **rewards** for compliance with parental instruction reinforces successful childrearing.
6. Praise, too, underscores successes in rearing children.
7. All children need special attention from their parents for their self-esteem and proper development.

B. Some helpful “rules of thumb” for childrearing include these considerations:

1. By and large, from infancy, dress children modestly; this will avoid conflict later when parents otherwise try to have the child start practicing modesty, 1 Timothy 2:9.
2. Parents must endeavor to practice even-handedness with a child; children need to know what to expect from their parents, even as we know what God expects of us and how God reacts to different situations, James 1:8.
3. Parents must be careful not to show partiality between their children, Romans 2:11.
4. Parents need to remember they are responsible for controlling their dependent children; children should not be allowed to run roughshod over their parents. (The tail must never wag the dog.)
5. Finally, all things go better with the Gospel.

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Conclusion:

1. Admittedly, parenting is somewhat of an imperfect science.
2. However, it is a mission that godly parents cannot afford to neglect.
3. Yes, there are difficulties associated with rearing children.
4. However, the rewards, both on earth and in Heaven, for both parents and children, far outweigh all the pains of parenting.

The Home

Inviting Christ into the Home

Genesis 2:18-25

Thesis: Christ in the home is the antithesis of Satan in the home; further, Jesus Christ in the home is a prerequisite to salvation and godly living.

Introduction:

1. Today, as we talk about the home, we are not discussing the houses in which we live but the family.
 - a. The home or the family had its beginning when God instituted marriage between Adam and Eve, Genesis 2:18-25.
 - b. From that point through the present, and as long as time continues, the home or the family has been, is and will continue to be the basic unit of society.
 - c. Our nation and other nations of the world will continue to be great or falter largely due to the strength or weakness of its homes.
 - d. Many modern homes are utter failures because Christ does not reside in those homes, but rather, Satan is enthroned in those homes.
2. Our nation cannot continue to be great if family units upon which it depends for its greatness continue to deteriorate.
 - a. The widespread pursuit of materialism and licentious living continues to undermine the stability of the home in this nation and throughout the world.
 - b. Also, irresponsibly contracted marriages, neglect of divine instruction regarding marriage and the home, rampant divorce as well as broken homes undercut the stability of both the nation and the Lord's church.
 - c. The answer to the ruined homes and the subsequent ruining of the nation is to invite Christ into homes.

Body:

I. Jesus Christ is needed in today's homes.

- A. Jesus Christ is no intruder; he will not come into a home in

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which He is not welcome.

1. Through providence and the Gospel, every home in which Jesus is a welcome guest will be wonderfully blessed.
 2. No home, into which Jesus enters, is more corrupt or irreligious because our Lord is there, but rather that home is lifted up in spirituality.
 3. Homes in which Jesus is welcome are schools for children whose pliable souls are molded for earthly habitation now and their eternal abode in Heaven with God.
- B. Christ will enter homes where He is welcome and bless those homes with the blessings they need.
1. Jesus visited the home of Peter and Andrew and healed Peter's mother-in-law, Mark 1:29-31.
 2. Jesus visited the home of Jairus and resurrected his daughter, Mark 5:22-24, 35-42.
 3. Our Lord entered the home of Mary and Martha and taught them divine truth, Luke 10:38-42.
 4. When Jesus visited the home of Zacchaeus, He pronounced salvation upon His host, Luke 19:1-10.
- C. Jesus Christ is needed in today's homes in times of sickness (or any affliction).
1. The sinful life loses its appeal when one faces great illness.
 2. Typically, people are drawn closer to God when they or their loved ones are facing great sickness, Psalm 119:67, 71; James 5:13-16; 2 Corinthians 12:1-10; James 1:2-4; Romans 5:3-5.
 3. Christian homes are usually better prepared to accept, endure and profit from sickness than homes that do not know the Lord.
 4. There is an abiding sense of hopelessness in the homes where people are seriously ill physically and spiritually, possibly even facing death **outside of Christ**.
 5. Christians, though, have a real friend in Jesus in both life and death.

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- D. Jesus Christ is needed in today's homes when death interrupts family fellowship.
 - 1. Preachers, family and friends can offer a little consolation to the families of departed Christians, but without Christ in the home, the bereaved can only experience utter despair at the loss of a loved one, 2 Corinthians 1:3-4.
 - 2. The fact that departed loved ones will be reunited with their family members who are in Christ is a great relief afforded only to Christians.
 - 3. Therefore, Jesus Christ is needed in the face of death.
- E. Jesus Christ is needed in today's homes to uplift the speech in the home.
 - 1. Of the about 4,800 words usually spoken daily in every home, they can be angry or kind, inspiring or destructive, pure or sensual, religious or profane, dignified or unworthy.
 - 2. Words can build homes or destroy families, mend or fester wounds, make happy marriages or broken homes.
 - 3. Consequently, the Bible often addresses the importance of the words that we speak, Matthew 12:36-37; James 3:1-12; Proverbs 25:11; Ephesians 4:29; Colossians 4:6.
- F. Jesus Christ is needed in today's homes to bring salvation to its occupants.
 - 1. No physical need outweighs the human need for salvation.
 - 2. The words of Jesus Christ are powerful and responsible for the creation and sustaining of the universe, John 1:1-3; Colossians 1:15-17; Hebrews 1:3.
 - 3. The words of Christ will be used in the Judgment to determine the eternal disposition of every soul, Hebrews 4:12; John 12:48; 6:63.
 - 4. The words of Jesus Christ are also powerful unto the salvation of souls, John 8:24; Luke 13:3; Matthew 10:32; Mark 16:16.
 - 5. Christ in the home is the most pressing need of the family in this or any century, especially respecting the salvation of souls.

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II. Jesus Christ in today's homes makes them stronger.

- A. The needs of the home can be better achieved with Christ in the home rather than without Jesus as the Divine Guest in the home.
 - 1. Jesus in the home helps offset the ungodly influence of the lost world on the home's occupants, John 17:15-16; 1 John 2:15-17.
 - 2. Jesus in the home helps reduce and solve marital problems, Ephesians 5:25-33.
 - 3. Jesus in the home helps moms and dads properly execute their parental responsibilities, Ephesians 4:1-6.
 - 4. Jesus Christ as a member of the Godhead instituted the home and is amply able to instruct it.
 - 5. Jesus Christ should, therefore, be a welcome guest at the marriage altar, at the birth of children, in good times and bad, and always be a reliable resource to whom each person in the home can appeal.
- B. Jesus Christ in the home ensures companionship and happiness.
 - 1. Marriage was instituted and the home was created, in part, that a man and a woman would be companions and be happy, Genesis 2:18-25.
 - 2. Husbands and wives who accept the evolutionary lie that they are merely highly developed animals, without Christ in their homes, are not equipped for lives of love, happiness and lifelong companionship.
 - 3. God has always intended marriage to be a permanent relationship between a man, a woman and God, Matthew 5:32; 19:1-9.
 - 4. With Jesus Christ in the home, marriages will exhibit mutual love between the husband and the wife, Ephesians 5:25-33.
- C. Jesus Christ in the home promotes purity and fidelity.
 - 1. A third of babies conceived are illegitimate and two thirds of marriages end with divorce.
 - 2. Premarital and extramarital sex occurs without restraint

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in modern society.

3. However, Jesus said that only the pure in heart will see God, Matthew 5:8.
 4. Purity begins in the heart, Matthew 5:27-28; Mark 7:20-23.
 5. The New Testament is replete with exhortations to avoid sexual sin, 1 Corinthians 6:18-20; Galatians 5:19-21; 1 Thessalonians 4:3-7.
 6. The New Testament also is filled with exhortations to pursue purity, 1 Timothy 4:12; 5:2, 22; 2 Timothy 2:22.
 7. Purity and fidelity together pose the solution to one of the gravest problems confronting the church today, marital discord and disrespect for God's marriage instructions.
- D. Jesus Christ in the home will expunge from it one of the greatest attacks on the home in our time, alcohol.
1. The consumption of alcohol is linked with numerous heinous crimes and the widespread destruction of the home.
 2. Drinking alcoholic beverages is often associated with other sins as well, especially infidelity, Proverbs 23:29-32.
 3. Drunkenness is a matter of degrees and is uniformly condemned in both testaments of the Bible, Proverbs 20:1; 1 Corinthians 6:10; Galatians 5:21.
- E. Jesus Christ in the home fosters forgiveness, kindness, courtesy and consideration.
1. To receive Divine forgiveness, one must be willing to forgive others, Matthew 6:14-15.
 2. Forgiving others is Christ-like, Colossians 3:12-13.
 3. We are required to rebuke sinners and forgive them when they repent, Luke 17:3-4.
 4. Failure to admit wrong and failure to forgive wreck many marriages.
 5. The kindness, courtesy and consideration that permeate courtship will make marriages happier and healthier.
 6. Kindness is commanded of Christians, Ephesians 4:32; Matthew 7:12.

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7. All family members are responsible for contributing to the happiness and success of the home, and for this to occur, we need Christ in our homes.

Conclusion:

1. Christ in the home assures the best possible fortune for the home and a boundless source to which one can appeal for the solution of all family problems.
2. When the home welcomes Christ by exalting the Bible, the Bible and Christ in the home exalt the home.

Invitation:

1. Christ in each family member contributes to the happiness and success of the home, Galatians 3:27.
2. One can put Christ on in baptism by being buried into the likeness of our Lord's death by immersion, Romans 6:3-5.
3. Erring Christians can put Christ back in their lives and back in their homes by repenting of their sins, 1 John 1:9.

The Home

The Hand that Rocks the Cradle

Proverbs 22:6

Thesis: To emphasize and praise motherhood.

Introduction:

1. Motherhood has been honored from ancient civilizations thousands of years ago through the present.
2. The Bible also highly regards motherhood, and the English word “mother” appears 245 times, besides other words referring to motherhood.
3. It is socially and biblically responsible to honor mothers, not only on Mother’s Day but everyday.

Body:

I. Right thinking persons place a premium on motherhood.

- A. The first Mother’s Day-like observances occurred among the Greeks and Romans.
 1. The first Mother’s Day celebrations date back to ancient Greece in honor of Rhea, the mother of the gods and goddesses.
 2. The Romans observed similar celebrations in honor of Cybele, the mother of gods and goddesses, about 250 years before Jesus Christ.
- B. Mother’s Day-like celebrations were later observed in 1600’s England.
 1. Catholics and Protestants in Europe appropriated Mother’s Day to honor Mary the mother of Jesus and the “Mother (Catholic) Church.”
 2. In England, “Mothering Sunday” was adopted on the fourth Sunday of Lent and was applied to all mothers.
- C. For much of the world, Mother’s Day today can be traced back to early efforts by a woman in West Virginia to honor her mother and motherhood.
 1. In 1872, Julia Ward Howe, who wrote the words to the

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Battle Hymn of the Republic, is attributed with first suggesting a Mother's Day in the United States; she "...organized Mother's Day meetings in Boston, Mass every year" (holidays.net).

2. However, the eventual establishment of Mother's Day as a national holiday is attributed to efforts by Anna M. Jarvis (1864-1948), a graduate of the Female Seminary in Wheeling, West Virginia, who for a while taught school like her mother in Grafton, West Virginia (21stcenturyplaza.com).
3. In 1907, Mother's Day was observed at the Andrews Methodist Church in Grafton on the second anniversary of the death of her mother, Anna Reese Jarvis (the second Sunday of May) (21stcenturyplaza.com).
4. On May 10, 1908, Mother's Day was also celebrated in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania where Anna lived.
5. By 1911, almost every state celebrated Mother's Day, as well as Mexico, Canada, China, Japan, South American and African countries (21stcenturyplaza.com).
6. The Mother's Day International Association incorporated on December 12, 1912 to promote Mother's Day around the world (21stcenturyplaza.com).
7. In 1913, the House of Representatives drafted a resolution calling for Mother's Day to be a national holiday.
8. May 8, 1914, President Woodrow Wilson made Mother's Day a national holiday.

Now, Therefore, I, Woodrow Wilson, President of the United States of America, by virtue of the authority vested in me by the said Joint Resolution, do hereby direct the government officials to display the United States flag on all government buildings and do invite the people of the United States to display the flag at their homes or other suitable places on the second Sunday in May as a public expression of our love and reverence for the mothers of our country. (everythingmothersday.com)

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II. The Bible has a high regard for motherhood.

- A. Motherhood began in the Garden of Eden by divine design.
 - 1. The name that Adam gave to his wife, Eve, signifies that she as the first woman is the mother of humanity through procreation, Genesis 1:27-28; 3:20.
 - 2. The Hebrew word that is translated “Eve” means, “life-giver” (*Strong’s*).
 - 3. The Septuagint, Greek translation of the Hebrew Bible, likewise uses a word meaning “life”; the arbitrary name “Eve” does not convey the thought contained in Genesis 3:20 — Adam named his wife “Life” (Clarke).
 - 4. *Keil & Delitzsch* says of the name, “Eve,” “life-spring...the continuance and life of his race were guaranteed to the man through the woman.”
 - 5. The word translated there as “mother” means “a mother (as the bond of the family)” (*Strong’s*).
 - 6. The Greek “meter” for “mother” means: “(a) of the natural relationship, e.g., Matthew 1:18; 2 Timothy 1:5; (b) figuratively, (1) of one who takes the place of a mother, Matthew 12:49, 50; Mark 3:34, 35; John 19:27; Romans 16:13; 1 Timothy 5:2; (2) of the Heavenly and spiritual Jerusalem...” (Vine).
- B. The term “mother” in the Bible occurs respecting other women after Eve to whom many descendants are attributed.
 - 1. Abraham’s wife, Sarah, was to be the mother of nations and kings, Genesis 17:16.
 - 2. It was said of Rebekah that she would be “the mother of thousands of millions,” Genesis 24:60.
- C. Both testaments of the Bible extol praise on motherhood.
 - 1. The virtuous woman of Proverbs 31:10-31 is a wife and mother who has been immortalized in Scripture as a perfect specimen.
 - 2. Motherhood was highlighted through the birth of our Savior to Mary, Acts 1:14.

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And what is true of the Old Testament is equally true of the New Testament. The same high type of womanhood, the same reverence for one's mother is in evidence in both books. The birth of Christ lifted motherhood to the highest possible plane and idealized it for all time. The last thing Jesus did on the Cross was to bestow His mother on John 'the beloved' as his special inheritance. What woman is today, what she is in particular in her motherhood, she owes wholly to the position in which the Scriptures have placed her. Sometimes the stepmother is spoken of as the real mother (Gen 37:10). Sometimes the grandmother or other female relative is thus spoken of (Gen 3:20; 1 Kings 15:10). (*International*)

3. Scripture uses the concept of motherhood to convey the love of God and His servants toward humanity, 1 Corinthians 3:1; 1 Thessalonians 2:7.
4. Motherhood is charged with setting the holiness of the home, Titus 2:3.
5. Motherhood is charged with guiding the home and its children, 1 Timothy 5:14.

III. We need to remember our mothers fondly, not only on Mother's Day, but daily.

- A. The significance of motherhood is immortalized by famous quotes.
 1. Abraham Lincoln said, "All that I am, or can be, I owe to my angel mother."
 2. Napoleon Bonaparte said, "Let France have good mothers, and she will have good sons."
 3. John Quincy Adams said, "All that I am, my mother made me."
 4. Thomas Edison said, "If it had not been for my mother's appreciation and her faith in me at a critical time in my experience, I would never have become an inventor."
 5. Henry Ward Beecher said, "The mother's heart is the child's schoolroom."

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6. An English Proverb says, “The hand that rocks the cradle rules the world.”
 7. A Spanish proverb reads, “An ounce of mother is worth a pound of clergy.”
- B. The love for one’s mother is indelibly inscribed on her child’s heart, irrespective of whether she is an exemplary mother, Psalm 35:14.
1. We are to honor our mothers, Deuteronomy 5:16; Proverbs 1:8; 6:20.
 2. Samuel’s mother, Hannah, was desperate to have children, and she cared deeply for Samuel even after she dedicated him to the Lord’s service, 1 Samuel 1-2; she became the “joyful mother of children,” Psalm 113:9.
 3. We are to be mindful of our mothers even when they (and we) are old, Proverbs 23:22.

Conclusion:

1. “While many countries of the world celebrate their own Mother’s Day at different times throughout the year, there are some countries such as Denmark, Finland, Italy, Turkey, Australia, and Belgium which also celebrate Mother’s Day on the second Sunday of May” (holidays.net).
2. “The second Sunday in May has become the most popular day of the year to dine out, and telephone lines record their highest traffic, as sons and daughters everywhere take advantage of this day to honor and to express appreciation of their mothers” (everythingmothersday.com).
3. **Motherhood is so important to the human race that it has been honored by God and man from the beginning to the present.**
4. Mothers, your place in the home and in society is so important that “the hand that rocks the world rules the world,” Proverbs 22:6.
5. For the rest of us, remember, it is socially and biblically responsible to honor mothers, not only on Mother’s Day but everyday.

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Invitation:

1. Each soul here today is no less dear to God than any mother's child is precious to his mother; God wants you to live with Him eternally.
2. Become a child of God today by obeying the Truth, 1 Peter 1:22; Galatians 3:26-27.
3. Children of God also need to behave like children of God, Ephesians 5:8; 1 John 5:2.

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The Home

It Takes a Community

Proverbs 22:6

Thesis: It takes a community, including the home and the church, to rear a child successfully.

Introduction:

1. The phrase, “It Takes a Community,” is popular across many fields of endeavor, evidenced by typing those words into an Internet search engine and glancing through the results.
2. It is equally true that it takes a community, including the home and the church, to rear a child successfully to adulthood.
3. Especially in view of the many unhealthy influences in contemporary society that attempt to mesmerize our children, we need to recognize the hugely important roles of good parenting and the Lord’s church to successful childrearing.

Body:

- I. **First, let’s define what we mean by the word “community.”**
 - A. A dictionary definition of “community” provides essential information about some of what we mean when we acknowledge that it takes a community to successfully rear children.
 1. “Community” means “a unified body of individuals: as...b: the people with common interests living in a particular area” (*Merriam*).
 2. The concept of “community” revolves around something or someone for which different people have a common regard.
 - B. Children are the focal point of common interest around which revolves the efforts of both those who contribute to successful childrearing, as well as those who detract from and make successful childrearing difficult at best.
 1. Our children are affected favorably or unfavorably at school sometimes through curriculum taught and their peers.
 2. Our children are affected favorably or unfavorably by media in all of its forms, e.g. TV, movies, music, video

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games, Internet.

3. Our children are affected favorably or unfavorably sometimes by homelife.
 4. Our children are affected favorably or unfavorably sometimes by their religious experiences or the lack of the same.
- C. Whether we like it or not, the larger community around us participates in rearing our children.
1. Therefore, parents must do everything within their power to minimize the bad societal influences and maximize the positive societal influences in children's lives.
 2. Hence, the value of proactive parents in the home cannot be overemphasized.
 3. Further, parents need to take advantage of the positive moral support system available to the home through the Lord's church.

II. Second, consider for a few moments the necessity of good and responsive homes to the successful rearing of our children.

- A. God gave parents the primary role in bringing up their children.
1. Children are a blessing directly from God to man to any home, Psalm 127:3.
 2. Parents do not have God's permission to neglect or to refuse their God-given assignment to rear the children that they brought into this world, Proverbs 22:6.
- B. Fathers have a role given to them by God, that unfortunately many men fail to realize.
1. Fathers are responsible to God for providing the spiritual upbringing of their children, Ephesians 6:4.
 2. Fathers are primarily responsible for disciplining their children, however, without being too harsh, Hebrews 12:7-10; Colossians 3:21.
 3. Simply providing food, clothes and a place to live is not enough, though many fathers think they have accomplished their part in childrearing if they just do those things.
- C. Mothers have a role given to them by God, that unfortunately

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is underappreciated by many mothers today.

1. Mothers need to instill the morality of the Christian faith in their children from the time they are infants forward, 2 Timothy 1:5; 3:15.
 2. Mothers are primarily responsible for guiding the home and providing the nurturing nest for childrearing, 1 Timothy 5:14; Titus 2:5.
 3. While mothers may work outside the home, it is imperative that they do not forsake their responsibility in the home to their children, Proverbs 31:10-31.
- D. Our society is full of examples of failed parenting where moms and dads did not take seriously enough the God-given responsibility of rearing their children.
1. Let us determine that to the best of our abilities we will not allow our children to be added to that number.
 2. Let us determine that we will be consistent in our efforts at childrearing.
 3. Let us determine that we will use the best resources to help us in successful childrearing.

III. Third, consider for a few moments the urgency of a caring and morally responsive church family to successful rearing of our children.

- A. The church is part of the community that can contribute in a positive way to successful childrearing.
1. Scripture speaks of the church as the “house of God,” 1 Timothy 3:15; 1 Peter 4:17.
 2. *Strong’s Concordance and Dictionary* says of the Greek for “house”: “by implication a family” (*Biblesoft’s*).
 3. The Lord’s church is a spiritual family!
- B. The church makes several invaluable contributions to successful childrearing.
1. Bible classes and sermons bring the mind of God to the minds of children and parents alike.
 2. The church is a valuable resource on which parents can

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draw for childrearing, Titus 2:3-5.

3. The church is a valuable support group to which parents can appeal in their childrearing (and other aspects of life), Galatians 6:2.
4. The church, along with the family, have a community or common interest in childrearing, and together they help to offset the bad influences from other segments of society.

Conclusion:

1. Whether we like it or not, the larger community around us participates in rearing our children.
2. Together the home and the church can increase the likelihood of successful childrearing.

Invitation:

1. However, for mom and dad to be all they can be as parents, they really need to be faithful Christians.
2. The words of Jesus tell exactly how to become a child of God, Mark 16:16.
3. The apostle John wrote how that if after one becomes a Christian he sins that his sins can be forgiven, 1 John 1:9.
4. Jesus Christ emphasized the need for Christians to be faithful, Revelation 2:10.

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The Home

Mother

2 Timothy 1:5

Thesis: To praise godly mothers and emphasize their maternal responsibility, as well as stress the responsibility of children toward their mothers.

Introduction:

1. Our dictionaries over simplify the term “mother” with the definition “a female parent” (*Merriam*).
2. Some form of the English word “mother” appears 328 times in the Bible.
3. The Hebrew word most frequently translated as “mother” means “a mother (as the bond of the family)” (*Biblesoft’s*).
4. The Greek word most frequently translated as “mother” usually refers to “the natural relationship” or “one who takes the place of a mother” (Vine).
5. The Greek word for “mother,” appears in our word “metropolis,” meaning mother city (Vine); see LXX 2 Samuel 20:19 (Kittel and Friedrich).

Body:

I. The Bible records special mothers.

- A. The Bible calls Adam’s wife, Eve, “the mother of all living,” Genesis 3:20.
- B. Abraham’s wife, Sarah, is called “a mother of nations,” Genesis 17:16.
- C. Isaac’s wife, Rebekah, is called “the mother of thousands of millions,” Genesis 24:60.

II. The Bible honors mothers.

- A. God has made women “to be a joyful mother of children,” Psalm 113:9.
- B. The virtuous woman of Proverbs 31:10-31 was also a mother, Proverbs 31:28.

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III. The Bible requires especially children to always honor their mothers.

- A. One of the famous Ten Commandments teaches children to honor their mothers, Exodus 20:12; Proverbs 30:17.
 - 1. Jesus Christ also repeatedly taught His audiences to honor their mothers, Matthew 15:4-6; 19:19.
 - 2. Likewise, the apostle Paul echoed the longstanding biblical principle that children ought to honor their mothers, Ephesians 6:2; Deuteronomy 5:16.
- B. The Bible instructs children to revere their mothers, especially when they are “old,” Leviticus 19:3; Proverbs 23:22.
- C. Even the grown man, Isaac, “obeyed” the instruction of his mother, Genesis 28:7; Proverbs 1:8; 6:20.
 - 1. The Bible calls for severe punishment of children who curse, hit or disobey their mothers, Leviticus 20:9; Exodus 21:15; Deuteronomy 21:18-19.
 - 2. Misbehaving children of any age bring great sorrow to their mothers, Proverbs 10:1; 15:20.
- D. Children of any age who do well bring great joy to their mothers, Proverbs 23:25.
- E. However, despite a child’s love for his mother, the Bible would not have one follow his mother in sinful ways, 1 Kings 22:52; 2 Kings 3:2; 2 Chronicles 22:3.
 - 1. The Gospel of Jesus Christ obeyed by some family members has the tendency to divide families, Matthew 10:35-37.
- F. A child mourns the death of his mother more than the passing of any other, Psalm 35:14.

IV. The Bible emphasizes maternal responsibility.

- A. Hannah cared for her young son, Samuel, with material items, 1 Samuel 2:19.
- B. A mother is a source of incomparable comfort, 2 Kings 4:19-20; Isaiah 66:13.
- C. Mothers naturally have the tenderest love for their own children, Proverbs 4:3.

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- D. Yet, a mother realizes that she must discipline her children, Proverbs 29:15.
- E. Maternal love for one's own children leads mothers to be sacrificial, 1 Kings 3:27.

Conclusion:

1. Children either improperly schooled by their mothers and fathers, or especially rebellious children, fail to adore their mothers, Proverbs 30:11; Micah 7:6.
2. Young people are not only to revere their own mothers, but they are to respect elderly women in a similar way that they respect their mothers, 1 Timothy 5:2.
3. There is no better example of the tag team of a mother and a grandmother contributing to successful childrearing than of Eunice and Lois toward Timothy, 2 Timothy 1:5.

Invitation:

1. Jesus Christ once stated that His spiritual family, including His spiritual mother, are those who make themselves His faithful disciples, Matthew 12:47-50.
2. You can become a faithful disciple of Jesus Christ and a part of His spiritual family by obeying the Gospel, 2 Thessalonians 1:8-9; Romans 1:16; Mark 16:16.
3. If you are an unfaithful Christian, through repentance and prayer, you can become a faithful child of God once more, Acts 8:22; 1 John 1:9.

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The Home

In Appreciation of Fathers

Genesis 18:19

Thesis: Being a good father involves much more than procreation.

Introduction:

1. A father is no more a good father than is a mother a good mother merely because of their participation in procreation.
2. Good mothers as well as good fathers are much more.
3. Good fathers, like good mothers, need to be praised as well as reminded of their role respecting their children.

Body:

I. The father under ordinary circumstances is primarily responsible for sustaining the home physically.

- A. Whoever refuses or neglects to provide physically for his own family “is worse than an infidel” (KJV) or “unbeliever” (ASV, NKJV), 1 Timothy 5:8.
- B. Typically, children know they can turn to responsive fathers and rely upon them, Luke 11:11-13.
- C. Fathers need to provide for their children food, clothing, shelter, etc., but godly fathers have responsibilities toward their children beyond the necessities of this life.

II. The father also is responsible for sustaining the home spiritually.

- A. God holds fathers responsible for the spiritual education of their children, Ephesians 6:4.
- B. Abraham was such a father who took seriously the responsibility to instill the faith of God in his children, Genesis 18:19.
- C. Likewise under Judaism, fathers were to seize every opportunity to instill the faith of God in their children, Deuteronomy 6:4-9; 11:18-20.
- D. Children need to be taught from infancy onward, Joshua 8:32-35; 2 Timothy 3:15.
- E. Fathers also must properly discipline their children forasmuch as our Heavenly Father disciplines His children so

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they will be what they ought to be, Hebrews 12:5-11; Proverbs 13:24; 23:13-14.

III. Notice some biblical portraits of fathers.

- A. Some fathers made obvious mistakes (sinned): Noah, Genesis 9:21; Lot, Genesis 19:33-38.
- B. Consider a prime example of a good father and an obedient son: Abraham and Isaac, Genesis 22:7-19.
- C. Paul and Timothy were a spiritual father and son team, 1 Timothy 1:2.
- D. A father may be blameworthy for the sinful lives of his children as Eli was, 1 Samuel 3:13.
- E. We have an example also of a father who was not responsible for the sinfulness of his children: Samuel 1 Samuel 8:1-5.
- F. Good fathers love their sons in spite of their sons' wickedness: David and Absalom, 2 Samuel 18:31-33; the Prodigal Son and his father, Luke 15:11-24.
- G. Jephthah is an example of a rash father, Judges 11:30-39.
- H. Our Heavenly Father is an example of a Father Who chastises His sons because He loves them, Hebrews 12:5-11.

Conclusion:

- 1. Good fathers deserve to be praised and honored.
- 2. Father's Day is one way we do that in our secular world.
- 3. Fathers, be all that you can be because God has given you an important role regarding both the physical and the spiritual needs of your children.

A True Home

A roof to keep out the rain. Four walls to keep out the wind. Floors to keep out the cold. Yes, but home is more than that. It is the laugh of a baby, the song of a mother, the strength of a father. Warmth of loving hearts, light from happy eyes, kindness, loyalty, comradeship. Home is first school for the young ones where they learn what is right, what is good, and what is kind. Where they go for comfort when they are hurt or sick. Where joy is shared and sorrow eased. Where

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fathers and mothers are respected and loved. Where children are wanted. Where the simplest food is good enough for kings because it is earned. Where money is not so important as loving-kindness. Where even the teakettle sings from happiness. That is home. (Schumann-Heink)

Invitation:

1. Our Heavenly Father takes care of us physically and spiritually, Matthew 5:45; John 3:16-17.
2. Like our children must favorably respond to our efforts toward them, we must respond favorably toward our Heavenly Father to obtain salvation initially and remain in a saved condition, Mark 16:16; 1 John 1:9.

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The Home

Marriage, Divorce and Remarriage

Matthew 19:9

Thesis: To ascertain the applicable New Testament doctrine concerning marriage, divorce and remarriage.

Introduction:

1. Biblically, marriage is a consensual covenant between one man and one woman for life.
 - a. To be legally valid, marriage must conform to the civil laws under which a couple lives, Romans 13:1-7.
 - b. To be biblically valid, marriage must conform to both the appropriate civil law and the law of God, since God instituted the institution of marriage, Genesis 2:18-25.
2. It is no wonder that marriage is universally practiced in every society throughout the world and was universally practiced throughout history, too.
 - a. Fornication and adultery are illicit deviations from socially and biblically sanctioned marriage.
 - b. Throughout man's existence, marriage has always been the societal norm.
3. Historically, mankind has often abused the God-given institution of marriage.
 - a. Lamech was the first to introduce polygamy, Genesis 4:17.
 - b. God tolerated divorce under Judaism, Matthew 19:7-8.
 - c. Jesus, however, restored the institution of marriage to its original status, Matthew 19:4-9.

Body:

- I. **Jesus Christ taught one man for one woman for life, except that the innocent spouse in a divorce because of adultery may remarry an eligible candidate.**
 - A. The ministry of Jesus prepared for the establishment of the church, that is, He taught doctrines that did not become effective until the church began.

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1. The first indication that the church existed as a reality is in Acts 2.
 2. Yet, Jesus taught about resolution of private sins between individuals or if necessary involving the church in such matters, before the church was established, Matthew 18:15-17.
 3. The Great Commission was given prior to the establishment of the church, but became effective only after the beginning of the church, Matthew 28:18-20.
 4. Before the establishment of the church, Jesus taught about the restoration of God's original plan respecting marriage, which took effect after the church began, Matthew 19:3-9; Mark 10:11-12.
- B. Jesus directed the attention of His audience back beyond the marriage practices of Judaism and what was contemporary in his day to the institution of marriage by God at the dawn of creation, Matthew 19:4-6.
1. God-sanctioned marriages are not dependent on contemporary social values but marriage as God began the institution.
 2. God made marriage to be the physical and social union of one male and one female.
 3. Further, God designed marriage to be permanent!
- C. Jesus asserted His authority when He said, "I say unto you," and pronounced as adultery in the eyes of God divorce and remarriage, with a single exception.
1. The lone exception that Jesus granted for one with a living spouse marrying another is that one's former spouse committed adultery.
 2. Romans 7:1-3 acknowledges that a widow or a widower also may remarry.
 3. Matthew 19 and Romans 7 record the only biblically permissible remarriages that God allows!

II. The apostle Paul also taught about marriage and divorce.

- A. Paul affirmed what Jesus already taught about marriage and divorce.

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1. The apostle specifically referred to the teachings of Christ and prohibited divorce, 1 Corinthians 7:10.
 2. He added, though, that if they do divorce (implied: for reasons other than adultery), they must remain celibate or reconcile, 1 Corinthians 7:11.
 3. At least one person sins every time a divorce occurs.
 4. The sin of separation or divorce, for instance, when a wife and mother flees the home with her children to avoid the abuse of her husband rests on him, not her.
 5. Still, divorce for safety reasons, etc., by itself, does not permit remarriage while one's spouse is alive.
 6. The apostle Paul absolutely did not establish an additional reason for which one can remarry while a former spouse yet lives!
- B. Paul spoke on some things respecting marriage about which Jesus said nothing.
1. Husbands and wives have mutual physical obligations to each other, 1 Corinthians 7:3-5.
 2. The marriages of non-Christians and Christians are recognized by God, 1 Corinthians 7:12-14, 16.
 3. If a Christian is deserted by his mate, he is not required to give up Christianity to convince the spouse to stay, 1 Corinthians 7:15.
 4. Nothing is said in the verse about remarriage.
 5. Paul does not give an additional ground for divorce and remarriage to what Jesus Christ already stipulated.
 6. The apostle advised Christians to abide in the circumstances in which they were when called by the Gospel, 1 Corinthians 7:17-23.
 7. Paul noted that becoming a Christian did not change social circumstances.
 8. He did not teach that becoming a Christian would make a biblically unlawful marriage permissible.

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III. Both Christians and non-Christians are bound by New Testament marriage laws.

- A. The lists of sins in the New Testament for which impenitent souls will be lost include adultery, 1 Corinthians 6:9-10; Galatians 5:19-21.
 - 1. Adultery is one of the sins of which some Corinthian church members were guilty and for which they repented when they became Christians, 1 Corinthians 6:11.
- B. Repentance involves stopping the sinful practice for which one is repenting.
 - 1. Adultery is not a one-time act but a continuing lifestyle, Colossians 3:5-7.
 - 2. If one could continue in the same adulterous relationship for which he was supposedly repenting, then one could continue doing any other sin for which he purported to repent. Absurd!

IV. There are only three types of persons who are biblically eligible candidates for marriage.

- A. Persons who have never been married are biblically eligible to marry.
 - 1. Marriage helps one avoid fornication, 1 Corinthians 7:2.
 - 2. Marriage is honorable before God and man, Hebrews 13:4.
 - 3. However, one must choose someone who also is biblically eligible to marry.
- B. Persons whose spouses have died may marry other biblically eligible spouses, Romans 7:1-4; 1 Corinthians 7:39; 1 Timothy 5:14.
- C. A person whose spouse is guilty of fornication may divorce that spouse and remarry another biblically eligible spouse, Matthew 19:3-9.

Conclusion:

- 1. God instituted marriage in the Garden of Eden between Adam and Eve.
- 2. Jesus Christ restored marriage to its original state, Matthew 19:3-9.

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3. The apostle Paul re-affirmed Christ's teaching about marriage, 1 Corinthians 7.
4. **Only never married persons, widowed people and innocent spouses in divorces for adultery can contract biblically approved marriages.**

Invitation:

1. Whether it's marriage laws or the plan of salvation, our obligation is to obey God, for which obedience Jesus Christ saves us, Hebrews 5:8-9.
2. Have you obeyed the command to be baptized for the remission of your sins, Acts 10:48; 2:38?
3. If a child of God, are you continuing to pursue an obedient faith, Romans 1:5; 16:26; Revelation 2:10?

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Getting Along with the Brethren

1 Corinthians 6:1-8

Thesis: To encourage brotherly love and brotherly kindness rather than discord among brethren through exposition of 1 Corinthians 6:1-8.

Song: “Angry Words”

Introduction:

1. All issues over which a congregation or some of its members may be troubled fall into one of two categories.
 - a. Many of the issues about which brethren disagree and that may develop into church problems pertain to matters that have no eternal significance, i.e. they are not doctrinal, and they are non-salvation issues.
 - b. A few of the issues about which brethren disagree and that may develop into congregational problems pertain to divine doctrine, are salvation issues and will affect the eternal disposition of souls.
2. Anything that does not affect the eternal disposition of souls matters no more than the proverbial “hill of beans.”
 - a. Doctrinal deviations, though, must not be tolerated, even if put forth by a likeable preacher, Romans 16:17-18.
 - b. Each child of God has the responsibility “to contend earnestly for the faith which was once for all delivered to the saints,” Jude 3 NKJV.
 - c. Every Christian must be “set for the defence of the gospel,” Philippians 1:17.
3. Disagreements between brethren, however, are first the responsibility of the brothers or the sisters involved, Matthew 18:15.
 - a. Ideally, mutual brotherly love will be restored, Romans 12:10; 1 Peter 2:17; Acts 4:32.
 - b. If brethren between whom disagreement exists are unable to resolve their differences, one or two Christian witnesses should be invited to assist, Matthew 18:16.

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- c. Only after these initial efforts to resolve disagreement prove fruitless should disagreements between brethren become a matter for congregational involvement, Matthew 18:17.
4. At no time should Christians or the church air disagreements between brethren before the ungodly world.
 - a. The ungodly world cannot rightfully sit in judgment on the children of God, but the children of God will judge the ungodly world, 1 Corinthians 6:2.
 - b. The apostle Paul, through the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, absolutely prohibited Christians from taking their grievances against brethren (or the church) to courts, 1 Corinthians 6:1.
 - c. Yet, Christians often discuss their complaints about fellow Christians or the church with non-Christians!
 - d. Sometimes, Christians even sue fellow Christians or the Lord's church in a court of law!

Body:

- I. **“Dare any of you, having a matter against another, go to law before the unjust, and not before the saints?” 1 Corinthians 6:1.**
 - A. This verse pertains to disagreements between Christians.
 1. The Epistle of 1 Corinthians was written to Christians, members of “the church of God which is at Corinth,” 1 Corinthians 1:2.
 2. The immediate context makes a distinction between Christians and non-Christians, 1 Corinthians 6:1, 6.
 - B. This context teaches that it is sinful for Christians to appeal to the courts to settle personal differences between them, 1 Corinthians 6:7-8.
 1. Resorting to the courts to settle disputes between Christians blemishes the spotless bride of Christ (the church), Ephesians 5:27; 1 Corinthians 10:32; 2 Corinthians 6:3.
 2. However, the context of 1 Corinthians 6:1-8 does not refer to matters over which the law necessarily has legal jurisdiction, e.g. auto accidents, robbery, murder, etc.

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3. The context does not advise Christians to take the law into their own hands, but it only exhorts brethren to refrain from engaging in civil suits against each other.

II. **“Do ye not know that the saints shall judge the world? and if the world shall be judged by you, are ye unworthy to judge the smallest matters?” 1 Corinthians 6:2.**

A. Indirectly, the righteous pass judgment upon the ungodly that they are unrighteous.

1. For instance, the same procedure by which Noah saved himself and led his family to save themselves constituted a condemnation or a judgment of everyone who did not do what he did, Hebrews 11:7.
2. Likewise, when persons today become Christians and when Christians continue to obey the Gospel, they essentially condemn everyone who does not do what they do, Romans 6:17; Mark 16:16.
3. According to Jude 14-15, it has been a longstanding biblical truth that at the Second Coming the saints will accompany Jesus Christ as He returns to execute judgment; see also Matthew 25:31-41.

B. Since Christians have already discerned between good and evil, they ought to be qualified to continue discerning between good and evil, Hebrews 5:14.

1. Non-doctrinal disagreements between Christians pale in importance to salvation issues.
2. Christians have already surpassed salvation issues and, therefore, they ought to be more than able to address issues of lesser importance, i.e. non-salvation issues between brethren.

III. **“Know ye not that we shall judge angels? how much more things that pertain to this life?” 1 Corinthians 6:3.**

A. This verse repeats the message of the preceding verse for emphasis, only exchanging references to sinful men with references to sinful angels.

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B. Indirectly, Christians pass judgment on the angels who sinned, Jude 6; 2 Peter 2:4.

1. Therefore, Christians ought to be able to demonstrate judgment or discernment regarding matters of less significance, i.e. disagreement between Christians.
2. A distinction appears in the verse between issues of spiritual and eternal significance versus relatively irrelevant matters that pertain to the here and the now.

IV. “If then ye have judgments of things pertaining to this life, set them to judge who are least esteemed in the church. I speak to your shame. Is it so, that there is not a wise man among you? no, not one that shall be able to judge between his brethren?” 1 Corinthians 6:4-5.

A. Disagreements between brethren pertain to non-doctrinal matters, i.e. “this life.”

1. These issues out of which contention arises are not as important as salvation issues.
2. Only doctrines of divine origin deserve the type of defense by which dissension may rightfully come.

B. Lesser issues than divine doctrine require less vigor with which they are addressed.

1. Even the least able member of the church who has already discerned between right and wrong when he obeyed the Gospel ought to be capable of discerning and judging respecting matters of less importance that pertain to this world and disagreements between brethren.
2. Nevertheless, Christians should appeal to the wisest Christians among them for helping to disarm disagreement between brethren.

V. “But brother goeth to law with brother, and that before the unbelievers. Now therefore there is utterly a fault among you, because ye go to law one with another. Why do ye not rather take wrong? why do ye not rather suffer yourselves to

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be defrauded? Nay, ye do wrong, and defraud, and that your brethren,” 1 Corinthians 6:6-8.

- A. The sinfulness of Christians suing each other in civil courts is emphasized repeatedly in this context.
 - 1. “Defraud” and “wrong” throughout the context are used as synonyms for sin.
 - 2. A catalog of sins immediately follows this context, suggesting that the contexts of 1 Corinthians 1:1-8 and verses 9-11 have something in common, i.e. sinfulness.
- B. It is preferable for Christians to suffer injury than for the Lord’s cause to suffer, which occurs when disagreements among Christians are taken to court.
 - 1. God will ultimately avenge any wrong done to His children, Proverbs 20:22.
 - 2. Jesus Christ also formerly taught during His ministry that His followers should turn the other cheek or submit if a court judgment succeeds against them, Matthew 5:39-40.

Conclusion:

- 1. Frequently, issues between brethren are nothing more than personality clashes, opinions or different ways of doing things that are neither right nor wrong.
 - a. Congregational tranquility is more important than personalities, opinions and optional matters.
 - b. It is not possible to worship God acceptably as long as brethren are at odds with each other, Matthew 5:23-24.
 - c. Christians must be careful they refrain from forcing their will on other brethren, 3 John 9-10; Titus 1:7.
- 2. Problems between brethren should remain within the local church and be resolved there.
 - a. Disagreements among brethren should be resolved between the brethren involved if possible.
 - b. One or two brethren may assist resolution of disagreements between brethren.

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- c. Finally, disagreements between brethren may be resolved by the local congregation if previous efforts between brethren were fruitless.
3. Ultimately, each child of God must be careful not to blemish the ministry of Christ or sow discord among brethren, Proverbs 6:16-19.
 - a. One of the Christian graces is “brotherly kindness,” 2 Peter 1:7.
 - b. “Brotherly love” for our brothers and sisters in the Christian family will alleviate many potential conflicts, Hebrews 13:1.
 - c. *Getting along with our Christian brethren on earth certainly must be a prerequisite to any anticipated fellowship together in Heaven forever!*

Invitation:

1. The first step to being with each other in Heaven forever is obedience of the Gospel, Hebrews 5:8-9.
2. Initial obedience involves believing the Gospel, repenting of sins, professing Jesus to be the Christ and immersion in water for the remission of sins, Mark 16:16; Luke 13:3; Matthew 10:32-33; Acts 2:38.
3. Continued obedience by the children of God keeps us in fellowship with God and remits sins for which we repent, Acts 8:22, and sins we may commit unknowingly from time to time, 1 John 1:7.

Christian Living

A Whole New Way of Life

Romans 6:1-2

Thesis: To impress on especially Christians that deciding to be a Christian and being a faithful Christian involves a whole new way of life.

Song: “True-Hearted, Whole-Hearted”

Introduction:

1. There is no aspect of one’s life that becoming a Christian does not reorganize according to God’s rulebook, the Bible (specifically for our time — the New Testament).
2. *Christianity is supposed to be a whole new way of life!*
3. Halfhearted Christianity in the lives of many Christians is completely unacceptable to God.
 - a. A Christian harms himself spiritually (and sometimes physically) by not practicing Christianity wholeheartedly.
 - b. Further, a Christian discourages other Christians by his or her lackadaisical or haphazard practice of Christianity, i.e. it is harder to be a faithful Christian when surrounded by deficient Christians.
 - c. Unfortunately, halfhearted Christianity in the lives of Christians discourages non-Christians from becoming Christians.
4. We need to sing more songs more often like “True-Hearted, Whole-Hearted,” and really mean them with all of our being.
 - a. Phrases like “faithful and loyal, King of our lives” need to be exemplified by the lives Christians live daily.
 - b. Phrases like “loving obedience, freely and joyously” need to be the disposition of Christian minds that determine to follow Jesus in everything.
 - c. Phrases like, “Take Thy great power and reign there alone, Over our wills and affections victorious, Freely surrendered and wholly Thine own,” need to represent the Christian’s submissiveness to the Sovereign of the universe.

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Body:

I. The apostle Paul emphasized that Christians must live differently than how the same persons lived prior to becoming Christians.

A. Christians are those who may have been guilty of the most heinous sins, but who through the blood of Jesus Christ have been cleansed from their past sins.

1. For instance, Christians at Corinth had previously been guilty of a wide spectrum of awful sins, 1 Corinthians 6:9-11.
2. Sinner or saint, whoever commits sins, though commonly practiced by humanity, will not enter the eternal kingdom of Heaven, Galatians 5:19-21.

B. Christians simply cannot allow sinfulness to continue as a way of life, expecting that God's grace and mercy will erase it, Romans 6:1-2.

1. Yes, God's grace and mercy erases sins from one's life that cannot be removed in any other way, Ephesians 2:8; Titus 3:5.
2. However, God's grace and mercy are only available to *obedient souls*, imperfect yes, but nevertheless obedient, Hebrews 5:9; 2 Thessalonians 1:7-9; 1 Peter 4:17.
3. Christians must not provide opportunities for temptations in their lives, setting themselves up to fail miserably in sin, Romans 13:14.

C. Instead, Christians must live sacrificial lives, imitating the greatest sacrifice of all made by Jesus Christ for humanity.

1. Christian lives are to be living sacrifices, Romans 12:1-2.
2. We betray our profession to be Christians when we continue to or again live like the ungodly world, 1 Peter 1:14.
3. Not the fleshly lust of men but the will of God must dominate our minds and direct our actions, 1 Peter 4:2.
4. Christians simply cannot run to the same excess of sinful conduct characteristic of their former lives and still demonstrated by lost souls everywhere, 1 Peter 4:3-4.

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II. True-hearted, whole-hearted Christianity demands of Christians that they fully throw themselves into the practice and spread of the Gospel of Jesus Christ.

A. *True-hearted, whole-hearted Christians allow Christianity to consume their lives.*

1. Faithful Christians do not use the guise of Christianity to excuse themselves from thoroughly implementing Christianity in their lives, i.e. not in word or in action essentially adopting the attitude of once saved always saved, 1 Peter 2:16.
 2. Jesus Christ Himself condemned pious religious persons who made a mere pretense of being holy and righteous, Matthew 23:14.
 3. Instead, our lives as Christians are to be “hid with Christ in God,” Colossians 3:3.
 4. In consequence of the cross of Jesus Christ and all that He did for us, as Christians, we are obligated to live as though we are dead to sins and living to personify righteousness, 1 Peter 2:24; 2 Corinthians 5:14-17.
 5. There must be an obvious difference between the way faithful Christians live their lives and the ways in which non-Christians live their lives, Matthew 5:13-16; Philippians 2:15.
 6. The ungodly world knows those who are its fellows, and Christians ought not to kid themselves that they are Christ’s if their affections and actions betray them as friends of the ungodly world, John 15:19; 17:14.
 7. Faithful Christians no longer pursue ungodliness, Ephesians 2:1-3; James 4:4.
- ### B. True-hearted, whole-hearted Christians actively promote the spread of pure Christianity in any and every way that they possibly can.
1. There is nothing — I repeat, nothing and no one! — on planet earth that ought to mean more to the practicing Christian than glorying in the cross of Christ (and all for which it stands), Galatians 6:14; Philippians 3:7-11.
 2. First, we must not be ashamed to live the Gospel of Jesus

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Christ or to tell it to others, Romans 1:16.

- C. True-hearted, whole-hearted Christianity is not something that ought to wane with the passing of time or from which we can retire when the years roll on.
 1. Though our bodies may slow as we age, inwardly lively Christians grow stronger day by day, 2 Corinthians 4:16.
 2. We do all we can for the cause of Christ until we die or otherwise are completely incapacitated, e.g. as long as one can still think, he or she can at least pray.
 3. Some of God's most useful servants were senior citizens, e.g. Noah (500-years-old at the flood), Moses (80 at the Exodus).

Conclusion:

1. *Christianity doesn't mean enough to you if it does not mean everything to you!*
2. *Christianity doesn't mean enough to you if it does not materially and fundamentally affect every aspect of your life.*
3. There is no better quotation and forming words into a brief summary of the proper application of Christianity than what sister Cindy Colley penned:

Children who grow up thinking that Christianity is only a part of life will find it increasingly easy to separate Christianity from academics, friends, career, and other pursuits. Parents must show children from infancy that God is the foundation of all of the family's decisions. He is central in all our activities. (15)

Invitation:

1. Is Christianity your everything, evidenced before all the world to see?
2. Christianity is not your everything if you have never become a Christian, Mark 16:16; Acts 11:26.
3. Christianity is not your everything if you are an unfaithful or a lax Christian, Acts 8:22; 1 John 1:7-9.

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Christian Living

Sins of Good People in the Church

1 Peter 4:17

Thesis: To emphasize the necessity of Christians being completely holy, pure and obedient.

Song: “More Holiness Give Me”

Introduction:

1. There are three kinds of people in the Lord’s church.
 - a. There are good people as God counts goodness, those who have obeyed the Gospel and continue to be faithful, Acts 2:47; Mark 16:16; Hebrews 5:8-9; Revelation 2:10.
 - b. There are morally good people, nevertheless, who are unfaithful to the Lord, 1 Corinthians 3:1-3; Hebrews 5:12-14; Revelation 2:4; 3:14-19.
 - c. There are people who are backsliders, 2 Peter 2:20-22.
2. Whereas the good people as God counts goodness are spiritually secure, those Christians who are merely morally good people and those erring Christians who have turned back to the ungodly world stand condemned before Almighty God.
3. Each of us needs to ask himself in what category before God he or she stands and make a spiritual examination, 2 Corinthians 13:5.
4. For a few moments, let’s survey some sins of good people in the church.

Body:

I. Omission of duty.

- A. With knowledge comes responsibility, James 4:17.
- B. In addition to enumerating one’s unforgiven sins, final judgment will note what was left undone, Matthew 25:31-46.
- C. Faith without works of obedience will not suffice in judgment, James 2:14-26.

II. Loss of one’s first love.

- A. Is your heart still in Christianity, Revelation 2:4?
- B. Where has the zeal gone that you had when you first obeyed

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the Gospel?

- C. Jesus Christ told the Ephesian Christians, through the pen of the apostle John, that they had to repent, Revelation 2:5.

III. Becoming lukewarm.

- A. Our Lord condemned the church of Laodicea because its members had become apathetic and indifferent, Revelation 3:14-19.
- B. Christians are supposed to be zealous of good works, Titus 2:14.

IV. Violating the Golden Rule.

- A. Jesus taught that the children of God are to treat all people in the way we desire others to treat us, Matthew 7:12.
- B. Further, Christians are supposed to have a preferential regard for fellow Christians, Romans 12:10; 1 Peter 2:17.

V. Practicing a surface religion.

- A. Are you distracted from New Testament Christianity by the least temptation, Luke 8:13?
- B. The writer of Hebrews warned to guard against unbelief developing in our hearts, after which we depart from the Lord, Hebrews 3:12.

VI. Choking our Christianity with worldly cares and pleasures.

- A. In the Parable of the Soils, seed (the Word of God) sown among thorns was unfruitful because of cares, riches, lusts and pleasures, Luke 8:14; Mark 4:18.
- B. The cares for physical things in this world should be secondary to concern for seeking our Lord first, Matthew 6:25-34 (33).
- C. The quest for riches can be ruinous, 1 Timothy 6:10.
- D. Lusts of the world are deadly, 1 John 2:15-17.
- E. The pleasures of sin are elusive and temporary, Hebrews 11:25.

VII. Compromise of Truth to please family.

- A. The Gospel will divide families because of the ongoing conflict in the spiritual world, Matthew 10:35-38; Luke 12:51-53.
- B. Any sacrifices one may make in this life, including in one's family, will be amply compensated in the world to come, Matthew 19:29.
- C. Faithful Christians will love Jesus more than their family

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members, Matthew 10:37.

VIII. Quarrelsome in the church, at home or at work.

- A. Christians are to learn gentleness, meekness and patience, 2 Timothy 2:24-26.
- B. Jesus Christ Himself was the perfect example to follow in meekness and gentleness, even in the face of His suffering and death, 1 Peter 2:21-23.

IX. Covetousness.

- A. Covetousness or greediness for gain by illicit means is classified with other sins for which the wrath of God will visit sinners, Colossians 3:5-6; Ephesians 5:5.
- B. The children of God are supposed to lay up treasures in Heaven rather than on earth, Matthew 6:19-21.

X. Discourteous and unfriendly.

- A. Christians are supposed to be courteous, especially to brethren, 1 Peter 3:8.
- B. In order to have and to maintain friends, one must exhibit friendliness, Proverbs 18:24.

XI. Envy.

- A. Envy and hate are some of the sins that we are supposed to have put away upon becoming Christians, and they are listed with sins that condemn souls to Hell, Titus 3:3; Romans 1:29.
- B. The older brother of the prodigal son, despite many other good qualities, was guilty of envy, Luke 15:11-32.

XII. Desiring preeminence.

- A. Diotrefes abused his brethren so he could rule the church, 3 John 9-10.
- B. The scribes and Pharisees during the ministry of Jesus Christ abused their fellows to seek preeminence over them, Matthew 23:1-9.

XIII. Burying one's talents.

- A. Jesus told a parable about a servant who buried his talent (which was the name for a quantity of money), Matthew 25:14-30.

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- B. We must be fruitful to be pleasing to our Lord, John 15:1-8.
- C. There is something for every member of the church to do in the service of Jesus Christ, 1 Corinthians 12:12-31.

XIV. Failing to bridle the tongue and control one's temper.

- A. James wrote that to not bridle one's tongue is to make his religion "vain," James 1:26; 3:3-13.
- B. Angry words are not to be answered with angry words, Proverbs 15:1.
- C. Unjustified anger, which fuels angry words, is listed among the sins not to be named among faithful Christians, Colossians 3:8-9.

XV. Being too critical.

- A. Non-disciples and disciples of Jesus Christ were critical of Him, Mark 14:1-11.
- B. Jesus Christ condemned unrighteous judgment, Matthew 7:1-5.

Conclusion:

1. Do we need to tweak our Christian living?
2. Are there sins of which we are guilty, by which we threaten our only heavenly hereafter and discourage the Lord's church?
3. Sin left unrepented and unforgiven once time is no more will condemn even children of God, Romans 6:23; Hebrews 10:26.

Invitation:

1. Does sin separate you from your God, Isaiah 59:1-3?
2. Erring Christians must repent, 1 John 1:9.
3. God desires all mankind to repent and turn to Him, 2 Peter 3:9; Acts 17:30-31; Acts 2:38.

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The Cost of Discipleship

Luke 14:25-35

Thesis: To provide a biblical definition of and to encourage the children of God to enthusiastically embrace Christian discipleship.

Introduction:

1. Our Lord addressed the cost of discipleship in Luke 14:25-35.
 - a. However, one has to know what the Bible means by discipleship and what it means by cost before anyone could possibly embrace it enthusiastically or knowledgeably.
 - b. Both English and Greek dictionaries provide relevant definitions respecting Christian discipleship and its costs.
2. The cost of discipleship is adequately demonstrated and recorded upon the pages of the New Testament.
 - a. No one better demonstrated what the cost of discipleship involves than Jesus Christ Himself.
 - b. Also, the lives of our Lord's apostles and other faithful disciples, as well as much of the New Testament, demonstrates what is involved in the cost of discipleship.

Body:

I. Luke 14:25-35.

- A. "If any man come to me, and hate not his father, and mother, and wife, and children, and brethren, and sisters, yea, and his own life also, he cannot be my disciple," Luke 14:26.
 1. The word "hate" can mean, as it usually does, malicious feelings toward another, or it can mean "relative preference for one thing over another" (Vine).
 2. Here the word "hate" means the latter and is used for the purpose of emphasis, cf. Matthew 10:37.
 3. We must have our priorities in proper order, Christ first, Matthew 6:33.
- B. "And whosoever doth not bear his cross, and come after me, cannot be my disciple," Luke 14:27.

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1. Each who would follow Jesus must carry a cross, not representative of a handsome piece of jewelry, but representing all of the peril and pain involved in crucifixion.
 2. No one is called upon to carry the cross of Christ, but each must carry his own cross.
 - 3. Being a disciple involves activity in the face of peril.**
- C. Luke 14:28-35 provides three illustrations, with an emphasis on counting the cost (28).
1. Planning ahead is essential to construct a fortification such as a tower and to achieve victory in war.
 2. Like useless salt, pursuits lightly undertaken, such as being a disciple of Christ, are useless, too.
 - 3. Anyone who would propose to be a disciple of our Lord must predetermine to pay the cost.**

II. Defining Discipleship.

- A. Defining “disciple,” some English definitions.
1. “One who accepts and assists in spreading the doctrines of another” (*Webster’s Seventh* 237).
 2. “A follower of a particular teacher: an adherent of the principles of some leader of thought” (*Living Webster* 284).
 3. “One who professes to have learned certain principles from another and maintains them on that other’s authority” (M’Clintock and Strong 815).
- B. Some Greek definitions for “disciple.”
1. “To learn, be taught, to learn by practice or experience, acquire a custom or habit” (*Analytical Greek*).
 2. “To learn, to understand, to know, to be informed, to comprehend” (Berry 62).
- C. The words “disciple” and “disciples” appear 221 times in the New Testament.
1. A faithful disciple of Jesus Christ adheres to the Lord’s teaching, practicing the same until it becomes a daily habit.
 2. The Lord’s disciple understands and is informed of His divine will in order to present one’s body as a living sacrifice and to

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disciple the nations, Romans 12:1-2; Matthew 28:19, ASV.

3. True discipleship is maintained only by the divine authority of Christ and not by the authority of men, John 8:31; Matthew 15:9.
4. Furthermore, effective disciples of the Lord are fruitful workers and good stewards, who have anticipated and acknowledged the cost of discipleship, Matthew 7:15-20; John 15:1-8; Matthew 25:14-30; Luke 14:25-35.

III. Defining Cost.

- A. Defining “cost,” some English and Greek definitions.
 1. “That which must be given to acquire, produce, accomplish or maintain anything” (*Living Webster* 230).
 2. “The outlay or expenditure (as of effort or sacrifice) made to achieve an object. Loss or penalty incurred in gaining something. To stand firm, constant. To require effort, suffering or loss” (*Webster’s Seventh* 189).
 3. “To devour, hence expense, as something which eats up resources” (Vincent 381).
- B. “Cost” appears in the New Testament once (Luke 14:28).
 1. The cost of discipleship mandates the investment of effort, labor, money and time in the service of our Lord and Savior.
 2. This is most easily and properly accomplished when Christians first give themselves fully to the Lord as the Macedonians did, 2 Corinthians 8:1-5.

IV. The Cost of Discipleship is Demanding.

- A. One is not a fruitful disciple who professes discipleship without actively assisting in the spreading of the teaching of Christ, Mark 16:15; Acts 8:4; 1 Thessalonians 1:8.
 1. True discipleship is maintained by faithful service and is governed by the authority of Christ alone, 1 Corinthians 15:58; John 8:31.
 2. It should be a habitual part of life and must be practiced, Luke 6:46.
- B. Discipleship does not simply happen, but it is learned,

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Hebrews 5:12-6:2; 1 Peter 2:2.

1. The basis upon which Christian discipleship rests and is built must be an intense familiarity with the Christ and His Word.
2. This familiarity occurs as the calculated result of earnest study of the Bible and imitation of Christ, Acts 17:11; 2 Timothy 2:15; 1 Corinthians 11:1, ASV; 1 Peter 2:21.

V. Demonstrating the Cost of Discipleship.

- A. Jesus Christ suffered the most anyone could suffer for the spiritual welfare of others.
 1. Jesus left the glory of Heaven, lived on the world he created, was rejected, beaten mercilessly and experienced an agonizing execution by ungrateful mankind on the cross.
 2. Our Lord assured His disciples that the world would treat them in similar fashion, Matthew 10:25; John 15:20.
- B. The apostles and other disciples of Jesus Christ suffered greatly in the first century.
 1. The apostles were threatened, imprisoned and beaten, Acts 4:17; 5:17-41.
 2. Stephen was stoned to death, Acts 7:57-60.
 3. The apostle James was executed, Acts 12:1-2.
 4. The apostle Paul suffered countless persecutions for the cause of Christ, 2 Corinthians 11:23-27.
- C. Encouragement in the face of persecution is a frequent biblical topic.
 1. Jesus encouraged His band of disciples, Matthew 10:28.
 2. The apostle Paul forewarned of persecution from the ungodly world, 2 Timothy 3:12.
 3. The apostle Peter addressed persecution of Christians, 1 Peter 3:14; 4:16.
 4. The apostle John offered encouragement in the face of severe persecution and death, Revelation 2:10.
- D. Faithful discipleship in the face of persecution spread the Gospel throughout the world in the first century.

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1. Persecution was the catalyst that took the Gospel beyond Jerusalem, Acts 8:1, 4.
2. *Foxe's Book of Martyrs* chronicles the torturous deaths of many disciples beyond what the biblical record mentions.
3. The more Christians were killed, the more Christians there were; it was said that, "The blood of martyrs is the seed of the kingdom."
4. The cost of discipleship was not too great for Christians in the early centuries to endure, while taking the Gospel to the world.

Conclusion:

1. That many Christians never carefully examine the ramifications of faithful discipleship is self-evident from the absence of fruitful activity among large numbers of our brethren.
2. The more overlooked sin among us is probably that of omission, the dilution of our discipleship, James 1:22.
3. The apathy and indifference, which for many brethren has replaced dedicated discipleship, is the sin for which the Laodicean church was condemned, Revelation 3:15-16.
4. Probably more of the church in this generation will be lost, not for overt commission of sin, but for omissions in Christian duty and careless discipleship

Invitation:

1. Individual, self-examination of personal discipleship now can save souls from the perils of an individual, divine examination (judgment) in which unprofitable disciples will be cast into Hell, 2 Corinthians 13:5; Matthew 25:30, 41, 46.
2. Unfaithful, unfruitful disciples can recommit themselves to Christian living and Christian service, Luke 15:7, 10.
3. Unbaptized believers can begin a life of discipleship by putting Christ on in baptism, Galatians 3:27.

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Christian Living

Living Soberly, Righteously and Godly in This Present World

Titus 2:12

Thesis: To encourage enthusiastic and committed Christian living.

Song: “I Surrender All”

Introduction:

1. Titus 2:12 and the rest of Titus are addressed to Christians — the church, the saved.
 - a. Titus 2:12 does not concern how to become a child of God.
 - b. It exhorts the child of God to be moved by the Word of God in Christian living.
2. Titus 2:12 is the summary definition of the manifestation of true Christianity in the lives of Christians and churches of Christ.
 - a. It is possible for individuals and churches to appear to manifest Titus 2:12 when really they are tainted with sin.
 - b. Christians and congregations cannot be acceptable to God without demonstrating Titus 2:12.
3. The implementation of Titus 2:12 involves both the eradication of some things from one’s life and the replacement of such with godly virtues.

Body:

I. Titus One

- A. The instruction of 2:12 rests in the authority of an apostle, 1:1.
- B. Heeding truth and practicing godliness are the bases of hope, 1:2.
- C. The Word of God is the sole medium by which this truth is revealed to men, 1:3.
- D. The appointment of elders is a contributor to individual Christian and congregational ‘soberness, righteousness and godliness,’ 1:4-9.
- E. Manifestation of the lack of ‘soberness, righteousness and godliness’ is evident among unruly, vain talkers and deceivers, 1:10.

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- F. The Jewish error and the abuse of the Gospel oppose ‘soberness, righteousness and godliness,’ 1:11-14.
- G. A defiled conscience prohibits ‘soberness, righteousness and godliness,’ 1:15.
- H. Evil works negate professions of godliness, 1:16.

II. Titus Two

- A. Sound doctrine (Truth) underlies ‘soberness, righteousness and godliness,’ 2:1.
- B. Elderly men are exhorted to be models (patterns) of ‘soberness, righteousness and godliness,’ 2:2.
- C. Elderly women are exhorted to be models (patterns) of ‘soberness, righteousness and godliness,’ 2:3.
- D. Young women are exhorted to be models (patterns) of ‘soberness, righteousness and godliness,’ 2:4-5.
- E. Young men are exhorted to be models (patterns) of ‘soberness, righteousness and godliness,’ 2:6-8.
- F. Servants are exhorted to be models (patterns) of ‘soberness, righteousness and godliness,’ 2:9-10.
- G. All men are availed of salvation — the path of which is ‘soberness, righteousness and godliness,’ 2:11.
- H. Putting off and putting on now is the key to eternal hope, 2:12-14.
- I. The apostolic authority with which these instructions were initially given are equally forceful and authoritative today, 2:15; 2 Timothy 2:2.
 - 1. There is no cause to despise the messenger.
 - 2. It is neither his message nor is it given by his authority.

III. Titus Three

- A. Submission to government is necessary to fulfill 2:12, 3:1.
- B. Meekness is necessary to fulfill 2:12, 3:2.
- C. Christians have put off and must abandon old ways in order to fulfill 2:12, 3:3.
- D. Old, evil ways must be replaced with better ways.
 - 1. A void must not be left after casting away old ways, 3:4.

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2. This was illustrated in principle by Jesus regarding an evil spirit re-entering a man with additional wicked spirits, Matthew 12:43-45.
- E. One cannot earn a favored position with God, but if one does his little part, God will do His big part, 3:5-8.
- F. Apostasy is an ever-present threat, 3:9-11.

IV. Lessons

- A. The pursuit of ‘soberness, righteousness and godliness’ is predicated upon divine authority, 1:1; 2:15.
- B. Divine instruction by which 2:12 is facilitated is the Word of God (Truth) or sound doctrine, 1:1, 3, 9; 2:1.
- C. Valid Christian hope is tied diametrically to implementation of 2:12, 1:2; 2:11-13; 3:7.
- D. Titus 2:12 is accomplished through divine commandment keeping of the “common faith,” 1:3-4, versus keeping commandments of men, 1:14.
- E. Practicing 2:12 equates to being “sound in the faith,” 1:13; 2:2.
- F. Without “living soberly, righteously and godly,” the Christian’s conscience is defiled and his profession of Christianity is vain, 1:15-16.
- G. Elders, elderly men, elderly women, young women, young men, servants (slaves, employees — in principle, anyone who is subject to someone else) are given specific instructions in Titus by which they can practice 2:12, 1:6-2:10.
- H. Living “soberly, righteously and godly in this present world” involves being: blameless, not self-willed, not soon angry, not given to wine, no striker, not given to filthy lucre (not covetous), hospitable, sober, just, holy, temperate, one who holds fast the faithful word, of good conscience, of sound doctrine, sound in the faith, charitable, patient, not a false accuser, teachers of good things, compassionate, discreet, chaste, a pattern of good works, uncorrupted, sincere, sound in speech, under subjection, not a brawler, gentle, meek, not foolish, not disobedient, not deceived, not lustful, not lovers

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of pleasure, not living in malice, not envious, not hateful, workers of good, and not factious, 1:6-3:10.

I. When Christians do what they can and still fall short of righteousness whereby they can come into the presence of God, through mercy and grace God makes up the difference (conditionally), 2:11, 3:5-7.

J. Mercy and grace are conditional on good works, 1:7; 2:5, 8, 14.

K. There is an emphasis in Titus on “sound doctrine,” 1:9; 2:1, and “sound in the faith,” 1:13; 2:2.

Conclusion:

1. It is not enough to obey the Gospel by which one’s past sins are remitted.
2. Hope of eternal life is conditional upon implementation of the Word of God in one’s life to produce true Christian living.
3. Sadly, many Christians and churches fall far short in this area, and it simply cannot be so without adversely affecting their prospect of spending eternity in heaven with God.

Invitation:

1. Neither Christians nor non-Christians dare assume that they are basking in the grace and mercy of God, Matthew 7:21-23; 2 Peter 2:20-22; Acts 10-11.
2. Christians must examine themselves routinely with the Word of God and repent and pray when found to be spiritually deficient, 2 Corinthians 13:5; Acts 8:22.
3. Non-Christians need to follow the apostolic instructions recorded in the first Gospel sermon, Acts 2:38.

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Let Us Examine Our Ways and Turn Back to the Lord

Lamentations 3:40 NKJV

Thesis: To encourage introspection and spiritual revival.

Song: “Revive Us Again”

Introduction:

1. Periodic or routine introspection is key to being in a right relationship with the God of the universe, Lamentations 3:40; Haggai 1:5, 7; 2 Corinthians 13:5.
2. Self-criticism, using God’s infallible Word as the tool with which we inspect ourselves, precedes any needed course corrections.
3. We must couple biblical introspection with a determination to bring ourselves in perpetual alignment with the divine will of Jehovah.

Body:

I. Let’s look more closely at Lamentations 3:40.

A. “Let us search out and examine our ways.”

1. “Try” (KJV) or “examine” (NKJV) means “to penetrate; hence, to examine intimately” (*Biblesoft’s*).
2. “Ways” means “a course of life” (*Biblesoft’s*).
3. Wycliffe calls the procedure outlined in this portion of the verse as “heart-searching.”
4. This searching can only be accomplished with the aid of God through His revealed Word, Psalm 139:23-24.
5. Every child of God needs to compare his course of life with the way in which God would have him live his life, in every aspect thereof.

B. “And turn back to the LORD.”

1. The word “LORD” in all capital letters refers to Jehovah, “(the) self-Existent or Eternal; Jehovah, Jewish national name of God” (*Biblesoft’s*).
2. Barnes says of this portion of the verse and turning back to Jehovah, “the Hebrew implies not half way, but the whole.”

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3. Clearly, the object of self-examination is to bring oneself in closer harmony with the will of God, and thereby to draw nigh to God himself, Psalm 119:59.
 4. God has always been willing to pardon the offenses of the penitent, Isaiah 55:7; Zechariah 1:3; 2 Peter 3:9.
 5. It is not only important to go through the motions of being a child of God, but we must actually comply with divine instruction outwardly and inwardly, which inward devotion in us will manifest outward compliance, Isaiah 1:11-15.
- C. The self-examination has as its purpose a change for the better, a reformation brought about by repentance.

Repentance begins with self-examination and honest analysis of their situation. Every individual must “search” (lit., dig into) and “examine” (lit., test or try) his heart. The objective of this rigorous self-examination is to discover and remove any impediments which may be preventing them from returning to the Lord. The Hebrew preposition translated “to” has the idea of actually arriving at the goal. The poet is urging upon his hearers a complete and whole-hearted return to God. (Smith)

II. What principles might we derive from Lamentations 3:40 that we can apply to ourselves today?

- A. Jehovah throughout Scripture repeatedly called upon mankind to devote himself to discerning the revealed will of God, Acts 3:19 ASV.
1. The apostle Paul called upon Christians to inspect their works for biblical soundness, Galatians 6:4.
 2. We must make biblical course corrections in our lives when our hearts or consciences (educated by the Word of God) convict us, 1 John 3:20-21.
 3. The consequence of not inspecting our own hearts and subsequent conduct is the harsh inspection of God, if not before, certainly in Final Judgment, 1 Corinthians 11:31.
 4. We must repent (when needed) or else, Revelation 2:5!

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5. Even the most previously useful Christians can lose their way and be lost, 1 Corinthians 9:27.
- B. New Testament Scripture calls upon Christians to perform introspection before communing with Jesus Christ in the Lord's Supper, 1 Corinthians 11:28.
 1. In the passage where 1 Corinthians 11:28 appears, the instruction pertains to observing the communion in a worthy manner, i.e. for spiritual purposes rather than to gratify one's hunger.
 2. Of course, one may also partake of the Lord's Supper in an unworthy manner if his mind is not centered on the sacrifice of Jesus that the communion represents, i.e. being distracted by sundry unrelated thoughts or just inattention to worship.
- C. The areas are many in one's life where we should examine our ways and when needed turn back to the Lord.
 1. Every aspect of Christian worship needs to be strictly in accordance with what is proscribed (for us) in the New Testament, Matthew 15:9; Colossians 2:23; John 4:24.
 2. Every aspect of Christian service needs to correspond to what is written in the New Testament, Titus 2:14; James 1:27; 2:14-26.
 3. Every aspect of Christian living needs to be in harmony with what the Gospel of Christ teaches, Titus 2:12; Philippians 4:8.
 4. Every aspect of Christian teaching needs to correspond exactly to what is taught upon the pages of the New Testament, 1 Peter 4:11; 1 Timothy 4:16; Romans 16:17-18.
 - 5. The whole of our Christianity needs to be whole-hearted submission to Almighty God, Hebrews 5:9; 2 Thessalonians 1:8; Matthew 22:37.**

Conclusion:

1. The nation of Judah, like the northern tribes (the nation of Israel) before them, spurned the longsuffering, grace and mercy of God

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until God destroyed the nation.

2. Will we search and try our ways, or will we wait until it's too late to make course corrections, i.e. when Jehovah in Final Judgment passes eternal sentence on us?
3. Will we turn to God at every opportunity, guided by His infallible Word, or will we exhibit little to no concern for our soul's salvation?

Invitation:

1. Turning to the Lord is a prerequisite to initial salvation and continued salvation, Acts 26:20.
2. Turning to the Lord initially includes repentance, Acts 2:38.
3. Christians also need to repent of sins in their lives, Acts 8:22; 1 John 1:9.
4. Please search and try your ways, and then, turn to the Lord today.

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The Time Is At Hand For Godly Living

Revelation 1:3; Romans 13:11-14

Thesis: To encourage godliness among God's people.

Song: "Take Time To Be Holy"

Introduction:

1. God destroyed an ungodly world in Noah's day, Genesis 6.
2. God caused Israel to destroy ungodly nations in Canaan, Joshua.
3. God will destroy an ungodly world in the last day, 2 Peter 3:9-12; 2 Thessalonians 1:7-9.

Body:

I. Examples of godliness among God's children.

- A. Good Ole Noah: The rest of the world except Noah's immediate family could not be persuaded from their ungodliness, even by a veteran servant (600-years-old) though he could have preached to them for the 120 years he built the ark.
- B. All of Hebrews Chapter 11's "hall of fame (or faith)" Bible characters.
- C. Joshua affected his generation and the one that followed in godliness, Judges 2:7-8.
- D. The virtuous woman of Proverbs 31:10-31.
- E. Lois, Eunice and Timothy represent three generations of godliness, 2 Timothy 1:5.
- F. Stephen and James practiced godliness unto death, Acts 6:8-7:60; 12:1-2; Revelation 2:10; the apostles (and other brethren) also were prepared to practice godliness unto death, Acts 4-5; 2 Corinthians 11:23-28.
- G. Scripture pictures Sarah as the mother of godly women, 2 Peter 3:4-6.

II. Examples of the lack of godliness among God's children.

- A. Ananias and Sapphira, Acts 5:1-11: Christians cheating on income taxes about church contributions would be comparable today.

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- B. Brother who lived with his father's wife, 1 Corinthians 5:1-13; even preachers have committed adultery.
- C. Diotrefes, 2 John 9-10.
- D. Demas, 2 Timothy 4:10.
- E. Simon (formerly a sorcerer), then he repented, Acts 8.

III. Exhortations to godliness.

- A. Older men and women as well as younger men and women are encouraged to practice godliness, Titus 2:1-6; all accountable souls — especially all Christians.
- B. Qualifications of elders do not represent a degree of godliness from which other Christians are exempt, 1 Timothy 3:1-7; Titus 1:5-9.
- C. Christians must obey government in order to be godly, Romans 13:1-8; 2 Peter 2:17; speeding tickets don't speak highly of our godliness.
- D. Godliness also requires practicing modesty, 1 Timothy 2:9-10; 1 Peter 3:1-6. Modesty is not wholly dependent on society; otherwise one day we could walk down the street stark naked and consider ourselves modest.
- E. Godliness requires our abstaining from drugs (including alcohol), Proverbs 23:29-35; Galatians 5:21.
- F. Godly people also abstain from pornography, Matthew 5:28.
- G. Godly people must not lie, Revelation 1:8.
- H. Godly people don't steal, Ephesians 4:28, not even from one's job or the government.
- I. Practicing godliness means not keeping evil companions, Proverbs 1:10-19; 1 Corinthians 15:33; 2 Corinthians 6:14-18; the so-called "good ole boys and gals" are not the ones with whom Christians should be spending their time.
- J. God's people must abstain from fleshly lusts, Proverbs 5:3-14; 6:25-35; 7:10-27; 23:26-28; 2 Timothy 2:22.
- K. Godliness means accepting family responsibilities, Ephesians 6:4; 5:25; 1 Timothy 5:8.

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Conclusion:

1. Godliness should be practiced by God's people **everywhere**.
2. Godliness should be practiced by God's people **all of the time**.

Invitation:

1. Isn't it time for you to obey the Gospel and begin a life of godliness, Acts 2:38; 1 John 1:7?
2. Isn't it time for you to come back to the Lord and resume a life of godliness, Acts 8:22; 1 John 1:9?

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Temple of God

Matthew 24:1

Thesis: To define the usage of the word “temple” in the New Testament and impress upon one another the requirement to set ourselves apart for holy use by God.

Introduction:

1. There are primarily two Greek words that are translated as “temple” in our English Bibles.
 - a. *hieron* = a sacred place set aside for a holy use; regarding the Jewish Temple, inclusive of the several porches, courts, entrances, Holy Place and Holy of Holies within it as well as related annexes without the main structure; the collection of buildings that comprised the Temple compound. According to W.E. Vine, *hieron* is never used figuratively.
 - b. *naos* = the inner most chamber of a temple, where if a pagan temple, the gold idol was placed; regarding the Jewish Temple, special reference to the Holy Place and Holy of Holies, exclusive of the several porches, courts, entrances within it and related annexes without the main structure; the sanctuary where God dwells. *Naos* is used literally and figuratively.
2. There are, though, at least two notable exceptions to this normal usage where *naos* apparently is used in the biblical text as a synonym for *hieron*, to refer to the collection of Temple buildings instead of the Holy Place or the Holy of Holies.
 - a. **Matthew 27:5** – Judas threw down the 30 silver coins in the Temple in the presence of the chief priests and elders. Access to the Holy Place and Holy of Holies was limited to priests in their official functions and the latter to the high priest only once a year.
 - b. **John 2:10** – The Jews noted that the Temple overall (not just the sanctuary) had been under construction for 46 years.
3. Despite these two occasions of *naos* being used in the place of

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hieron, otherwise observing where these two Greek words are used respectively can enhance Bible study and comprehension.

- a. Noting whether “temple” is translated from *naos* or *hieron* in various biblical passages makes those texts more intelligible.
- b. Further, noting the special emphasis on the application of “temple” from *naos* in the New Testament makes some doctrines more meaningful.

Body:

I. Citing examples of the uses of *hieron* and *naos* for “temple” clearly distinguish between their respective definitions.

A. *hieron*

1. **Luke 2:27** – Baby Jesus was taken to the temple (*hieron*).
2. **Luke 2:46** – The boy Jesus stayed behind when his parents returned home; he was found in the temple (*hieron*).
3. **Matthew 4:5** – The devil dared Jesus to jump from the pinnacle of the temple (*hieron*).
4. **Matthew 21:13** – Jesus drove the moneychangers from the temple (*hieron*), (14) healed the blind and the lame in the temple (*hieron*) and (23) taught the people in the temple (*hieron*).
5. **Matthew 24:1** – “And Jesus went out, and departed from the temple: and his disciples came to him for to shew him the buildings of the temple (*hieron*).”
6. **Matthew 26:55** – Jesus taught daily in the temple (*hieron*).
7. **Luke 18:10** – Jesus told the parable of the Pharisee and the publican who entered the temple (*hieron*) to pray.
8. **John 8:20** – Jesus taught in the temple (*hieron*) treasury.
9. **John 10:23** – Jesus taught in Solomon’s porch in the temple (*hieron*).
10. **Luke 24:53** – Following the ascension of Jesus, the apostles returned to Jerusalem and frequented the temple (*hieron*).
11. **Acts 2:46** – The early church continued to make use of the temple (*hieron*) rooms.

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12. **Acts 3:1-8** – Peter and John went to the temple (*hieron*) where they encountered a lame man and healed him.
13. **Acts 5:20** – An angel released the apostles from jail and commanded them to teach in the temple (*hieron*).
14. **Acts 5:42** – The apostles taught and preached daily in the temple (*hieron*).
15. **Acts 21:26** – Paul purified himself in the temple (*hieron*) regarding a Jewish vow he fulfilled.

B. *naos*

1. **Matthew 23:16-21** – The Jews made references to the temple (*naos*) in their oaths.
2. **Matthew 23:35** – Zacharias was murdered between the altar of burnt offering in the court and the temple (*naos*).
3. **Matthew 27:51** – Following the death of Jesus, the veil of the temple (*naos*) tore from top to bottom.
4. **Luke 1:9** – Zacharias, the father of John the Baptist, burnt incense in the temple (*naos*).
5. **Acts 7:48; 17:24** – God does not dwell in pagan temples (*naos*).

II. Figurative references to temple (*naos*) emphasize the presence of deity.

- A. *Naos* denotes the sanctuary where God dwells (1 Kings 8:10-11; 2 Chronicles 5:13-14; 7:1-2).
 1. **John 21:19-21** – Jesus used the word “temple” (*naos*) to refer to his body and that it would be resurrected after three days.
 2. **1 Corinthians 3:16-17** – The body that is the church in which the Holy Spirit dwells is called a temple (*naos*).
 3. **1 Corinthians 6:19** – The human body in which the Holy Spirit dwells is called a temple (*naos*).
 4. **Ephesians 2:21** – The church is called the temple (*naos*).
 5. **Revelation 16:17** – The heavenly abode of God is called a temple (*naos*).
- B. As the dwelling place of deity, both the church and individual

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Christians MUST be holy and set apart for use by God.

1. We must be holy as God is holy. “But as he which hath called you is holy, so be ye holy in all manner of conversation; Because it is written, Be ye holy; for I am holy,” 1 Peter 1:15-16.
2. We do this by ridding ourselves of sinful practices. “Let all bitterness, and wrath, and anger, and clamour, and evil speaking, be put away from you, with all malice,” Ephesians 4:31.
3. We need to add the Christian virtues, 2 Peter 1:5-11.
4. The children of God must think on holy things, Philippians 4:8.
5. Both individual Christians and the Lord’s church are obligated to excel in good works, 1 Timothy 6:18; Titus 2:14.

III. God will not continue to dwell in His temple when His children forsake Him.

- A. Accordingly, God’s presence vacated the Jewish temple, Ezekiel 10:18; Lamentations 2:7.
- B. Likewise, God will neither continue to dwell in the church nor in Christians who forsake Him, Revelation 2-3.

And what agreement hath the temple of God with idols? for ye are the temple [*naos*] of the living God; as God hath said, I will dwell in them, and walk in them; and I will be their God, and they shall be my people. Wherefore come out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord, and touch not the unclean thing; and I will receive you, And will be a Father unto you, and ye shall be my sons and daughters, saith the Lord Almighty. 2 Corinthians 6:16-18

Conclusion:

1. Knowing the difference between *hieron* and *naos*, both translated “temple,” makes Scripture easier to understand.
2. The holiness enjoined on Christians and the church is emphasized by the application of the word “temple” (*naos*).

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3. We cannot enjoy a special relationship with God if we are not set apart for a holy use and otherwise a fitting dwelling place for deity.

Invitation:

1. As a child of God, does your temple need a house cleaning, Acts 8:22; 2 Corinthians 13:5; Revelation 2-3?
2. If you are not a child of God, you cannot be a temple in which deity dwells, Mark 16:16; Acts 22:16.

Christian Living

A Burning and a Shining Light

John 5:35; Matthew 5:14-16

Thesis: To urge each Christian to be “a burning and a shining light.”

Song: “Ye Are the Light of the World”

Introduction:

1. Light and darkness are used extensively in Scripture to depict the polar opposites of righteousness and wickedness.
2. Jesus referred to John the Baptist as “a burning and a shining light,” John 5:35; this John very effectively contrasted light and darkness.
3. Our Lord also said to His followers, of whom we profess to be some, “Ye are the light of the world... Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven,” Matthew 5:14-16.

Body:

I. The Bible contrasts the light of righteousness with the darkness of wickedness.

- A. Light and darkness represent the opposites of righteousness and wickedness, 2 Corinthians 6:14.
- B. Outside Christ’s kingdom of light is only darkness, Colossians 1:12-13; 1 Peter 2:9.
- C. There is no middle ground between light and darkness, righteousness and wickedness, the kingdom of Christ and the darkness of sin.

II. Light is divine in origin.

- A. Heaven itself is the power plant of divine light, 1 Timothy 6:16.
 1. Light is said to emanate from God Himself, James 1:17; Revelation 21:23-25; 22:5.
 2. It was a matter of prophecy (fulfilled in Jesus Christ) that divine light should dwell on earth in the ministry of the Savior, Matthew 4:13-17.
- B. Jesus came to be a light to Jews and Gentiles alike, Matthew 4:13-17; Luke 2:32; Acts 26:23.

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1. Jesus Christ is the only light of the world, John 1:4-9; 8:12; 9:5.
2. Our Lord came to give light to men, Ephesians 5:14.
3. Jesus began to impart light by preaching repentance and the kingdom, Matthew 4:13-17.
4. Jesus empowered men to become the children of light, John 12:35-36.

III. Light shines on earth through the Word of God.

- A. Paul referred to the “light of the glorious gospel of Christ,” 2 Corinthians 4:4.
- B. The same divine power which spoke physical light into existence has also provided spiritual light (revelation, knowledge), 2 Corinthians 4:6.
- C. The Word is called a “light that shineth in a dark place,” 2 Peter 1:19-21.
- D. The Christian’s source of light, which he in turn must reflect toward others, comes today through the Word of God, the Gospel.

IV. The followers of Christ reflect divine light.

- A. Heavenly light resides in the children of God; Christians, therefore, have the divine charge to let that light shine, Matthew 5:14-16; Luke 8:16; 11:33-36; 12:35.
- B. We are called the “children of light,” Luke 16:8; Ephesians 5:8; 1 Thessalonians 5:5-8; God is called the “Father of lights,” James 1:17.
- C. Christians are children of light because they have been “enlightened” by the Word of God, Hebrews 6:4-6.
- D. We are commanded to give that light away to all men, Luke 1:79; Acts 13:47; 26:17-18.
- E. The Christian light must not only burn, it must also shine, Matthew 4:14-16; John 5:35.

V. Christians are cautioned against false lights.

- A. Satan and his servants take on the appearance of light and righteousness, 2 Corinthians 11:14-15.
- B. Sometimes men are false lights as often were the Jews,

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Romans 2:19.

VI. How can Christians let their lights shine?

- A. Reflect *only* light emanating from the divine source (Heaven, the Father, Christ, the Word of God).
- B. Reflect *all* of the light radiating from the divine source, Acts 20:27.
- C. Allow no darkness a place in one to overshadow or dim the light of the Gospel, Luke 11:33-36.
- D. Put away unholy things, Pilippians 2:14-16.
- E. Seek only that which is holy, 1 Thessalonians 5:5-8.
- F. Put on the armor of light, Romans 13:12-13.
- G. Finally, hold forth the Word of God, Philippians 2:14-16.

Conclusion:

1. Light reproves sin and darkness, John 3:19-21; Ephesians 5:13.
2. The light of the Gospel is the only means by which one can avoid stumbling as if walking in the night, John 11:9-10.
3. Men can walk in light or darkness, not both and not in between, 1 John 2:8-11.
4. Only by walking in the light can one enjoy fellowship with God and the forgiveness of sins, 1 John 1:5-7.
5. Let's each of us determine to be "a burning and shining light," John 5:35.

Invitation:

1. There is a distinct difference between the light of righteousness and the darkness of sin; won't you be led by the light of the Gospel today?
2. Erring Christians can be rekindled, Acts 8:22.
3. Others can begin their walk in the light by being immersed in water for the remission of sins, Acts 2:38; 22:16; 1 John 1:7.

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Let's Go to Heaven — Together!

Philippians 3:17, 20

Thesis: Teamwork (fellowship) is a valuable resource to help God's children successfully journey to Heaven.

Song: "Here We Are but Straying Pilgrims"

Introduction:

1. Jesus is preparing a place in Heaven, John 14:1-3.
2. Now is the time for God's children to prepare themselves to go to Heaven, 2 Corinthians 13:5.
3. God will separate the prepared from the unprepared, Ecclesiastes 12:13-14; 2 Corinthians 5:10; Matthew 7:21-23; 25:31-46.
4. There is little time to make preparation, James 4:13-14.
5. Opportunity for preparation will end suddenly, Matthew 24:36-51; 2 Peter 3:10.

Body:

I. God's messengers said to the WORLD, "Let's go to Heaven, together," 2 Corinthians 5:18-20; Matthew 7:13-14.

- A. God destroyed the old world with a universal flood, Genesis 6-7; 1 Peter 3:19-20; 2 Peter 2:5.
- B. God will destroy the world a second time with fire, 2 Peter 3:5-7, 10-12.

II. Joshua said to the NATION of Israel, "Let's go to Heaven, together," Joshua 24:14-25, 31.

- A. Previously, during the Exodus, Israel repeatedly turned away from God.
- B. Later, the Israelites also refused to obey God, Jeremiah 6:16-17.

III. Noah said to his FAMILY, "Let's go to Heaven, together," Genesis 6-9.

- A. Lot lost his family.
- B. Adam and Eve lost their family.

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IV. Aquila and Priscilla (HUSBAND and WIFE) said “Let’s go to Heaven, together,” Acts 18:2, 26; 1 Corinthians 16:19.

- A. Joseph and Mary said, “Let’s go to Heaven, together,” Matthew 1-2.
- B. Zacharias and Elizabeth said, “Let’s go to Heaven, together,” Luke 1:5-6.
- C. Ananias and Sapphira are an example of a failed husband and wife team, Acts 5:1-10.

V. The apostles said to the CHURCH, “Let’s go to Heaven, together,” Philippians 3:17, 20.

- A. Five of the seven churches of Asia stood condemned, Revelation 2-3.
- B. The church at Corinth was marching away from Heaven, 1 Corinthians.
- C. The Jewish congregations were turning from Christianity back to Judaism, Hebrews.

Conclusion:

- 1. Let’s go to Heaven together as:
 - a. a congregation
 - b. a brotherhood
 - c. husbands and wives
 - d. families
 - e. friends
 - f. community
 - g. nation
 - h. the world
- 2. Teamwork or fellowship is required in order to go to Heaven together!
 - a. One has to plan to go to Heaven together!
 - b. We need to help each other.
 - c. We need to pray for each other.
 - d. We need to fellowship each other.
 - e. We need to consciously try to take brethren and non-Christians

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with us to Heaven.

- f. We must develop a heightened zeal.
- g. We must actually work to convert the lost.
- h. “Let’s go to Heaven, together” is a worthy motto or theme.

Invitation:

- 1. Let’s go to Heaven together!
- 2. Non-Christians.
- 3. Christians.

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The Nature of the Bible Heart

Romans 6:17

Thesis: To distinguish between the human and Bible hearts by identifying the Bible heart.

Introduction:

1. Each person has two hearts, a literal, physical human heart and a figurative, spiritual heart.
2. Each of man's two hearts is discernible by what each does.
3. The physical heart is a pulsating muscle in each one's chest that pumps blood throughout the body.
4. The Bible heart, the spiritual heart, is not that beating organ within one's chest.
5. Perhaps symbolism will allow us to strike our breasts with reference to our Bible hearts, but let the mind know the difference.

Body:

I. One third of the Bible heart is characterized by intellect.

- A. Intellect includes man's thoughts, Genesis 6:5.
- B. Intellect includes the ability to reason, Mark 2:8.
- C. Intellect includes the process of understanding, Matthew 13:15.

II. One third of the Bible heart is characterized by willpower.

- A. Willpower includes the belief or the determination to embrace facts, Acts 8:37; Romans 10:9-10.
- B. Willpower includes purposing or intending to do something, 2 Corinthians 9:7; Hebrews 4:12.
- C. Willpower includes following through or obeying, Romans 6:17.

III. One third of the Bible heart is characterized by emotion.

- A. Emotion includes prayers and desires, Romans 10:1.
- B. Emotion includes love, Matthew 22:37.
- C. Emotion includes trust, Proverbs 3:5.

IV. The nature of the Bible heart is conducive to Gospel preaching.

- A. The Bible heart as God has made man is able to obey Bible

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preaching or disobey it.

1. Mankind can respond to the Great Commission, Matthew 28:18-20; Romans 1:16.
 2. Mankind can reject the pure Word of God to his own spiritual demise, Galatians 1:6-9; 2 Thessalonians 1:7-9.
- B. The Gospel as God designed it can be discerned and appeals to the Bible heart.
1. Facts appeal to the intellect, 1 Corinthians 15:1-4.
 2. Commands appeal to the willpower, Acts 10:48.
 3. Hope appeals to the emotions, Romans 8:24; 1 Corinthians 15:19.
- C. Denominational doctrines respecting the Bible heart are false.
1. For instance, the doctrine of predestination is false because it supposes that mankind is incapable of responding to the preaching of the Gospel, though God put the Bible heart within humans whereby they could choose to obey or to disobey.
 2. The doctrine of universalism is false because it supposes that mankind does not need to respond to the preaching of the Gospel, though God put the Bible heart within humans whereby they could choose to obey or to disobey.

Conclusion:

1. Often, mankind thinks too little or too much of the Bible heart.
2. Proper understanding of the Bible heart is a key factor and a prerequisite to understanding man's part in God's plan for the redemption of man.
3. **The Bible as God gave it is adaptable to man as God made him!**
4. Distortion of the nature of the Bible heart sets aside God's plan for the redemption of mankind – leaving mankind without salvation.
5. Likewise, distortion of God's plan of redemption fails to address the nature of the Bible heart – leaving mankind without salvation.

Invitation:

1. Since man is a free, moral agent, possessing a Bible heart, he can obey unto eternal life or he can disobey unto eternal punishment,

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Hebrews 5:8-9; 2 Thessalonians 1:7-9.

2. The first law of pardon requires faith, repentance, professing Christ and immersion, Mark 16:16; Acts 2:38; 8:37; 22:16.
3. The second law of pardon requires repentance and prayer, Acts 8:22; 1 John 1:9.

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The Persuasive Power of Godly Deportment

1 Peter 3:1-6

Thesis: To demonstrate how genuine Christian living can favorably influence people indirectly with the Gospel.

Introduction:

1. The context of 1 Peter 3:1-6 is part of a larger context spanning two chapters where the apostle Peter enumerated responsibilities respecting various roles.
 - a. The apostle addressed the responsibility of first century Christian slaves toward their masters, 1 Peter 2:18-25.
 - b. Our context pertains to the responsibility of Christian women especially toward their non-Christian husbands, 1 Peter 3:1-6.
 - c. The apostle also addressed some responsibilities of husbands toward their wives, 1 Peter 3:7.
 - d. Finally, the larger context of this area of Scripture also speaks to responsibilities of Christian brethren toward each other, 1 Peter 3:8-9.
2. Our emphasis from 1 Peter 3:1-6, naturally, will pertain especially to divine instruction respecting Christian women and their non-Christian husbands.
 - a. First, conversion to Christ did not nullify contracts or covenants, including marriage, entered prior to conversion, 1 Peter 3:1-6; 1 Corinthians 7:12-13.
 - b. Second, though men and women through obedience to the Gospel are equal respecting salvation, conversion to Christianity by the Gospel did not do away with the social distinction between the roles of men and of women in the home, 1 Peter 3:1-6; Galatians 3:27-28; Ephesians 5:22-33.
 - c. It is equally true that, despite equality in redemption, conversion by the Gospel to Christianity did not nullify distinct roles between men and women religiously, in the church,

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1 Timothy 2:9-15; 1 Corinthians 14:34-35.

3. There were two reasons that first century Christian women might have little opportunity to speak to their non-Christian husbands about the Gospel of Christ.
 - a. First, unlike today in western society, culture in the first century and in many parts of the world today inhibit women from advising their husbands.
 - b. Second, in any century including today, husbands often turn a deaf ear to continual dwelling on any particular subject in which they are not interested. (The same, of course, is true regarding any persons irrespective of gender.)
4. Consequently, when the Christian wife married to a non-Christian husband in the first century lacked opportunity to persuade him regarding the Gospel with words, by inspiration, the apostle Peter gave the instruction found in 1 Peter 3:1-6.
 - a. Namely, the Christian wife can augment whatever information about the Gospel may have been previously imparted to her husband by others, maybe public knowledge or herself with the demonstration of the Gospel in her life.
 - b. What we want to take from the examination of this passage today is that genuine Christian living can favorably influence people indirectly with the Gospel.

Body:

I. The apostle Peter directed Christian wives to remain in subjection to their non-Christian husbands, and he provided a noble motive for such conduct, vss. 1-2.

- A. "Likewise, ye wives, be in subjection to your own husbands," vs. 1a.
 1. Under the religious system of Patriarchy, God placed the wife (Eve) in the Garden of Eden in a helper role to man (Adam), Genesis 2:18, 22; subsequently, wives throughout Patriarchy occupied roles that were subject to their husbands, Genesis 3:16; 18:12; 1 Peter 3:6.

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2. Under the religious system of Judaism, God continued the helper role of wives to their husbands, Numbers 30:13; Esther 1:20, 22.
 3. Under Christianity, God continues the helper role of wives to their husbands, 1 Corinthians 11:3; 14:35; Ephesians 5:22-23.
 4. Besides the apostle Peter, the apostle Paul, also by inspiration instructed Christian women to be subject to their own husbands, Ephesians 5:22; Colossians 3:18.
 5. The subjection of wives to their respective husbands is softened with the kind disposition that husbands are supposed to have toward their respective wives, 1 Peter 3:7; Ephesians 5:25, 28.
- B. “That even if some do not obey the word, they, **without a word**, may be won by the conduct of their wives,” vs. 1b, NKJV.
1. This verse signifies that the husbands under consideration are not believers, i.e. Christians.
 2. The verse does not suppose that anyone can be saved without the Word or the Gospel but that it is possible for someone to be saved by the Gospel without resorting to words (voice) alone.
 3. The Word of God or the Gospel of Christ demonstrated in the godly lives of Christian wives can go a long way to converting non-Christian husbands with whom their wives do not have the opportunity to persuade with words (voice).
 4. **The difference is between hearing the Gospel and seeing the Gospel in action!**
- C. “When they observe your chaste conduct accompanied by fear,” vs. 2.
1. The hoped conversion of non-Christian husbands in this text is a noble reason for which Christian wives will submit themselves even to their non-Christian husbands.
 2. “Observe” means “closely scrutinize,” which is how all non-Christians critically review professed Christian conduct.

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3. The New Testament, though, reveals other reasons as well for wives to submit to their husbands, i.e. order of creation and who first sinned, 1 Corinthians 11:8-9; 1 Timothy 2:13-14.
4. Not by debate, but by Christian example, Christian wives may win their stubborn, non-Christian husbands.
5. Whether spoken or demonstrated, the Gospel alone is still the only power of God unto salvation, Romans 1:16.
6. The “fear” with which Christian wives are to relate to their husbands pertains to “reverence,” Ephesians 5:33.

II. Verses 3-4 definitively express acceptable, calculated behavior by which Christian wives may save their non-Christian husbands.

- A. “Do not let your adornment be merely outward,” 3a NKJV.
 1. The Christian wife cannot expect to win over her non-Christian husband to the Gospel of Christ with only physical allurements.
 2. Spiritual allurements must be employed to direct husbands to spiritual stepping-stones to Heaven.
 - 3. Artificial outward adornment should not be valued and pursued over natural outward adornment coupled with holy inward adornment.**
- B. “Arranging the hair, wearing gold, or putting on fine apparel,” 3b.
 1. Not outward adornment is condemned, e.g. wearing clothes, but outward adornment is contrasted with and found inferior to inward adornment.
 2. Gaudy and immodest adornment was condemned.
 3. The apostle Peter condemned extravagant hairdos into which were woven strands of pearls, gold and silver.
 4. The apostle Paul also addressed the proper adornment of Christian women, 1 Timothy 2:9-10.
 5. Isaiah 3:16-24 decries how some women of God anciently decked themselves outwardly instead of becoming tru-

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ly holy.

6. It is sometimes difficult to identify a Christian woman by her manner of dress (or undress), but it is often easy to identify a truly religious woman by her manner of dress and adornment.
- C. “Rather let it be the hidden person of the heart,” 4a.
1. **The inner person of one who professes to be God’s child must outshine the outward adornment.**
 2. The inner person is a frequent subject of New Testament Scripture, Romans 7:22; 2 Corinthians 4:16; Colossians 3:10.
 3. The biblical “heart” is the seat of human emotion, will-power and intellect.
 4. The hidden man of the heart or the spiritual part of man is invisible or concealed to the eye, but a glimpse of the hidden man is observable by noting the outward, physical manifestation via adornment.
- D. “With the incorruptible beauty of a gentle and quiet spirit,” 4b.
1. The inward adornment is as intangible and as immune to physical decay as the inward or the spiritual part of man.
 2. The apostle contrasted the tangible, outward adornment with the superior intangible, inner adornment of man’s spirit.
 3. The “gentle and quiet spirit” bears provocation without responding in kind, 1 Peter 2:23.
 4. The godly wife does not create disturbances, but absorbs the disturbances caused by others, whereby she may favorably influence others, i.e. her non-Christian husband here.
 5. The apostle Peter directed first century Christian women, especially those married to non-Christian husbands, to pursue inward beauty as opposed to chiefly trusting in outward beauty.
- E. “Which is very precious in the sight of God,” 4c.
1. A second reason for Christian women to pursue inward beauty is because God values inward beauty over outward beauty.

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2. God who made mankind knows true beauty better than mortal man knows it.
3. According to God, the inward adornment of the inner man that leads one to spiritual maturity is more valuable than the expensive pearls, gold and silver that may adorn the outward person; a contrast appears respecting value.

III. The apostle Peter encouraged Christian wives to imitate holy women, such as Sarah, recorded in the Old Testament Scriptures, vs. 5-6.

- A. “For in this manner, in former times, the holy women who trusted in God also adorned themselves, being submissive to their own husbands,” vs. 5.
 1. Anciently, godly women practiced the deportment taught by Peter.
 2. The word “holy” means set apart to faithfulness, in this context to God and to husbands.
- B. “As Sarah obeyed Abraham, calling him lord,” vs. 6a.
 1. Sarah is one of just a few women whose names appear in the Bible as an example to be imitated.
 2. Sarah recognized and respected the roles God variously assigned to men and to women, to husbands and to wives, Genesis 18:12.
- C. “Whose daughters you are if you do good,” vs. 6b.
 1. Of course, no one today can prove she is an ancestral descendant of Sarah, and that is not what is meant in this verse.
 2. Any wife who imitates the holy conduct of Sarah respecting God-given roles of men and of women is worthy to be compared with saintly Sarah.
 3. Similarly, men and women who practice faith in God like Abraham did are worthy to be associated with faithful Abraham as though they were his children, Galatians 3:7.
 4. The “as long as ye do well” KJV signifies the conditional relationship to Sarah as her daughters, only valid as long as wives imitate her godliness respecting roles of wives

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and husbands.

D. “And are not afraid with any terror,” vs. 6c.

1. Wives should have no reason to be afraid of husbands who love them.
2. However, godly wives must revere or respect their husbands, Ephesians 5:33.

Conclusion:

1. Genuine Christian living can favorably influence people indirectly with the Gospel.
2. The apostle Peter instructed Christian women to win their non-Christian husbands to the Gospel through the persuasive power of godly deportment (conduct).
3. Likewise, each of us ought to practice genuine Christian living whereby we can influence and win lost souls with the Gospel.

Invitation:

1. Are you practicing genuine Christian living and influencing others with the Gospel?
2. You cannot demonstrate the Gospel in your life if you are an unbaptized believer yourself, Mark 16:16.
3. You cannot demonstrate the Gospel in your life if you are an erring Christian, 2 Corinthians 13:5.

Christian Living

Christianity: Theory and Practice

Ephesians 5:8

Thesis: To emphasize the necessity of Christians discerning the will of God and doing the will of God, too.

Songs: “To the Work,” “I Want to be a Worker,” “We’ll Work Till Jesus Comes”

Introduction:

1. It is appropriate that we first define the words, “Theory and Practice.”
 - a. Though the word “theory” sometimes means “speculation” or “conjecture,” those are not the definitions we entertain in this lesson.
 - b. By “theory” we mean, “1: the analysis of a set of facts in their relation to one another,” “6c: a body of theorems presenting a concise systematic view of a subject (theory of equations)” (*Merriam*).
 - c. A “theorem” pertains to “demonstrable truth” (*Merriam*).
 - d. By “theory” in this lesson, we mean consideration of the facts concerning Christianity apart from the “practice” of those facts in one’s life.
2. Nearly every subject can be reduced to “theory and practice.”
 - a. **As good as book learning is, one’s education is not complete until he has gained experience in the area of his education.**
 - b. For instance, seasoned schoolteachers acknowledge that there is a world of difference between teacher education and teacher experience.
 - c. Likewise, imagine the contrast between book learning and actual experience respecting farming, auto mechanics, cooking or sewing.
3. Theory and practice together are essential to success in anything, including the practice of Christianity.
 - a. Insufficient knowledge about farming, auto mechanics,

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cooking or sewing spells sure failure.

- b. Likewise, insufficient knowledge about spiritual matters spells sure failure respecting the eternal disposition of souls.
 - c. Even with sufficient knowledge about farming, auto mechanics, cooking or sewing, failure certainly results whenever one disregards the respective knowledge for the endeavor in which one engages.
 - d. Likewise, disregard for Bible knowledge about spiritual matters results in spiritual ruin with eternal consequences.
4. A ruined harvest, a car that won't run right, bad tasting food and garments that don't fit are insignificant disappointments compared to the failure to faithfully practice Christianity.

Body:

I. The theory or facts (truths) respecting Christianity are perfect and adequate if practiced to save souls.

- A. The New Testament reveals the theory of Christianity.
 - 1. Though the Old Testament provides background and examples, people today must resort to the New Testament for divine instruction, Romans 15:4; 1 Corinthians 10:11; 2 Corinthians 3:6, 11.
 - 2. Jesus Christ possesses authority in the New Testament era and by Him all mankind will be judged, Matthew 17:1-5; 28:18; John 12:48.
- B. The theory of Christianity or the Word of God is perfect.
 - 1. It is the truth by which men are freed from sin, John 8:32.
 - 2. Hence, the Gospel is the "perfect law of liberty," James 1:25; 1 Corinthians 13:10.
 - 3. This Gospel saves, Romans 1:16.
- C. Deviations from the theory of Christianity have disastrous consequences.
 - 1. Human creeds are inadequate to save souls and will cause many people to be lost, Matthew 15:9, 13; Galatians 1:6-9; Revelation 22:18-19.

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2. False teachers lead souls to perdition, Romans 16:17-18; 1 John 4:1.

II. The practice of theory (facts and truths) of Christianity is equally important to the salvation of souls as discerning the theory of Christianity.

- A. Failure to practice Christianity is just as tragic as not knowing the theory of Christianity.
 1. The New Testament repeatedly affirms that Christians have a responsibility to do what they know to be right, Ephesians 5:8; Galatians 5:25; 1 John 2:6.
 2. Knowledge without application of that knowledge is useless, Matthew 7:21-23; Revelation 2-3.
- B. It is not possible for Christians to successfully practice the theory of Christianity and serve Satan at the same time.
 1. For the Christian, his old man of sin has been crucified and he has been resurrected from the watery grave to walk in newness of life, Romans 6:3-13.
 2. One cannot fully devote himself to our Lord and as completely pursue anything else, Matthew 6:24, 33; 10:37.

Conclusion:

1. Essentially, **Christians must be careful to practice what they preach to remain saved**, 1 John 1:7; Titus 2:14!
2. Christians must arm themselves with God's Word, 2 Timothy 2:15; Acts 17:11; 2 Peter 2:2.
3. Then, Christians must serve God accordingly, Luke 6:46.

Invitation:

1. Failure to do what we know God requires of us is sinful, James 4:17.
2. Failure to follow the instructions of Jesus condemns souls to a devil's hell, Luke 6:46; Mark 16:16.

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Let Your Light So Shine

Matthew 5:16

Thesis: To learn to what extent the Gospel light should fill the Christian.

Song: “Let the Lower Lights Be Burning”

Introduction:

1. Matthew 5:16 is the concluding verse of the paragraph Matthew 5:13-16.
 - a. Verse 16 is an appropriate conclusion to the message in the paragraph.
 - b. It constitutes divine direction, which when followed has a positive, calculated result.
 - c. The reverse must also be true, namely, if the divine instruction is not followed, there will not be a positive, calculated result.
2. Matthew 5:13-16 is also part of Christ’s Sermon on the Mount, Matthew 5-7.
 - a. The Matthew 5:13-16 paragraph, then, pertains to the New Testament kingdom or church rather than to the Old Testament or Judaism.
 - b. The entire Sermon on the Mount pertained to the then coming kingdom, Matthew 5:20.
 - c. Jesus Christ exalted His teaching to a position higher than the Old Testament and tradition, though He spoke while living under the Old Testament, Matthew 5:21-22, 27-28, 31-32, 34, 39, 44.

Body:

- I. **“Ye are the salt of the earth: but if the salt have lost his savour, wherewith shall it be salted? it is thenceforth good for nothing, but to be cast out, and to be trodden under foot of men,” Matthew 5:13.**
 - A. “Salt.”
 1. Salt in the first century was considered legal tender or a commodity of trade.

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2. Sometimes merchandise was purchased with salt or one could pay his taxes with salt.
 3. However, often impurities were added to salt as a way of counterfeiting to make the salt go further.
 4. Salt was also deemed precious due to its natural ability to help preserve food.
- B. “Ye are the salt of the earth.”
1. The disciples of Christ in the first century were compared to precious salt, which analogy applies likewise today to Christians.
 2. Christians are the saving or preserving power (by carrying the Gospel of Christ) among people today.
 3. Christians, collectively the church, are responsible for taking the Gospel to the lost world, Ephesians 3:8-12.
- C. “But if the salt have lost its savour, wherewith shall it be salted?”
1. For salt to lose its savour is for it to lose its preserving quality.
 2. According to the analogy, if Christians lose their preserving quality (for evangelizing the world), the world will not be preserved (saved by the Gospel).
 3. Christians who fail to take the Gospel to the world are as useless as ruined salt, except that human souls are more important than salt and the food it is supposed to preserve.
- D. “It is thenceforth good for nothing.”
1. Salt that will not do what salt is supposed to do is good for nothing.
 2. Likewise, **Christians who will not do what Christians are supposed to do are worthless.**
 3. These verses teach that Christians and the church are supposed to be evangelistic, and if they are not evangelistic, Christians and the church are seriously defective.
- E. “But to be cast out and to be trodden under foot of man.”
1. Worthless salt can only be discarded.

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2. Worthless Christians, likewise, will be thrust out of the kingdom into a devil's hell, Matthew 13:50; 25:30.
3. Impure salt will not preserve and can only serve as gravel in the streets and a deterrent to weeds.

II. "Ye are the light of the world. A city that is set on an hill cannot be hid," Matthew 5:14.

A. "Ye are the light of the world."

1. This phrase is comparable to the earlier phrase, "Ye are the salt of the earth."
2. Christians are pictured as the light of the world.
3. Without practicing Christians, there would be no light in the world; Christians are indispensable for promoting Christianity through the Gospel, Romans 10:13-17; Acts 8:1-4.

B. "Light."

1. Light dispels darkness; Christians as light dispel the darkness of sin.
2. Without Christians as light, the world would be in the utter darkness of sin.
3. The light of Christians is reflected (like moonlight) from Jesus Christ, Malachi 4:2.
4. Whereas "salt" works internally and limitedly, light has an external and farther-reaching effect.
5. Christians as salt affect those most with whom they have direct contact and frequent association.
6. Christians as light extend their influence to all humanity, i.e. benevolent institutions and morality are traceable to Christianity.

C. "A city that is set on a hill cannot be hid."

1. Anciently, cities were built on hills for protection against plunderers and hostile armies.
2. Such a city's night lights were visible for a great distance in the dark of night.
3. Similarly, **the light of Christians should be acutely visible in a world of spiritual darkness.**

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III. “Neither do men light a candle, and put it under a bushel, but on a candlestick; and it giveth light unto all that are in the house,” Matthew 5:15.

- A. “Neither do men light a candle, and put it under a bushel.”
 - 1. The purpose of lighting a candle is to produce light.
 - 2. Candles are not lit to be concealed.
 - 3. Likewise, the light of Christians is not intended to be concealed or covered.
 - 4. Incidentally, the “bushel” here is equivalent to our peck.
- B. “But on a candlestick; and it giveth light unto all that are in the house.”
 - 1. “House” stands for the “earth” or the “world.”
 - 2. The light has a high mission for which it is highly exalted.
 - 3. As the candlelight was intended for all in the house, so the Gospel light radiating from Christians is intended for all souls.
 - 4. The scope of the light is identical to the universal scope of the Great Commission, Mark 16:15.

IV. “Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven,” Matthew 5:16.

- A. “Let your light so shine.”
 - 1. Christians are given this imperative or command to permit their light to shine in the world as a candle lights a house.
 - 2. The light that Christians should shine is bright and pure forasmuch as Jesus Christ is the origin of Christian light.
 - 3. Light may appear dimmed sometimes due to weak Christians and congregations.
 - 4. **Christians are directed to “let your light shine,” rather than to ‘shine your light.’**
 - 5. The Christian light is to shine as though it were a glaring torch in the blackest of nights.
 - 6. Christians have the immense responsibility of illuminating the world with the Gospel of Christ.

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- B. "Before men."
1. Christians are not directed to shine in corners or secretly.
 2. The Christian light must shine in the presence of or in front of the human race.
 3. The Christian must be recognizable in the midst of a wicked world, Philippians 2:14-16; 1 Thessalonians 5:5.
- C. "That they may see."
1. **The calculated result of Christians allowing their lights to shine is that men will see.**
 2. Seeing means a discerning look and applied spiritually as here, it means those seeing will come to know God and His saving Gospel.
- D. "Your good works."
1. Works are deeds or actions.
 2. **Works are the manifestation of Christian light.**
 3. No works evidences an extinguished light and nothing that men might see by which they could be prompted to glorify God.
 4. Scripture furnishes us to every good work, 2 Timothy 3:16-17.
 5. Christians are to establish themselves in good works, 2 Thessalonians 2:17; Titus 2:14.
- E. "And glorify your Father which is in heaven."
1. Good works on the part of Christians are calculated to cause men to glorify or acknowledge God.
 2. Such may or may not lead to conversions, but even unconverted souls will be favorably impressed by the light radiating from Christians.
 3. "Your Father" refers to our Heavenly Father where we are the children of light, Ephesians 5:8.
 4. "Heaven" is the abode of the Father, whose home we as the children of light want to share.

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Conclusion:

1. Christians have been called from the darkness of sin into the marvelous light, 1 Peter 2:9; Colossians 1:13.
2. Christians must walk in that light and be guided by the light of the Gospel, John 12:35-36; 1 John 1:5-7.
3. As the apostle Paul was set to be a light to the Gentiles, Christians are set to be a light to all men throughout the world, Acts 13:46; 26:17-18; Matthew 5:13-16.
4. Every child of God needs to ask himself whether the light of Jesus Christ is reflected from him, John 8:12; 12:46; 1:4, 9; 2 Corinthians 4:6; Ephesians 5:14; 1 John 2:8; Revelation 21:23.

Invitation:

1. The light of the Gospel of Christ does not radiate from erring Christians, Acts 8:22.
2. The light of the Gospel of Christ does not radiate from unbaptized believers, Mark 16:16.

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Highway of Holiness

Isaiah 35:8

Thesis: Both testaments emphasize that there is but one way that leads to eternal habitation with God — the Highway of Holiness.

Introduction:

1. Both testaments emphasize that there is but one way that leads to eternal habitation with God — the Highway of Holiness, Isaiah 35:8.
2. John the Baptist, likewise, made a spiritual highway preparing for the ministry of the Messiah, Isaiah 40:3-4; Malachi 3:1; Matthew 3:1-3.
3. Jesus spoke of a narrow way versus a broad way, each leading to different spiritual destinations, Matthew 7:13-14.
4. Every soul would do well to travel the high road to Heaven!

Body:

I. Let's look a little more closely at Isaiah 35:8.

- A. The word “highway” means “a thoroughfare (as turnpike)” (*Biblesoft's*).
 1. Albert Barnes describes “highway” as “a RAISED way and would be expressed by our word ‘causeway’ or ‘turnpike.’ It was such a way as was usually made for the march of armies by removing obstructions, filling valleys, etc.”
 2. Our interstate highways in many parts of the country generally involve a highway raised beyond the surrounding terrain, and where necessary, mountains are lowered and valleys are raised.
 3. There is a superhighway to Heaven that only the righteous can travel, Isaiah 49:11; 62:10.
- B. The word “way” in Isaiah 35:8 means “a road (as trodden); figuratively, a course of life or mode of action” (*Biblesoft's*).
 1. The manner of one's life who is on God's highway of holiness differs from the way other people live their lives,

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1 Peter 2:9.

2. In our age, then, Christians are supposed to act like Christians, Ephesians 5:8.
 3. The elevated spiritual highway of holiness is lighted with God's Word so we can see where we walk, 1 John 1:7.
- C. "Holiness" means "a sacred place or thing" (*Biblesoft's*).
1. Holy things are set apart for a special use.
 2. The highway of holiness is set apart for special use by the children of God to make their journey to God's heavenly home.
 3. Faithful children of God who travel along the highway of holiness likewise are set apart.
- D. "Unclean" means "foul in a relig. sense" (*Biblesoft's*).
1. The ungodly have no interest in traveling on God's highway of holiness.
 2. There is no compatibility between the religiously foul and God's highway of holiness.
- E. The word "fools" here means "silly" (*Biblesoft's*).
1. The highway of holiness will be so obvious that even simple persons cannot mistake it.
 2. Further, God will guide travelers along the highway of holiness so that none need stray from it.
 3. If anyone once on the highway of holiness fails to reach the journey's end, it will neither be because the highway is poorly marked nor because there is no guide along the way, John 14:6.

II. Appropriately, Christianity or the Lord's church is spoken of in Scripture as "the way," Acts 9:2.

- A. The highway of holiness is not only ignored by most of humanity, it is sometimes the object of scorn, Matthew 7:13-14; Acts 19:9.
1. The world denies that God's highway of holiness is the only way that leads to Heaven where God is, Acts 19:23.
 2. The world is painfully aware of God's highway of holi-

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ness, Acts 24:22.

- B. There are not many paths through the forest of life, all of which lead to the clearing of Heaven.
 1. Though all roads may have led to Rome in its heyday, all roads do not lead to Heaven, Matthew 7:13-14.
 2. Manmade religion, or even God-given religion altered, cannot compare with the way which is exclusively through Jesus Christ, John 14:6.
 3. Manmade and man-altered divine religion are dead ends spiritually, Romans 10:1-3; Matthew 15:9, 13.

Conclusion:

1. The reference to a superhighway is figurative and spiritual.
2. “This passage is not referring to any kind of an elevated roadway through a desert, but to the way of salvation in Jesus Christ. He alone is ‘the way’” (Coffman).
3. Clearly, there is a “way of salvation,” Acts 16:17.
4. It is “the way of the Lord” or “the way of God,” Acts 18:25-26.
5. It is “the way of truth,” 2 Peter 2:2.

Invitation:

1. To Jesus, then, one must turn for guidance respecting salvation, Mark 16:16.
2. For erring Christians who have departed from “the way of righteousness,” repentance and prayer rather than being baptized again takes care of their sin problem, 2 Peter 2:21; Acts 8:22; 1 John 1:9.

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Honest Things

2 Corinthians 8:21

Thesis: To demonstrate that honesty goes a long way, both with God and with one's fellow man.

Song: "To the Work," "I Want to Be a Worker"

Introduction:

1. Inspired instruction in 2 Corinthians 8:21 dictates that especially Christians demonstrate honesty both with God and with one's fellow man.
2. Aside from the Bible, in the business world it is not enough to be honest, but one has to appear honest as well, e.g. employees at work need to not only do their assigned work but appear to be busy as well.

Body:

I. Just what is the context of 2 Corinthians 8:21?

A. The apostle Paul and others with his missionary team were taking up a collection to take to famine-stricken Christians in Palestine.

1. Especially where money is concerned, people often make wild, unsubstantiated allegations.

All christian churches, missions, and para-church organizations, whose very existence depends on the "gracious stewardship" of individual Christians, are obligated by scriptural command and apostolic precedent to make an accounting in the presence of the Lord and the presence of men. It must not only be their aim to do so, they must "make arrangements" or "take precautions" to do so. Those who give must be given an open, honest, "good" report of the administration of their gifts. It is the responsibility of individual Christians to support only those christian works which are willing to make arrangements for sound financial auditing, accounting, and reporting. Such financial responsibility is "honorable" (good) before

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the Lord and men. (Butler 291)

2. In the case of the apostle Paul, B.W. Johnson noted that the apostle was determined “to provide what was honest, in the sight of God, for his conscience’s sake, and in the sight of men for his work’s sake.”
- B. The word “providing” is very significant and needs to be defined before we can understand how this instruction applies to our lives.
 1. “Providing” means “to consider in advance, i.e. look out for beforehand (actively, by way of maintenance for others...” (*Biblesoft’s*).
 2. Consequently, Christians are instructed to plan ahead for taking care of their families or face being dubbed as though they were an unbelievers, 1 Timothy 5:8.
- C. The “men” before whom the child of God are to manifest honesty refers to human beings or to mankind without respect to gender.

II. Living one’s life honestly before God and his fellow man pre-emptively refutes false allegations before they arise.

- A. “It is not enough for God to know that a man’s conscience is clear; he should order his affairs in such a manner that people will also be aware of it” (Coffman).
 1. Matthew Henry advised from 2 Corinthians 8:21 that the responsible person will choose:

...to act so prudently as to prevent, as far as we can, all unjust suspicions concerning us, and all occasions of scandalous imputations. Note, We live in a censorious world, and should cut off occasion from those who seek occasion to speak reproachfully. It is the crime of others if they reproach or censure us without occasion; and it is our imprudence at least if we give them any occasion, when there may not be a just cause for them so to do.
 2. Albert Barnes writes:

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The sentiment is, that we are to see to it beforehand that all our conduct shall be comely or honest. The word rendered “providing for” ...means foreseeing, or perceiving beforehand; and the idea is, that we are to make it a matter of previous calculation, a settled plan, a thing that is to be attended to of set design.

- B. Especially concerning the management and administration of other people’s money calls for the demonstration of honesty before God and one’s fellow man.
 - 1. One’s demeanor, conduct and reputation should reduce the likelihood of baseless accusations being made.
 - 2. This demeanor, conduct and reputation happens not by accident, but by consistent, trustworthy behavior, Romans 12:17; 1 Peter 2:12, 15-16 ASV, NKJV.
- C. Every Christian has a responsibility to be a good steward of his own wealth as well as any prosperity of others with which he may be entrusted.

Every christian is “accountable” for his stewardship before the Lord (Matthew 18:23; Luke 16:2; Romans 14:12; Hebrews 13:17; 1 Peter 4:5) and before men (Matthew 5:16; John 15:8; Philippians 2:14-16; I Thessalonians 4:9-12; 11 Thessalonians 3:10-13; I Tim. 5:7-8; Romans 14:18; I Peter 2:12). (Butler 291).

- D. The biblical principle in 2 Corinthians 8:21 should extend to all aspects of the Christian’s life.

It may be applied to the acquisition and use of property; to the discharge of our professional duties; to our contact with others; to our treatment of inferiors and dependents; to our charities, etc. — in all of which we should make it a matter of previous thought, of earnest diligence, that our conduct should be perfectly honest and comely before God and man. (Barnes).

- 1. Students in school should be diligent in their studies and deportment with their peers and school personnel, as well

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- as appear to be cooperative in their education.
2. Employees and employers ought to conduct themselves appropriately in keeping with good work ethics, as well as appear to be genuinely interested in their respective roles as employees and employers.
 3. Family members ought to be responsive to their family members and appear to be affectionately interested in family roles and interaction.
 4. Christians ought to serve their Lord and appear to serve their Lord effectively.
 5. Especially preachers, elders, deacons, teachers, etc. ought to not only perform their respective duties, but they ought to appear to any onlookers as performing their respective responsibilities.
- E. In every imaginable role one might occupy, he needs to do the work and appear to be working in that role.

Conclusion:

1. Are we perceived to be trustworthy with other people's money; should anyone entrust us with it?
 - a. Are we responsible with the use of our own money?
 - b. If we are not, no one will have confidence that we can be trusted with resources that belong to others.
2. Are we honest and appear to be honest to observers of our lives in every area that could be scrutinized?
 - a. Are we valued employees or beloved employers?
 - b. Are we dependable students at school?
 - c. Are we busy in the vineyard of the Lord and do we appear to others that we are busy in the labors for Jesus Christ?

Invitation:

1. The first way in which we can show ourselves honest before God and our fellow man is to become children of God, Acts 2:38.
2. Second, as Christians we can act like Christians in our worship, Christian service and Christian living, Ephesians 5:8; Acts 8:22.

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Christian Living

New Beginnings

2 Corinthians 5:17

Thesis: To encourage especially members of the Lord's church to purposely commit themselves to the work of self-improvement religiously or spiritually throughout the new year.

Song: "A New Creature"

Introduction:

1. Contemporary people view the turning of the calendar from one year to the next as a time of new beginnings.
 - a. We call these new beginnings at the start of a new calendar year resolutions.
 - b. Typically, our new beginnings or resolutions are positive respecting self-improvement, e.g. "I'm going to start a new diet and exercise program — and stick with it this year."
 - c. Or, our new beginnings or resolutions may be negative, also respecting self-improvement, e.g. "I'm not going to spend my money impulsively this year as though money would burn a hole in my pocket."
2. The concept of beginnings is an important concept in the Bible as well.
 - a. For instance, the opening verses of the Bible record the "beginning" of the created, physical universe, Genesis 1:1.
 - b. Further, the Book of Genesis is really a book of beginnings in addition to creation, e.g. marriage and family.
 - c. John 1:1-2 uses the word "beginning" to represent the eternal habitation of the Godhead before there was any such thing as time.
 - d. First John 1:1 uses the word "beginning" to refer to the start of our Lord's earthly ministry.
3. Beginnings, especially new beginnings, are important to us today.
 - a. The word "beginning" means "the point at which something begins" (*Merriam Webster's*).

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- b. Hence, beginning “is used also to express the inauguration of a particular event (Ex 12:2)” (*ISBE*).
- c. The beginning of a new year when everyone is already thinking about new year resolutions is a perfect time to devote oneself to new beginnings religiously or spiritually — not just for a few days of the first month of the new year, but throughout the entire year.

Body:

I. We all need some positive resolutions or new beginnings.

- A. We need to resolve for the new year that we will worship Almighty God in His own appointed way when Christians assemble for worship every opportunity we possibly can.
 - 1. We already know well that we are obligated to assemble with fellow Christians each Lord’s Day, Hebrews 10:25.
 - 2. We already know well that New Testament worship on the Lord’s Day includes giving back to the Lord some of our material blessings, 1 Corinthians 16:1-2.
 - 3. Lord’s Day worship includes preaching and the Lord’s Supper, Acts 20:7.
 - 4. Worship assemblies also include singing and prayer, 1 Corinthians 14:15.
 - 5. What could be a better way to start the new year than determining that when God’s people meet that we will be there to worship God in spirit and in truth, John 4:24?
- B. We need to resolve for the new year that we will study God’s Holy Word more effectively so that we can know and apply more of it to ourselves.
 - 1. We already know that we are supposed to arm ourselves with the Word of God through regular study, 2 Timothy 2:15; Acts 17:11.
 - 2. Armed with the Word of God, we can more easily defend ourselves against the efforts of the devil to destroy our hopes of going to Heaven, Ephesians 6:17; Hebrews 4:12;

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Matthew 4:4, 6-7, 10.

3. Only by arming ourselves with the Word of God through earnest Bible study can we adequately discern between right and wrong, Hebrews 5:14; 1 Peter 2:2.
 4. If we do not study our Bibles diligently and attain some mastery of its contents, how can we instruct others or answer inquiries of others concerning the Word of God, 1 Peter 3:15; 2 Timothy 2:2?
 5. What could be a better way to start the new year than purposing to know God's Word better than we have in the past?
- C. We need to resolve for the new year that we will grow in Christian service to a height of service exceeding prior years.
1. Christians are supposed to be looking for opportunities for Christian service, Titus 2:14; 3:1; 1 Timothy 6:18; 2 Timothy 3:17.
 2. Rather than falling into the mold of the world, each of us needs to live a sacrificial life consciously in the service of and in accordance with the will of God, Romans 12:1-2.
 3. We must not simply be good people (though we must be good people), we must also do good, Hebrews 13:15-16.
 4. Our lives will never be what they could be for God if we do not offer up "spiritual sacrifices," 1 Peter 2:5.
 5. What could be a better way to start the new year than by growing spiritually as a servant of Jesus Christ?
- D. We need to resolve for the new year that we will more carefully practice Christian living than we have in the past.
1. Christians must abstain from every category or type of evil, 1 Thessalonians 5:22 ASV, NKJV.
 2. As Christians, we must not only refrain from allowing sinful practices a place in our lives, but we need to be militant against sinful activities, Ephesians 5:11.
 3. One way we can better make sure that we do not allow sinful activities a place in our lives is to not socialize with ungodly people, Ephesians 5:6-7; 1 Timothy 5:22;

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Romans 12:10; 2 Corinthians 6:14, 17.

4. We can more easily be what God wants us to be if we think holy things and purposefully attempt to own the Christian virtues for ourselves, Philippians 4:8; 2 Peter 1:4-11.
 5. What could be a better way to start the new year than by practicing godly living better than we have in the past, Titus 2:12?
- E. The best beginning anyone can make, or the best resolution anyone can make, in the new year is either to become a child of God or if already a child of God, but an erring child of God, is to obey the Gospel of Jesus Christ.
1. Why not become “a new creature” in Jesus Christ to start this new year, 2 Corinthians 5:17; Galatians 3:27; Mark 16:16?
 2. Erring Christians, there is no better time than the beginning of a new year to turn a new leaf of repentance, Acts 8:22.
 3. Becoming a child of God or determining to be a faithful child of God will bring a fresh, brighter outlook to the new year.
 4. Who will be immersed in water for the forgiveness of sins, or who will acknowledge waywardness (sin) in their lives and seek God’s forgiveness?
 5. What could be a better way to start the new year than by being a faithful child of God, a Christian father or a Christian mother or a Christian young person?

II. We all need some negative resolutions or new beginnings.

- A. We need to resolve for the new year to rid ourselves of some bad habits.
1. Some bad habits make it difficult to impossible to favorably influence people with the Gospel of Jesus Christ, e.g. using tobacco, procrastination, poor work ethic, etc.
 2. Some bad habits are definitely sinful, e.g. so-called social drinking, Galatians 5:21.
 3. “Drunkenness” means “intoxication” (*Biblesoft’s; Merri-*

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- am Webster*), which occurs with the first drink of alcohol.
4. The souls of otherwise good people are marred by bad habits, some of which are definitely sinful.
 5. What could be a better way to start the new year than to lose those bad habits?
- B. We need to resolve for the new year to rid ourselves of some pet sins.
1. First, we need to realize that any sin, no matter how trivial we might think it is, can cause a soul to be lost forever in a devil's Hell, Revelation 21:8; Romans 6:23.
 2. We might rationalize that our pet sin is a victimless crime, but even if not one other soul is affected by our pet sin, we nevertheless are the victim of a sin that can cause us to be lost, e.g. pornography, gambling, etc., Matthew 5:28; 2 Samuel 11:2; Proverbs 6:25; James 1:14-15; 2 Peter 2:14; Ephesians 4:28.
 3. What could be a better way to start the new year than to stop fooling ourselves and wake up to the fact that every sin unrepented of is enough sin to condemn our souls to a devil's Hell?

Conclusion:

1. Is your life going to be one of new beginnings or resolutions kept this year?
2. Are you going to be a better Christian, a better husband, a better wife, a better young person?
3. If you are not a Christian, are you going to become a Christian this year?

Invitation:

1. Why not become a Christian now and start the new year off right!
2. Jesus summarized the redemptive plan in what we call the Great Commission, Mark 16:16; Matthew 28:18-20.
3. The apostles Peter and John summarized what we might call the second law of pardon for erring Christians, Acts 8:22; 1 John 1:9.

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Think on These Things

Philippians 4:8-9

Thesis: To encourage Christians to fill their minds only with holy thoughts.

Song: “How Shall the Young Secure Their Hearts?”

Introduction:

1. We live in the age of computers, with which we manage and store all kinds of data.
 - a. This data can be stored on storage devices, some of which data is useful whereas other data is useless.
 - b. Since data storage devices have a maximum capacity, the available data space is very precious.
 - c. Unprofitable data ought to be erased so that more valuable data can reside on the available storage space.
 - d. Whatever is stored on such data storage devices is all that can possibly be recalled for use; one cannot call up what simply is not there!
2. Similarly, the human mind is like a data storage device.
 - a. Like the computer, the human mind fills itself with various types of data, some useful and some useless.
 - b. Especially Christians need to make the best possible use of the mind and store only valuable information.
 - c. **To the best of our abilities, we need to erase from our minds impure things and reserve our minds for noble thoughts.**
 - d. Like the computer, whatever is stored in our minds is all that can possibly be recalled; one cannot call up what simply is not there!

Body:

- I. **We need to be selective when entering data into our minds.**
 - A. The human mind records what it sees and hears.
 1. Whatever is recorded is repeatedly recalled, sometimes for conscious use and sometimes contrary to choice; we

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are what we think, Proverbs 23:7.

2. Foul language to which we may be subjected or voluntarily subject ourselves through our entertainment choices (e.g., movies) may inscribe such speech in the brain, speech that may come forth from one's own mouth unexpectedly particularly if angered, Ephesians 4:29; Colossians 3:8; Matthew 15:18-19.
3. Pornographic or sensual books, magazines, TV and movies vividly engrave themselves on the mind and crowd out thoughts of nobler things, Matthew 5:27-28; Proverbs 6:24-25.
4. The sins in which young and old may participate can be forgiven upon repentance, but the consequences of sin and one's remembrance of sin can nevertheless result in much torment, 2 Corinthians 2:6-7; Hebrews 10:17.

B. Everything with which we come in contact in life should be examined by Philippians 4:8 before it is allowed storage space in the human mind.

1. If it fails to pass the divine test, not only should it not be granted admission to our minds, but also we should flee from it, Romans 12:9; 2 Timothy 2:22.
 2. Most of what this world finds pleasurable is out of step with Philippians 4:8 and is sinful, Hebrews 11:25.
 3. Christians must be careful to avoid every type of evil, 1 Thessalonians 5:22.
- C. The companions we choose keenly affect what we say, do and record in our minds.
1. The Bible warns all Christians of the danger of evil companions, 1 Corinthians 15:33.
 2. Christians are further cautioned from becoming unequally yoked with unbelievers, thereby led into sin, 2 Corinthians 6:14.
 3. However, Christians are not forbidden from having contact with non-Christians as long as a friendship with the

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world does not occur, 1 Corinthians 5:9-10; James 4:4.

4. If Christians live intensely godly lives, they will be more likely to influence, persuade and perhaps convert their friends instead of being corrupted by those friends, 1 Peter 3:1-6.

II. Philippians 4:9 would have us teach each other God's ways.

A. As Christians who hope to influence the world and as parents who hope to properly rear their children, we each need to live Philippians 4:8.

1. The people around our children and us will not apply Philippians 4:8 to their lives if we do not apply it to our lives.
2. Philippians 4:9 portrays the holy example in our lives that is "learned, and received, and heard, and seen."
3. Sin and apathy toward religion in the lives of Christians and parents relates directly to the appearance of the same in the lives of others, including children.
4. By whatever standard of righteousness parents operate, their children are likely to do likewise.

B. The children of God above all others ought to realize what matters in life.

1. The most important factor in living life is to prepare ourselves to go to Heaven, Ecclesiastes 12:13-14.
2. One can be poor and with few friends but still be pleasing to God.
3. Seeking heavenly things first is what matters most, Matthew 6:33.

Conclusion:

1. Don't be a litterbug! Garbage and trash do not belong in the mind or in the heart of any of God's children.
2. Each of us needs to guard himself against worldly corruption; the pleasures of sin cost too much — costing us an eternity in Heaven.
3. There are morally good companions with whom we can associate and activities in which one can participate without compromising godliness; why not opt for them?

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4. Conformity to the world rather than transformation of one's life after godliness is sinful, Romans 12:1-2.
5. Every Christian (including each parent respecting his children) has the grave and sobering responsibility to put forth the best example and provide spiritual direction.

Invitation:

1. We must think on holy things and provide that example to those around us.
2. If we have failed in this regard, as erring Christians, we need to humbly approach God in prayer and petition him for forgiveness, Acts 8:22.
3. Unbaptized believers must obey the Gospel before they can effectively embrace Philippians 4:8 and demonstrate it for others, Hebrews 5:8-9; 2 Thessalonians 1:8.

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Keep the Faith!

2 Timothy 4:7

Thesis: To emphasize that immoveable Christian conviction is necessary for an individual to keep the faith, especially when the trials of life come.

Song: “True Hearted, Whole Hearted”

Introduction:

1. If true Christianity were merely a matter of human ingenuity, there would be no need for Christian conviction.
2. It is no wonder that most religious groups promote ecumenism instead of religious conviction, since much of what passes itself off as religion today is the product of human ingenuity.
3. Faithful Christians, though, must demonstrate in their lives that they have Christian conviction to keep the faith once for all delivered, Jude 3.
4. Christians must prove themselves immoveable in the face of peer pressure, general ungodliness all around us, immorality, all forms media, atheism, evolution, humanism and denomination-ism, 1 Corinthians 15:58.

Body:

- I. **The apostle Paul was one who lived his Christian life in such a way that he could say at life’s end, “I have kept the faith,” 2 Timothy 4:7.**
 - A. The apostle Paul never turned back to the beggarly elements of the world once he obeyed the Gospel of Christ and became a Christian, Galatians 4:9.
 1. Paul’s only look back was with remorse because he had made havoc of the Lord’s church, 1 Corinthians 15:9.
 2. Happily, Paul tirelessly preached the Gospel faith that he once violently opposed, Galatians 1:23.
 - B. Keeping the faith for the apostle Paul meant doing all within his power to promote the cause of Christ.

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1. Paul was the last apostle appointed by Jesus Christ, appointed to be an apostle at a time distant from the selection of the other apostles, 1 Corinthians 15:8.
 2. Yet, the apostle Paul was more productive for the cause of Christ than all the other apostles, 1 Corinthians 15:10.
 3. In the course of this productiveness of keeping the faith, the apostle Paul suffered the forfeiture of many things in life as well as much calamity, Philippians 3:4-11; 2 Corinthians 11:23-28.
- C. The apostle Paul ever ‘pressed forward’ as a servant of Christ, Philippians 3:14.
1. Paul’s Christianity was an active and a relentless pursuit of honorable Christian service.
 2. Paul’s Christianity knew nothing of passivity.
 3. Paul’s Christianity was not in name only, Luke 6:46.

II. Other inspired and un-inspired historical figures kept the faith at great personal cost.

- A. Stephen, the first Christian martyr, kept the Christian faith despite his faithfulness cost him his life, Acts 7:58-60.
- B. Polycarp is a notable example from ancient history of a Christian keeping the Christian faith despite his faithfulness cost him his life.
1. Polycarp was contemporary with one or more of the apostles of Jesus Christ, being born in the first century and living into the second century.
 2. Captured for the sole crime of being a Christian, he was given the opportunity to be spared death if he would renounce Christ.
 3. Instead, he is reputed as having responded, “Eighty and six years have I served him and he never did me wrong; how then can I revile my King and my Savior?”
 4. Subsequently, he was burned alive at a stake.
- C. The greatest example of keeping the faith in the face of extreme trial is Jesus Christ in His ministry and subsequent death.

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Conclusion:

1. In view of the conviction exhibited by the apostle Paul, Stephen, early martyrs and Jesus Christ Himself, do we not see the need to exercise true, Christian conviction in our lives?
2. Since Christianity is not a matter of human ingenuity but divine in origin, each of us needs to exercise Christian conviction.
3. Each child of God must show himself or herself immovable in the face of peer pressure (including at home), general ungodliness all around us, atheism, evolutionary teaching, humanism and denominationalism.
4. We conclude with the inspired admonition of the apostle Paul in 1 Corinthians 16:13, “Watch ye, stand fast in the faith, quit you like men, be strong.”

Invitation:

1. If you are not a Christian yet, for what are you waiting, Mark 16:16; Acts 11:26?
2. If you are an unfaithful Christian, are you willing to repent and pray for forgiveness, Acts 8:22; 1 John 1:9?

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The Impact of Faith

James 2:19

Thesis: To emphasize that in order for a professed faith in Jesus Christ to actually mean something, it has to have a direct impact on the way we conduct ourselves.

Introduction:

1. What is the impact of your faith on you personally as a Christian?
2. In order for a professed faith in Jesus Christ to actually mean something, it has to have a direct impact on the way we conduct ourselves.

Body:

I. In what ways is it evident that one's faith in Jesus Christ has a direct impact on him?

- A. Faith in Jesus Christ has a direct impact on us when we obey the Gospel of Jesus Christ and become Christians.
 1. Faith that does not lead one to become a child of God on His terms is a faith that is no more valuable than the faith of "devils" (KJV) or "demons" (ASV, NKJV), James 2:19.
 2. If faith in Jesus Christ has the proper impact on us, we will couple that faith with baptism and be saved, Mark 16:16.
 3. Baptized believers are added to the church by Jesus Christ, Acts 2:38, 41, 47.
 4. Members of the church were first called Christians in Antioch of Syria, Acts 11:26.

B. Faith in Jesus Christ has a direct impact on us when we are aware of our allegiance to our Lord every waking moment.

1. There is no time during our waking moments that we as Christians should not think pure thoughts, Philippians 4:8.
2. There is no time during our waking moments that we should not speak like Christians, Ephesians 4:25; 5:12.
3. There is no time during our waking moments that we should not act like Christians, Ephesians 5:8.

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- C. Faith in Jesus Christ has a direct impact on us when we manage our interpersonal relationships in accordance with that system of faith, the Gospel.
1. The faith in Jesus Christ that led us to become Christians should also lead us to be good spouses and parents, Ephesians 5:24-25; 6:4; Titus 2:4-5.
 2. The faith in Jesus Christ that led us to become Christians should also lead us to be good employees and employers, Ephesians 6:5-9.
 3. The faith in Jesus Christ that led us to become Christians should also lead us to be good citizens, 1 Timothy 2:1-2; Titus 3:1; 1 Peter 2:13-14, 17.
- D. Faith in Jesus Christ has a direct impact on us when we scrutinize every activity in which we involve ourselves by the Gospel of Jesus Christ.
1. The faith we have in Jesus Christ ought to keep us from developing a close friendship with ungodly people, 1 Corinthians 15:33 ASV; 2 Corinthians 6:14-18.
 2. For instance, we will not eventually marry an ungodly person if we make it a practice not to date or have close social interactions with ungodly persons.
 3. The faith we have in Jesus Christ ought to cause us to evaluate potential recreation and entertainment choices properly in light of the Word of God, Hebrews 11:25; 1 John 2:15-17.
 4. Activities that may be biblically permissible may be inappropriate for Christians depending upon when and where they occur, such as fishing or golfing instead of assembling with fellow Christians to worship God in His own appointed way, Hebrews 10:25-31.
 5. The faith we have in Jesus Christ ought to lead us to select as carefully as possible the jobs at which we work to avoid promoting ungodliness or preventing us from worshipping God in the public assembly.
 6. Circumstances such as available work opportunities may

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be less than ideal, but we must find some time to worship (as well as serve) our God to be Christians indeed.

II. In what ways is it evident that one's faith in Jesus Christ does not have a direct impact on him?

A. Faith in Jesus Christ does not have a direct impact on us when that faith does not leave the church house.

1. Our faith in Jesus Christ is useless if it is not evident in our daily lives — at home, at work, at school, in our business dealings, in our citizenship, etc.
2. Those with whom we come in contact throughout the days, weeks, months and years we spend on planet earth ought to be able to ascertain that we look “for a city which hath foundations, whose builder and maker is God” (Hebrews 11:10).

B. Faith in Jesus Christ does not have a direct impact on us when that faith does not help make this world a better place in which to live.

1. If we can help this world to be a better place in which to live as we conduct ourselves like Christians, we also provide an example for others to imitate us, 1 Thessalonians 1:6-7; 1 Timothy 4:12; Titus 2:7-8; 1 Corinthians 11:1.
2. As Christians and the Lord's church, we should not rub elbows with sin, but rather oppose it, Romans 1:32; Ephesians 5:11.
3. Where gambling, pornography, drinking, dancing, lewd activities and vulgarities are ought not to be the haunt of Christians.

C. Faith in Jesus Christ does not have a direct impact on us when we do not glorify God.

1. Obviously, we can glorify God verbally through statements we make, prayer and song, Acts 4:24; Hebrews 13:15; Psalm 69:30.
2. We can also glorify God by the way in which we live our lives, or we can spite God and bring reproach upon Him by the way we live (especially if we profess to be Chris-

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tians), 1 Corinthians 10:31; Matthew 5:16; 1 Peter 2:12.

- D. Faith in Jesus Christ does not have a direct impact on us when we do not save souls, including our own.
1. Faith in Jesus Christ is inconsequential to us when we are so little concerned about sin that mars our souls and that will prevent us from going to Heaven, Acts 26:28.
 2. We need to ask ourselves if we really care about where we spend eternity — enough to do something about it.
 3. Faith in Jesus Christ is inconsequential to us when we are so little concerned about sin that we make no attempt to rescue the souls of others from a devil's hell, James 5:20.
 4. We need to ask ourselves if we really care if our family members, friends, neighbors, coworkers, etc. spend forever in hell.
- E. Faith in Jesus Christ does not have a direct impact on us when we are not true to the Book — the Bible, the only book learning that is able to guide us to Heaven.
1. When we pick and choose portions of Scripture to apply to our lives, we are fooling ourselves if we think that is a winning strategy which will take us to Heaven, Matthew 7:21; Luke 6:46.
 2. When we substitute doctrines of men in place of the doctrines of God (even if we abide by many of God's doctrines), we make it apparent that we neither have sufficient regard for the Bible nor have the right kind of faith in Jesus Christ, Matthew 15:9; Titus 1:14; Hebrews 13:9.

Conclusion:

1. In what ways is it evident that your faith in Jesus Christ has a direct impact on your life?
2. Are there ways that it is obvious your faith in Jesus Christ does not have a direct impact on your life?

Invitation:

1. What is the impact of faith on you personally?
2. Has your faith led you to become a Christian, Mark 16:16?
3. Has your faith led you to be a faithful Christian, 1 John 1:7, 9?

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Faithfulness Biblically Defined

Psalm 31:23-24

Thesis: To biblically define “faithfulness.”

Song: “Faith Is the Victory”

Introduction:

1. “Faithfulness” obviously means different things to different people; to some faithfulness is:
 - a. Believing God exists,
 - b. Being on a church roll,
 - c. Having been baptized,
 - d. Attending Easter and Christmas services,
 - e. Attending services every week or so, once weekly or every time the doors are open.
2. Faithfulness even may be variously defined by churches, their elders, deacons, teachers and preachers.
 - a. Doubtless, elders and preachers would not usually consider as faithful those who did not regularly attend all the services of the church that they could.
 - b. Too frequently, faithfulness is limited to regular attendance of church services, and yet, it is possible that someone attending every service of the church may not be considered faithful by God Himself.
3. The only definition of faithfulness that really matters is God’s definition of faithfulness!
 - a. He has recorded His definition of faithfulness in the Bible.
 - b. Further, the Bible is filled with admirable examples of faithfulness.
 - c. However, the Bible also records instances of lapsed faithfulness.
 - d. The Bible frequently commands the practice of faithfulness to God.

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Body:

I. What Faithfulness Is Not.

- A. That irregular attendance of Bible classes and worship does not constitute faithfulness can be illustrated from contemporary life.
 - 1. Is the paperboy faithful who brings your paper one out of every three or four times?
 - 2. Is the employer faithful who fails to pay his employees every other payday?
 - 3. Is the husband and father faithful who only comes home to his house every few days according to his whimsical choice?
- B. Neither is faithfulness simply attending every Bible class and worship of the church.
 - 1. What is so intrinsically faithful about sitting on a pew?
 - 2. Yet, because there is so little true faithfulness exhibited by church members, elders and preachers are prone to equate faithfulness with regular attendance.
 - 3. The biblical definition of faithfulness certainly includes regular attendance of church services, but it is so much more, too.

II. What Is the Divine Definition of Faithfulness?

- A. Faithfulness is serving God foremost!
 - 1. One must seek God before wealth and material possessions, Matthew 6:24-33.
 - 2. God must ever be one's "first love," Revelation 2:4.
 - 3. Befriending the world makes one an enemy of God, James 4:4.
- B. Faithfulness is serving God to the best of one's ability.
 - 1. The Parable of the Talents illustrates the necessity of serving well, Matthew 25:14-30.
 - 2. Faithfulness demands one assume the nature of a servant.
 - 3. God expects His servants to serve Him commensurate with each's ability, and He will reward or punish each according to his effort or lack thereof, Matthew 25:21, 23, 30.
- C. Faithfulness is serving God unendingly.

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1. Servants who continuously serve will be rewarded, Matthew 24:45-47.
 2. Servants who abandon service to God will be sentenced to Hell, Matthew 24:48-51.
- D. Faithfulness is serving God despite the dangers of persecution or death.
1. Historically, sometimes faithful service resulted in the loss of one's life, Revelation 2:10.
 2. Nevertheless, Jesus taught His disciples that they would be saved if they endured unto the end of their lives, Matthew 10:22.
 3. Jesus promises His followers that they will persevere spiritually, even if they do not persevere physically, Matthew 10:28.
- E. Faithfulness is serving God with all our available resources.
1. We must give ourselves first, 2 Corinthians 8:1-5.
 2. As stewards, we must apply our resources to the cause of Christ, 1 Corinthians 4:2.
 3. The apostle Paul taught that Christians should give liberally, 2 Corinthians 9:6-7.

III. The Bible Is Replete with Examples of Faithfulness.

- A. Scripture holds up Abraham as a perfect specimen of faithfulness, Nehemiah 9:7-8.
1. Abraham appears in the Bible's Hall of Fame of Faith, Hebrews 11:8-12, 17-19.
 2. Abraham is the subject of several passages where he is held up as an admirable example to follow in faithfulness to God, Acts 7:2-5; Genesis 12:1ff.
- B. Abel, Enoch, Noah, Isaac, Jacob, Joseph, Moses, Rahab and allusions to others also appear in the Bible's Hall of Fame of Faith, Hebrews 11.
1. Abel became the first faithful martyr.
 2. Noah was faithful when he lacked moral support, fellowship and spiritual direction from his fellow man.

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3. Enoch and Elijah were exemplary specimens of faithfulness and were not subjected to death, Genesis 5:24; 2 Kings 2:11.
 4. Moses, though not sinless, faithfully served God as an old man, leading the nation of Israel for 40 years in the wilderness.
- C. Samuel is an unparalleled example of faithfulness from his youth throughout his life.
1. Hannah, Samuel's mother, purposed before he was conceived that her son would faithfully serve God all his life, 1 Samuel 1:11.
 2. At a young age, Samuel was lent for life to the service of the Lord, 1 Samuel 1:24-28.
 3. Samuel was called to the service of God while he was yet a child, 1 Samuel 3:2-10.
 4. Samuel lived all his life in faithful service, 1 Samuel 12:1-5; 25:1.
- D. The apostle Paul is a fine New Testament demonstration of faithfulness, 1 Timothy 1:12.
1. Paul (Saul of Tarsus) always faithfully practiced what he thought was right, Acts 23:1.
 2. From the time he obeyed the Gospel, Paul began to faithfully practice and preach the Gospel, Acts 9:21-22.
 3. Paul endured the forfeiture of personal honors and severe persecution as a faithful Christian servant, Philippians 3:4-11; 2 Corinthians 11:23-28.
 4. Paul taught about an obedient, living and active faithfulness, Romans 1:5; 16:26.

IV. The Bible Chronicles Instances of Lapsed Faithfulness.

- A. King Saul is an example of lapsed faithfulness.
1. He was a different character when chosen by God to be king than he became later in life, 1 Samuel 9-10.
 2. He faithfully delivered Israel from the oppression of surrounding nations, 1 Samuel 11ff.

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3. However, later, Saul began a life of rebellion against God, 1 Samuel 15ff.
4. Finally, unfaithful Saul took his own life, 1 Samuel 31:4.
- B. Solomon also began his reign as a faithful servant and yet apparently died in unfaithfulness.
 1. David prayed that Solomon might have a perfect heart to keep God's commandments, 1 Chronicles 29:19.
 2. Solomon asked God for wisdom, 2 Chronicles 1:7-12.
 3. Among the labors of Solomon was the construction of the Temple, 2 Chronicles 2ff.
 4. However, in his old age, Solomon practiced and promoted idolatry in Israel, 1 Kings 11.
- C. Ananias and Sapphira are New Testament examples of lapsed faithfulness, Acts 5.
 1. Evidently, they had been faithful disciples.
 2. However, they ceased to be faithful when they lied to men and to God.
 3. They coveted the esteem due the faithful, but they did not live accordingly.
 4. They conspired together to defraud the church of what they proposed to give.
- D. The New Testament records indelibly and eternally other first century Christians who became unfaithful.
 1. Hymenaeus and Alexander made shipwreck of their faith and were disfellowshipped, 1 Timothy 1:19-20.
 2. Hymenaeus and Philetus erred doctrinally and became unfaithful, as well as contributed to the unfaithfulness of others, 2 Timothy 2:17-19.
 3. Demas forsook faithful Paul, preferring this material world, 2 Timothy 4:10.
 4. Diotrephes became unfaithful when he rejected the inspired apostles and teachers of his day, 3 John 9-10.
- V. The Bible Explicitly Teaches the Practice of Faithfulness.**
 - A. Faithfulness is synonymous with "saint," "Christian" and

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other terms descriptive of the children of God.

1. Paul used the word “saints” and “faithful” interchangeably, Ephesians 1:1.
 2. Teaching and preaching servants of God are called “faithful men,” 2 Timothy 2:2.
- B. Faithfulness is a common characteristic of the child of God.
1. Deacons’ wives must be faithful, 1 Timothy 3:11.
 2. Elders must have faithful children, Titus 1:6.

Conclusion:

1. Faithfulness is an essential ingredient to successful Christianity.
2. Every Christian must demonstrate or practice faithfulness, James 2:14-26.
3. The unfaithful or unbelieving are grouped with a host of sinners who God has determined to remand to an eternal Hell, Revelation 21:8.

Invitation:

1. Are you a faithful child of God, 2 Corinthians 13:5?
2. Erring Christians need to renounce sin, announce their repentance of publicly knowable sins and pray, Acts 17:30; 8:22.
3. Unbaptized believers need to put Jesus on in baptism, Galatians 3:27.

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Two Opinions

1 Kings 18:21

Thesis: To move Christians to faithfully live the Christianity they profess.

Introduction:

1. The background to the occasion of 1 Kings 18:21 and its surrounding verses include:
 - a. Ahab became king of the northern kingdom of Israel and was more wicked than any of his predecessors, 1 Kings 16:29-30.
 - b. Ahab married Jezebel, after which he introduced Baal worship into Israel, 1 Kings 16:31-33.
 - c. The prophet Elijah pronounced a three-year absence of rain because of the sins of Ahab, Jezebel and Israel, 1 Kings 17:1.
 - d. After three years, Elijah staged a confrontation between the prophets of Baal and himself to prove to Israel who the true God is, 1 Kings 18:1-45.
 - e. The site of this contest was Mt. Carmel on the seacoast.
2. The same question that Elijah posed to Israel in 1 Kings 18:21 needs asked in every generation.
 - a. The world needs to consciously choose between God and all alternatives (e.g., denominationalism, hedonism, materialism, evolution).
 - b. God's people need to consciously choose between following God faithfully and allowing worldly distractions to sidetrack them.
 - c. Every congregation needs to answer the question, "...How long halt ye between two opinions? if the LORD be God, follow him..."

Body:

- I. **Christians have the responsibility of echoing Elijah's question before the communities in which they live.**
 - A. The Great Commission levies upon Christians the responsi-

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bility to challenge the lost to follow God, Matthew 28:18-20; Mark 16:15-16.

1. Those who do not pretend to be religious are among those to whom Christians must take God's saving Gospel, Romans 1:16.
 2. Not only must Christians take the Gospel to those sometimes styled the unchurched, but we must take the Gospel to lost souls who are practicing vain religion, Matthew 15:9, 13 (e.g., denominations).
- B. Christians have their prophets of Baal to slay.
1. However, the weapons of our warfare are not carnal and literal, 2 Corinthians 10:4.
 2. The Lord's kingdom and the kingdom of Satan are spiritual kingdoms, John 18:36; Matthew 26:52.
 3. Christians use the sword of the Spirit (the Word of God) and wear the Gospel armor, Ephesians 6:11-17; Hebrews 4:12.
- C. We, like Elijah, must rely on God to slay the prophets of Baal today.
1. Only through the power of God could Elijah stop rain for three years.
 2. Only through the power of God could Elijah call down fire from heaven and cause it to rain.
 3. We cannot save the lost without God.
 4. We cannot save the lost without the Gospel.

II. Elijah's question needs to be posed to spiritual Israel today.

- A. False doctrines taught within the church require the posing of the question, "...How long halt ye between two opinions? if the LORD be God, follow him..."
1. Departures from truth were predicted, Acts 20:29-30.
 2. Therefore, Christians are required to test preachers, teachers and their words with the Word of God, 1 John 4:1.
 3. Some of the doctrinal errors taught within the church in our lifetimes include errors about marriage-divorce-and-remarriage, the role of women, the A.D. 70 theory, gimmickry,

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cultic tactics, elders have no authority, the Holy Spirit, evolution, loosing God's authority where he did not loose and making laws where God did not make laws.

- B. Elijah's question needs to be posed within the church today because of widespread materialism.
 - 1. The love of money is still the root of all evil, 1 Timothy 6:10.
 - 2. Making the pursuit of riches one's primary goal in life still leaves one unprepared to meet God, Luke 12:16-21.
 - 3. It is still impossible to serve God foremost and seek money foremost, Matthew 6:24.
- C. Elijah's question needs to be posed within the church because of apathy among God's people.
 - 1. Losing one's first love and being lukewarm spiritually are still offensive to Jesus Christ, Revelation 2:4; 3:15-16.
 - 2. It is still the case as it was in Jeremiah's day that God's people often misrepresent themselves as faithful servants and true to the Word of God when they are not, Jeremiah 6:14 (e.g., "all is well").
- D. We as Elijah must call upon the Lord and encourage others to do so, too.
 - 1. Those who call upon the name of the Lord in an acceptable way will be saved, Romans 10:13; Acts 22:16.
 - 2. Calling on the name of the Lord requires activity on our parts, James 1:22; Matthew 7:21; Luke 6:46; James 4:17.
- E. Christians must slay the prophets of Baal, today.
 - 1. For us, that includes defending the Gospel of Christ, Philippians 1:17.
 - 2. We must contend for the faith once and for all delivered to the saints, Jude 3.

Conclusion:

- 1. The world often halts between two opinions and usually follows Satan.
 - a. Only Christians can make a difference.

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- b. God has no Elijahs today besides faithful Christians.
- c. With an abiding sense of urgency, we need to take the Gospel to the whole world.
2. Denominationalism often halts between God's way and alternatives to God's way.
 - a. Only Christians can make the difference.
 - b. Again, Christians are the only Elijahs God has on earth today.
 - c. If Christians do not confront denominational error, who will?
3. Christians often halt between two opinions.
 - a. Only faithful Christians can make a difference.
 - b. Faithful Christians are the only Elijahs God has on earth today to search for and rescue the perishing.
 - c. Only faithful Christians can rebuke sinners, contradict false teachers and admonish weak brethren.
4. What can we do?
 - a. Each child of God can begin by correcting shortcomings in his own life, Matthew 7:3; 2 Corinthians 13:5.
 - b. Each child of God can uphold morally, financially and bodily church programs to convert the lost and to restore fallen brethren, 2 Corinthians 8:5.
 - c. The church can do nothing unless we do something; we are the church!

Invitation:

1. Who this day is willing to slay the prophets of Baal and overturn the heathen altars in his life?
2. Who will say as old Israel did after the prophets of Baal were slain, "The LORD, he is the God; the LORD, he is the God" in 1 Kings 18:39 by being baptized for the remission of his sins, Acts 2:38; 22:16?
3. Who will say as an erring Christian, "The LORD, he is the God; the LORD, he is the God" and heartily come back to the Lord penitently and in prayer, Acts 8:22; 1 John 1:9?

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Who Do You Say That I Am?

Matthew 16:13-17

Thesis: To encourage especially Christians to live their lives as though acknowledging that Jesus of Nazareth is the Christ, the Son of God, really means something to them.

Songs: “The World’s Bible,” “I’m Not Ashamed to Own My Lord”

Introduction:

1. I am indebted to Phil Sanders and his article in *Think* magazine for some key thoughts around which I molded this lesson.
2. Respecting the text of Matthew 16:13-17, brother Sanders began his article with the affirmation: “The most important question you will ever answer is ‘Who do you say that I am?’” (6).
3. Let me suggest that there is who we identify Jesus to be by our words, but it is quite possible that we essentially answer our Lord’s question to Peter very differently by the way we conduct ourselves.
4. **Who is Jesus of Nazareth? Do our words and our actions tell the same thing?**

Body:

- I. **Who do we say that Jesus is by the way we live our lives?**
 - A. Who do we say that Jesus is by the words that come out of our mouths?
 1. Does our speech identify us as followers of Jesus or betray us as followers of the devil, Ephesians 4:29; Colossians 3:8; 2 Peter 2:7?
 2. Do we tell and appreciate dirty jokes, Ephesians 5:4 NKJV?
 3. Is our language punctuated and well-seasoned with profanity, Romans 12:14; James 3:10?
 4. Are we remembered by others for our angry words, Matthew 5:22?
 5. Is there really any discernible difference between the way we talk and the things about which we talk than the way unright-

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teous people talk and the things about which they talk?

- B. Who do we say that Jesus is by the way we conduct ourselves, Philippians 1:27; 1 Peter 1:15 “manner of life” ASV; “conduct” NKJV?
1. Do our neighbors know that we are Christians, 1 Timothy 4:12 “manner of life” ASV; “conduct” NKJV?
 2. Do our coworkers or fellow students know that we are Christians, 1 Peter 2:12 “behavior” ASV; “conduct” NKJV?
 3. Do our family members sometimes forget that we are Christians?
 4. Is there anyone who knows you who would be surprised to discover that you profess to be a Christian, 1 Peter 3:16 “good manner of life in Christ” ASV; “good conduct in Christ” NKJV?
- C. Who do we say that Jesus is when someone asks us about our religious convictions?
1. Are we ashamed of Jesus Christ and His Gospel, Romans 1:16?
 2. Have we studied God’s Word sufficiently to give honest Bible answers to any who would inquire of us about the Christianity we endeavor to practice, 1 Peter 3:15?
 3. Do what we preach and what we practice agree with each other?
 4. The motto, “Do as I say, not as I do,” is failed theology and speaks of no religious conviction, 1 Corinthians 11:1.
- D. Jesus’ words in Luke 6:46 come to mind.
1. If Jesus Christ is truly the Lord of our lives as the Son of God, certainly the words rolling off our tongues in our daily speech will be compatible with our Christian profession.
 2. If Jesus Christ is the Lord of our lives as the Son of God, the places we go and the things that we do will correspond to divine instruction in the Gospel of Christ.
 3. If Jesus Christ is the Lord of our lives as the Son of God,

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there are places we will not go and things that we will not do because they are counter to divine instruction in the New Testament.

II. Who do we say that Jesus is when it is time to worship God or attend Bible study?

- A. Who do we say that Jesus is by assembling for worship when God's people assemble for worship, Hebrews 10:25?
 - 1. When we are present at every opportunity we have to worship God with fellow Christians, we affirm to the world that Jesus Christ is the Lord of our lives as the Son of God.
 - 2. If we fail to assemble regularly with God's people for worship, what are we really saying about the influence of Jesus Christ on us?
 - 3. Worshipping God has always been a delight for faithful children of God, Psalm 122:1.
- B. Who do we say that Jesus is by studying God's Word together in a Bible class?
 - 1. When we are present at every opportunity we have to gather with God's people for Bible study, we affirm to the world that Jesus Christ is the Lord of our lives as the Son of God.
 - 2. If we fail to avail ourselves regularly of Bible study with God's people, what are we really saying about the influence of Jesus Christ on us, Acts 17:11?
 - 3. We must study God's Word, 1 Timothy 2:15.
- C. Jesus' words in Luke 6:46 come to mind again.
 - 1. If Jesus Christ is truly the Lord of our lives as the Son of God, we will make every effort to assemble with fellow Christians at every worship time.
 - 2. If Jesus Christ is truly the Lord of our lives as the Son of God, we will seize every opportunity to study our Bibles alone as well as gathered with other Christians at designated times of Bible study.
 - 3. If Jesus Christ is truly the Lord of our lives as the Son of God, there is no place that we would rather be when it is

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time for Bible class or worship than with the people of God, Romans 12:10; 1 Peter 2:17.

Conclusion:

1. We agree with brother Sanders when he stated, “When Christians confess Jesus as the Lord, the Christ, and the Son of God, it must mean something in the way that they live. He must be Lord all the time and in every matter” (7).
2. Furthermore, “[p]eople see Jesus as weak and ineffective in making changes in the lives of people” (Sanders 7) whenever it appears that Jesus has made so little difference in the lives of Christians.
 - a. Individual Christians and congregations of the Lord’s church that fail to demonstrate true Christianity shout down every good Gospel sermon.
 - b. Individual Christians and congregations that fail to demonstrate true Christianity discount or mark down the cost of the sacrifice of Jesus Christ upon the cross for the redemption of humanity.
 - c. Brother Sanders gave one tell-tale example of devalued Christianity: “Churches that cease from worship to watch the Super Bowl, to watch Wrestle Mania, or to celebrate Christmas at home can hardly argue that they give Jesus first place in everything (Col. 1:18)” (7).
 - d. Really, the examples that could be put forth in the lives of Christians and congregations would be innumerable.
3. “If we are determined to influence the world for Jesus, we must first show the world that the Lord has already influenced us” (Sanders 7).

Invitation:

1. Has the Lord Jesus influenced you enough to obey the Gospel of Christ, Mark 16:16?
2. Has the Lord Jesus influenced you enough to be a faithful Christian, Revelation 2:10?

Works Cited

Sanders, Phil. “Who Is This Jesus?” *Think* May 2006: 6-7.

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By Way of Example

1 Corinthians 10:11 ASV

Thesis: To encourage especially Christians to learn from the mistakes of others, so as to better prepare to meet God in eternity.

Introduction:

1. Parents sometimes say to their children (and others over whom they may have some influence), “Don’t make the same mistake that I made.”
 - a. This type of advice might have to do with a misspent youth (e.g., drinking, drugs, premarital sex, an abortion, marrying too young, hanging out with the wrong crowd, etc.).
 - b. Quite possibly, such advice may have to do with post-adolescent or adult life responsibilities (e.g., mishandling one’s money, childrearing, etc.).
 - c. Any number of things might be included in such well meaning parental advice, howbeit, advice that often is neither desired by younger persons nor followed.
2. The Bible contains several instances of Bible characters essentially urging subsequent generations, “Don’t make the same mistakes that we made.”
 - a. Solomon, for instance, tried everything “under the sun” to bring him earthly, sensual happiness and concluded that it was all in vain, Ecclesiastes 1:14.
 - b. Solomon’s Book of Proverbs in its entirety is a warning to youth to avoid paths of wickedness (and their hurtful consequences) and rather choose paths of righteousness (which promise a better today and a brighter eternity).
 - c. The individual accounts of various Bible characters echo loudly the truism, “Don’t make the same mistakes that we have made!”
3. The apostle Paul encouraged Christians both in Rome and Corinth to learn from Old Testament history and to avoid making the same sinful mistakes, Romans 15:4; 1 Corinthians 10:11.

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Body:

I. What should we be able to learn from the demise of the Jewish priests, Nadab and Abihu, Leviticus 10:1-2?

- A. The NIV says they offered “unauthorized fire” in Jewish worship.
 - 1. The fire was supposed to come from the altar of burnt sacrifice before the entrance of the Tabernacle, Leviticus 16:12.
 - 2. Evidently, these two sons of Aaron, the high priest, derived their fire from some other source.
- B. In a very dramatic and public display of divine disapproval, God destroyed Nadab and Abihu with fire out of the sky.
 - 1. God declared that the two errant priests, by their ignoring of divine instruction, neither had observed the holiness of God nor were they glorifying God, Leviticus 10:3.
 - 2. Further, under the penalty of death, even their father and brothers were forbidden to either mourn or sympathize with Nadab and Abihu, Leviticus 10:3, 6-7.
- C. Just what might we conclude that we can apply to ourselves?
 - 1. We had better not worship God in any unauthorized way, or we, too, will come to know divine displeasure (at Final Judgment).
 - 2. At all times, especially when worshipping, we need to act in such a way as to honor the holiness of God and glorify Him.
 - 3. We must not sympathize with sinners, irrespective of whether they may be fellow Christians or even family members.

II. What should we be able to learn from God’s punishment of His people following the Exodus from Egypt?

- A. In 1 Corinthians 10:1-11, the apostle Paul summarized the sins of Israel during this period.
 - 1. The children of God were guilty of “lust[ing] after evil things,” idolatry, fornication and grumbling against God, 1 Corinthians 10:6-8, 10.
 - 2. One translation says that they tested God (i.e., tested the

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authority and fortitude of God like children test their parents to see if they will follow through on what they say), 1 Corinthians 10:9.

- B. Consequently, God littered the desert with the bodies of those sinners, 1 Corinthians 10:5.
 - 1. Preceding the Exodus, the Egyptians had seen the result of the mighty hand of God against them, Deuteronomy 6:21; 7:8; 26:8; Daniel 9:15.
 - 2. Ironically, Israel was not more receptive to God in view of the power He demonstrated against the Egyptians.
 - 3. Israel sinned and was severely punished by God during the 40-year wilderness wandering so that a whole generation eventually died before reaching Canaan, Numbers 14:29-33.
- C. Just what might we conclude that we can apply to ourselves?
 - 1. We must not lust after evil things, Titus 2:12; 1 John 2:15-17.
 - 2. We must not practice idolatry (i.e., nothing and no one must either be more important to us than God or come before God in our lives), Matthew 6:24, 33.
 - 3. Sexual immorality must not characterize the children of God, 1 Corinthians 6:9-10.
 - 4. We must not grumble against God or His divine Word (e.g., marriage, divorce and remarriage; the role of women in the home and the church; instrumental music; etc.).
 - 5. God will punish His children for their sins, perhaps provisionally in this life, Hebrews 12:5-11.
 - 6. Especially Christians should not test the authority of God.

Conclusion:

- 1. Though similar instances could be multiplied greatly, the principle would remain the same, namely: God says what He means, and He means what He says.
- 2. There is no need for us to make the same kind of mistakes that Bible characters made to bring upon them God's severe displeasure.

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3. We can learn by the sinful mistakes of others how to better prepare to meet God in Final Judgment, Amos 4:12.

Invitation:

1. The first step today in preparing to meet God in Final Judgment is to become a Christian, Mark 16:16; Acts 2:38; 11:26.
2. Each day is an opportunity to commune with Jesus Christ and His blood, whereby we can be prepared to meet God in Final Judgment, 1 John 1:7-10.

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What Doth the Lord Require of Thee?

Micah 6:8

Thesis: To demonstrate that in all dispensations, God has required men to seek divine righteousness.

Introduction:

1. Micah was a faithful prophet of God at a critical time in the nation of Judah.
 - a. Micah was a contemporary of the prophet Isaiah.
 - b. Micah preached in the rural areas whereas Isaiah preached in Jerusalem.
 - c. Micah's divine condemnations chided both divided kingdoms of Israel (in the north) and Judah (in the south).
 - d. Micah's message foretold of divine punishment and captivity.
 - e. However, Micah offered hope if the Israelites would repent, as well as ultimate hope in the then distant coming of the Messiah.
2. God was grieved with the sins of both Israelite kingdoms.
 - a. The northern kingdom of Israel, or Samaria, left God from the time of its inception by immediately practicing idolatry.
 - b. Judah also began to practice idolatry.
 - c. Leaders perverted judgment in both kingdoms; priests and prophets in both kingdoms caused the people to err from God's Word.
 - d. Both kingdoms practiced idolatry and gross immoralities, among other sins.
3. Micah 6:8 records God's solution to the sin problem affecting both kingdoms.
 - a. Micah 6:8 emphasizes that the solution to the problem of sin lies with God and that He has not left humanity without instruction regarding human redemption.
 - b. Abiding by the Word of God, generally speaking, is the answer for people who lived under the Old Testament and for people who live under the New Testament, Ecclesiastes

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12:13-14; 1 Thessalonians 2:13.

Body:

I. What Doth the Lord Require of Thee? Micah 6:8.

A. “Do justly.”

1. God-approved religion has always been a doing religion, Matthew 7:21; James 4:17.
2. Good intentions and empty “amens” are deficient.
3. “Do justly” means actively pursuing righteousness as God defines righteousness, rather than what simply may pass for righteousness among men.
4. One’s conduct should be judicially correct before our God and Judge.

B. “Love mercy” (“kindness” ASV).

1. The child of God will exercise mercy, kindness or have pity on his fellow man.
2. The child of God will also show deference for God and do acts or deeds that represent a kind response to divine instruction.
3. We will receive no more mercy and kindness from God than we are willing to bestow on our fellow men, Matthew 5:7; 18:23-35.

C. “Walk humbly with thy God.”

1. Humanity has been invited to go on a journey with God, the end of which for the faithful is a home in Heaven with God.
2. Successful pilgrims on the journey with God to God’s house are lowly, humble and not argumentative against God and His Word, 3 John 9-11; 1 Corinthians 1:18-21; Proverbs 11:2.
3. We must continually walk down the path of life where God leads, 1 John 1:7; 2:6.

II. What Doth the Lord Require of Thee? Deuteronomy 10:12-13.

A. “Fear the Lord thy God.”

1. In addition to any outward acts and ceremonial activities

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legislated by God, the Godhead requires that mankind respond to divine instruction with reverential fear and with reverent conduct.

2. As the great Sovereign, Creator and Judge, God demands from His creation the reverence that is due Him.
- B. “Walk in all his ways.”
1. Humans must follow God through the course of life as he leads them through the Word of God.
 2. Life is neither hapless nor the destiny uncertain for those who allow themselves to be led of God through his Word.
- C. “To love him.”
1. The child of God’s affections are to be set primarily on God.
 2. We do not forget the objects of our affections, or what pleases and displeases them.
- D. “To serve the Lord thy God.”
1. “Serve” means to enslave one’s self to another whereby one is completely at the discretion of whomever is being served.
 2. The most noble and rewarding devotion is to God.
 3. As the New Testament reveals, mankind must opt to serve God foremost, Matthew 6:33.
- E. “With all thy heart and with all thy soul” (cf., Matthew 22:37).
1. “Heart” is defined as courage with understanding.
 2. “Soul” has to do with the life breath that animates us or makes us alive.
 3. Therefore, purposely the child of God determines to employ his total being or essence in the service of God.
- F. “To keep the commandments of the Lord, and his statutes.”
1. Both “commandments” and “statutes” refer to divine instruction and represent all of it.
 2. Both testaments demand obedience, 1 Samuel 15:22; Hebrews 5:8-9.
 3. Love is associated with obedience, John 14:15.
- G. “Which I command thee this day.”

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1. Obviously, divine instruction is not optional!
 2. It is never safe to relegate divine instruction to a matter of indifference.
- H. “For thy good.”
1. The “good” in which God’s Word instructs humanity is for our physical and spiritual welfare on earth, and our spiritual welfare forever in Heaven.
 2. The good God intends for us is better than what man often plans and does for himself.

Conclusion:

1. Generally, God just wants man to behave himself according to God’s rules; God as our Father has the right to direct His children and require obedience.
2. All of humanity will be judged according to the respective laws of God under which they lived, Revelation 20:12-15; 2 Corinthians 5:10; John 12:48.
3. Our mission regarding righteousness and its reward is plain, 1 Peter 3:11-12.
4. The righteousness that we must pursue is revealed in the Word of God (i.e., not the civil law of men that may conflict with divine instruction or personal mottos: “If it feels good, do it!”).

Invitation:

1. “What doth the Lord require of thee?” depends on your spiritual condition.
2. Non-Christians must obey the Gospel to avoid a vengeful Jesus Christ at His Second Coming, 2 Thessalonians 1:7-9; Mark 16:16.
3. Erring Christians must repent and pray, Acts 8:22.
4. The rest of us must stay on the path that leads ever upward to a heavenly city!

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A Chance, a Change and a Challenge

Romans 5:6-11; 6:11-13

Thesis: To portray Christianity from the perspectives of what it offers and what it requires of mankind.

Song: “Just As I Am”

Introduction:

1. The word chance may mean luck or refer to gambling.
 - a. However, it is not used in that sense in this sermon.
 - b. Rather, by chance, in this study, is meant an opportunity.
2. The title of our lesson today suggests, then, that
 - a. Christianity provides an opportunity,
 - b. requires change and
 - c. further challenges mankind.
3. Romans 5:6-11; 6:11-13...
 - a. ...indicate that God through Jesus Christ afforded mankind a chance or an opportunity to be saved,
 - b. refer to a change that takes place when one becomes a Christian and
 - c. challenge Christians to act as though that chance and change has transpired.
4. When in other areas of life we may sometimes feel that we neither have a chance, cannot change nor feel that life is challenging, we can know and be joyful that Christianity offers all three: a Chance, a Change and a Challenge.

Body:

- I. **Christianity is a religion of another chance (or opportunity).**
 - A. The family relationship is a good illustration of the mind of God toward mankind.
 1. Loving parents sometimes must chastise their children for their misconduct.
 2. Yet, the same loving parents extend to their children another chance to do better.

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3. Further, parents offer their penitent children additional chances or opportunities to become obedient children.
- B. Likewise, our Heavenly Father offers chances or opportunities to His children to become obedient.
 1. God's favor directed toward humanity is called His mercy and grace, Ephesians 2:1-13.
 2. The extension of God's grace toward His creation unfolded according to His eternal purpose for human redemption, Ephesians 3:10-11.
 3. That grace is manifest in the vicarious sacrifice of Jesus Christ for fallen humanity, John 3:16; Romans 5:6-11; 6:11-13.
 4. The chance or opportunity to be saved is revealed through the proclamation of the Gospel, Mark 16:15-16; Matthew 28:18-20.
 5. Likewise, erring Christians also are afforded chances or opportunities to save themselves, Luke 17:3-4; James 5:19-20; Acts 8:22; Philippians 2:12; Revelation 2-3.

II. Christianity is a religion of change.

- A. If no change were necessary, God would not have sacrificed so greatly that men could change, and men would not change.
 1. Without the shed blood of Jesus Christ, mankind would have been forever doomed and separated from God, Isaiah 59:1-3; Romans 5:8; Ephesians 1:7.
 2. If change were not possible and desirable, our Lord would not have had to trouble Himself preparing mansions in Heaven, John 14:1-3.
- B. Approved religious change whereby one's life is brought into alignment with God's Word is called repentance.
 1. Hearing God's Word exclusively and developing a saving faith necessarily precedes biblical repentance, Romans 10:17; John 8:24.
 2. Publicly professing allegiance to Jesus Christ and the obedient action of immersion in water for the remission

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- of one's sins follows repentance, Romans 10:9-10; Acts 8:37; Romans 6:3-5; 1 Peter 3:21; Acts 2:38; 22:16.
3. The New Testament contains several examples and commands urging repentance, Luke 13:3, 5; Acts 17:30; 2:38; 3:19.
 4. Avowed repentance that is not based on the Word of God only, based on a Bible faith, resulting in professing Christ and acts of obedience is not biblical repentance and does not save.
- C. There are valid reasons why all men ought and many do change or repent.
1. Those who gratefully acknowledge that God through Jesus Christ first loved humanity and gave our Lord to die for us accept the chance to change and do change, 1 John 4:19.
 2. The anticipation of eternal doom is a sobering reason to accept the chance to change, Acts 17:30-31; 2 Corinthians 5:10-11; Revelation 20:11-15.
 3. The temporal pleasures of sin are inferior and not comparable to the eternal joy in Heaven, Hebrews 11:25; Revelation 21:4; 1 Peter 1:8-9.

III. Christianity is a religion of challenge.

- A. Christians are challenged to remain faithful.
1. The Bible is replete or filled with warnings to the children of God to remain faithful, Matthew 24:13; Revelation 2:10.
 2. The Bible demonstrates examples of failure to remain faithful, 2 Peter 2:20-22; 1 Timothy 1:19-20.
 3. With personal diligence, Christians must work out their own salvation and run well the Christian race, Philippians 2:12; 1 Corinthians 9:24-26; 2 Timothy 4:6-8.
- B. Christians are challenged to live godly lives in an ungodly world.
1. Rather than sequestering themselves in communes isolated from the world, Christians are they who with Christ in the midst of them successfully live amidst the world,

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John 17:14-23; Romans 12:1-2.

2. Godliness is a primary distinction of Christians versus the ungodly world, Titus 2:11-14; 2 Peter 1:3, 6-7.
- C. Christians are challenged to save souls.
1. If Christians do not proclaim the Gospel to a sin-sick and dying world, no one will, Luke 24:46-47.
 2. If Christians do not rescue erring Christians, no one will, James 5:19-20; Jude 23.
- D. Christians are challenged to perform good works.
1. Christians have repented of past evil works and ought to have nothing to do with evil works anymore, Romans 13:11; Galatians 5:19-21; Colossians 1:21.
 2. Christians must be careful to always abound in good works, with the same diligence as a scout trying to acquire a merit badge, 2 Thessalonians 2:17; 1 Corinthians 15:58; 2 Corinthians 9:8; Colossians 1:10; 1 Timothy 5:10; 2 Timothy 2:21; Titus 2:13; 3:6; James 1:25; 1 Peter 2:12.

Conclusion:

1. Man does have a chance; man can change; and, man is not challenged with more than he is capable of doing.
 - a. A chance or opportunity is not itself salvation, but rather it levies upon each soul a responsibility to comply with the will of God.
 - b. As a free, moral agent, man can change or turn to God, Deuteronomy 30:19; Joshua 24:15; Matthew 6:33.
 - c. The Gospel provides a challenge to humanity and Christians that is not too great, 1 Corinthians 10:13; James 1:12.
2. There are several chances, changes and challenges afforded Christians through the Gospel.
 - a. Foremost, the Gospel affords souls the opportunity to save themselves from sin and its eternal consequences.
 - b. Second, the Gospel enables Christians to rescue fallen Christians.

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- c. Third, the Gospel enables Christians to serve God Who has saved them.
- d. Fourth, the Gospel provides unparalleled purpose in life, Ecclesiastes 12:13; 1 Thessalonians 4:16-17.

Invitation:

1. A chance to change from lost to saved and a challenge to serve God faithfully are useless if disregarded by the lost.
2. Unbaptized believers are lost now and will be lost eternally, Mark 16:16; are you content to face eternity lost?
3. Erring Christians can only anticipate an eternal hell, 2 Peter 2:20; are you content to face eternity lost?

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The Strait Gate

Matthew 7:13-14

Thesis: To define the carefulness with which Christians need to purposely prepare for eternity.

Introduction:

1. No one will awake on eternity's dawn to find that he or she accidentally arrived within Heaven's eternal refuge.
2. Only those who with carefulness and purpose navigate successfully the obstacles and temptations of this sin-forn and devil-ruled world will achieve Heaven hereafter, Romans 5:12; 2 Corinthians 4:4.
3. Hapless masses of humanity who wander through life aimlessly (or even obstinately) will not experience God's Heaven, Jeremiah 6:16.
4. Our Lord Jesus Christ stated publicly in His Sermon on the Mount that comparatively few souls will pursue the narrow, difficult highway to Heaven with enough determination to actually arrive within the confines of God's eternal home, Matthew 7:13-14; Proverbs 14:12; 16:25.

Body:

I. "Enter ye in at the strait gate: for wide is the gate, and broad is the way, that leadeth to destruction, and many there be which go in thereat," Matthew 7:13.

A. "Enter ye in."

1. The Greek word for "in" at this place means "through."
2. "Enter ye in" is no mere mental assent, but actual activity, howbeit a physical illustration represents necessary spiritual activity to be saved.

B. "Strait."

1. This word is only used by Jesus, twice in Matthew 7:13-14 and once in Luke 13:24 on different occasions but on the same subject.
2. Some confusion results over the word "strait."

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The words “straight” and “strait” have very different meanings. The former means “not crooked;” the latter, “pent up, narrow, difficult to be entered.” This is the word used here, and it means that the way to heaven is “pent up, narrow, close,” and not obviously entered. The way to death is open, broad, and thronged. (*Barnes*’)

3. *Strong’s* concordance defines this word as “narrow (from obstacles standing close about)” (*Biblesoft’s*).
 4. A Greek lexicon adds to the definition of “strait” “being narrow or restricted” (Louw and Nida).
 5. Robertson says of “strait” and “narrow” that the way is “compressed,” (*Robertson’s*).
- C. “Gate.”
1. Literally, the Greek for “gate” here means “the leaf or wing of a folding entrance” (*Biblesoft’s*).
 2. Similar to the “gate” here, Jesus referred to Himself as “the door” as well as “the way, the truth and the life” between humanity and an eternal home with God, John 10:9; 14:6.
- D. The word “for” here means “because.”
- E. The word “wide” can mean an “open square” (*Biblesoft’s*).
- F. The word “broad” at this place means “spacious” (*Strong’s*) or “roomy” (Bauer, Gingrich and Danker).
- G. The word “way” means “road” (*Biblesoft’s*) or a “natural path” (*Vine’s*).
- H. “Leadeth” means “to take off” (*Biblesoft’s*) or “[l]iterally, ‘leadeth away’” (*Vincent’s*), as to misdirect one’s journey.
- I. The word “to” at this place means “into.”
- J. “Destruction.”
1. “Destruction” means “ruin or loss” (*Biblesoft’s*).
 2. The destruction here is comparable to the “everlasting punishment” of Matthew 25:46.
 3. “Life. Here a contrasting parallel to destruction” (*Wycliffe*).
- K. “Go in” means “enter.”
- L. “Thereat” means “through” and indicates activity, not inno-

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cent inactivity, James 4:17; Matthew 12:30.

II. “Because strait is the gate, and narrow is the way, which leadeth unto life, and few there be that find it,” Matthew 7:14.

- A. “Narrow” means “to crowd” (*Biblesoft’s*) or “to cause someone to suffer trouble or hardship” (Louw and Nida).
- B. “Few” means “puny,” indicating a small number of something (*Biblesoft’s*).
- C. “Find” is sometimes translated as “get,” “obtain,” “perceive” or “see.”
- D. Some other translations incorporate these word meanings into their text, which contributes to a fuller understanding of what Jesus had to say.

Enter by the narrow gate. For the gate is wide and the way is easy that leads to destruction, and those who enter by it are many. 14 For the gate is narrow and the way is hard that leads to life, and those who find it are few. ESV

Enter by the narrow gate; for wide is the gate and broad is the way that leads to destruction, and there are many who go in by it. 14 Because narrow is the gate and difficult is the way which leads to life, and there are few who find it. NKJV

III. The Illustration, Meaning and Application.

- A. Jesus used a multi-faceted illustration with which His audience was well familiar.
 - 1. Jesus referred to two different kinds of roadways.

The Saviour here referred probably to ancient cities. They were surrounded with walls and entered through gates. Some of those, connected with the great avenues to the city, were broad and admitted a throng; others, for more private purposes, were narrow, and few would be seen entering them. So, says Christ, is the path to heaven. It is narrow. It is not “the great highway” that people tread. Few go there. ...The way to death, on the other hand, is broad. Multitudes are in it. It is the great highway in

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which people go. They fall into it easily and without effort, and go without thought. If they wish to leave that and go by a narrow gate to the city, it would require effort and thought. ...

“Broad is the road that leads to death,
And thousands walk together there;
But wisdom shows a narrower path,
With here and there a traveler.” (*Barnes’*)

Our Saviour seems to allude here to the distinction between the public and private ways... The public roads were allowed to be sixteen cubits broad, the private ways only four. The words in the original are very emphatic... (*Clarke’s*)

2. Jesus referred to two different kinds of cities and two kinds of gates.

The Master here presents two cities before us. One has a wide gateway opening onto the broad street, and other a narrow gate opening onto a straitened street or alley. The first city is Destruction, the second is Life. (McGarvey and Pendleton)

The figure that Jesus uses is that of two final destinations under the form of two cities, “Destruction” and “Life.” Each city has a gate by which it is entered: one is wide and the other, narrow. Each city is approached by a road: one broad, the other restricted of passage. Note that, for Jesus, there be only these two possible choices as live options... (Fowler)

Nearly every town in Palestine is surrounded by walls and is entered by gates. The principal ones are wide, with double doors, closed with locks and fastened with iron bars. The “strait gates” are in retired corners, are narrow, and are only opened to those who knock. (Johnson)

- B. Jesus taught that there are only two possible eternities.

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The sum of what our Saviour here saith is this: There are but two ultimate ends of all men, eternal destruction and eternal life. The course that leadeth to destruction is like a broad way that is obvious to all, and many walk in that. That course of life and actions which will bring a man to heaven is strait, unpleasing to flesh and blood, not at all gratifying men's sensitive appetites, and narrow, (the Greek is, afflicted), a way wherein men will meet with many crosses and temptations; and there are but a few will find it. (Poole)

Jesus here presents in a very vivid way the two ways—the narrow way and the broad way. These two ways are brought in contrast by a series of words; narrow is opposed to wide; few, to many; and life, to destruction... [The pathway to life is hedged and hindered by many difficulties and troubles. It must be walked with care and watchfulness, lest the way be missed and evil befall us. The way of life is a plain and simple way; but there are obstacles and difficulties...the narrow way is difficult; the others are easy to follow.] (Boles)

C. Application.

1. The Sermon on the Mount and our Lord's teaching about the kingdom of Heaven are the backdrop for Matthew 7:13-14.

The leading thought of the whole discourse is the kingdom of Heaven and its conditions. Hence, when the Lord says, "Enter ye in," he means into the kingdom of heaven. (Johnson)

2. It is a sad fact that few souls, comparatively speaking, will be saved eternally and most souls will be lost eternally, Luke 13:23-25.

Many are called but few accept God's invitation. The majority of humanity will be lost. Therefore, choose well which decision you will make! (Fowler)

The relative number of the saved and the lost is plain from

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this. They shall be as the few to the many. This eternally recurring contrast between the numbers of the saved and the lost with reference to each succeeding generation should not be discouraging. Wheat does not grow grain all the way to the ground but only in the ear. Although salvation is obtainable and available for all who truly desire it, the plain fact is that the majority in all generations will despise it. And, of wheat, it will be remembered that Christ himself used this grain as a figure of the saved and lost in Matthew 3:12. The relative number of redeemed souls in any generation is not the scale by which God's success may be measured. God will keep on saving men until the "fullness" of his purpose is achieved (Romans 11:25). (Coffman)

3. Jesus taught a crucial lesson as applicable today as when he spoke it.

However, Jesus may be only saying, "It is the easiest thing in the world to destroy oneself, and the majority of the world's people are doing just that." Many are they that enter in thereby. Here is another clue to the impending difficulties of Christian discipleship. (Cf, 5: 10-12). This is a veiled warning that one must be prepared to go against convention, custom and the crowd, and be different even if it means walking alone. Men must not take their moral cue from others, because they too may be lost. Many will be destroyed who did not believe themselves on the broad way. ...It requires effort, sacrifice and self-surrender to enter into Life. (Cf. Mt. 19:16-22) And few are they that find it. There is certainly no easy optimism in this sad declaration of Jesus. Jesus intends this statistically negative picture as a frank warning that makes His disciples realists who know what to expect in His service. He would have them make their decision wisely. (Fowler)

Conclusion:

1. There have always been only two paths for mortals through life

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toward eternity, Deuteronomy 30:19; Jeremiah 21:8.

2. God has always warned mankind to avoid the pathway that leads to death, Psalm 1:1.
3. God has always given good counsel to travel “the way of holiness,” Isaiah 35:8; Proverbs 4:26-27.
4. However, the pathway that leads to a heavenly home with God is fraught with obstacles and temptations, Acts 14:22; 1 Thessalonians 3:2-4.

Invitation:

1. Jesus, however, is our Great Shepherd who will lead us to Heaven if we will only follow Him, Hebrews 13:20.
2. Jesus said, “He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved,” Mark 16:16.
3. Unfaithful Christians can renew their journey toward Heaven through penitence and prayer, Acts 8:11; 1 John 1:9.

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Some Servants Who Are Needed in the Church

Esther 4:14

Thesis: To encourage Christians to develop the admirable and holy qualities of godly men and women about whom we read in the Bible.

Introduction:

1. Esther's uncle, Mordecai, told her that especially she had a crucial role to play in the preservation of her people.
 - a. She needed to accept that role despite lethal perils she would face.
 - b. However, if Esther cowered and did not rise to the occasion, God would find another servant to do his bidding.
2. Likewise, each member of the church is either an asset or a liability, and either helps or hinders the work and growth of the Lord's church.
 - a. The Lord's church is bigger than anyone of us, so that we are dispensable and the church can get along without us, but we do not want to lose a single soul.
 - b. Obviously, the progress of the local congregation depends on its own members, their lives and labors for God, rather than outsiders, visitors, guest speakers, etc.
 - c. Neither does the work depend upon any one person (preacher, elder, patriarch or any other single member), but all members must work together.
3. The church must be composed of the right kind of people — dedicated Christians bearing godly characteristics.

Body:

- I. **The church needs servants who have knowledge — like Timothy, 2 Timothy 1:5; 3:15.**
 - A. The need for a thorough knowledge of God's Word cannot be over emphasized.
 1. Proverbs 11:9 says, "...through knowledge shall the just

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be delivered.”

2. Jesus said that “the truth,” which involves knowledge, will set men free, John 8:32.
 3. The apostle Peter wrote about the relationship between the Word of God and Christian growth, 2 Peter 2:2.
 4. A lack of knowledge in the first century, especially among Jewish Christians, was hurtful to the early church, Hebrews 5:12-14.
- B. Following man’s pseudo-wisdom and pseudo-knowledge is valueless respecting one’s eternal soul.
1. Humans are masters of self-deception, Proverbs 16:25.
 2. It is an exceptional person who recognizes that the answers that matter lie beyond himself, Jeremiah 10:23.
 3. Heightened zeal and enthusiasm are not guarantees that one is either righteous or obedient to God, Romans 10:1-3.
 4. The wisdom and knowledge of the world leads humanity away from divine wisdom and knowledge whereby redemption and eternal life is attainable, 1 Corinthians 1:18-25.
- C. Knowledge is necessary to resist evil satisfactorily.
1. Christians must avoid evil and sin, Romans 12:9; 1 Thessalonians 5:21-22.
 2. Knowledge is invaluable in abstaining from evil, Psalm 119:104-105; Titus 1:9-11.
- D. The church needs men and women who are interested in studying and learning as much of God’s Word as they possibly can.
1. We cannot know what God expects of us or holds in store for us without studying the Bible.
 2. Reading God’s Word is good, but studying God’s Word is essential, 2 Timothy 2:15.

II. The church needs servants who are righteous — like Noah, Genesis 6:8-9; 2 Peter 2:5.

- A. Noah did not pursue popularity with his fellow man, but rather he completely obeyed the commands of God.
1. The ark floated above the deluge because Noah obeyed

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God, Genesis 6:22.

2. Noah's righteousness motivated him to be God's servant, Hebrews 11:7.
- B. Noah was a "preacher of righteousness" because of his right doing.
1. Performing the commandments of God leads to righteousness, Psalm 119:172.
 2. Not abiding by the commandments of God is unrighteous or sinful, 1 John 5:17.
- C. The church needs servants of integrity and character who will obey God in spite of opposition and personal peril.
1. The apostles stood firm with God and His Word despite intimidation by the Sanhedrin, Acts 4:19-20.
 2. On a second occasion before the Sanhedrin, and for which they were beaten, the apostles allied themselves with God, Acts 5:29.

III. The church needs servants who have patience — like Job, James 5:11.

- A. No other Bible character compares with Job for his patience.
1. Job Chapter One describes Job's loss of all his children and all of his wealth.
 2. Job's reaction was unique among men and praiseworthy, Job 1:20-22.
- B. One topic for which Christians must exercise patience is the Second Coming of Jesus Christ.
1. Many people despise the longsuffering of God, 2 Peter 3:8-12.
 2. We must simply make sure that we are ready irrespective of when our Lord returns, Matthew 24:42-51.
- C. Like Job, Christians must be patient in the face of adversity.
1. Patience is one of the Christian graces toward which we should strive, 2 Peter 1:5-6.
 2. The half brother of Jesus, James, wrote that patience comes by successfully negotiating trials of life, James 1:2-4.

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- D. The church needs reliable and dependable souls — not quitters!
 1. Adversities cannot be allowed to triumph over us, 2 Timothy 3:12; 1 Peter 4:16.
 2. We must endure unto the end, Matthew 24:13; Revelation 2:10.

IV. The church needs servants of faith and trust — like Abraham, Genesis 15:6; Hebrews 11:8-10.

- A. Abraham's faith was unsurpassed.
 1. He left home and all with which he was familiar at the bidding of God, Genesis 12:1-4.
 2. Abraham also had faith in God and trusted God regarding the promise of a son, despite Abraham's advanced age, Romans 4:19-22.
- B. Abrahamic faith is necessary in order for Christians to fulfill their purpose on earth and spend eternity in Heaven.
 1. We must have no less faith and trust in God than Abraham had, Hebrews 11:6.
 2. We must learn from God's Word respecting our purpose on earth and how to prepare for eternity, Ecclesiastes 12:13-14; Matthew 6:33.
- C. Great faith will enable Christians to make sacrifices when necessary.
 1. This degree of faith will permit us to carry our crosses daily and follow Jesus, Luke 9:23.
 2. Great faith will allow Christians to put Jesus first in their lives, Luke 14:26-27.
 3. Not even wealth and possessions will crowd Jesus out of our lives if we have faith and trust in God, Matthew 19:21-22.

V. The church needs servants who will preach or teach the Gospel — like Paul, 1 Corinthians 9:16.

- A. Christians need to be faithful always to God especially when preaching or teaching.
 1. Faithful Christians are not in the men-pleasing business,

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Galatians 1:10.

2. We are required to hold “back nothing” and proclaim “all the counsel of God,” Acts 20:20, 27.
 3. Though we may become enemies even to some brethren when we present God’s Word as it is, we must not apologize for the Gospel that saves us, Galatians 4:16; Romans 1:16.
- B. We need to be determined to defend the Gospel of Christ.
1. Like Paul, we need to be “set for the defense of the Gospel,” Philippians 1:17.
 2. We must reject without hesitation any altered or counterfeit gospels, Galatians 1:6-9.
 3. Christians are fully persuaded that there is only one, unalterable system of faith or Gospel, Jude 3.
- C. The Word of God has come down to us through much suffering and persecution.
1. The apostle Paul forfeited many ordinary pleasures in this life to take the Gospel to the world, Philippians 3:4-11.
 2. He further suffered unimaginable hardships and persecutions to bring the Gospel to the lost, 2 Corinthians 11:23-28.
- D. Every Christian can proclaim the Gospel in some way, e.g. teach classes, home Bible studies, correspondence courses, godly living, etc.
1. Why, to exhibit care for lost souls, Romans 10:1.
 2. Why, to fulfill the Great Commission, Mark 16:15-16.
 3. Why, to save lost souls, Luke 19:20; Romans 10:13-17.

VI. The church needs servants who will lead God’s children to success — like Nehemiah, Nehemiah 2-6.

- A. Nehemiah was a competent leader.
1. He had a difficult task before him, to rebuild the walls of Jerusalem and remove the Jewish reproach.
 2. Under Nehemiah’s leadership, the Jews rebuilt the walls in a record 52 days.
 3. They accomplished this Herculean task under the threat of war.

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- B. Nehemiah typifies the kind of leadership needed in the Lord's church.
 - 1. A congregation grows in direct relationship to its leadership (provided there is a fellowship).
 - 2. Church leaders must lead in the way of truth and resist evil encroachments.
- C. The New Testament sets the criteria for church leaders (elders) in 1 Timothy 3 and Titus 1.
 - 1. The church needs leaders who will not lead it astray, but who will feed it a steady diet of God's Word, Acts 20:28-30.
 - 2. Elders, as a congregation's leaders, are to rule without being dictators and to provide the proper example, Hebrews 13:17; 1 Peter 5:3.

Conclusion:

- 1. There is nothing the church cannot accomplish when its members are willing to develop such godly characteristics as we have discussed.
- 2. Christians with these and other godly characteristics contribute to the growth rather than to the decline of the church.
- 3. Do you contribute to the success or to the failure of the church (there is no middle ground, Matthew 12:30)?

Invitation:

- 1. Erring Christians are doomed in that condition and contribute to the failure of the church; therefore, come back to the Lord, Acts 8:22; 1 John 1:9.
- 2. Non-Christians are doomed outside of Christ and, of course, in that condition they cannot contribute to the success of the church; come, obediently, to the Lord, Hebrews 5:9; Mark 16:16.

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Personal Responsibility in a No-Fault World

1 Timothy 5:8

Thesis: To emphasize the biblical need for personal responsibility in an irresponsible world.

Introduction:

1. Biblical instruction concerns mankind's physical and spiritual well-being.
 - a. The Bible addresses man's physical well-being when its instructions are pragmatic or practical, e.g. Proverbs; 1 Corinthians 7; Ephesians 5; 6:1-4.
 - b. The Bible addresses man's spiritual well-being when its instructions concern salvation issues, e.g. redemption, Christian living, Christian service, Christian worship.
 - c. However, man historically neglects or refuses to abide by God's instructions, Romans 3:23; 1 Corinthians 10:1-11; Jeremiah 6:16.
2. From near the time mankind first inhabited the earth, he *passed the buck* or refused to accept personal responsibility.
 - a. When guilty of violating one of the only four instructions God gave to the first pair, Eve blamed the serpent and Adam blamed Eve directly and God indirectly, Genesis 3:12-13.
 - b. Another classic example of failure to accept personal responsibility is King Saul when he disobeyed God and brought back the Amalekites' best animals and King Agag as a trophy, 1 Samuel 15:2-26.
 - c. The Parable of the Prodigal Son and the account of two sons sent to labor in the vineyard illustrate selfish refusal to accept personal responsibility, Luke 15:11-32; Matthew 21:28-30.
3. Today, an increasing number of people have no sense of personal responsibility for any number of things.
 - a. These days, marriages are contracted lightly and often not

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much later dissolved (perhaps through no-fault divorce) with little apparent awareness of personal responsibility. (Over two thirds of homes in which children reside in our nation are now one-parent homes!)

- b. While we do not fault persons who have genuine needs and are unable to take care of themselves, in many families, welfare and receiving charitable gifts has become a way of life, passed down from generation to generation. (Many people seem to think that the world owes them a living!)
4. However, God holds humanity and especially Christians to a higher standard of personal responsibility than the irresponsible world chooses for itself.

Body:

I. What is the personal responsibility of those who are potential recipients of charitable relief?

- A. Under ordinary circumstances, God expects people to provide for their own physical well-being, e.g. food, clothing, shelter.
 1. Most of life's daily burdens are one's own responsibility, but sometimes burdens become more than a person can bear alone, Galatians 6:2, 5.
 2. The Bible notes that under ordinary circumstances parents are to provide for their young children, whereas children are to provide for their aged parents, 2 Corinthians 12:14; Matthew 15:5-6.
- B. Sometimes, though, people become unable to meet their own needs, and they are deserving of assistance.
 1. First, the potential recipient of benevolence must be needy, Acts 2:45; 4:34-35; Romans 15:26.
 2. Second, the potential recipient of benevolence must not have family to whom he or she can appeal, i.e. must not have another recourse, 1 Timothy 5:16.
 3. Third, recipients of benevolence ought to be grateful, Luke 17:12-19; Acts 9:39.

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C. Contemporary parable:

1. The eldest son of a family of seven came home on leave from the Air Force, with a duffle bag of dirty laundry in tow (which he had no intention of washing for himself).
2. Upon time to return to his duty station, the eldest son's father had to sell his gun collection for plane fare because this son squandered all his own money.
3. Later in life, the eldest son's bank foreclosed on the land that he had been given by his parents, at which time he moved with his family into his mother's home.
4. Still later in life, his mother felt compelled to move from her home, leaving it to her eldest son.
5. Finally, the eldest son's bank foreclosed on the mother's house, too, depriving his youngest sibling of her inheritance.
6. Permitted to do so, some people, like leaches, will suck the life-blood from whomever they can, even their siblings and their parents. (This is a true story.)

D. Another contemporary parable:

1. A young married man with two daughters bought a house while he and his family received welfare.
2. He augmented his family's welfare income by being paid *cash under the table* for work he did at a junkyard.
3. However, when this young man was required to work summers in the nearby State Park in exchange for the funds his family received, he considered that to be *slave labor* and unfair.
4. Afforded thereby an opportunity to retain integrity and dignity, he chose rather to despise the State from whom he and his family received a free ride. (This, too, is a true story.)

II. What is the personal responsibility of those who are able to provide charitable relief?

- A. God requires Christians and the church to respond benevolently to both fellow Christians and non-Christians who have needs beyond their ability to meet.

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1. The early church in Jerusalem responded with love offerings from the sale of property for poor saints, Acts 4:32-37.
 2. The apostle Paul encouraged collections among the Gentile churches for benevolence among the Jewish churches, Acts 11:27-30; Romans 15:25-27; 2 Corinthians 8-9.
 3. The primary recipients, of benevolent money collected, were needy Christians, but funds were not withheld from needy non-Christians, 2 Corinthians 9:13; Galatians 6:10.
 4. The practice of “pure religion” by either individual Christians or the church requires benevolent action corresponding to opportunity and resources, James 1:27; 4:17.
- B. God forbids Christians and the church to respond benevolently to either Christians or non-Christians who, though they have needs, have either the ability or other resources with which to meet those needs.
1. For instance, widows who have relatives who can and will support them are not the ongoing responsibility of the Lord’s church for their livelihood, 1 Timothy 5:4.
 2. The Bible harshly condemns one who refuses to accept his personal responsibility for providing for himself and his family, 1 Timothy 5:8.
- C. Contemporary parable:
1. The number two child of a family with four boys suffered brain damage at birth.
 2. As one might expect, there were a number of things in life that this child could not do well.
 3. Therefore, to protect him, his parents largely secluded him at home from the world, except to attend school.
 4. To make life fairer for him, his parents also applied the same restrictions to his three brothers.
 5. Consequently, the number two child was prevented from trying things at life in which he might fail — or succeed.
 6. His three brothers, likewise, were prevented from experiencing fuller lives as youths.

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7. All four boys failed to develop ordinary social skills and further failed to develop any sense of self-worth and confidence with which to face life.
 8. Instead of one damaged son, all four boys were damaged!
 9. Though meaning well, the parents inadvertently harmed their children when they thought that they were helping them. (This is a true story.)
- D. Another contemporary parable:
1. A thirteen year old boy arrived one day in a new foster home.
 2. He was nearly unable to dress himself, afraid of the world and a bed-wetter.
 3. His mother had never let him get dressed by himself or even button his own buttons, but she treated him almost like the infant she brought into this world.
 4. Medical examinations of the boy disclosed that he neither had physical problems nor lacked sufficient intelligence to don his own clothes or avoid bed-wetting.
 5. This boy's mother had not allowed her son to mature, and essentially, she had crippled him, leaving him unable to care for himself and lacking even the basest social skills.
 6. Sometimes the wrong kind of help really harms. (This is a true story.)

Conclusion:

1. Especially Christians need to realize the biblical need for personal responsibility in an irresponsible world.
2. However, the recipients of benevolence have personal responsibilities respecting that relief.
3. Even those who extend benevolence have personal responsibilities respecting the relief they give.
4. Neither individuals nor congregations can or ought to help those who will not help themselves, or who would not help themselves if they could.
5. Sometimes helping when we ought not help enables irresponsible

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persons to continue as they are and not change.

6. God's Word is so practical that either in what it directly says or what biblical principles imply, mankind can know precisely for what God holds us responsible, i.e. how we can order our lives.

Invitation:

1. There is nothing more practical and no greater demonstration of personal responsibility than to turn to God's Word regarding redemption.
2. Specifically, the New Testament contains God's plan of salvation for both the non-Christian and the erring Christian, Mark 16:16; Acts 8:22.

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Everywhere Religion

Exodus 4:24-26

Thesis: To demonstrate that location does not change the will of God.

Song: “Anywhere with Jesus”

Introduction:

1. Exodus chapters 3-4 record the excuses Moses made when commissioned by God to liberate Israel from Egypt.
2. Beginning in Chapter 5, Moses sought Pharaoh to free Israel.
3. However, nearly half of Exodus Chapter 4 records three additional events, including:
 - a. The departure of Moses, his wife and their children from the house of Jethro, his wife’s father, vss. 18-23.
 - b. Aaron, brother of Moses, coming out of Egypt to meet Moses in the wilderness, vss. 29-31.
4. A third event is obscure, contained in a mere three verses, yet it is rich with an important biblical lesson with which all God’s people need to be impressed, vss. 24-26.
5. As it turned out, Moses forgot to practice his religion everywhere — everywhere religion!

Body:

I. Exposition of Exodus 4:24-26.

- A. While on the way to Egypt and as Moses and his family lodged for the night, God confronted Moses because he had not circumcised one of his sons (Gershom or Eliezer, Exodus 2:22; 18:3-4).
 1. Circumcision was a law of God under Patriarchy and later under Judaism, Genesis 17:9-14, 23-27; Leviticus 12:3.
 2. Circumcision was a physical mark or symbol of the covenant God made with His people, Genesis 17:9-10.
 3. Later, before the Jewish possession of Canaan, God required all the males to be circumcised; circumcision had been neglected during the 40-year wilderness wandering,

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Joshua 5:2-9.

- B. Though God had selected Moses and sent him to deliver Israel from Egypt, God was prepared to kill him for his disobedience.
 - 1. Moses faced a life and death situation, all because he had neglected part of the covenant with God under which he lived.
 - 2. Zipporah, Moses' wife, reluctantly circumcised her son to spare her husband's life.
 - 3. Omission of covenant duty has always been considered by God as sin, James 4:17, in addition to the commission of sin, 1 John 3:4.**
 - 4. It is more than probable that Moses' sin of omission respecting circumcision had been because his wife, Zipporah, found the practice foreign to her family's customs and distasteful.
 - 5. (Incidentally, Zipporah and her two children returned to Jethro's house and did not travel with Moses the rest of the way to Egypt; they joined Moses again after Moses and Israel fled Egypt, Exodus 18:2-6.)

II. Moses discovered the hard way that location does not change the will of God; Christians can learn from this episode in the life of Moses that location does not change the will of God.

- A. The Bible teaches that immodesty is a sin, 1 Timothy 2:9-10; 1 Peter 3:1-6.
 - 1. Immodesty is not just sinful in church.
 - 2. If immodesty is a sin, it is sinful at the public pool or the beach, too.
 - 3. Whether the location is in the mountains, in the plains, in a coastal state, on a cruise ship or even in another country, God's law is the same.**
- B. The Bible teaches that drinking alcohol is sinful, Proverbs 23:29-35; Galatians 5:21.
 - 1. The pleasurable consumption of alcohol is not just a sin at the corner bar.
 - 2. If drinking alcohol is a sin, it is sinful at social events or

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even secretly at home, too.

3. Irrespective of whether the location is in one's home community, Germany or Italy, God's law is the same.
- C. The Bible teaches that pornography is a sin, Matthew 5:28.
 1. Pornography is not just sinful at X-rated (NC-17) movies, bookstores and so-called gentlemen's clubs.
 2. If pornography is a sin, it is sinful when viewed at work or at home, too (e.g., magazines, TV, Internet).
 - 3. Christians must faithfully practice everywhere religion.**
- D. The Bible teaches that lying is a sin, Revelation 21:8.
 1. Lying is not just a sin when it occurs on the witness stand in a court of law.
 2. If lying is a sin, it is sinful to lie to the IRS, at work or at home.
 3. Everywhere religion will dispel lying from the lives of Christians.
- E. The Bible teaches that stealing is a sin, Ephesians 4:28.
 1. Stealing is not just sinful when robbery occurs at gunpoint.
 2. If stealing is wrong, it is sinful when one steals from God, his employer or the government.
 3. Everywhere religion eradicates stealing from the lives of Christians.

Conclusion:

1. The number of examples to illustrate the effect of practicing Christianity everywhere is endless.
2. Every example demonstrates that the **location does not change the will of God.**
3. **Christians either faithfully practice everywhere religion or they do not faithfully practice Christianity.**
4. **Location does not change the will of God.**

Invitation:

1. Since location does not change the will of God, living in Utah should not make one a Mormon, living in Italy should not make

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one a Catholic and living in the Middle East should not make one a Muslim.

2. **God has one law of redemption for all men, Acts 17:30.**
3. **God's everywhere religion is Christianity!**
4. The universal Gospel of Christ teaches: hearing God's Word only, Romans 10:17; believing the Bible only, John 20:30-31; turning from sin to God [repenting], Acts 3:19; publicly avowing that Jesus is the Christ, Romans 10:9-10; submitting to immersion in water for the remission of sins, Acts 22:16; living obedient lives until death, Revelation 2:10; and repenting and praying for forgiveness of future sins as they occur, Acts 8:22.

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Old People Religion

Titus 2:1-3

Thesis: To make a brief examination of Christian living as it especially pertains to older men and women.

Song: “Take My Life, And Let It Be”

Introduction:

1. The only religion in which any of us should have any interest is religion of divine origin and revelation.
2. In addition to general passages addressing Christian living, some verses especially teach older men and women how to live godly.
3. Certain other verses also teach especially young men and young women about Christian living.

Body:

I. Old Man Religion.

- A. Older men must present themselves examples of godliness, Titus 2:1-2.
 1. Older Christian men should be sober, honorable, temperate, sound in the faith, loving and patient — a tall order!
 2. Older men who are godly are praiseworthy before mankind and God, Proverbs 16:31.
 3. Grandpa Noah wore his old age in ever-beautiful godly fashion, though none of his contemporaries obeyed God (600 years old when the flood came).
 4. Joshua is an outstanding example of godliness in an older man, Judges 2:7-8.
- B. Older men should strive to attain the qualifications required of elders, 1 Timothy 3:1-7; Titus 1:5-9.
 1. Each older Christian man should be exemplary as one not worthy of rebuke, moderate, sober minded, orderly, hospitable, able to teach, not covetous, patient, not contentious, who accepts responsibility, who has a good reputation and humble.

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2. Further, Paul wrote to Titus that elders should be good stewards, not self-willed, not easily angered, lovers of good men, just and holy.
 3. Even if a man does not qualify to be an elder, he should pursue these traits and determine to possess as many of them as he can.
 4. Elders are not responsible for a level of Christian living from which other members are exempt!
- C. Older men have special responsibilities uniquely their own among all God's creatures.
1. As fathers and husbands, men have the responsibility to care for and rule their families, 1 Timothy 3:4; Ephesians 5:22-25; 6:4; 1 Timothy 5:8.
 2. Men in general and elders in particular have the responsibility for the public worship of the church, 1 Corinthians 14:34-35; Acts 20:7; 1 Timothy 3; Titus 1.
 3. Though women may participate to a large degree in evangelism, edification and benevolence, men (especially elders) have the primary responsibility for the direction of the church.
 4. Often, however, many men neglect their various and special responsibilities at home and in the church.

II. Old Lady Religion.

- A. Older women may be the gracious recipients of the good works of others, Acts 9:36-42.
1. Tabitha (or Dorcas) was the benefactor of several widows, Acts 9:39.
 2. Those women apparently were not embarrassed to accept the hospitality of brethren.
 3. Likewise, sisters today should not be reluctant to experience the good works of others on their behalf.
 4. Sometimes older Christian women may need a little help and should not hesitate to apprise their brethren and the church; we want to help.

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- B. Older women can provide an invaluable service to brethren and the church, 2 Timothy 1:5; Titus 2:3-5.
 - 1. Grandma Lois instilled faithfulness in her daughter Eunice, and through their combined influence, they favorably influenced preacher Timothy as well.
 - 2. Older women should not underestimate their potential influence for good (or bad) — so watch it!
 - 3. Older women should not underestimate their responsibility toward younger women and children.
- C. Older women also can give to others and cause change, Acts 9:36-42; Ruth 1:16-17.
 - 1. Dorcas may not have been elderly herself, but as opportunities present themselves, older women can be the benefactors of others; “woman” in Acts 9:36 indicates that she exhibited her Christian service alone, without the help of anyone else or the church.
 - 2. Naomi had such an effect on Ruth that Ruth forsook her own people to remain with Naomi and espoused the true God in place of idols.
 - 3. Old lady religion does not provide for retirement from Christian living and Christian service!**
 - 4. Even widows taken in by the church must labor for the church, 1 Timothy 5:3-16.

Conclusion:

- 1. Older men and women must present themselves as examples of Christian living.
- 2. Older men are not exempt from pursuing the traits required of elders.
- 3. Men have unique responsibilities that they dare not neglect.
- 4. When in need, the elderly should not hesitate to apprise brethren and the church of their circumstances; we will gladly do what we can.
- 5. Yet, older Christian women have heightened responsibilities

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toward younger women and children.

6. In addition, older women must exhibit hospitality as they have opportunity.
7. Older women can make a difference!
8. Finally, **older Christians must realize that there is no retirement from Christianity this side of the grave!**

Invitation:

1. Every accountable soul, irrespective of age, is responsible for working out his own salvation, Philippians 2:12.
2. Every child of God has the responsibility to continue in Gospel obedience for life, Revelation 2:10.
3. We have an obligation also toward other souls as well, Galatians 6:1-2; James 5:19-20.

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Young People Religion

Titus 2:1-15

Thesis: To make a brief examination of Christian living as it especially pertains to younger Christians.

Song: “Take My Life, And Let It Be,” “The Touch Of His Hand On Mine”

Introduction:

1. The only religion in which any of us should have any interest is religion of divine origin and revelation.
2. In addition to general passages that address Christian living, some verses especially teach younger Christians how to live godly.
3. Certain other verses also instruct especially older men and women.

Body:

I. Some passages especially instruct young men in godly living.

- A. A great deal of biblical instruction intended especially for young men pertains to fleshly lusts.
 1. The Old Testament warns young men about fleshly lusts, Proverbs 5:1-23; 6:25-35; 7:10-27; 23:26-28.
 2. The New Testament also warns young men about fleshly or youthful lusts, 2 Timothy 2:22; “There are lusts peculiar to flaming youth.” (Robertson)
 3. Young men are to “follow after” Christian virtues “as if in a chase” in a “steady pursuit” of them. (Robertson)
- B. Some passages instruct young men about family responsibilities.
 1. Fathers have a primary role in the rearing of their children, Ephesians 6:4.
 2. Husbands have the responsibility to love their wives comparably to the love Jesus Christ has for His church, Ephesians 5:25.
 3. Husbands and fathers have the responsibility to provide for the physical support of their families, 1 Timothy 5:8.

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- C. Still other Scriptures teach young men to heed the instruction of older men.
 - 1. The Old Testament warns young men to heed the advice of their fathers, Proverbs 1:8; 4:1; 6:20.
 - 2. The New Testament instructs youth to revere older men as fathers, 1 Timothy 5:1.
- D. The Bible teaches young men about the dangers of evil companions.
 - 1. In the company of evil companions, a young man can commit heinous crimes that he otherwise would not do, Proverbs 1:10-19.
 - 2. Association and friendship with sinful persons leads one to commit sin, 1 Corinthians 15:33, ASV; 2 Corinthians 6:14-18.

II. Some passages especially instruct young women in godly living.

- A. Young women are urged also by Scripture to be morally pure.
 - 1. Young women are to be “pure from carnality” (Vincent), Titus 2:3-5.
 - 2. The modesty supposed to be characteristic of a young woman is a quality that begins on the inside and reflects itself outwardly in manner of dress and demeanor (Vine), 1 Timothy 2:9-10; 1 Peter 3:1-6.
- B. The Bible also assigns family responsibilities to young women.
 - 1. God determined that the home is the primary sphere of activity for which the wife and mother is responsible, Titus 2:3-5.
 - 2. In her role as wife and mother, she can contribute to the conversion and edification of her husband and children, 1 Peter 3:1-6; 2 Timothy 1:5.
 - 3. Proverbs 31:10-31 paints an admirable portrait of a godly woman.
- C. Scripture also instructs younger women to heed the instruction of older women.
 - 1. Younger women learn how to be good wives and mothers

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from older women, Titus 2:3-5.

2. Naomi and Ruth are excellent examples of a daughter (daughter-in-law here) learning godliness from a mother (mother-in-law here).

Conclusion:

1. Godly living is expected and required of young men and women, as well as of older men and women.
2. Each must pursue moral purity.
3. Each must accept divinely prescribed roles and subsequent responsibilities.
4. Each must heed instruction from older, more experienced and knowledgeable brethren.

Invitation:

1. The greatest responsibility of any accountable soul, regardless of age, is to obey the Gospel.
2. The second greatest responsibility is to continue obeying the Gospel.
3. Third, each Christian must attempt to teach the Gospel throughout his life so that others may also realize the blessings of the Gospel.

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This Is Your Life

Revelation 20:12

Thesis: To illustrate the seriousness of righteous living and encourage obedience to the Gospel.

Introduction:

1. Some years ago, there was a TV show entitled, *This Is Your Life*.
2. When each of us stands before the Judgment Bar of God, the books will be opened, including the Book of Life, Revelation 20:12.
3. For the next few moments, let's examine our spiritual lives — This Is Your Life!
4. (Assemble a 3-ring binder with colored poster board pages corresponding to the numbered points below.)

Body:

I. WHITE PAGE: Innocence and Purity of Children.

- A. Sin is not inherited, Ezekiel 18:20.
- B. Babies enter the world sinless, Ezekiel 28:15.
- C. Little children are sinless, and therefore, they are worthy examples to illustrate the affect of conversion and membership in the kingdom of God, Matthew 18:3; 19:14.

II. BLACK PAGE: Age of Accountability.

- A. Eventually, sin comes into the life of every accountable soul, Romans 3:23.
- B. We are not being honest with ourselves if we deny that we sin sometimes, 1 John 3:4; 1:8, 10.
- C. Unaddressed, sins lead to eternal death or separation for eternity from God, Romans 6:23.

III. RED PAGE: Blood of Jesus Christ.

- A. Anyone who is saved today is saved by the blood of Jesus Christ.
 1. Jesus washes the saved from their sins with His blood, Revelation 1:5.
 2. Through His blood, Jesus redeems souls from sins, Ephe-

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sians 1:7; Colossians 1:14.

3. Our Lord purchased the church with His blood — one soul at a time, Acts 2:47; 20:28.
 4. Consequently, nothing is more precious than the blood of Christ, 1 Peter 1:18-20.
- B. According to the Bible, baptism is the way in which a soul contacts the saving blood of Jesus Christ.
1. Jesus shed His blood in His death, especially as a Roman soldier pierced His side with a spear, John 19:31-37.
 2. Baptism alone is ascribed in Scripture with the capacity to immerse a sinful soul in the saving blood of Jesus Christ — by placing one symbolically into the death of Christ, Romans 6:3-5.
 3. Therefore, baptism and the blood of Christ are inseparably tied together — and no preacher, human doctrine or manmade church has divine approval to divorce them from each other.
 4. For the blood of Jesus Christ to save a soul from sins, all of the elements to which Scripture attributes saving power must be embraced (i.e., faith, repentance, professing Christ as Lord).

IV. WHITE PAGE: Purged from Past Sins.

- A. One rises from the waters of baptism to walk in newness of life and does not serve sin any longer, Romans 6:5-6.
- B. Sins forgiven by the blood of Christ are forgiven forever, unlike the remembrance of sins annually under Judaism, Hebrews 9:12; 10:1-4.
- C. The blood of Christ, properly applied, cleanses the conscience of past sins, Hebrews 9:14; 1 Peter 3:21.

V. YELLOW PAGE: Faithfulness and Service.

- A. Jesus Christ Himself is our perfect example for faithfulness and service to God, 1 Peter 2:21.
- B. Like Jesus, we must determine to be faithful unto death if necessary, Revelation 2:10.

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- C. As Christians, we are obligated to practice “the perfect law of liberty” and remain pure and holy, James 1:25, 27; 1 Peter 1:15.
- D. Each Christian needs to spiritually mature for his own spiritual welfare as well as to reach others successfully with the Gospel, Hebrews 5:12-14.
- E. Further, the New Testament instructs every Christian to seek good works, Titus 2:14.

VI. BLACK PAGE: Sin of Apostasy.

- A. Simon, a Samaritan, is a biblical example of the possibility of sinning so as to be lost after one becomes a Christian, Acts 8:18-24.
- B. The eternal punishment for apostasy somehow is worse than other sins for which souls will be punished eternally, 2 Peter 2:20-22.
- C. A Christian cannot reasonably expect to persevere without adopting the Christian graces in his life, 2 Peter 1:5-9.

VII. RED PAGE: Blood of Jesus Christ.

- A. The blood of Jesus Christ saves penitent Christians from their sins, 1 John 1:7.
- B. Erring Christians cannot obtain forgiveness for their sins under any other conditions and from anyone else, Hebrews 10:26-31.

VIII. WHITE PAGE: Purged of Recent Sins.

- A. Penitent acknowledgement of a Christian’s sins results in forgiveness, 1 John 1:9.
- B. Jesus Christ acts as the penitent Christian’s defense lawyer before the Heavenly Father, 1 John 2:1-2.

IX. YELLOW PAGE: Christian Service and Endurance.

- A. The Christian must be unmovable from the Christian faith, 1 Corinthians 15:58.
- B. Christians must remember that Jesus Christ is the Savior of the obedient, Hebrews 5:8-9.

X. BLUE PAGE: Heaven and Eternal Life.

- A. Only the righteous as God reckons righteous will enter Heaven and enjoy eternal life, Matthew 25:46.

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- B. Heaven and eternal life are symbolized in “the crown of righteousness” of which Paul wrote and the “crown of life” of which Jesus spoke, 2 Timothy 4:8; Revelation 2:10.
- C. All the ups and downs of this life will be worth it when we hear our Lord say, “Well done thou good and faithful servant,” Matthew 25:21.

XI. BLACK PAGE: Sin and Death.

- A. Unforgiven sins will separate souls from God for eternity, Isaiah 59:1-3.
- B. Instead of everlasting life, everlasting punishment will be the disposition of lost souls after the great Judgment, Matthew 25:46.
- C. Disobedient souls will hear their Lord say, “Depart from me,” Matthew 7:21-23.
- D. The fires of divine vengeance will buffet disobedient souls throughout eternity, 2 Thessalonians 1:7-9; Revelation 21:8.

Conclusion:

1. This is your life! (Hold up the 3-ring binder and fan its pages.)
2. Is what appears in your spiritual book of life what you want to be read in the Judgment?

Invitation:

1. What verb will Jesus use when He addresses you in the Last Day — Enter or Depart?
2. Even Christians need to examine themselves whether they are in the faith, 2 Corinthians 13:5.
3. Unbaptized believers can have their sins washed away in baptism, Revelation 1:5; Acts 22:16.

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A Million Years from Now

1 John 3:20-21

Thesis: To encourage people and especially Christians to contemplate and evaluate their spiritual path to eternity.

Introduction:

1. Where will you be and what will you be doing in a million years from now?
2. One's physical life on earth is a mere pittance of a few years contrasted with an eternity thereafter.
3. However, what we do in the here and the now will determine where we will be and what we will be doing a million years from now.

Body:

- I. **No matter how long one may live, life on earth is comparatively brief.**
 - A. The oldest person who ever lived as far as any record reveals was Methuselah.
 1. He lived to be 969 years old, Genesis 5:27.
 2. Methuselah still died!
 - B. However, ordinarily in modern times, common lifespans range from 70 to 80 years old, Psalm 90:10.
 1. Yet, we know that babies die, too.
 2. Some other people live longer than 80 years, maybe approaching or exceeding 100 years.
 3. Still, all die, Hebrews 9:27.
 - C. There were two exceptions to dying as a prerequisite to leaving the land of the living.
 1. Enoch and Elijah avoided the pains of death, Genesis 5:24; Hebrews 11:5.
 2. Furthermore, many souls will avoid death when Jesus returns at the end of time, 1 Thessalonians 4:17.
 3. Still, after life on earth comes endless eternity.

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II. The eternity that follows life on earth is Vastness with a capital “V” and without end.

- A. There are two eternities into one of which each person will enter.
 - 1. It is well known that there are two possible eternities that face every soul — Heaven and Hell, Matthew 25:46; John 14:1-3; Matthew 18:8-9.
 - 2. There is no third or fourth possible eternity where one might miss Heaven but avoid Hell, e.g. purgatory, limbo.
 - 3. Each of us needs to ask himself which of the two possible eternities looms in his future according to the way in which he is conducting himself now.
- B. What a person does or doesn't do in this life determines where he or she will spend eternity.
 - 1. God is willing that all souls be saved, 1 Timothy 2:4; 2 Peter 3:9.
 - 2. However, salvation is conditional rather than unconditional, Hebrews 5:9; 2 Thessalonians 1:8.
 - 3. Hence, now is the time for mortals to prepare to meet God in Final Judgment, Amos 4:12.
 - 4. That preparation involves things we do not do as well as what we must do, James 4:17; Matthew 25:31-46.
- C. You and I are not taking life and eternity seriously enough if we are not evaluating our lives by the Holy Word of God.
 - 1. We owe it to ourselves to evaluate our lives with the light of the Bible, 2 Corinthians 13:5; 1 John 3:20-21.
 - 2. Every thought, every word uttered, every action, every entertainment choice, one's choice of companions and spouses, and one's choice of a vocation need to pass biblical inspection if we have any real hope of spending eternity in Heaven with God.

Conclusion:

- 1. Are you making preparation right now for the forever that

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follows this life?

2. Please tell me that you are not so shallow as to think only about the life you are living now and how you can enjoy it more.

Invitation:

1. One makes preparation for a million years from now by becoming a Christian if he is not a Christian already, Acts 2:38; 11:26.
2. An unfaithful or erring Christian makes preparation for a million years from now through repentance and prayer, Acts 8:22; 1 John 1:9.
3. Please come and take care of the undoneness in your life if you are not now prepared for where you will be and what you will be doing in a million years from now.

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The Day the Sundial Went Backward

Isaiah 38:1-8; 2 Kings 20:1-11

Thesis: To discern principles from the Old Testament that Christians need to instill in their lives today.

Introduction:

1. Today's sermon is drawn from Isaiah 38:1-8 and 2 Kings 20:1-11, and it is entitled, "The Day the Sundial Went Backward," though it could as easily be subtitled, "Set Thine House in Order."
2. It is our purpose on this occasion to discern principles from this Old Testament account that Christians need to instill in their lives today.

Body:

I. First, let's consider the background relative to the context under consideration.

- A. Israel grew to the size of a small nation as foreigners in Egypt.
 1. Joseph who had become second highest ruler in Egypt invited his father Jacob (who God renamed Israel) and his brothers to settle in the part of Egypt called Goshen.
 2. Many years later, and after the Egyptians had enslaved the Israelites, Moses led the little nation in the Exodus, Red Sea crossing and protracted wilderness wandering up to the eastern edge of Canaan.
 3. Joshua led the Israelites into Canaan, wresting it by conquest from its inhabitants.
 4. For hundreds of years following the death of Joshua, Israel was guided periodically by a series of judges.
 5. Samuel, the last judge, reluctantly appointed a king and Israel adopted monarchy as its form of government.
- B. The united monarchy of Israel lasted 120 years from 1095 B.C. to 975 B.C.
 1. Kings Saul, David and Solomon each reigned for 40 years.
 2. Due to disobedience, God took the right to be king from King Saul, his tribe (Benjamin) and family, and gave the dynasty

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- to King David and his descendants from the tribe of Judah.
3. After the death of King Solomon, his son Rehoboam became King, but because of his harshness the kingdom split into two nations.
- C. From that time, the nation of Israel represented the ten northern tribes, and the nation of Judah represented the two southern tribes.
1. The nation of Israel launched immediately into widespread idolatry when its first king, Jeroboam, erected golden calves for worship in the cities of Dan and Bethel.
 2. King after king in the northern kingdom of Israel multiplied idolatry in the land as well as either committed or permitted great wickedness.
 3. After a time, the nation of Judah likewise introduced idolatry into its land and permitted much wickedness to flourish.
- D. Almighty God punished both wayward nations of Israelites by sending other nations against them.
1. The nation of Israel fell to the Assyrians in 721 B.C.
 2. After the time of Hezekiah, God permitted the Babylonians to conquer Judah in 587 B.C.
- E. However, the context under consideration today corresponds to the time immediately following the Assyrian defeat of the nation of Israel.
1. Assyria not only conquered Israel, the sister nation to Judah, Assyria was attempting to conquer the nation of Judah as well.
 2. Assyria had conquered 46 cities, numerous smaller villages of Judah and laid siege to Jerusalem, driving out of those communities 200,150 people (Halley 286).
 3. Assyria laid siege to Jerusalem and would have overrun it as well except for God's divine intervention.
 4. Jerusalem was spared by the divine intervention of God when He sent an angel of death into the Assyrian camp, killing 185,000 soldiers, 2 Kings 19:35-36.

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5. It was about this time that Hezekiah was dying per the context of Isaiah 38:1-8 and 2 Kings 20:1-11.

II. Second, let's look more closely at the texts that record the event in Hezekiah's life of the shadow going backward.

A. Isaiah delivered the harsh and blunt message to King Hezekiah, "Set thine house in order; for thou shalt die, and not live," 2 Kings 20:1; Isaiah 38:1.

1. The illness from which Hezekiah was dying may well have been leprosy when his ailment is compared with other passages, Leviticus 13, especially verse 18.

2. The accompanying physical activity to the miraculous cure appears in Isaiah 38:21.

B. Upon receiving news from God through the prophet that he would die, Hezekiah immediately prayed.

1. It was a sorrowful prayer accompanied by many tears.

2. Hezekiah represented himself as one with a "perfect heart" and who obeyed God.

3. The word "perfect" in this place means "complete...especially friendly" (*Biblesoft's*); Hezekiah's heart was completely dedicated to God, and his heart was especially friendly toward God.

Hezekiah surely does not claim for himself sinlessness.

His claim is that of a life based upon the truth as he knew it from God and a complete (perfect) heart's motivation to do what was good in God's sight. (Butler 274)

4. In the case of Hezekiah, God answered his prayer and promised to add 15 years to his life.

C. Other than the shock, why would Hezekiah question God's declaration respecting the timing of his death?

But why did not Hezekiah resign himself to what apparently was God's will — his immediate death? Hezekiah was only 39 or 40 years old when this terminal illness struck him. Manasseh was not to be born for three more years (Manasseh was 12 years old when Hezekiah died at

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the age of 54; see II Kings 21:1; II Chron. 33:1). It was contrary to all Hezekiah believed concerning the perpetuation of the dynasty of David (which God had certainly promised) that he should die without a successor to the throne of David! It was also considered by any Jewish male to be a sign of Divine disfavor to be cut off in the midst of one's life without a male child to carry on the family name (Job 15:32; 22:15-16; Psalm 55:23; Prov. 10:27; Eccl. 7:17). (Butler 275)

1. Summarized, Hezekiah was as concerned about God's announced plan respecting a Messiah as anything else: "Hezekiah at that time had no son (39:7; cf. 2 Kings 21:1), and the dynasty of David, in which centered so many Messianic hopes, was seriously threatened" (Robinson 123).
 2. "Hezekiah's concern was well-founded as the genealogical record of Christ proves, 'And Ezekias [Hezekiah] begat Manasses [Manasseh]; and Manasses begat Amon; and Amon begat Josias' (Matthew 1:10)" (McDade 207-208).
- D. Hezekiah asked for a miracle to assure him that God would really add 15 years to his life, 2 Kings 20:8.
1. The miracle agreed upon and actually selected by Hezekiah was for the shadow on the sundial to retreat 10 degrees or steps, 2 Kings 20:9-11.
 2. The device upon which the shadow was to show itself going backward is uncertain: "degrees," KJV; "steps," ASV; "sundial," NKJV.

Josephus thinks these degrees were steps ascending to the palace of Ahaz. The time of day was indicated by the number of steps reached by the shadow. The dial was of such a size and so placed that Hezekiah, when convalescent, could witness the miracle from his chamber. (*Jamieson, Fausset and Brown*)

Ahaz was the father of Hezekiah; and it is evident from

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this, that the dial had been introduced by him, and had been used by him to measure time. There is no mention of any instrument for keeping time in the Bible before this, nor is it possible, perhaps, to determine the origin or character of this invention, or to know where Ahaz obtained it. ... The mention of the dial does not occur before the time of Ahaz, who lived 726 BC... In order to the understanding of this miracle, it is not necessary to be acquainted with the form of the ancient dial. It will be understood by a reference to any dial, and would have been substantially the same, whatever was the form of the instrument. (Barnes)

E. By what means did the sundial go backward?

1. The words "I will bring back" in Isaiah 38:8 mean "to turn back" (*Biblesoft's*); the affect of the shadow returning to where it had already been made it appear as though the earth had reversed its revolution.

It is evident that this may have been accomplished in several ways. ... As there is no evidence that the event was observed elsewhere; and as it is not necessary to suppose that the earth was arrested in its motion, and that the whole frame of the universe was adjusted to this change in the movement of the earth, it is most probable that it was an inclination of the rays of the sun; or a miraculous causing of the shadow itself to recede. This is the whole statement of the sacred writer, and this is all that is necessary to be supposed. What Hezekiah desired was a miracle; a sign that he should recover. That was granted. The retrocession of the shadow in this sudden manner was not a natural event. It could be caused only by God; and this was all that was needed. A simple exertion of divine power on the rays of the sun which rested on the dial, deflecting those rays, would accomplish the whole result. It may be added that it is not recorded, nor is it necessary to an understanding of the subject to suppose, that the bending of the rays was permanent, or that so much time was lost. The miracle was instantaneous, and was satisfactory to Hezekiah,

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though the rays of the sun casting the shadow may have again been soon returned to their regular position, and the shadow restored to the place in which it would have been had it not been interrupted. (Barnes)

In the light of our present information it is impossible to ascertain how many steps or degrees made up this sundial of Ahaz. The markings may have indicated half-hours or even quarter-hours. Nor can we be certain whether this miracle involved an actual reverse rotation of the earth (which might well have occasioned violent geological disturbances), or was caused by some special atmospheric condition involving an unprecedented refraction of the sun's rays. (Wycliffe)

The retrogression of the shadow may have been effected by refraction: a cloud denser than the air interposing between the gnomon and dial would cause the phenomenon, which does not take away from the miracle, because God gave him the choice whether the shadow should go forward or back, and regulated the time and place. ...At all events, there is no need for supposing any revolution of the relative positions of the sun and earth, but merely an effect produced on the shadow (2 Kings 20:9-11); that effect was only local, and designed for the satisfaction of Hezekiah...(*Jamieson, Fausset and Brown*)

2. Frankly, other than recognizing that it was a miraculous event, it does not matter how God accomplished the shadow on the sundial or steps going backward.

Thus the miracle, from all the accounts of it, might consist only of the retrogression of the shadow ten degrees, by a simple act of Almighty power, without any medium, or, at most, by that of refracting those rays only which fell upon the dial. It is not said that any time was lost to the inhabitants of the world at large... (*McClintock and Strong*)

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III. Third, let's consider some principles from the event in Hezekiah's life that is under consideration.

- A. Every soul who knows the difference between right and wrong needs the blunt instruction that God through the prophet Isaiah gave to King Hezekiah.
1. "Set thine house in order; for thou shalt die, and not live," 2 Kings 20:1; Isaiah 38:1.
 2. There is nothing more important in life than preparing to meet God in Final Judgment, Ecclesiastes 12:13-14; Amos 4:12.
 3. Unlike Hezekiah who was given the privilege of knowing he was about to die so he could amend his life, we do not know when we are going to die so that we can amend our lives, James 4:14.
 4. Hence, you and I need to be ready at all times to meet God in Judgment, Matthew 24:44; 25:13; Luke 12:40.

Let every reader be here reminded of the uncertainty of this life and the imperative need to "set your house in order." ...Too often men and women procrastinate setting themselves in order with God until there is no more time or they are incapable. Now is the time; Today is the day of salvation! (Butler 277)

- B. Just as Hezekiah needed comfort in his plight, we need to comfort those who are around us who face great trials in life and death, 2 Corinthians 1:3-4.

God told Hezekiah that he should get his house in order and prepare to die; of course the prophet was deeply disturbed (Isaiah 38:1-3). Why would he not be? Just as Isaiah came with comfort and reassurance, so do we desperately need to give emotional strength to the dying. (Coats 394)

- C. Just as Hezekiah prayed to God for what from human perspective appeared to be a hopeless circumstance, Christians today need to pray to God.

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1. God heard the prayer of Hezekiah, 2 Kings 20:5.
 2. Especially in the New Testament, prayer is exemplified and urged frequently, 1 Thessalonians 5:17.
 3. “As an example in prayer Hezekiah proves that God answers prayer” (McDade 208).
- D. Miracles are still proof that God means what He says, though the miracles on which we rely today are the ones that have already occurred and about which we read in the Bible.
1. Miracles were temporary means by which new revelation (the New Testament) was received and verified, after which miracles would no longer be needed, 1 Corinthians 13:8-13; Ephesians 4:11-14.
 2. The miracles with which we need to concern ourselves are recorded in the Bible, John 20:30-31; Hebrews 2:3-4.

Conclusion:

1. There is no reason to believe that the sun literally went backward.
 - a. “The ‘sun’ here means, evidently, the sun as it appeared; the rays, or the shining of the sun” (Barnes).
 - b. “When it is stated that ‘the sun returned,’ this does not mean the sun in the heaven, but the sun upon the sun-dial, upon which the illuminated surface moved upwards as the shadow retreated...” (*Keil & Delitzsch*).
2. More importantly, there are certain principles that we ought to learn and apply to ourselves from the narrative surrounding Hezekiah.
 - a. Each of us needs to set his house in order because sooner or later we will die, Hebrews 9:27.
 - b. We need to comfort the dying and others who are afflicted with the comfort with which we are comforted of God.
 - c. We need to appreciate the efficiency of prayer, Luke 18:1; James 5:16.
 - d. The Bible has been validated as God’s divine Word, which rather than adapting as we see fit, we should bring our lives into conformity with it, Deuteronomy 4:2; Proverbs 30:6;

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Revelation 22:18-19; Deuteronomy 6:6; Job 23:12; Psalm 119:11; Proverbs 4:4.

3. Unfortunately, King Hezekiah did not live in those 15 years added to his life in such a way to show gratitude toward God, 2 Chronicles 32:24-26.

Invitation:

1. Have you set your house in order by obeying the Gospel of Christ?
2. You can set your house in order and prepare for the next world by becoming a Christian, Acts 26:28; Mark 16:16.
3. If you are an unfaithful Christian, you can set your house in order and prepare for the next world through repentance and prayer, 1 John 1:9; Acts 8:22.

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Christian Living

Potential Danger in All Our Blessings

Matthew 22:37-40

Thesis: To emphasize that the proper attitude toward and use of physical blessings is essential to salvation.

Song: “O Thou Fount of Every Blessing”

Introduction:

1. Things that are neither good nor bad have the potential of being used for good or for evil.
 - a. For instance, the airplane is neither good nor bad, but it can be used for rescue and medial missions or travel, or it can be used for war.
 - b. Fire has no moral quality either, but it can be used for warmth and cooking, or it can destroy.
2. Blessings enjoyed by Christians, which blessings have no moral quality (they are neither good nor bad), can be abused to the harm of one’s spiritual health.

Body:

I. Great intellect, higher education and abundant knowledge can be a curse to a Christian.

- A. We do not mean, as opponents to Christianity sometimes charge, that Christianity only appeals to poorly educated people.
- B. Christians must be humble and teachable like children, Matthew 11:25; 18:3-4.
- C. A person must correctly exercise intellect in Christianity, Matthew 22:37; Philippians 1:9; Colossians 1:9.
- D. Yet, worldly wisdom can puff one up and cause him to be arrogant, 1 Corinthians 1:21; 3:18-21; 8:1.

II. Time can be a blessing or a curse depending on how it is used.

- A. One’s time can be used to serve God or Satan, but not both, Matthew 6:24.
- B. We must buy back wasted moments by the efficient way in which we use time presently, Ephesians 5:16.

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III. Wealth can be a blessing or a curse.

- A. Wealth can ruin one or by its correct use help one prepare for a blissful eternity, 1 Timothy 6:10, 17-19.
- B. Treasure in Heaven is more important than earthly riches, Matthew 19:21.
- C. Our Lord compared riches to thorns that can choke the Word of God out of us, Luke 8:14.
- D. Christians must develop contentment in place of coveting this world's riches, Hebrews 13:5.

IV. Authority can be a blessing or a curse.

- A. The abuse of authority spelled the ruin of a Christian named Diotrefes and troubled the church, 3 John 9-10.
- B. If we have any authority in various areas of life or the church, we have an obligation to use that authority righteously (e.g., elders, deacons, teachers, preachers, bosses, officers, husbands, wives, etc.), Proverbs 29:2.

V. Great beauty or personality when diverted to sinful use becomes a curse.

- A. Great beauty may lead one to immodesty and immorality, 1 Timothy 2:9-10; Prov. 7:10.
- B. An outgoing personality may lead a salesman or a preacher to deceive people, Leviticus 19:36; Amos 8:5; Romans 16:17-18.

VI. Great popularity, reputation and worldly honor may lead to compromises of truth and character.

- A. A good name is a worthy pursuit, Proverbs 22:1.
- B. However, it is never right to follow a majority in unrighteousness to preserve one's popularity, Exodus 23:2.
- C. Godly men and women do not seek the praise of men in place of the praise of God, John 12:42-43.
- D. Often, the pursuit of worldly distinction interferes with the pursuit of godliness, 1 Corinthians 1:26.

VII. Even a good moral life and devotion to duty may cause one to despise "publicans and sinners," Luke 18:9-14.

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- VIII. Fine clothes, cars, homes, meetinghouses, etc. can be dangerous, if we depend on these things rather than on personal faith, devotion, godly lives, saving souls, etc., 1 John 2:15-17.**
- IX. Loyalty to home and duty led the elder son to despise his wayward, prodigal brother, Luke 15:11-31.**
- X. Great talent and a good voice, etc. can ruin a preacher if it keeps him from studying and working for the Lord, 1 Timothy 2:15.**
- XI. Good health or youthfulness now may keep some from obeying the Gospel.**
- A. There is no promise of a tomorrow for any of us, irrespective of how young we may be, Proverbs 27:1; James 4:13-15.
- B. Aware that besides our eventual demise that Jesus Christ will return possibly within our lives, we ought to live godly now, 2 Peter 3:9-11.

Conclusion:

1. The physical blessings of which we have been recipients are nearly innumerable.
2. Especially Christians must exercise caution regarding our earthly blessings lest they draw us away from God.
3. Blessings also increase our responsibilities!
 - a. A good job, for instance, increases one's responsibility to give heartily to the church so the Lord's work can continue.
 - b. Worldly honor increases one's responsibility to influence the world with the Gospel.
4. Blessings are like an automobile, neither good nor bad, but someone behind the steering wheel determines the use and the course.

Invitation:

1. In addition to the physical blessings that God showers on the just and on the unjust, He reserves spiritual blessings for those who are in Christ, Matthew 4:45; Ephesians 1:3.
2. Put on Christ today in baptism to begin enjoying spiritual blessings, Galatians 3:27.
3. Others present may have discarded their spiritual blessings and need to return to the Lord, 1 John 2:1-6.

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My Eyes! My Eyes! Oh, My Eyes!

Psalm 119:37 NKJV

Thesis: To emphasize that whatever we dwell upon or otherwise allow into our lives determines who we are and contributes to where we will spend eternity.

Introduction:

1. Christians cannot train their eyes (and minds) on sinful pleasures of this world and be all that God wants them to be, Hebrews 11:25.
 - a. Though, like Moses, aware of the ungodly world in which we live, we must determine that despite living **in** the world that we will not be **of** the world, John 15:19; 17:14-17.
 - b. By “train,” we mean the dictionary definition for the verb “train,” which can mean “5: to aim at an object or objective: DIRECT (trained his camera on the deer)” (*Merriam Webster’s*).
 - c. Christians cannot train their eyes (and minds) on the sinful pleasures of this world in addition to pursuing godliness and be all that God wants them to be, Matthew 5:28.
2. There are simply too many evil things in this world that especially with which the children of God must have nothing to do, Ephesians 5:11.
 - a. When we happen to see some of the wickedness in this world, our souls ought to cry out, “My eyes! My eyes! Oh my eyes!” See Psalm 119:37 NKJV.
 - b. In a sense, Christians need to resemble the proverbial three monkeys: “Hear no evil! See no evil! Speak no evil!”
 - c. The modern proverb in the computing age, “Garbage in, garbage out,” is likewise true respecting what we focus our eyes upon in the ungodly world around us, Philippians 4:8.
3. What we focus our attention upon in the ungodly world around us will determine for us who we are in this life and where we will spend eternity.

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Body:

I. There are some things in this ungodly world that are better left behind when one becomes a Christian.

- A. We must not look back with pleasure upon those things for which we have repented.
 - 1. It is not fitting for a disciple of our Lord to begin to follow the Christ and then muse about the former, unregenerate life, Luke 9:62.
 - 2. Christians who turn back to the beggarly elements of the sinful world cast their own souls into a devil's hell, Hebrews 10:38-39.
 - 3. Somehow, perhaps through degrees of punishment, the loss of the Christian's soul will be worse than the loss of the same soul would have been had he never become a Christian, 2 Peter 2:20-22.
- B. Though once we were part of the ungodly world, as Christians we no longer traffic in the ways of the world.
 - 1. The apostle Paul reminded Christians at Ephesus that though they had been companions of sinners they since were dead to sin, Ephesians 2:2-5.
 - 2. As a matter of fact, every faithful Christian (no matter how esteemed and useful of a servant) at one time was once a part of the unregenerate, ungodly world, Titus 3:3-7; 1 Peter 4:3.

II. There are better things on which Christians can train their sight than on the ungodly world in which we live.

- A. We must look ahead rather than to the side or behind us as we march to Heaven's gates.
 - 1. The pilgrim, Abraham, had no home but sought one in eternal Heaven, Hebrews 11:8-10, 13-16.
 - 2. No matter what wealth we may amass or what property deeds or titles we can hold in our hands, Christians are merely squatters on this mud ball of sin, awaiting a home in Heaven with God, John 14:1-3; Hebrews 13:14.

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3. The Christian's citizenship is in Heaven, Philippians 3:20 ASV, NKJV.
- B. The journey toward Heaven is worth any and all sacrifices one may experience along life's way.
 1. The apostles of Christ asked our Lord regarding the sacrifices they were making to follow Him, Matthew 19:27-29.
 2. All of the tears and sorrows of this life will be compensated, Revelation 21:4; 7:7.

Conclusion:

1. There is supposed to be a discernible difference between the children of God and the rest of the (unsaved) world, 1 John 5:19; 1 Peter 2:9-12.
2. This can only be true of Christians if they habitually turn away their eyes from looking at worthless things and trust in God to revive them, Psalm 119:37 NKJV.

Invitation:

1. In a sense, the first revival process through which God transforms a soul is the forgiveness of past sins and addition of one to the body of Christ when he is baptized for the remission of sins, Acts 2:38, 41, 47; 22:16; 1 Corinthians 12:13.
2. Subsequent revival by God removes the sins that Christians commit, 1 John 1:7-10.

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Christian Living

Sit Down with Dogs; Rise Up with Fleas!

1 Corinthians 15:33 ASV

Thesis: To caution Christians respecting their associations and affections with the surrounding world.

Song: “We’re Marching to Zion”

Introduction:

1. The Bible repeatedly cautions especially the children of God respecting their associations and affections with the surrounding world.
2. Both testaments of the Bible address the dangers of associating with the sinful world.
3. Some of these biblical warnings are positive directives, whereas other biblical warnings are negative prohibitions.
4. Our God only has our best spiritual interest in mind.

Body:

I. Companionship with sinful people leads to apostasy from God.

- A. The principle of the corrupting influence of the ungodly upon the godly is a well-established principle in the Old Testament.
 1. God prohibited the nation of Israel to intermingle with the heathen nations of Palestine because of their corrupting influence toward apostasy from God, Deuteronomy 7:1-6.
 2. The multitude usually pursues evil, Exodus 23:2; Matthew 7:13-14.
 3. The companionship of sinners often influences the godly to sin also, Proverbs 1:10-16; 4:14.
- B. The principle of the corrupting influence of the ungodly upon the godly is a well-established principle in the New Testament as well.
 1. The New Testament repeatedly cautions the children of God about the corrupting influence of the ungodly world, 1 Corinthians 15:33 ASV; James 4:4.
 2. Christians are forbidden to fellowship ungodly brethren

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because of their corrupting influence, 1 Corinthians 5:6; 2 Timothy 2:16; 2 Peter 2:18-20.

3. The calculated result known ahead of time for fraternizing with ungodliness around us is that the children of God will imperil and quite possibly lose their souls, 2 Corinthians 6:14-18.

II. Companionship with faithful children of God guards against spiritual apostasy.

- A. The Old Testament charged the people of God in those past ages to seek the company of the godly.
 1. This is first accomplished by seeking to serve God foremost, Joshua 24:15.
 2. Old Testament Scripture also admonishes the children of God to associate with faithful children of God rather than with ungodly children of God who will lead one to destructive ends, Proverbs 13:20.
- B. The New Testament charges Christians to prefer fellowship with other Christians.
 1. Christians must exhibit the highest form of love for the brotherhood, 1 Peter 2:17.
 2. Christians must demonstrate brotherly love toward fellow Christians, bestowing esteem upon and giving deference to them, Romans 12:10.
 3. Though Christians should conduct themselves kindly toward all of humanity, Christians are obligated to esteem brethren in Christ first, 2 Corinthians 9:13; Galatians 6:10.

Conclusion:

1. If we sit down with dogs, we will rise up with fleas!
2. If the children of God spend more time with the ungodly world than they do with the people of God, the children of God will be infected with the sinful ways of the ungodly world.
3. If the children of God love the world, the world will corrupt them and make them also the enemies of God, 1 John 2:15-17;

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James 4:4.

4. We must determine that though we live in the world we will not be of the world, knowing full well that the world will hate us, John 17:14-16.

Invitation:

1. Jesus will return one day exclusively for His faithful followers, but who will be ready, John 14:1-3; 1 Thessalonians 4:13-18?
2. However, if we sit down with dogs, we will rise up with fleas!
3. Erring Christians and unbaptized believers alike need to be cleansed from the fleas of sin, 1 John 1:9; Acts 2:38.

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Patience

James 1:2-3

Thesis: To come to a better understanding of patience by examining what the Bible has to say about it.

Song: “It Won’t Be Very Long,” “Where the Gates Swing Outward Never”

Introduction:

1. Two Greek nouns are translated as “patience.”
 - a. *Hupomone* literally means “abiding under” and appears in the New Testament 32 times, translated as “patience” 31 times and “enduring” once (*Vine’s*).
 - b. *Makrothumia* means “forbearance, patience, longsuffering” and is translated “longsuffering” in the New Testament 12 times and twice as “patience,” Hebrews 6:12; James 5:10 (*Vine’s*).
 - c. Forms of these two words also appear as verbs and an adverb, plus two additional Greek words that appear as adjectives are each translated once as “patient” (*Vine’s*).
2. Patience is a crucial trait for successful Christian living.
 - a. Patience tempers the disposition.
 - b. Patience contributes to fruitfulness in the kingdom.
 - c. Patience complements faithfulness.
 - d. Patience develops through trials and suffering.
 - e. Bible examples of patient saints can help us develop patience, too.
 - f. Patience is a necessary part of hope and salvation.
 - g. “Waiting” is fundamental to “patience.”
 - h. Christian living is never all that it can be unless we learn from the Bible about patience.

Body:

I. Patience tempers the disposition.

- A. Patience is an appropriate substitute for anger, Proverbs 15:18; Ecclesiastes 7:8-9.

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- B. God will avenge His people and patience will be rewarded; the prosperity of the wicked is no reason to lose patience, Psalm 37:7-9.
- C. The apostle Paul instructed first century Christians to exercise patience toward all people, 1 Thessalonians 5:14.

II. Patience contributes to fruitfulness in the kingdom.

- A. A spiritual harvest requires patience just as any farmer must patiently wait for harvest time, Luke 8:15.
 - 1. The spiritual harvest is not hastened by Miracle Grow; there are not overnight harvests.
 - 2. The Parable of the Sower illustrates that the bumper crop resulted from only a quarter of the seed sown and only a third of the seed that rooted.
- B. Despite difficulty, Christians must produce fruit, John 15:1-6; 1 Corinthians 3:6-9.

III. Patience complements faithfulness.

- A. God promises eternal life to those who continually and patiently seek godly glory, holy honor and immeasurable immortality, Romans 2:7.
- B. Christians should be patient and not become weary in well doing, Galatians 6:9.
- C. Faith coupled with patience will help us stay the course and someday “inherit the promises,” Hebrews 6:11-12; that was the theme of the Book of Hebrews to the Jewish Christians who were abandoning Christianity and returning to Judaism.
- D. We must not despise the longsuffering of God, 2 Peter 3:8-10.

IV. Patience develops through trials and suffering.

- A. Tribulations, if handled right, result in patience, Romans 5:3; James 1:2-3.
- B. The servants of God must exercise patience in the face of distress, necessities, afflictions and persecutions, 2 Corinthians 6:4-6.
- C. The apostle John in his day saw “tribulation” and “patience” as companions to citizenship in the Lord’s kingdom, Reve-

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lution 1:9; 2 Timothy 3:12.

V. Bible examples of patient saints can help us develop patience, too.

- A. The apostle Paul practiced patience in response to great persecutions and forfeitures of personal privileges, 2 Corinthians 11:24-28; Philippians 3:4-8; 2 Corinthians 12:12.
 - 1. The apostles were patient when persecuted by the Sanhedrin, Acts 4-5.
 - 2. Paul and Silas patiently endured beating and imprisonment, Acts 16:16-24.
- B. The New Testament instructs Christians to demonstrate patience when suffering, just as Jesus did, 1 Peter 2:19-23.
 - 1. Jesus Christ is our example for showing patience when suffering, Colossians 3:12-13.
 - 2. Especially elders must have patience, 1 Timothy 3:2-3.

VI. Patience is a necessary part of hope and salvation.

- A. Patience, hope and prayer are inseparable biblical companions, even in the face of tribulations, Romans 8:25; 12:12.
- B. Patience and hope participate in the redemption of souls, Luke 21:19 ASV; Hebrews 10:36.
- C. Part of the biblical definition of “hope” includes the concept of “patience,” 1 Thessalonians 1:3.
- D. The Scriptures are the source of patience and hope, Romans 15:4-5.

VII. “Waiting” is fundamental to “patience.”

- A. Christians must exercise patience while waiting for the return of Jesus Christ, 2 Thessalonians 3:5; James 5:7-8.
- B. God’s children must not tire of patiently waiting for eternal salvation, Lamentations 3:26; 2 Peter 3:1-10; 1 Thessalonians 4:13-18.

VIII. Christian living will never be all that it can be unless we learn from the Bible about patience.

- A. Patience should be diligently sought by Christians, 1 Timothy 6:11; 2 Timothy 2:24-25; Ephesians 4:1-2; Colossians 1:10-11.

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- B. Patience is one of the Christian virtues of which the apostle Peter wrote, which we are obligated to adopt, 2 Peter 1:5-6.
- C. The Christian race must be run with patience, Hebrews 12:1.
- D. According to the inspired apostle Paul, preaching “sound doctrine” teaches patience, Titus 2:1-2.

Conclusion:

1. Elders should be examples of patience.
2. Christians must show patience to all men.
3. Heavenly promises hinge on learning patience.
4. Patience is learned from the Scriptures.
5. Trial and suffering are opportunities to develop patience.
6. Patience is for all places at all times.
7. To have patience is to be Christ-like.
8. Patience is a virtue.
9. Patience, hope and prayer are partners.
10. Often, patience simply involves waiting!

Invitation:

1. God, in His patience (longsuffering), waits for man to obey the Gospel, but He will not wait forever, 2 Peter 3:9-10.
2. Erring children of God need to repent and pray, whereas unbaptized believers must repent and be baptized, Acts 9:22; 2:38.

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Christian Living

Jesus Knows

John 2:23-25

Thesis: To encourage Christians and non-Christians alike to be on their best behavior in godly living and faithful service to God, especially since Jesus Christ knows us intimately like no other knows us.

Introduction:

1. Christians and non-Christians alike need to be on their best behavior in godly living and faithful service to God, especially since Jesus Christ knows us intimately like no other knows us.
2. Children and adults typically exhibit better behavior when they know that someone is watching them, when that someone commands their respect or can exact punitive measures.
 - a. Children sometimes look to see if mom or dad, a teacher, a shopkeeper or a policeman is watching them before they do something they are not supposed to do.
 - b. Employees often work more efficiently or at least don't pilfer company property when the supervisor or boss is watching.
 - c. Police presence dissuades people from criminal activity and speeding down the highways.
3. Aware that Jesus knows all (everything past, present, future and each of us, too), we ought to be on our best spiritual behavior.
4. Jesus knows all, and Jesus is watching each of us.

Body:

I. Jesus knows the Father.

- A. "While on earth the supernatural knowledge of Jesus was manifested in His knowledge of the Father" (Nichols 25).
- B. Jesus Christ knew the Father because He had sent Him into the world, John 7:29.
- C. Knowing the Father intimately, Jesus was able to show the Father to mankind, who otherwise could not know the Father, Matthew 11:27; John 8:38.
- D. The knowledge and wisdom of Jesus Christ was noticeably su-

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perior to mere human knowledge and wisdom, Matthew 13:54.

II. Jesus knows the past.

- A. The personal knowledge of Jesus Christ predates Abraham, John 8:58.
- B. Jesus had an intimate relationship with Moses and Elijah so that he could effortlessly converse with them, Matthew 17:1-5.
- C. Jesus amazed Nathaniel by displaying knowledge of an event in his past, John 1:48.
- D. Jesus Christ astonished the Samaritan woman at the well by exhibiting knowledge that she had been married four times and that she was an adulteress with the man with whom she was living then, John 4:16-18.
- E. Jesus knows the past, including your past and mine!

III. Jesus knows the present.

- A. Jesus forcefully told people contemporary with Him in His earthly ministry “But I know you, that ye have not the love of God in you,” John 5:42.
- B. Jesus knew where there was a large school of fish, all without the help of some modern contraption called an electronic fish finder, Luke 5:4-7.
- C. Jesus Christ knows those who are His faithful disciples — and those who are not, 2 Timothy 2:19.
- D. Consequently, Jesus only hears the prayers of the righteous, 1 Peter 3:12.

IV. Jesus knows the future.

- A. Jesus knew that a certain man would permit His disciples and Him to use an upper room for observance of the Passover and institution of the Lord’s Supper, Luke 22:10-12.
- B. Jesus knew that Peter would catch a fish in the mouth of which was sufficient money to pay taxes for Jesus and Peter, Matthew 17:27.
- C. Jesus foreknew that He would be betrayed by one of His twelve disciples (Judas), John 6:64, 70-71; 13:11.
- D. Jesus knew that Peter would deny Him three times before a

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rooster crowed, Matthew 26:34, 75.

- E. Jesus knew that the apostle John would live to be an old man, though some of the other apostles and disciples plus Jesus Christ Himself suffered persecutions resulting in their deaths, Matthew 27:50; John 19:33; Acts 7:58-60; 12:1-2.
- F. The prophecies of Jesus Christ that came to pass are many more than these few cited here.
- G. “Each predictive prophecy demonstrates that Jesus knows the future!” (Nichols 25).

V. Jesus knows our hearts, John 2:23-25.

- A. Jesus Christ searches the hearts of men, Revelation 2:23; Mark 2:8.
- B. Jesus Christ was able to look into the hearts of His twelve disciples as they wrangled among themselves who would be the greatest in the kingdom, Luke 9:46-48.
- C. Consequently, Jesus Christ knows when you or I have evil in our hearts, Matthew 9:4.
- D. Certainly not our deeds or works and not even our thoughts are hidden from Jesus Christ, Matthew 12:25; Luke 6:8; 11:16-17.
- E. Jesus is watching our behavior, and He is monitoring our thoughts, too!

Conclusion:

1. The supernatural knowledge of Jesus Christ is apparent.
2. The supernatural knowledge of Jesus Christ includes intimate knowledge of each of us.
3. Essentially, Jesus is watching!
4. That should inspire each of us to be on our best spiritual behavior — in godly living and Christian service.

Awareness that Jesus knows us “through and through” is a powerful stimulus to motivate us, collectively, and as individuals, to lovingly and sincerely “walk in the light” (I John 1:7) so that we constantly will have Christ’s approval. How can any child of God be unfaithful to Christ,

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while he recognizes-and fully believes!-that Jesus knows what is in man? (Nichols 26)

5. Borrowing language from 2 Peter 3:11, with the apostle Peter, we exhort, “Seeing then all these things... what manner of persons ought ye to be in all holy conversation [conduct NKJV] and godliness.”

Invitation:

1. With the apostle Paul, we urge, “The Lord knoweth them that are his. And, Let every one that nameth the name of Christ depart from iniquity,” 2 Timothy 2:19.
2. Initially, one departs from “iniquity” or sin by becoming a child of God, a Christian, 1 Peter 3:21; 4:16.
3. A Christian departs from “iniquity” or sin by walking in the Christian light and repenting of sin on those occasions when his Christian walk is marred by sin, 1 John 1:7, 9.
4. What does Jesus know about you; are you in a saved condition, or are you lost right now?
5. Jesus knows our hearts and our works, Acts 1:24; Revelation 2:2, 9, 13, 19; 3:1, 8, 15.

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Christian Living

Heavy Loads and Life's Disappointments

Matthew 11:28-30

Thesis: To encourage all to develop and maintain the best possible disposition or attitude despite sometimes often and severe disappointments in life.

Song: "Come Unto Me"

Introduction:

1. There are many reasons for which and at different times in life that a person may be said to have a "heavy heart," and there is often little that one can do to boost the spirits of one who has a heavy heart, Proverbs 25:20.
2. Further, there is "a time to mourn," Ecclesiastes 3:4.
3. Friends will empathize with their fellows who are distraught over life's disappointments, Romans 12:15.
4. There is, though, a breathtaking reason for which even something as heartbreaking as the death of loved ones ought to lift the fallen spirits of Christians, 1 Thessalonians 4:13-18.

Body:

I. Sometimes we think that we cannot bear any more of life's burdens and that we are at a breaking point.

A. I have been there, and I think that we all have been there.

1. Maybe like me when on occasion you "cannot take it anymore," you simply make an audible, incomprehensible noise that hurts the throat and seems to rise from deep inside our being.
2. Yet, somehow, we get through the current crisis.
3. Imagine the crises faced by poor Job, e.g. loss of all his children, loss of his property, loss of his health and discouraged by his wife and closest friends.
4. Unlike Job, sometimes my Christian faith has faltered a little, Mark 9:24.

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- B. Jesus was literally “a man of sorrows,” Isaiah 53:3.
 - 1. Our Lord experienced not only the excruciating and humiliating death of crucifixion, but he bore the sins of all humanity of all time, 1 Corinthians 15:3; Galatians 1:4; 1 Peter 2:24.
 - 2. Were we to be killed for our faith like the apostle James, we would not face the same duress Jesus faced on the cross bearing our sins, Acts 12:2; Matthew 27:46.
 - 3. Jesus demonstrated and made it possible for humans to participate in life after death, at which time earthly sorrows will be no more, Revelation 21:4.

II. Sometimes there are burdens in life that are ongoing with no prospect of release from them.

- A. Life’s burdens and sorrows can virtually cripple us if we allow that to happen, Psalm 38:17.
 - 1. We can spend too much down time, getting ourselves down emotionally and spiritually, by dwelling on regrets and castigating the present.
 - 2. Our lives may be punctuated by goals unrealized and missed opportunities.
 - 3. However, the present and the small blip in history made by our lives is hardly to be compared with a glorious future in heavenly habitations, Romans 8:18.
- B. Rather, life’s burdens can be viewed as challenges, even opportunities for spiritual growth.

Sorrow or grief is necessary for discipline, for the development of the finer feelings and higher nature of the soul and spirit (Eccl 7:3, “Sorrow is better than laughter; for by the sadness of the countenance the heart is made glad,” margin “better”). (*ISBE*)

- 1. I know a brother in Christ who tries his best to look at every challenge and disappointment in life as an opportunity.
- 2. As far as I can tell, he does a pretty good job of doing just that.
- 3. We ought to be less concerned about what this life makes of us and more concerned about what we make out of this

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life (preparing ourselves to meet God), Amos 4:12.

III. Sometimes there are disappointments in life because things didn't turn out the way we had hoped.

- A. People, especially loved ones, can be a source of insurmountable disappointment in life.
 - 1. The very ones from whom we ought to have derived great joy and satisfaction are often the ones who bring instead great sorrow into one's life, 2 Corinthians 2:3.
 - 2. For instance, a morally unfaithful spouse can bring almost unimaginable heartache when instead there should have been an enduring bliss.
 - 3. A son or a daughter "gone bad" or a child from whom parents are involuntarily estranged is a hurt too deep it seems to fill.
- B. However, we must go on despite "great heaviness and continual sorrow," Romans 9:2.
 - 1. When family, friends, coworkers and brethren disappoint us, we must remember that God has not abandoned us, James 5:11.
 - 2. For instance, we have the assurance that we will not be given more than we can handle; that's what gets me through the tough times of life, 1 Corinthians 10:13.
 - 3. If we let Him, Jesus will bear our heavy load, Matthew 11:28-30.
 - 4. In addition, some Christians likewise, in the spirit of Christ, will help us bear some of the burdens of this life that are beyond our capability to bear alone, Galatians 6:2.

Conclusion:

- 1. We must make the best of whatever it is that life throws our way, Matthew 10:28; Revelation 2:10.
- 2. Further, we must always be conscious of the fact that if we are faithful Christians, there is a better, eternal life coming that will make all we endure in this life relatively insignificant, John 14:1-3.

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Invitation:

1. The comfort that we desperately need to traverse this life of frequent duress is Heaven sent especially to Christians, 2 Corinthians 1:3-4.
2. If you have acted out the words of Jesus Christ in your life, then you are a Christian, Mark 16:16.
3. If you are a Christian who sometimes has sinned (and all have sinned), but repented and prayed for forgiveness, God's comfort remains available to you as well, 1 John 1:9; Acts 8:22.

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Life's Burdens

Galatians 6:2, 5

Thesis: To emphasize Christian responsibilities respecting life's burdens.

Song: "Burdens Are Lifted at Calvary"

Introduction:

1. The burdens of this life are often many, frustrating and relentless.
 - a. What individual responsibilities do we have respecting these burdens that appear in our lives and the lives of others around us?
 - b. Our responsibility depends on the type of burden.
2. The word "burden" in Galatians 6:2 appears to contradict the usage of the same English word in Galatians 6:5.
 - a. The "burden" addressed in this context pertains to "faults" or sins of verse one.
 - b. The word "burden" in 6:2 refers to heavy burdensome grief for sin, which cannot be borne alone.
 - c. The word "burden" in 6:5 refers to a burden that can be borne or carried, and in this verse, without help from another.
3. Borrowing a principle from this context, for the next few moments, we will emphasize Christian responsibilities respecting life's burdens.

Body:

I. Galatians 6:2

- A. "Burden" here is from the Greek *baros*.
 1. It means, "weight, burdensome, difficult requirements, load, oppressive, momentous, heavy, pressing on one; it is the idea of **a crushing load.**"
 2. This type of burden **cannot be borne or carried alone.**
- B. If we have a burden of this kind, we should appeal to our brethren for help.
 1. Christians who become aware of the crushing burdens of

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other Christians ought to willingly help them carry these burdens.

2. These verses are addressed to brethren (6:1) and primarily affect interaction between brethren, but we may elect to assist non-Christians as we have opportunity, 6:10.
- C. There are biblical examples of crushing burdens lifted with the help of others.
1. **Physical burdens lifted:** Acts 4:34-35; 1 Corinthians 16:1-2; Romans 15:26; 2 Corinthians 9:1-5; 8:4.
 2. **Spiritual burdens lifted:** Romans 12:15; 2 Corinthians 1:3-4.

II. Galatians 6:5

- A. “Burden” here is from the Greek *phortion*.
1. It means, “load carried as in the cargo of a ship.”
 2. In this verse, it represents **a daily burden for which no one needs help** to bear.
- B. Since this burden can be borne alone, it must be borne alone.
1. One should not expect anyone to carry this type of burden for him.
 2. Further, we should not seek to lift this type of burden from the shoulders of one to whom it belongs.
- C. There are biblical examples of daily burdens that are not to be borne by one’s brethren (under normal circumstances).
1. **Physical burdens:** 2 Thessalonians 3:10; 1 Timothy 5:8; however, daily burdens became crushing burdens to the saints in Jerusalem following Pentecost and later in Judaea during famine.
 2. **Spiritual burdens:** There are individual spiritual responsibilities that if one fails to accept brethren still cannot bear them, 2 Thessalonians 3:6; Matthew 18:15-17.

Conclusion:

1. Christians have individual responsibilities as well as congregational responsibilities to aid those with crushing burdens.
2. Christians have daily burdens that under normal circumstances

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they alone must bear.

3. Daily burdens can become crushing burdens to which Christians must respond and bear.
4. We do not fulfill the Law of Christ if we do not carry our own daily burdens and help lift crushing burdens from our brethren.

Invitation:

1. The burden of sin is a burden only Jesus Christ can lift, and only if we let Him.
2. Erring Christians must repent and pray, Acts 8:22.
3. All other accountable souls must believe and be baptized, Mark 16:16.

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Feet of Clay

Daniel 2:31-35

Thesis: As fallible creatures, mankind must be ever vigilant to ensure one's continued salvation and must be ever aware that fallible men, though esteemed, can falter, too.

Song: "Have Thine Own Way"

Introduction:

1. The image of Daniel Two, the subject of Nebuchadnezzar's dream, is the basis of an outstanding prophecy, which is key to the establishment of the Lord's church.
2. Today, though, we turn to this image with the feet of clay to use it as an illustration.
3. Obviously, the image, with feet of clay, was flawed.
4. The focal point for the destruction of this image was its feet of clay.
5. From this modest beginning, permit me to emphasize that all human beings also have "feet of clay."

Body:

I. From Bible history one can observe that it is unwise to place too much confidence in even outstanding servants of God, for they also can falter (i.e., sin).

- A. Noah saved himself and seven other souls alone from the universal flood, yet he was not always a noble example, Genesis 9:20-21.
- B. Even Abraham, the "friend of God," James 2:23, and the father of the faithful, Romans 4:16, sometimes sinned, Genesis 12:11-20; 20:1-6.
- C. King David was "a man after mine own heart," Acts 13:22, God said, but David committed adultery and murder, 2 Samuel 11:2-24.
- D. The apostle Peter denied Christ three times, Matthew 26:69-75.

II. The children of God must follow Jesus Christ foremost.

- A. Even family members must not be allowed to come between

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a Christian and his Lord, Luke 14:26.

- B. Christians must not allow the pursuit of earthly things to obscure their spiritual goals, Matthew 6:33.
- C. The preservation of our lives is not more important than being faithful Christians, Luke 12:4; Revelation 2:10.
- D. We dare not trust in ourselves (be self-guides), Proverbs 3:5-7; Romans 12:3.
- E. Further, we must follow others only as they faithfully follow Christ (and thereby lead us to Christ), 1 Corinthians 4:16; 11:1; Philippians 3:17-19.

III. Outstanding Christians today fall (or were they to fall away) and lead many to destruction.

- A. In our lifetime, preachers and elders led a prominent congregation of the Lord's church in Nashville into Pentecostalism.
- B. In recent decades, preachers led tens of thousands into "multiplying ministries" and ultimately out of the church into a new denomination called the International Churches of Christ.
- C. The director of a school of preaching, the speaker for a popular radio program, preachers and elders have committed adultery and have been found out, resulting in much hurt to the church and members in particular.
- D. Many years ago, I attended a debate in which the opponent of brother Guy N. Woods was a Pentecostal preacher. As the debate opened, the Pentecostal preacher boldly affirmed that by the conclusion of the debate brother Woods would be won over to the Pentecostal position. Of course, it never happened; brother Woods did not abandon the Gospel in favor of the Pentecostal error. However, I shuddered when the Pentecostal preacher made his audacious remark — because I was certain (and am equally certain today) that had brother Woods fallen as the Pentecostal predicted, a large, ignorant body of Christians would have blindly followed brother Woods to their eternal doom.

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Conclusion:

1. Sometimes, preachers follow their teachers, school director or the school itself to a fault. Misplaced reverence allows someone at a great distance and outside of the autonomous congregation of which one is a member to “call the shots.” Misplaced reverence can also lead one into doctrinal errors or other sins. All Christians must serve God and be true to the Book.
2. Bible history amply demonstrates the futility of revering too much even outstanding servants of God.
3. Contemporary history reinforces the danger of trusting in even the renowned Gospel preachers in the brotherhood.

Invitation:

1. We all have “feet of clay!”
2. Christians who err from the faith — sin — need to repent and pray, Acts 8:22; 1 John 1:9.
3. Unbaptized believers need to obey from the heart the Gospel, Romans 6:17; 2 Thessalonians 1:8.

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Contentment

1 Timothy 6:6-8

Thesis: To encourage especially brethren to seek contentment instead of materialism and hedonism.

Song: “Sing and Be Happy”

Introduction:

1. Materialism is, “preoccupation with or emphasis on material objects, comforts, and considerations, as opposed to spiritual or intellectual values.” (*Webster’s Talking Dictionary*)
2. Hedonism is, “1. the doctrine that pleasure or happiness is the highest good. 2. devotion to pleasure and self-gratification as a way of life.” (*Webster’s Talking Dictionary*)
3. The world frantically chases materialism and hedonism and never derives contentment.
4. Unfortunately, even Christians relentlessly pursue materialism and hedonism, and by such pursuits they, too, fail to achieve contentment.
5. However, the Bible commands the child of God and provides instruction how to find contentment in this life.

Body:

I. Biblical Commands and Instruction about How to Develop Contentment.

- A. God requires His children to pursue contentment.
 1. The apostle Paul, by inspiration, wrote that Christians should seek what they need and be little concerned about what they want, 1 Timothy 6:6-8.
 2. Likewise, the writer of Hebrews urges Christians to be happy with the necessary things of life as opposed to being dissatisfied in lacking optional things, Hebrews 13:5.
 3. Earlier, John the Baptist also taught the pursuit of contentment, Luke 3:14.
 4. The apostle Paul even taught learning contentment respect-

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ing the socio-economic class in which one finds himself, 1 Corinthians 7:17-24.

- B. God's Word provides instructions about how to achieve contentment in this life.
 - 1. We can learn contentment by seeking spiritual things first, Matthew 6:19-34 (33).
 - 2. We can develop contentment through our happy homes, Ecclesiastes 9:9.
 - 3. Practicing righteousness makes for contentment, Psalm 37:16; Proverbs 14:14; 16:8; Hebrews 11:25-36.
 - 4. We should set our hearts on neither poverty nor great riches, Proverbs 30:8-9.
 - 5. We should seek a tranquil life, Ecclesiastes 4:6.
 - 6. Mankind needs to discipline his appetite for acquisition of things, Ecclesiastes 6:7, 9.

II. The apostle Paul is an example of contentment.

- A. He suffered forfeitures, hardships and persecutions but still developed contentment.
 - 1. Paul no longer prided himself in the type of things in which men usually pride themselves, Philippians 3:4-9.
 - 2. This apostle suffered hardships and severe persecutions for the cause of Christ, to whom he entrusted himself and in whom he found contentment, 2 Corinthians 11:23-28; Acts 16:22-25.
- B. Paul's personal leisure and pleasures were not the focus of his Christian living and Christian service.
 - 1. In whatever state he found himself that afforded him the ability to practice Christianity was satisfactory, Philippians 4:11-13.
 - 2. Jesus Christ counseled His disciples that their priorities should be on spiritual pursuits and the material needs would take care of themselves, Matthew 6:25-34 (33).

III. Alternatives to Contentment.

- A. One's quality of life can become impaired.

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1. We can experience needless anxieties and worries, Matthew 6; Ecclesiastes 4:6.
2. Insatiable appetites for material goods and pleasure bring unhappiness, Ecclesiastes 6:7, 9.
- B. Failure to achieve contentment in this life is displeasing to God.
 1. Covetousness is one of the sins that Jesus said defiles a man, Mark 7:21-23; Romans 13:9.
 2. Our hearts are to be set on things above, not on things on this earth, Colossians 3:2.
 3. Purposing to be rich will ruin one's soul, 1 Timothy 6:9-10.
 - 4. All of the riches in the world and the world itself cannot satisfactorily equal the value of a soul in a right relationship with God, Matthew 16:26.**

Conclusion:

1. The Bible alone holds the key to contentment.
2. Christians are commanded to seek contentment.
3. The pleasures of sin for a season cannot produce contentment.
4. Relying on Jesus Christ and the Word of God can lead us to contentment.
5. The only alternatives to contentment in this life are unhappiness and eternal doom.

Invitation:

1. Genuine contentment begins with godliness and being in Christ, 1 Timothy 6:6-8; Philippians 4:13.
2. The unconverted must become children of God, being born again, John 3:5-7; 1 Peter 3:21-23.
3. The erring child of God cannot be renewed until he returns to his Lord, Hebrews 6:6; Acts 3:19.

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Having Food and Clothing Let Us Therewith Be Content

1 Timothy 6:6-10

Thesis: To emphasize that our material priorities ought to be modest, especially contrasted with our pursuit of godliness.

Song: “Is My Name Written There?”

Introduction:

1. The word in 1 Timothy 6:8 translated “raiment” in the KJV, “covering” in the ASV and “clothing” in the NKJV “means house or lodging, as well as clothing” (Clarke; see also Bauer, Gingrich and Danker).
 - a. “Food, clothing and shelter are the three basic needs of mankind; and all three are included here” (Coffman).
 - b. According to divine inspiration, human contentment ought to manifest itself when one’s needs are met, as opposed to his mere wants and desires that exceed need.
2. First Timothy 6:8 would have Christians to be content with the basic necessities of life, cf. Hebrews 13:5 NKJV.
 - a. Contentment means to “be satisfied” (Bauer, Gingrich and Danker).
 - b. “[I]f we have food and clothes, that should be enough for us” (Louw and Nida).

What we eat and what we wear is all the material good we get out of riches. [What else may be granted should be received with thanksgiving. Still it is not absolutely necessary, and the earnest and devout Christian will be satisfied when his actual needs are supplied.] (Lipscomb and Shepherd)

3. Determining to set as one’s chief goal in life the acquisition of much more than one’s needs invites soul-injuring greed, 1 Timothy 6:9-10.
 - a. The apostle Paul simply restated a principle that Jesus Christ

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already established during His earthly ministry, Matthew 16:26.

- b. The physical blessings in this life over which mankind often frets do not deserve man's acute attention, Matthew 6:25-34.

Body:

I. Paul by inspiration did not write to Timothy: "Having the best or the most food and the most expensive or the most clothing therewith be content."

- A. Can a person have too much food or too much rich food?
 - 1. Everyone must eat to stay alive and healthy, but contentment respecting food ought to correspond to need, Proverbs 30:8-9 ASV.
 - 2. The child of God should control his appetite, especially respecting "delicacies," Proverbs 23:1-3 NKJV.
 - 3. Of course, one is not limited to only the food needed to fuel the body, but contentment ought to derive from food needed for the body rather than whatever is beyond need.
- B. Can a person have too many pairs of shoes or too many clothes?
 - 1. Imelda Marcos, wife of the 10th president of the Philippines, purportedly had about 3,000 pairs of shoes, though she claimed that she really owned 1,060 pairs of shoes ("Imelda").
 - 2. The servant of Elisha coveted changes of clothes and was rewarded with leprosy, 2 Kings 5:21-27.
 - 3. Certainly, especially in an affluent society such as ours, we may have several changes of clothes, but contentment ought to correspond to when our need for clothing has been met, and any more that we have should be counted as an added blessing.

II. Paul by inspiration did not write to Timothy: "Having the most lavish house therewith be content."

- A. Over the years, I have imagined a dream house for my family and me.

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1. Once, I imagined a little white house with a white picket fence edging a green lawn.
 2. For many years, I have admired log homes and think I would like to live in one, especially if it were in a wooded, country setting.
 3. More recently, I have favored a ranch style, one level living due to the pains stairs sometimes cause in my knees.
 4. However, I am embarrassed when I think that I may not have fully appreciated the abundance I enjoy and have enjoyed through the years in blessed America, wherever my family and I have lived.
- B. The American Dream includes home ownership.
1. The Fannie Mae company, responsible for many people achieving the American dream of home ownership, has as its motto: “Our business is the American Dream.”
 2. The American Dream respecting home ownership is icing on the cake, extra and beyond simply having a place to reside.
 3. Jesus Christ once remarked that he did not have a home, Luke 9:58.
- C. Many wealthy people (e.g., sports figures, movie stars, extremely successful business people, etc.) have mansions that tower in grandeur far beyond the richest palaces of the ancient world.
1. For instance, one of the most lavish houses in this country was owned by Bill Gates, billionaire founder of Microsoft.
 2. Whereas the average American home is about 2,000 square feet, the Gates home was 40,000 square feet, took seven years to build and appraises at \$113,000,000 (property tax is \$1,000,000 annually) (Agarwal).
 3. We ought to be content when our need for a place to live is met, and thank God for the added blessing if we have more than that.

III. Paul by inspiration did not write to Timothy: “Having a shiny, new car (or truck) therewith be content.”

- A. There is nothing necessarily wrong with having a car or a truck.

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- B. However, cars and trucks are in a different class than the necessities of life — food, clothes and shelter.
- C. Cars and trucks can serve useful purposes, and we ought to be thankful if we have either.
- D. However, new vehicles or even old vehicles on which we may spend inordinate amounts of time and money have to do with the gravy in life, not the essentials, and ought to be regarded as such.

IV. Paul by inspiration did not write to Timothy: “Having a nice boat therewith be content.”

- A. The only God-authorized and specified boat was Noah’s ark!
- B. Jesus Christ also used boats on occasion at the Sea of Galilee.
- C. Luxury possessions such as boats have to do with the gravy or extras in life, not essentials, and ought to be regarded as such.

V. Paul by inspiration did not write to Timothy: “Having the latest audio, video technology and computer equipment therewith be content.”

- A. Of course, some of the latest techno gadgets can be used in the work of the Lord’s church, e.g. sermon preparation, radio and TV sermons, etc.
- B. Luxury possessions, though, such as the latest audio, video technology and computer equipment have to do with the gravy in life, not essentials, and ought to be regarded as such.

VI. Paul by inspiration did not write to Timothy: “Having the newest gaming station or ATV therewith be content.”

- A. Agreed, toys of all sizes for boys and girls of all ages may contribute to much needed recreation.
- B. Jesus Christ Himself sometimes sought a holiday from the toil of His ministry, John 6:15.
- C. However, recreation of any kind has to do with the gravy of life and ought to be regarded as such.

VII. Of course, one could go on endlessly simply specifying any of a number of things on which even Christians spend an

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inordinate amount of time and money, which may displace seeking spiritual things first in our lives, Matthew 6:33.

Conclusion:

1. Moderate prosperity usually serves the child of God much better than either poverty or riches, Proverbs 30:8-9.
2. Most of the things to which we devote the most attention and money simply do not deserve the investment of time or money we spend on them.
3. We will never have enough when our life's goal is the acquisition of more and more stuff.
4. After we acquire the basic necessities for our families and ourselves, most of our attention needs to be spent respecting spiritual matters, Matthew 6:33.

Invitation:

1. There is a contentment in being saved from one's sins that exceeds any contentment available to an unsaved person.
2. Experience the contentment of salvation by obeying the Gospel of Jesus Christ, Hebrews 5:9; 2 Thessalonians 1:7-9.
3. Erring Christians cannot really find contentment in this life while estranged from our Lord, 1 John 1:9.

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Companionships

1 Corinthians 15:33

Thesis: To consider life's companions and whether they assist us in going to Heaven or hamper us by leading us to Hell.

Song: "The Lily of the Valley"

Introduction:

1. Essentially, there are two highways throughout life, Matthew 7:13-14; Proverbs 2:13.
 - a. These two highways of life are defined by their respective, but drastically different, destinations.
 - b. One of life's highways leads to Heaven on high with God for eternity.
 - c. The other of life's highways leads to an eternity away from God in a place prepared for the devil and his angels.
2. With whom we associate in this life has a lot to do with which of the two highways of life we travel, 1 Corinthians 15:33, "evil companionships" (ASV), "evil company" (NKJV), "bad company" (NIV, RSV, NASV); Proverbs 13:20.
 - a. Along one path in life, the acquaintances and friends we meet and with whom we associate help us arrive at the destination of Heaven.
 - b. However, along one path in life, the acquaintances and friends we meet and with whom we associate lead us to Hell.
3. Each of us needs to evaluate the pathway of life on which we find ourselves and make course corrections as needed, 2 Corinthians 13:5; 6:14-18.
 - a. For instance, do our friends and acquaintances help us arrive at the desired destination of Heaven?
 - b. Or, do our friends and others with whom we normally associate lead us away from God and toward Hell?

Body:

I. Are we on the highway to Heaven?

- A. Heaven is a worthy goal toward which to march all the days

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of our lives.

1. Heaven is where God is, Psalm 11:4; 33:13; Matthew 5:34; 6:9; 10:32-33; Acts 7:49.
 2. Eternal God is in eternal Heaven, Isaiah 57:15.
 3. Heaven is where our Savior, Jesus Christ, resides, Hebrews 8:1.
 4. Eternal Heaven will be as a residence in heavenly mansions, John 14:1-3.
 5. All the miseries and events over which we sorrow will be removed in Heaven, Revelation 21:4.
 6. Heaven is called a “paradise,” 2 Corinthians 12:4.
- B. Having the right kind of friends and acquaintances will help us arrive in Heaven when this life is over.
1. Good men will lead others in paths of righteousness, Proverbs 2:20.
 2. God’s people today need to make friends of those who practice divine doctrine, worship God together and often pray to God, Acts 2:42.
 3. Righteous companions in this life encourage those with whom they interact to perform righteousness, Hebrews 10:24.
 4. We become family members, which is more than simply friends, with Jesus Christ when we do the will of God in our lives, Matthews 12:50.

II. God forbid, but are we on the highway to Hell?

- A. Hell is a horrible, never ending place of pain and torment away from the presence of Almighty God.
1. Hell is something that a reflective and conscientious soul wants to avoid at all cost.
 2. Scripture describes Hell as “the furnace of fire,” Matthew 13:49-50.
 3. Yet, Hell is a place of complete darkness, Matthew 22:13.
 4. Everlasting hell-fire was not prepared initially for mankind but for the devil and his angels, Matthew 25:41.
 5. Hell is a place of everlasting punishment for sins, Mat-

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thev 25:46.

6. The fires of Hell will never be quenched (put out), Luke 3:17.
- B. Having the wrong kind of friends and acquaintances in this life will lead us to a devil's Hell and eternal torment.
 1. Some friends and life's companions lead all they can in paths of wickedness, Proverbs 1:15-16.
 2. There are several kinds of persons who will be barred from spending eternity in Heaven, Galatians 5:19-21; Ephesians 5:5.
 3. Instead, wicked and unrighteous people of all sorts will be assigned to eternal punishment in a devil's Hell, Revelation 21:8.
 4. Friends of false teachers will also perish spiritually and eternally, 2 Peter 2:1-2.
 5. Thankfully, God, through Jesus Christ, has made it possible for all types of sinners to receive forgiveness of their sins and change their highway toward eternity, 1 Corinthians 6:9-11.

Conclusion:

1. Each soul needs to reevaluate his life's journey from time to time to make sure that he or she is safely on the highway to Heaven, 2 Corinthians 13:5.
2. Fortunately, as long as we live, we have the opportunity to make course corrections.

Invitation:

1. There are essentially two course corrections that one can make in one's life: becoming a Christian and an unfaithful Christian repenting of recent sins.
2. There is nothing simpler and nothing more efficient for saving souls than what Jesus declared in Mark 16:16.
3. Likewise, God made it easy for erring Christians to receive forgiveness of sins in their lives as well, Acts 8:22; 1 John 1:9.

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Abortion: Murder of Innocents

Deuteronomy 27:25

Thesis: Abortion equates to murder, the taking of innocent life.

Song: “Jesus Loves the Little Children”

Introduction:

1. Abortion is one of the most highly controversial subjects in our society.
2. Proponents and opponents of abortion exhibit highly charged emotions about it.
3. Abortion is far more than a social, or even a political issue; it is a biblical issue as well.
4. Legalized or not, if abortion is contrary to biblical teaching, it is sinful; and, man must please God rather than himself, Acts 5:29.

Body:

I. Unquestionably, biblically speaking, abortion involves killing innocent life.

- A. Samson and John the Baptist were Nazarites, who through the cooperation of their respective mothers, began observing the Nazarite vows before they were born, Judges 13:3-5; Luke 1:15.
- B. Isaiah records that Jesus had a mission and a name while yet in His mother’s womb, Isaiah 49:1-5.
- C. Job was alive in the womb and lamented he had not died there because of the afflictions in life through which he went, Job 10:18.
- D. The Law of Moses prescribed penalties for the injury or death of an unborn child, Exodus 21:22-25.
- E. Jeremiah was sanctified and ordained a prophet while he was yet in his mother’s womb, Jeremiah 1:5.

II. Unquestionably, even the secular world recognizes that abortion involves taking life.

- A. The State of New York once required a death certificate for each abortion performed in that state.

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- B. Medical authorities and scientists attest life begins at conception: First International Conference on Abortion (1967):

The majority of our group could find no point in time between the union of sperm and egg... and the birth of the infant at which point we could say that this was not a human life. ...The changes occurring between implantation, a six-week embryo, a six months fetus, a one week old child, or a mature adult are merely stages of development and maturation.

- C. The very nature of abortion indirectly affirms it involves taking human life. An unborn child is growing and if allowed to come to term is a replica of his parents; he is not a tumor, a fungus, a parasite or a member of the plant kingdom.
- D. Were an unborn child in any stage of development discovered in outer space on some distant planet, without doubt the entire medical and scientific community would unanimously acclaim the discovery of not only life, but human life; however, in the womb an unborn child is demeaned to unwanted fetal tissue.

III. Aggressive, non-defensive, non-punitive taking of life has always been styled murder in the Bible.

- A. The Bible made provisions for holy wars under Judaism, capital punishment and accidental death whereby such killings were not considered murder by God (e.g., conquering Canaan, stoning of idolaters, cities of refuge)
- B. All other taking of life is condemned in both testaments, Exodus 20:13; Romans 13:9; Matthew 5:21, 22; 19:18; 1 Peter 4:15.
- C. The Old Testament required that a murderer be put to death, Genesis 9:6; Exodus 21:12; Proverbs 28:17.
- D. The New Testament condemns unrepented murderers to eternal doom, 1 John 3:15; Revelation 21:8.

IV. The magnitude of abortion.

- A. Since 1973, far more unborn babies have been killed in America than the total number of U.S. soldiers killed in all the wars combined this country has ever fought.

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- B. The magnitude of abortion, further, is multiplied by the many countries in today's world that also allow abortion.
 - C. Abortion is the cruelest dereliction of parental responsibility and often the solution of choice by fornicators faced with an unwanted and illegitimate pregnancy.
 - D. Truly, abortion is also the most glaring example of people void of "natural affection," Romans 1:28-32 (31).
- V. How should the Christian respond to abortion?**
- A. Acknowledge and teach our children that abortion, though it may be legal, is murder.
 - B. Teach our children about moral purity to refrain from fornication; sex education without moral values is a green light to both fornication and abortion.
 - C. Collectively and individually, let others know of our Bible-based convictions.
 - D. Though individuals may cooperate with others in organized efforts to educate and lobby concerning abortion, civil disobedience is a violation of Scripture, and therefore, sinful, Romans 13:1-7 (unless the specific violation of civil law is necessary to comply with divine law, Acts 5:29).

Conclusion:

1. Abortion is a violation of God's law, and therefore sinful.
2. The sin of abortion is a reproach to our nation, Proverbs 14:34.
3. Abortion represents the loss of natural affection and the general cheapening of human life.
4. Abortion is the forerunner of euthanasia. Who's to say that handicapped persons or others thought unable to live meaningful lives may not fall victim to a disregard for the value of human life?

Invitation:

1. Any sin, including abortion, for which a person will repent will be forgiven by God, 1 Corinthians 6:9-11.
2. First, one must become a child of God or a Christian, Mark 16:16.
3. Erring Christians need to repent and to pray, Acts 8:22; 1 John 1:9.

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Alcohol

Proverbs 20:1

Thesis: To emphasize that sin, though approved by society and allowed by civil law, is no less sin before God, the consequence of which is (spiritual) death, Romans 6:23.

Introduction:

1. Civil government, in general, is ordained of God, Romans 13:1-7.
 - a. However, God does not authorize a particular kind of government (Roman Empire, democracy, etc.).
 - b. Neither does God pre-authorize specific laws of any government.
2. The apostles found it necessary to disregard civil government on occasion when it required of them something unlawful in God's law, Acts 4:18-20; 5:28-29.
 - a. However, they only disregarded civil law to the extent it required them to violate God's law.
 - b. The apostles were still bound by the balance of man's law under which they lived.
3. **When civil government allows, tolerates, legalizes, taxes or sponsors sin, to that extent faithful Christians must resort to the higher law of God over man's law.**
 - a. Governments sometimes legalize sin, but usually do not require participation in the same (e.g., abortion on demand [murder], prostitution, immodesty and even nudity, unscriptural remarriage, gambling, alcohol, etc.).
 - b. Christians must persevere in righteousness in spite of legal permission or even compulsion to commit sin.

Body:

I. Alcohol and civil government.

- A. Liquor was outlawed in the U.S. and its territories between 1919 and 1933.
 1. Rhode Island and Connecticut never ratified the 18th

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(prohibition) Amendment.

2. In 1929, Utah became the 36th state to renounce prohibition.
 3. The 21st Amendment rescinded the 18th Amendment.
 4. Several nations in the early 20th Century also practiced prohibition, later to repeal it.
- B. Alcoholic beverages are legal today and big business for manufacturers, retailers and government.
1. Largely, with the exception of some dry counties and age restrictions, alcohol is legal throughout our nation.
 2. Tax receipts are sizable of liquor's tens of billion of dollars in annual sales.
 3. New York once even required police to act as a free taxi service to drunks.

II. Alcohol and the facts.

- A. Alcohol is the worst abused drug in our nation.
1. Alcohol abuse costs over 100 billion dollars annually.
 2. It costs about five times more to address the abuse of alcohol than the money generated by retail sales of alcoholic beverages.
 3. Business, industry and government spend large amounts of money combating the abuse of alcohol in the work place.
- B. Alcohol is associated with most crime; it is involved in:
1. 70% of all murders,
 2. 41% of assaults,
 3. 50% of rapes,
 4. 60% of sex crimes against children,
 5. 56% of fights and assaults in homes,
 6. 37% of suicides,
 7. 55% of all arrests.
- C. Alcohol is a safety hazard; it is involved in:
1. 66% of fatal accidents,
 2. 53% of fire deaths,
 3. 36% of pedestrian accidents,

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4. 22% of home accidents,
 5. 45% of drownings,
 6. 50% of skiing accidents,
 7. More admissions to mental hospitals than any other cause,
 8. 50% of all traffic accidents (killing 25,000 and seriously injuring 1,000,000 annually)
 9. Is the #1 killer of people 25 and under (the #3 killer in America for all ages).
- D. Alcohol is a medical hazard.
1. Alcohol is poisonous; half of 1% alcohol in the blood usually results in death.
 2. Each alcoholic drink kills brain cells (which the body does not replace); memory loss begins with the last things learned or memorized.
 3. Alcohol also damages the stomach, liver and kidneys.
 4. Only cancer and heart disease claim more lives than alcohol each year.
 5. Alcohol is a depressant drug, which affects the central nervous system.
 6. One drink (of beer, liquor or wine) produces .05% alcohol in the blood and accompanying physical impairments.
 7. Alcohol combined with medication or other drugs can kill.
 8. Alcohol consumption during pregnancy may result in birth defects (including facial abnormalities, heart defects, abnormal limb development and less than average intelligence).
 9. Even in small quantities, alcohol deadens mental activity and slows muscular response and coordination.
 10. Alcohol produces fatigue and lowers physical endurance.

III. Alcohol and society.

- A. Alcoholic beverages are widely used.
1. About 71% of Americans 18 and up use alcohol.
 2. Only 29% abstain from its use.
 3. Most restaurants serve alcohol (including Pizza Hut, Ground Round, Cracker Barrel, etc.).

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4. Where permitted, almost all grocery stores sell alcohol.
 5. Serving alcoholic beverages to guests upon entrance into one's home has become the norm for modern hospitality.
 6. Alcohol accompanies most social and sporting events.
 7. Our leaders and heroes (e.g., politicians, entertainers, athletes and most other public figures) are viewed regularly using alcoholic beverages.
- B. Even some religious leaders condone its use.
1. Billy Graham expressed his approval of alcohol.
 2. Church festivals frequently offer alcoholic beverages.
 3. Military chaplains commonly fellowship over cocktails.
 4. The Roman Catholic Church owns wineries and uses alcohol in its worship service.
- C. Alcoholism is said to be a disease.
1. It is the only disease that is taxed by governments.
 2. It is the only disease that typically leads to auto accidents, divorce, murder, rape, etc.
 3. It is the only disease for which one can be fined for having too much of it.
 4. It is the only disease gladly accepted by its victims.
 5. It is the only disease that employs people for its manufacture.
 6. It is the only disease regulated by government.
 7. It is the only disease allowed or disallowed in a community by popular vote.
 8. It is the only disease bottled and sold.

IV. Alcohol and the Bible.

- A. Conservative religious people have always regarded alcohol as sinful.
1. Some churches oppose the selling of alcoholic beverages close to their buildings.
 2. Some churches distribute literature opposing the pleasurable consumption of alcoholic beverages.
 3. Many elders, preachers and congregations throughout the churches of Christ oppose alcohol on biblical grounds.

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B. The pleasurable consumption of alcohol is condemned in the Old Testament.

1. Priests were forbidden to consume alcohol under penalty of death, Leviticus 10:8-11.
2. Civil leaders were forbidden to drink alcohol lest they pervert judgment, Proverbs 31:4-5.
3. Faithful Jews were not allowed even to look upon wine in its intoxicating state, Proverbs 23:31.
4. Alcohol was reserved for medicinal purposes, Proverbs 31:6.
5. Drunkenness was punishable by death, Deuteronomy 21:20-21.
6. Alcohol impoverishes, Proverbs 23:21.
7. Drinking alcohol demonstrates lack of wisdom, Proverbs 20:1.
8. Faithful Jews were forbidden to be in the company of those drinking alcohol, Proverbs 23:20.
9. Alcohol leads to other immorality, Proverbs 23:29-35.
10. Alcohol is hazardous to health and safety, Proverbs 23:29-35.
11. Alcohol causes God's servants to err, Genesis 9:21-22; Isaiah 28:7.
12. Drinking alcohol was considered a defilement by faithful Jews, Daniel 1:5-8.
13. It was a crime to give alcoholic beverages to another person, Habakkuk 2:15.
14. The Israelites were forbidden to drink alcohol in order to always know God and practice his law, Deuteronomy 29:6.
15. Alcohol is associated with violence, Proverbs 4:17.
16. Total abstinence from alcohol was praised by God, Jeremiah 35:2-19.

C. The pleasurable consumption of alcohol is condemned in the New Testament.

1. Whereas Old Testament priests were forbidden to drink alcohol, Christians are priests (1 Peter 2:5, 9) in the perfect tabernacle (the church, Hebrews 9:11; 8:2) all the time.

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2. Drinking alcohol is expressly forbidden, Ephesians 5:18.
3. Drunkenness is a sin explicitly cited as keeping people from Heaven, 1 Corinthians 6:9-11; Galatians 5:19-21.
4. Drinking alcohol is drinking with the devil, 1 Corinthians 10:21.
5. Drinking alcohol is a work of the flesh, warring against the spirit of man, Galatians 5:19-21.
6. Christians are exhorted to be sober, 1 Thessalonians 5:6, 8; 1 Timothy 3:2-3, 8; 1 Peter 1:13; 4:7; 5:8.
7. Aged women are cautioned against use of alcohol, Titus 2:3.
8. Alcohol was restricted to medicinal use, 1 Timothy 5:23.
9. Leaders of the church are especially forbidden the use of alcohol, 1 Timothy 3:2-3, 8.
10. Christians are exhorted to avoid every type of evil, 1 Thessalonians 5:22.
11. It is sinful to harm the body, which alcohol does, 1 Corinthians 3:16-17; 6:19-20.
12. Drinking alcohol is sinful and associated with other sins, Romans 13:13.

V. Objections to the condemnation of alcohol.

- A. Jesus turned water into wine at a marriage feast, John 2:1-11.
 1. The Greek word from which wine is translated in John 2 can mean the grape vine, the grape, grape juice, grape juice concentrate, grape juice mixed with other flavors or alcoholic wine and can only be defined by the context in which it appears (*oinos*).
 2. Jesus lived under the Old Testament, which prohibited drinking alcohol.
 3. If Jesus, then, made alcoholic wine, He sinned, and could not be the perfect sacrifice.
 4. If Jesus sinned, we all are hopelessly lost in sin, having no hope whatsoever of going to Heaven.
- B. The Bible condemns drunkenness, not drinking alcohol.
 1. This is a faulty distinction between drinking and drunken-

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- ness, which the Bible does not make.
2. Medically, drunkenness is only a matter of degrees; one drink alone kills brain cells and deposits alcohol in the blood stream; additional drinks only increase the concentration of alcohol in the blood.
 3. The word, drunk, even by English definition is “having the faculties impaired by alcohol”; drunkenness is only a matter of degrees.
 4. Included in commands against alcohol in God’s former law is warning not to even look upon alcohol, Proverbs 23:31.
 5. The Gospel commands soberness (*nepho*), which by Greek definition “signifies to be free from the influence of intoxicants,” 1 Thessalonians 5:6, 8; 2 Timothy 4:5; 1 Peter 1:13; 4:7; 5:8.
- C. Paul told Timothy to drink wine for his stomach, 1 Timothy 5:23.
1. It is not conclusive that the word wine refers to alcohol.
 2. Even if wine here is alcoholic, the medicinal purpose taught in this verse falls far short of allowing the consumption of alcohol as a beverage.
- D. While elders are not allowed any alcohol, deacons are permitted some alcohol, 1 Timothy 3:3, 8.
1. The Greek words translated wine here are “*paroinon*” and “*prosecho*,” which both mean “to be addicted to.”
 2. Both passages equally condemn a disposition which is attributed to drinking alcohol.
 3. Compare the inclusion of the word much in verse 8 to these passages, Ecclesiastes 7:17; 1 Peter 4:4.
- E. Ancient peoples did not know how to preserve grape juice and therefore drank alcoholic wine.
1. Ancient peoples often preferred pure grape juice to fermented grape juice.
 2. In order to preserve grape juice, they boiled it, leaving too much sugar to ferment;

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3. Or, they employed filtration, getting rid of the yeast;
 4. Or, they used subsidence to allow the yeast to settle on the bottom before skimming the juice from the top;
 5. Or, they used fumigation, adding sulfur to absorb the oxygen.
- F. The word wine is used in several instances in the Bible where its use by the children of God is not condemned.
1. The word wine is represented in the Bible by ten Hebrew and three Greek words.
 2. Sometimes wine means first-fruits which are ripe first, Numbers 18:12-13.
 3. It can mean the cluster of grapes, Isaiah 65:8.
 4. Wine can refer to raisins, Hosea 3:1, ASV.
 5. Sometimes wine equals the winepress, Nehemiah 13:15.
 6. Wine can be the pure juice of the grape, Proverbs 3:10.
 7. It can refer to alcoholic wine as well, Genesis 9:21.
 - 8. The context is the overriding factor determining the definition of both Greek and English words for wine.**
- G. The apostles in Acts 2, and Jesus in Luke 7:34, were respectively accused of being drunken and a winebibber; both accusations suggest Jews drank alcohol.
1. The Jews were mocking the apostles; the verses do not conclusively argue for either alcoholic or non-alcoholic wine in view of the mocking; in any event the charge was not true.
 2. Whether any Jews were in the habit of drinking alcoholic wine does not affect whether God approved of it.
 3. In the context of Luke 7:34 (29-35), Jesus was also accused of being a glutton; other times he was said to be demon-possessed, (Mark 3:22), called crazy (Mark 3:21; John 7:20) and called a Samaritan (John 8:48).
 4. Under Judaism during which time Jesus lived, gluttons and winebibbers were sentenced to death, Deuteronomy 21:20-21.
 5. Are the enemies of Jesus credible to be believed?
 6. Neither the Christ nor the apostles admitted to the con-

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sumption of alcohol or gave others permission to drink it.

- H. Jesus used an illustration in a parable about wine and new and old bottles (skins), which shows the Jews customarily drank alcoholic wine, Luke 5:37-39.
1. On the contrary, new skins were used to keep the grape juice from fermenting.
 2. Emptied old skins would develop yeast, which if transmitted to a new batch of grape juice would ferment, and the skins would expand and burst.
 3. Further, the preference for older wine in verse 39 does not prove it was alcoholic; something aged is not necessarily fermented.

Conclusion:

1. Drunkenness has always been sinful.
2. No law of man can override God's law on any topic, including alcohol.
3. Various national, state and local governments have found cause against alcohol to legislate against it.
4. Alcohol is a dangerous drug.
5. Alcohol costs more than it earns in tax dollars.
6. Alcohol is frequently associated with crime.
7. Alcohol is a safety hazard.
8. Alcohol is poisonous and otherwise harmful to one's health.
9. The use of alcohol is deeply ingrained into nearly every aspect of society.
10. Alcohol is the most unlikely and peculiar disease.
11. As if man didn't know it was bad for him, God denounces the consumption of alcohol as sinful.
12. No defense can be made for alcoholic beverages.
13. Christians must not consume any alcoholic beverages.
14. Christians and the church must oppose this evil to whatever extent possible, Ephesians 5:11; James 4:7.
15. Alcohol destroys internally, externally and eternally!

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Invitation:

1. We must listen exclusively to the law of God on all subjects addressed by God in the Bible; further, we must obey, Hebrews 5:8-9.
2. Repentance precedes forgiveness for both sinner and saint, Luke 13:3; Acts 8:22.
3. Non-Christians must accompany their penitence also with belief, confessing Christ and baptism, Romans 10:17; Romans 10:9-10; Acts 22:16.
4. Erring Christians express their penitence through prayer, 1 John 1:9.

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The Sin of Sodom

Romans 1:26-32

Thesis: To discern God’s evaluation of homosexuality.

Introduction:

1. The subject of our lesson today is a delicate matter.
 - a. However, it is a subject that is paraded openly before our families in schools, on TV, by famous people, in politics and even by religious leaders.
 - b. Therefore, the subject of our lesson today is one that we must also address.
2. Our topic today is something about which God speaks in the Bible — in both testaments.
 - a. However, God views this conduct as sinful and further belonging to a sub-category of what God considers an **abomination**.
 - b. Therefore, it is important for us to examine what God says about this topic.
3. The subject of our sermon is something that cannot be ignored, because:
 - a. It adversely affects both our nation and our society, and often results in death.
 - b. It is something that leads to **spiritual death**, too.
 - c. It is something that already has infected religion, including members of the churches of Christ.
 - d. It affects men, women and children of all ages.
 - e. This subject **must** be examined.
4. For a few moments, I direct your attention to the “Sin of Sodom” which is introduced in Genesis 19.
 - a. I will try to present this material tactfully in consideration of the children present and our sensitivities.
 - b. However, any children not old enough to understand simply won’t comprehend our discussion.
 - c. Further, any children able to comprehend the presentation **need to hear this**, too.

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Body:

I. What does the Bible say about the sin of Sodom?

- A. What does the Old Testament say about the “Sin of Sodom”?
 1. The “Sin of Sodom” is introduced in Genesis 19:1-29.
 - a. Genesis 13:13 identifies the men of Sodom as exceedingly wicked sinners.
 - b. Genesis 18:20 says the sin of Sodom is “very grievous.”
 - c. Genesis 18:23 portrays the inhabitants of Sodom as “wicked.”
 - d. Genesis 18:24-33 shows that God could not find even 10 righteous souls in Sodom.
 - e. Genesis 19:5 (NKJV) identifies the specific sin by which the city of Sodom defiled itself.
 - f. This is the sin commonly known to us as homosexuality or sodomy.
 - g. So, under Patriarchy, God’s first system of religion given to mankind, God condemned homosexuality.
 2. Next, under Judaism, God also condemned homosexuality.
 - a. Leviticus 18:22 reads, “Thou shalt not lie with mankind, as with womankind: it is abomination.”
 - b. Leviticus 20:13 records, “If a man also lie with mankind, as he lieth with a woman, both of them have committed an abomination: they shall surely be put to death; their blood shall be upon them.”
 - c. Though God specifically stated that this sin should not be practiced by men or women, especially in Israel, Deuteronomy 23:17, this is one of the sins that Israel learned from the nations around them, 1 Kings 14:24; 15:12; 22:46; 2 Kings 23:7.
- B. What does the New Testament say about the “Sin of Sodom”?
 1. The Gospel refers back to the “Sin of Sodom” of Genesis 19.
 - a. Luke 17:29 reads, “But the same day that Lot went out of Sodom it rained fire and brimstone from heaven, and destroyed them all.”
 - b. Second Peter 2:6 says, “And turning the cities of Sodom

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and Gomorrha into ashes condemned them with an overthrow, making them an ensample unto those that after should live ungodly.”

- c. Jude 7 records, “Even as Sodom and Gomorrha, and the cities about them in like manner, giving themselves over to fornication, and going after strange flesh, are set for an example, suffering the vengeance of eternal fire.”
2. The sin of homosexuality is condemned elsewhere in the New Testament as well.
 - a. Romans 1:26-32 (26-27).
 - b. First Corinthians 6:9-11 is a catalog of sins that includes “effeminate” and “abusers of themselves with mankind” or “homosexuals” and “sodomites” (NKJV).
 - c. First Timothy 1:9-11 is a catalog of sins that includes “them that defile themselves with mankind” or “sodomites” (NKJV).
3. The sin of homosexuality is one form of fornication.
 - a. “Fornication” may involve conduct man to man, man to woman, woman to woman or humans to animals.
 - b. “Fornication,” regardless of its specific form, is condemned throughout the New Testament, Matthew 5:32; 19:9; 1 Corinthians 5:9; Galatians 5:19-21.

II. How does the “Sin of Sodom” affect us today?

- A. Homosexuals have come out of the proverbial “closet” and people with moral values are being **forced** into the “closet.”
 1. The homosexual movement is militant and aggressive.
 2. Homosexuals are a major force behind the attempt to place compulsory sex education in every public school in America. Proposals include the teaching of homosexuality and other perversions to children from five years old and up.
 3. In 1985, a homosexual school was established in New York City, funded by \$50,000 annually from public taxes.
 4. Mayors of major U.S. cities have declared “gay pride” weeks during which homosexuals and lesbians march in “gay pride” parades.

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5. In 1991, the governor of New York ordered military recruiters barred from the State University because the military did not accept homosexuals.
 6. Homosexuals are demanding child custody rights.
 7. Laws (including the revision of the 1964 Civil Rights Act) would grant non-discrimination to homosexuals in every facet of American life (housing, employment, teachers, foster parents, adoption rights, marriage).
 8. The FCC forbids programming that speaks against homosexuality and requires that any group doing so pay for air time for homosexuals to present their message.
 9. Homosexual prisoners successfully petitioned New York City for their own prison wing.
 10. Homosexual rights groups have obtained tax exempt status.
 11. Marital status is being granted to homosexuals (domestic partnership may legally replace marriage).
 12. There are at least 336 homosexual religious congregations in 47 states besides homosexual membership in traditional churches (including the churches of Christ).
 13. Several hundred children's pornographic books circulate in America.
 14. There are an estimated 30,000 children used by homosexuals in the Los Angeles area alone.
- B. The American family is regularly bombarded with the homosexual message.
1. Homosexuality is the frequent topic of TV programming and is generally presented in a favorable light by the media.
 2. Even "Dear Abby" and "Ann Landers" have written to support homosexuality.
 3. Homosexual groups are courted by at least one political party.
 4. Even companies are publicly declaring themselves friends or opponents of homosexuality (Disney for; Cracker Barrel against).
 5. So-called "gay" children's books are appearing in libraries.
 6. The American public is being told that homosexuality is

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the result of one's genetic make-up and that God made homosexuals.

- C. About half of the states have laws against both homosexual and heterosexual sodomy.
 - 1. In the past, the U.S. Supreme Court has not interfered with those laws. The Supreme Court, of course, has demonstrated repeatedly that it cannot be trusted with the moral welfare of America.
 - 2. Non-enforcement of laws prohibiting homosexuality and the militant homosexual movement make those laws ineffective.
 - 3. Lower courts are overturning voter-approved laws that restrict rights of homosexuals.
 - 4. If homosexuals achieve their goals, America will become a homosexual nation while heterosexuals and dissenting groups (churches) will be outlawed.
- D. How many homosexuals are there in America?
 - 1. Unscientific studies and militant homosexuals claim they number 10% of the American population.
 - 2. A 1994 University of Chicago poll using modern polling methods discovered that less than 3% of Americans are homosexual.

Conclusion:

- 1. What did God intend?
 - a. God designed marriage to include one man for one woman for life, Matthew 19:4-5.
 - b. Homosexuality is condemned by God (lesbianism and sodomy included).
- 2. How does one become a homosexual?
 - a. One commits this sin the same way any other sin is committed.
 - b. Matthew 15:19 reads, "For out of the heart proceed evil thoughts, murders, adulteries, fornications, thefts, false witness, blasphemies."
 - c. James 1:14-15 says, "But every man is tempted, when he is drawn away of his own lust, and enticed. Then when lust

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hath conceived, it bringeth forth sin: and sin, when it is finished, bringeth forth death.”

- d. This does not deny that outside influences may contribute to the temptation of this sin, but sin can be resisted. James 4:7, “Submit yourselves therefore to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you.”
 - e. First Corinthians 10:13 records, “There hath no temptation taken you but such as is common to man: but God is faithful, who will not suffer you to be tempted above that ye are able; but will with the temptation also make a way to escape, that ye may be able to bear it.”
3. Is there any hope for a homosexual?
 - a. Yes, some of the Corinthians were formerly guilty of this sin, but they repented (changed), 1 Corinthians 6:10-11.
 - b. There is no sin, which if we will repent of it, that God will not forgive us, 1 John 1:5-10.
 - c. Happily, God also **forgets** the sins that He forgives, Hebrews 8:12; 10:17.
 4. There is a militant homosexual movement in our country today.
 - a. Christians must learn what God says about homosexuality and guide their families in God’s Word.
 - b. Christians and other moral persons must actively resist the encroachments of the homosexual movement in our nation (by giving special attention to voting, school boards, libraries).
 - c. Our nation and the free practice of Christianity are at risk!

Invitation:

1. God will forgive even abominations for which a person repents, 1 Corinthians 6:9-11.
2. The first thing necessary for forgiveness of any sin is to become a child of God — a Christian, Mark 16:16.
3. Upon repentance, Christians also can be forgiven of their sins when they repent, Acts 8:22; 1 John 1:9.

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Calling Evil Good and Calling Good Evil

Isaiah 5:20

Thesis: To properly distinguish between righteousness and unrighteousness, despite the confused or reversal of definitions alleged by an ungodly world.

Song: “Yield Not to Temptation”

Introduction:

1. It hardly seems imaginable, but the people of God in the days of the prophet Isaiah — the nation of Judah — had become so religiously and morally corrupted that they actually had inverted God’s value system, which He had given them by divine revelation.
 - a. The *New Bible Dictionary* paraphrases Isaiah 5:20, “Woe, then, to those who invert the divine scale of values, giving the name of good to what God calls evil, and vice versa (Is. 5:20).”
 - b. *Wycliffe* describes those of Isaiah 5:20 as “[g]uilty of reversing the standards of morality.”
 - c. We can illustrate the magnitude and nonsense of this degree of tampering with God’s value system by imagining the absurdity of someone calling white black and calling black white.
 - d. Or, to demonstrate what it means to invert something and how useless to invert something can be, imagine someone turning a glass filled with water upside down.
2. When we look around us today, we see that non-Christians likewise have inverted God’s value system in what once was often referred to as a Christian nation.
 - a. Society today is a far cry from the days depicted by *Little House on the Prairie* or *The Waltons*.
 - b. Throughout our nation and the world, essentially we live amidst a moral cesspool of ungodliness and sin.
3. Worse yet, often Christians themselves evidence that they, too, have inverted God’s value system just like their counterparts to whom the prophet Isaiah wrote in Isaiah 5:20.
 - a. **Often, Christians engage in so many of the same vices as**

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the ungodly world around us that the world cannot distinguish between themselves and a member of the church.

- b. Some Christians, like their worldly counterparts, dress (or undress) like the world, take drugs, drink alcohol, curse, lie, steal, commit gross immoralities, view pornography, et al.
- c. **There is no real difference between sinners and Christians when they commit the same sins, Romans 2:1-3.**

Body:

I. Contemporary society has blurred the distinction between right and wrong.

- A. Society disputes God's right to decide what is sinful and what is not sinful.
 - 1. Albert Barnes said of Isaiah's contemporaries, and we could say of our contemporaries, Isaiah 5:20 is a "...general reference to those who confound all the distinctions of right and wrong, and who prefer the wrong."
 - 2. What the writer of Hebrews calls "the pleasures of sin for a season" are allowed to override what God says in His inspired Word, Hebrews 11:25.

Sin Is Delusional. Often, someone will say he does not see anything wrong with gambling, dancing, premarital sex, or some unauthorized act in worship. Such an individual is absolutely right. He does not see anything wrong. Sin has blinded him (2 Corinthians 4:4). ...Jeremiah penned, "Were they ashamed when they had committed abomination? Nay, they were not at all ashamed, neither could they blush" (Jer. 6:15). How sad when individuals cannot distinguish between right and wrong, good and evil. Such a person is delusional. In fact, when the prodigal determined to repent and go home to his father, the text declares, "And when he came to himself" (Luke 15:17). Sin will not allow the sinner to be rational or to be reasonable. (Grider 304)

- B. Ungodly people are not content with practicing ungodliness themselves.

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1. They harass godly people for their godliness, calling good people for the good they exhibit in their lives bad people, e.g. homophobic, Genesis 19; 1 Corinthians 6:9 NKJV.
2. “In justifying that which is evil, the wicked also condemn that which is righteous and good” (Jones 345), but God has ruled already on justifying wickedness and condemning righteousness, Proverbs 17:15; Malachi 2:17.
3. They praise ungodliness and encourage other people to engage in the same ungodliness, Romans 1:32.
4. Matthew Henry described those of Isaiah’s day and our contemporaries as those:

Who confound and overthrow the distinctions between moral good and evil, who call evil good and moral evil (v. 20), who not only live in the omission of that which is good, but condemn it, argue against it, and, because they will not practise it themselves, run it down in others... not only do that which is evil, but justify it, and applaud it, and recommend it to others as safe and good.

II. Contemporary society has replaced a divine standard of values for personalized subjectivism.

- A. First, God is dethroned, so that His system of righteousness is deemed inapplicable and of no consequence.
 1. Some cried out in the 1970’s that “God is dead!” thinking that by adopting such a philosophy they could liberate themselves from the necessity of complying with the Word of God in their lives, encouraging the rise of the so-called sexual revolution.
 2. Others — atheists — have persuaded themselves that there is no God to whose rules they must conform so that every deed in life is right or wrong solely in the eyes of the beholder with no moral consequence in this life or in eternity.

Where there is no faith in God there are no clear-cut moral distinctions — no clear conception of what is right and wrong. There can only be moral relativism — a thing

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is right because we want it to be... moral anarchy. ... **If there is no God everything is permissible.** (Butler 121 emphasis added)

- B. After rejecting God and His value system, mankind substitutes his own value system.
 - 1. Like the Jews of Isaiah's day or the contemporaries of the apostle Paul in the first century, misguided persons may even claim to be abiding by God's Word while supplanting it with their own system, Romans 10:1-3.
 - 2. Mankind is famous (infamous, really) for valuing his own devices over God's divinely revealed will, Proverbs 14:12; 16:25.
 - 3. Mere human wisdom is always at odds with the divine wisdom of God, Isaiah 5:21; Proverbs 3:7; 1 Corinthians 1:18-21.
 - 4. Denominationalism today is a prime example of man attempting to do things religiously and morally his own way instead of abiding by the Word of God, Matthew 15:9; Luke 6:46.

III. Contemporary society has completely realigned God's value system by redefining or re-labeling the designations for sin.

- A. In the new dictionary of biblical words that mankind substitutes for what the Bible decrees, there are no sins!
 - 1. James Burton Coffman writes in his commentary: "Calling sins by names that appear to approve of them is an old satanic trick. Thus the infidel is called a free thinker; the drunkard is called sociable; the alcoholic suffers from alcoholism; the stingy is called thrifty, etc."
 - 2. We might add that fornication is sanitized by referring to it as it consensual or calling it a trial marriage if more than one night stands; homosexuality is styled an alternate lifestyle; adulterers and adulteresses are swingers; taking illicit drugs is referred to as recreational; the murder of abortion is upgraded to being pro-choice; alcoholism is

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relegated to the category of disease; etc.

- B. Our nation can no longer be rightfully referred to as a Christian nation!
 - 1. “Sadly, under Satan’s influence, our nation daily moves closer to societal and governmental approval of that which God plainly and powerfully condemns (cf. Isaiah 5:20)” (Liddell 768).
 - 2. Our nation is quickly expunging all public references to God, and then media, political leaders and the citizens of our nation have the audacity to express amazement at the widening disregard for law in general and the increasing frequency of horrible crimes throughout the country.
 - 3. Almighty God will not suffer this nation to continue in greatness in so many ways if it and its citizens turn away from Him!

IV. God’s people have the responsibility to correctly recognize God’s standard of righteousness and act accordingly.

- A. We must hate the things that God hates and love the things that God loves, Amos 5:15; Romans 12:9.
 - 1. We must not gamble instead of nurturing the work ethic, Ephesians 4:28; 1 Thessalonians 4:11-12.
 - 2. We must not lie, covet things that do not belong to us, steal, commit sexual immoralities, dabble with the occult, cause division, envy, murder, etc., 1 Corinthians 6:9-10; Galatians 5:19-21; Revelation 21:8.
 - 3. We must think pure things, Philippians 4:8.
 - 4. We must add to our lives Christian virtues, 2 Peter 1:5-8.
- B. We must actively resist sin in the world around us, Ephesians 5:11.
 - 1. We cannot either do in our lives the things God hates or have pleasure in the things God hates when done by others, Romans 1:32.
 - 2. “Though Satan minimizes sin and the world calls evil good, we must rebuke sin (Isaiah 5:20; I Tim. 5:20;

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II Tim. 4:2; Tit. 1:13)” (Liddell 778).

3. Resist the introduction of gambling into a community where it may not be already.
4. Resist the expansion of bars, liquor licenses and bawdy clubs in our communities.
5. Resist the moral travesties of abortion, so-called homosexual rights, etc. at the polling places and informationally in lawful disseminations of facts.

Conclusion:

1. God has already decided what is good or righteous and what is bad or unrighteous (sinful), but man is ever up to his old tricks of attempting to devise his own standard of righteousness, Romans 10:1-3.
2. When through such subjectivism every person is left to determine for himself or herself what is right and what is wrong, God and His Word are certainly disregarded and humanity descends into anarchy and chaos, Judges 17:6; 21:25.
3. **Mankind is the big loser when he purports to upend God’s value system, as though somehow God were obligated to accept man’s counterproposal to God’s dictates.**

God has spoken regarding living godly, righteous lives. God has determined what is “right” and what is “wrong,” and man does not have the right to alter God’s plan to meet his whim or preference. Man may call evil good (Isaiah 5:20), but it is still evil and damning in the sight of Almighty God. (Sain 64)

Invitation:

1. God will no more honor a manmade plan of salvation than He will accept counterproposals respecting worship or godly living.
2. The simplest expression of what God requires of mankind for initial salvation was expressed by Jesus Himself, Mark 16:16.
3. Fortunately, God also had recorded in the New Testament His plan for the subsequent salvation of Christians when they sin,

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Acts 8:22; 1 John 1:9.

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Modesty

1 Timothy 2:9-10; 1 Peter 3:1-5

Thesis: To make a biblical investigation of the subject of modesty and make the appropriate application to Christians today.

Introduction:

1. The New Testament teaches about “modesty.”
2. Further, the New Testament is authoritative, which authority has not diminished with the passing of the centuries.
3. What the New Testament says regarding “modesty” is binding upon Christians today.
4. What the New Testament teaches about “modesty” is truth, which if violated constitutes sin.

Body:

I. Definition of modesty.

- A. The English word “modesty” appears only once in the KJV, 1 Timothy 2:9.
 1. “Modesty” is from the Greek “*kosmios*.”
 2. It means, orderly, well-arranged, decent, modest, harmonious arrangement, adornment.
 3. “*Kosmois*” appears in the Septuagint, Ecclesiastes 12:9, and is translated “set in order” and is applied to Solomon’s proverbs.
 4. “*Kosmios*” is derived from “*kosmos*,” which means, order, regular disposition, ornament, decoration, embellishment, adorning, 1 Peter 3:3, and is used, among other ways, of the planet on which we live, Matthew 13:35; Mark 16:15.
- B. “*Modesty*” can apply to one’s manner of dress.
 1. The context of 1 Timothy 2: 9-10 affects gaudy dress.
 2. Also, the word for “apparel” is from the Greek “*katastole*,” which means, letting down, and is used in the Septuagint in Isaiah 61:3 as “garment” for the Hebrew meaning “covering” or “wrapping.”

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C. “Modesty” is also biblically applied to one’s demeanor or behavior.

1. “*Kosmois*” appears in the qualifications of elders as “good behavior,” 1 Timothy 3:2.
2. The apostle Peter also taught “modesty” and addressed both what one may wear and an internal modesty, 1 Peter 3:1-5.
3. The Greek for “adorning” (vs. 3) is “*kosmos*.”

D. The summary definition of “modesty” involves both one’s manner of dress and inward qualities.

1. The well ordering is not of dress and behavior only, but also of one’s inner life, which exhibits itself outwardly, too.
- 2. Biblical “modesty” is something that starts on the inside and works its way to the outside of a person.**

II. Modesty in context.

A. Brief exposition of 1 Timothy 2:9-10.

1. The context of 1 Timothy 2:8-11 relates first to the public worship.
2. Especially in the public worship, women are cautioned to be careful lest their outward adornment pose a distraction both to themselves and to others.
3. “Shamefacedness” is the natural, internal moral quality of blushing when sin is viewed as repulsive.
4. “Sobriety” is soundness or soberness of mind, resulting in self-restraint.
5. “Not with broided hair, or gold, or pearls, or costly array” refers to the gaudy show in which women braided their hair with strands of gold and silver, as well as layered themselves with jewels, which glistened in the sunlight, Isaiah 3:16-23.
6. “But which becometh women professing godliness with good works” is contrasted with a mere outward display; the inner display is more precious before God and more representative of Christian womanhood.
7. The prohibition is on the extreme and otherwise addresses

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the priority of adornment, extolling praise on inward over outward adornment.

B. Brief exposition of 1 Peter 3:1-5.

1. From the first verse of this context, one's behavior rather than anything else, such as physical adornment, is commended.
2. Verses one and two champion chaste or holy behavior as the means for a Christian wife to influence a husband whose wife's words are ineffective toward him.
3. The Christian woman does not rely on lavish outward adornment to secure and keep the attentions of a man; the references to adorning here are the same as those of 1 Timothy 2:9.
4. Comparatively speaking, the inward spiritual adornment is more precious to God and more effective for Christians than outward physical adorning.
5. The apostle Peter teaches a disposition that was also practiced by godly women, such as Sarah, verses 5-6.
6. Peter did not prohibit wearing jewelry, cosmetics or clothes; he did prohibit extreme adornment or adornment that overshadowed (displaced) a holy and reverential behavior.
7. Both Paul and Peter urge holiness that is to be exhibited, not hindered, outwardly.

III. Is modesty a variable?

- A. There is a sense in which "modesty" is not variable.
 1. God's Word does not change.
 2. There are no special circumstances either then or now that can mitigate or set aside this teaching.
 3. **It will never be right for one's dress or degree of undress to overshadow and displace a Christian's holy behavior.**
 4. God is concerned about Christian "modesty" (of men and women) in and out of the worship assembly.
 5. Men and women should be modestly attired (inwardly and outwardly) in public.
- B. There is a sense in which "modesty" is variable.
 1. "Modesty" in public worship is equivalent to what consti-

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tutes “modesty” in any public setting.

2. However, what is biblically “modest” in public differs from what is biblically “modest” in the private setting of a married couple’s bedroom, etc.
3. The modern day problem over “modesty” is not primarily the putting on of apparel but the taking off apparel or clothes.
4. People, and unfortunately Christians too, have taken modesty confined to private settings and moved it to public display.
5. This is sinful, for it discounts biblical modesty, numbs the senses of morality (shamefacedness, etc.), displaces holy behavior and influence, as well as promotes lust.

IV. The topic of modesty is also affected by the topic of lust.

- A. The attire of a harlot has always aroused the baser nature of men.
 1. The “attire of a harlot” is discernible and has a calculated result, Proverbs 7:10.
 2. Is it reasonable to suppose the dress or lack thereof that if worn by a harlot encourages men to lust will lead to less lust if worn by a Christian woman?
 - 3. Christian women wearing the attire of harlots produces the same affect as harlots wearing the same clothes.**
- B. Watching a woman bathe has been known to arouse unlawful lusts in a man.
 1. King David saw Bathsheba washing, lusted after her, committed adultery with her, fathered a child, murdered her husband and brought much misery upon himself and the nation, 2 Samuel 11:2-5.
 2. Is it advisable for women, especially those professing godliness, to bathe in the presence of men, whether it be sunbathing, swimming, etc.?
- C. “Lust” is a sin, which especially men are cautioned in Scripture to avoid; is it any more praiseworthy for women to dress provocatively and excite lust?
 1. “Lust” is viewed by our Lord as “adultery” only not yet enacted, Matthew 5:28.

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2. “Lust” is a sin for which souls will be lost, Titus 2:12; Romans 6:23; James 1:14-15; 1 Peter 2:11.

V. An unambiguous and concise application of biblical modesty.

- A. It is improper and sinful for Christians to dress immodestly in the worship assembly.
 1. The greater context of 1 Timothy 2:9-10 addresses the public worship.
 2. Mini-skirts, backless dresses, high-slit skirts and low-cut dresses have no place in public worship.
 3. Especially women should be careful to wear appropriate undergarments that contribute to modesty.
- B. It is improper and sinful for Christians to dress immodestly in any public setting.
 1. **Public immodesty displaces positive Christian influence and promotes lust, and is, therefore, sinful.**
 2. Added to the former list, short-shorts, halter or tube tops, sheer blouses, contemporary swimsuits, tank tops and other revealing or provocative clothing should not be worn publicly by Christians.
 3. The beach or a swimming pool does not lessen the need for Christians to dress modestly.
- C. At home, the modesty of one’s dress varies.
 1. What may be biblically modest in the inner chambers of one’s home is biblically immodest in the public areas of the house while entertaining guests or out in the yard.
 2. Further, what may be modest between husband and wife can be immodest in front of the children.
 3. What may be modest family dress is immodest when exhibited to others (e.g., night-clothes).
- D. Persistence in immodesty has serious ramifications.
 1. Immodesty in the face of biblical instruction demonstrates willful lack of subjection to God and one’s father or husband.
 2. Immodesty is not a usual and orderly arrangement of clothing.

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3. Immodesty overshadows and displaces “shamefacedness and sobriety,” “professing godliness” and “good works.”
4. Immodesty makes impossible the influence of another with the Gospel “without a word,” 1 Peter 3:1-5.
5. Immodesty is sinful, leads to additional sins and corrupts others.

Conclusion:

1. The topic of “modesty” is taught in the New Testament and is binding today.
2. **Modesty is an orderly arrangement of clothes that does not hide the inner or spiritual side of man.**
3. Immodesty leads to lust and other sins.
4. Faithful and knowledgeable Christians do not wear revealing clothing in public.
5. **Persistent immodesty is evidence of rebellion toward God, His Word, the church, fathers and husbands.**
6. **Immodesty ruins the Christian influence and impairs the effectiveness of the Gospel.**

Invitation:

1. God calls on mankind to conform to his Word rather than conform to the world, Romans 12:1-2.
2. Initial conformity to God’s Word results in Gospel obedience and forgiveness of sins, Acts 2:38; Hebrews 5:8-9.
3. Faithful children of God will continue to obey the Gospel, 1 Corinthians 15:58; 2 Corinthians 13:5; Revelation 2:10.

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Theft by Consent

Ephesians 4:28

Thesis: To emphasize that sin, though approved by society and allowed by the government or civil law, is no less sinful in the eyes of God, for which there are the same consequences as for any other sin in which one willfully engages.

Introduction:

1. It is obvious from the New Testament that civil government is ordained by God and that God requires mankind to submit to civil government, Romans 13:1-7; 1 Peter 2:11-17.
2. The apostles, however, disregarded civil law when and only when it contradicted the higher law of God, Acts 4:18-20; 5:28-29.
 - a. When civil government allows, tolerates, legalizes, taxes or sponsors sinful activity, to that extent and to that extent only the child of God must disregard civil law and appeal to the higher law of God.
 - b. It is possible to be legally correct in one's activities while at the same time to be spiritually lost.
3. Examples in contemporary America where our government legally protects, taxes, sponsors or promotes biblically sinful activities include:
 - a. Abortion, homosexuality, fornication, gambling, divorce and remarriage not because of adultery, alcoholic consumption, etc.
 - b. In this lesson, we will confine ourselves to contrasting biblical principles with gambling.

Body:

I. Just what is gambling, and what is not gambling?

- A. Gambling involves betting some of one's material wealth on an unknown, future result.
 1. A dictionary definition for the verb "gamble" is: "1a: to play a game for money or property; b: to bet on an uncer-

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- tain outcome. 2...take a chance” (*Merriam*).
2. The corresponding definition for the noun “gamble” is: “2: the playing of a game of chance for stakes.”
 3. One Gospel preacher observes: “Artificial risks are created in order to take from the many so as to benefit the few who are ‘lucky’ enough to get it” (Gulledge).
- B. One could and people often gamble on virtually every conceivable circumstance where the future result cannot be known with certainty.
1. Popular forms of gambling involve slot machines, card games, roulette, bingo, lotteries, raffles, horse and greyhound racing, sports pools, pitching coins, dice, punchboards, cockfights, dogfights, etc.
 2. Various parts of our nation and several Indian reservations have gambling casinos.
 3. Most states operate lotteries.
 4. Bingo games and raffles have become big business for many churches and other charitable organizations.
 5. In various parts of our country, betting on horse and greyhound racing is legal.
 6. In many places, slot machines populate bars, restaurants and even grocery stores.
 7. Betting on office sports pools and card games are common fare in American society.
 8. Even children in school sometimes initiate themselves to gambling by pitching coins.
- C. There are some activities that often are involved in gambling that do not constitute gambling when the betting or wagering is absent.
1. For instance, bingo is not gambling in nursing homes, etc. where the participants do not buy the bingo cards, even if prizes are given to winners.
 2. One may play card games, even poker, for amusement without gambling where there is no actual wagering involved.

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3. Several games like Yahtzee or Monopoly use dice without betting and do not constitute gambling.
- D. Gambling is still gambling, even if it is for a good reason or a good cause, Romans 3:8.
 1. The fact that the states that operate lotteries purport to use the state's winnings for elderly care, education, etc. does not alter the nature of gambling per its ordinary and normal dictionary definition.
 2. The fact that charities, civic organizations and schools may have good uses for their share of the proceeds from bingo, raffles, etc. does not change the nature of gambling.

II. Note some social attitudes toward and the history of gambling.

- A. Doubtless, mankind has been gambling since near his debut on planet earth and after he became a wayward creature from the continual presence once enjoyed in the Garden with God.

Archaeological discoveries reveal gambling devices dating as far back as 1800 years B.C. In Babylon, headless arrows were used in wagering, and ancient Greeks had dice marked with numbers on four sides. (Gulledge)

1. About the same time period, residents of Crete were gambling with gaming boards (Hearn 1).
2. The rudest example of gambling in the Bible was at the foot of the cross where Roman soldiers cast lots for the seamless coat (tunic) of Jesus Christ, John 19:23-24.
3. Much closer to our time, of course, yet centuries ago, the proceeds from a lottery in England financed the sailing of the *Mayflower* to colonize the New World (Puzo 26).
- B. The American people overwhelmingly approve of gambling.
 1. Four out of five people in the U.S. approve of gambling as a pastime and two out of three admit to having gambled legally or illegally (Barbour G1).
 2. In 1999, legalized gambling was a \$600 billion annual industry spread over 48 of 50 states ("Gambling Industry

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Aware” 2A).

3. Americans bet about 5 billion dollars a year legally on horse racing.
 4. In 1976, there were 9 million problem gamblers (Barbour).
 5. One Memphis church was closed by the city after it was discovered the church conducted bingo 8 hours daily, seven days a week as opposed to a one hour religious service weekly.
- C. Historically, illegal and legal gambling has always harmed society.
1. “[L]egalized lotteries were common in the United States until they were abolished, ending with the Louisiana Lottery in 1892” (Kefauver 2), because of the great harm gambling caused.
 2. Organized crime and other criminal activity has always risen in the communities where gambling is permitted, i.e. prostitution, robbery, rape, loan sharking, bribery, murder, illegal drugs, violence, embezzling, etc.
From 1977-1980, violent crimes, involving murder, rape, robbery... increased in Atlantic City 176%. (Clarke 2)
 3. Wherever gambling is allowed a foothold, addiction to gambling leads many people to experience broken homes, domestic abuse, poverty and even suicide.
The suicide rate is the highest in the country in Las Vegas, Nevada. ...Suicide rates for spouses of compulsive gamblers are 150 times higher than the national average. (Clarke 2)
- 4. Gambling produces neither products nor services, only great harm to individuals and society.**

III. Gambling in light of biblical principles.

- A. The words “Thou shalt not gamble” do not appear in Scripture.
1. Incidentally, neither do the words “Thou shalt gamble” appear in Scripture.

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2. In the strictest sense, gambling is not among the activities in the Bible that the Bible either treats as a non-issue or looks upon with favor.
 3. Several biblical principles, though, lead to the unmistakable conclusion from Scripture that gambling is an unauthorized activity and sinful.
- B. There are a limited number of ways portrayed in the Bible whereby a person may legitimately acquire wealth.
1. First and ordinarily, material wealth may be increased with God's approval through work, Proverbs 13:11; Matthew 10:10; 1 Timothy 5:18; Ephesians 4:28.
 2. Second, one's material wealth may be lawfully (God's law) increased by commercial activity, buying and selling property and merchandise, Matthew 13:46; Acts 2:45; 4:34; 5:4; James 4:13.
 3. Also, one may be the recipient of gifts or donations, Philippians 4:15; Luke 15:11-31.
 4. In addition, material wealth may be found, the owner of which cannot be known, Matthew 13:44.
 5. Lastly, material wealth may be increased, without God's approval, by theft, Ephesians 4:28.
 6. Gambling gains, for which every gambler hopes, do not correspond to wealth acquired by labor, commercial activity, gifts or found money, but they more nearly correspond to theft, howbeit, by consent.
 7. A renowned, late Gospel preacher observed:

Gambling is a form of theft, because it takes from many and gives without effort to a few. Most often, those from whom money is taken are least able to lose, and usually the loss falls on helpless women and children who must suffer deprivation because of the gambler's obsession. (Woods 17)
- C. Our Lord's Golden Rule must be discarded in order to pursue gambling.
1. Matthew 7:12 would have us treat others as we want to

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be treated.

2. Gambling, rather, is the intent to do harm to others while others attempt to do harm to us, Matthew 22:39; Romans 12:17; 13:8-10.

...the individuals involved want each other's money but are unwilling to just donate their money to the others. Everyone who gambles is hoping to win money from others. No one wants to lose the money he gambles. Consequently, the very nature, character and essence of gambling is in direct conflict with the core and heart of Christianity as articulated by Jesus in Matthew 7:12. By definition, a gambler is treating others the way he himself does not want to be treated. (Miller)

- D. Gambling undercuts the work ethic, 2 Thessalonians 3:8-12; Ephesians 4:28; Acts 20:35; Genesis 3:19.

1. "Gambling is an obvious attempt to sidestep and short-circuit the principle of toil undertaken for noble ends" (Miller).
2. Proverbs 28:20 teaches that hastening to get rich is sinful.

- E. Gambling is the manifestation of covetousness.

1. True success in one's life has nothing to do with his possessions, Luke 12:15.
2. Covetousness has to do with the love of money, which pursuing as a chief goal in life, souls err from the faith, 1 Timothy 6:10.
3. In place of covetousness, we are to be content with what we have, Hebrews 13:5; Proverbs 30:8-9.

- F. Gambling makes a mockery of good stewardship.

1. Stewardship and faithfulness stand or fall together, 1 Corinthians 4:2.
2. Jesus used examples of good and poor stewardship to portray final judgment of humanity, Matthew 25:14-30.
3. Everything, this whole world and everything in it, including our souls really belong to God, Psalm 24:1; 50:10-12; 1 Corinthians 10:26; Ezekiel 18:4.

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- G. Gambling bears evil fruit and cannot be acceptable to God.
 - 1. The ill effect on gambler and society is amply documented.
 - 2. Gambling is an evil fruit, and we will be judged by our fruits, Matthew 7:16-20.
- H. Gambling is addictive and causes one to lose self-control.
 - 1. Lack of self-control is listed among other sins, 2 Timothy 3:3 ASV, NKJV.
 - 2. God calls on people to live soberly or with self-restraint, Titus 2:11-12.
- I. Gambling causes one to associate with evil persons.
 - 1. The apostle Paul warned that evil companionship has a corrupting influence, 1 Corinthians 15:33 ASV.
 - 2. Especially Christians are warned in Scripture to separate themselves from those whose sinful influence may overcome us, 2 Corinthians 6:14-18.
- J. Gambling leads to poverty.
 - 1. Often gamblers gamble away the grocery money, the mortgage payment, etc., 1 Timothy 5:8.
 - 2. One religious leader where bingo was conducted noted a bingo player who lost money playing bingo and then requested a benevolent handout to obtain groceries.

IV. Even some Christians attempt to rationalize approval for gambling by making unfounded comparisons with non-gambling circumstances or citing supposed benefits to gambling.

- A. Farming, for instance, is often cited as a venture characterized by chance or risk, just as gambling involves chance or risk.
 - 1. However, farming involves human labor, which God commands, as well as petitions to God for a fruitful harvest and the general providence of God (if not his special providence, too), Genesis 2:15; 2 Thessalonians 3:10; Matthew 5:45.
 - 2. Agriculture occupies a prominent and frequent presence in God's Scriptures, and it symbolizes the divinely approved work ethic, Galatians 6:7.

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3. Gambling does not involve human labor, is unsuitable for petitions to God and could hardly be expected to be the subject of the favorable providence of God.
- B. Trying to defend gambling, some will state that buying insurance is comparable to gambling because insurance has to do with risk.
 1. However, insurance does not create a risk, and it does not increase risk as with gambling.
 2. The risk for which insurance is secured is involuntary whereas gambling involves voluntary risk.
- C. Some attempt to minimize arguments against gambling by declaring they don't gamble much and it's just for amusement anyway.
 1. Since gambling is a biblically unauthorized way to increase wealth, it does not matter how little one gambles; a little bit of sin is as deadly as much sin, Romans 6:23.
 2. Being amused with a little sin is as deadly as being amused with much sin, Romans 6:23.
- D. Others may try to equate the chance of a marriage succeeding with chances associated with gambling.
 1. Marriage is authorized by God, but gambling is not!
 2. Even if there were some observable comparison between marriages and gambling, the odds at the national average of 50/50 remain tremendously better for marriage than with gambling.
- E. Some attempt to defend gambling by equating it with door prizes and giveaways.
 1. However, there is no risk involved in these things.
 2. Door prizes and giveaways are gifts.
- F. Still others hope to diffuse criticism of gambling by labeling it a voluntary rather than a compulsory activity.
 1. However, participating in a duel voluntarily is still murder when death results.
 2. Prostitution and other occasions of fornication are still

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sinful even when these activities are consensual, Galatians 5:19-21.

G. Gamblers and the gambling industry claim that legalized gambling provides much needed revenues (in place of raising taxes) for such things as senior care, education, etc. as well as creates jobs.

1. In reality, “[f]or every dollar in benefits, the social costs are at least \$3” (“Professor Tells” 14; Clarke 2).
2. The human cost as well as extra police protection and repairs to the infrastructure more than equal gambling revenues realized by government (Clarke 2).
3. Especially casinos drive out businesses with their all inclusive, on premises services, and significant drops in population occur, partly because real estate prices climb so that only the gambling industry can afford it.

...[S]ince casino gambling was introduced into Atlantic City, the population has declined and nearly half of the 2100 businesses have closed. ...serious crimes have tripled from 4,689 in 1977 to 14,914 in 1985. ...the population... declined by approximately 6,000 people. (Clarke 2).

Conclusion:

1. “Christians, by definition, are people who regulate their behavior by the Scriptures” (Miller).
2. Gambling is not a biblically authorized method of increasing one’s wealth.
3. There are many biblical principles that must be trampled to practice gambling.
4. Since gambling is something that harms the gambler and society, it is sinful and something from which the children of God and God’s church must turn away, Ephesians 5:11.
5. Anyone who concentrates on acquiring riches and harms his fellow man in the process stands condemned by God, James 5:1-4.
6. Gambling is not merely a political issue, but it is also a moral

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issue that runs counter to biblical principles.

Invitation:

1. Sin, though approved by society and allowed by the government or civil law, is no less sinful in the eyes of God, for which there are the same consequences as for any other sin in which one willfully engages.
2. Non-Christians and Christians both need to submit to God unconditionally through conformity to the Word of God in all matters, Romans 12:1-2.
3. For unbaptized believers, that means complying with the apostle Peter's charge in Acts 2:38, 41, 47.
4. For erring Christians, repentance and prayer is needful, Acts 8:22.

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Gambling

Ephesians 4:28

Thesis: To ascertain from the Bible whether gambling is sinful, and therefore, something that Christians ought to avoid and resist.

Introduction:

1. Gambling is an ever increasingly popular pursuit throughout America.
 - a. “An estimated 57 percent of adult Americans gambled regularly in 1954. ...By the mid 60’s it was reported that ‘Gambling is the biggest business in the nation...’” (Nichols 25).
 - b. Nearly 32 billion dollars was spent in 1998 on lottery tickets in the United States (Gerstein et al. 32).
 - c. Annually, 90 million gamblers visit U.S. casinos, and gamblers in America wagered on all forms of legal gambling 482 billion dollars (Burleson 4).
 - d. Gamblers lost 20 billion dollars at Casinos in 1998 (Gerstein et al. 33).
2. “Presently [1997], gambling in some form is legal in all but 3 states, casinos or casino-style games are available in 21 states, and 37 states have lotteries” (“Executive Summary” 1).

Body:

I. Just what is gambling?

- A. How do dictionaries define gambling?
 1. The meaning for the verb “gamble” includes: “to stake something on a contingency,” and the meaning of the noun “gamble” includes: “the playing of a game of chance for stakes” (*Merriam*).
 2. Another dictionary defines “gambling” as “the act of playing for stakes in the hope of winning (including the payment of a price for a chance to win a prize)” (“Gambling”).
 3. The 1998 Gambling Impact and Behavior Study defined gambling thus: “We defined ‘gambling’ as placing a bet

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on the outcome of a race or game of skill or chance, or playing a game — including for charity — in which one might win or lose money” (Gerstein and Toce 7).

B. “Gambling is getting — or trying to get — something for nothing, without rendering service, or exchanging goods for the value received. This makes gambling essentially stealing, a form of robbery” (Nichols 25).

1. “...[G]ambling is not wrong because it is taking a chance, but because of the strong covetous desire to take another’s possessions without giving him a fair return” (Jim E. Waldron qtd. in Bland 251).
2. “...[I]n principle, risking a penny is no different from risking millions” (Cooper 20).
3. Amusingly but accurately, someone has observed that “lotteries are ‘a tax on people who aren’t good at math’” (Elkins, “We Saw” 2).

C. In what ways does gambling manifest itself?

1. “Paying a fee to play a game of Bingo (for example) in the hope of winning a great deal more, is equivalent to ‘betting’ the amount of your fee against the prize. No goods are produced, no service is rendered; yet a risk which did not exist is created” (Nichols 25).
2. “A mother who wins a vase at bridge should not be surprised if her son wins (or loses!) \$1,000 at cards! She taught him to be a gambler!” (Nichols 29).
3. Wayne Jackson lists a number of the popular ways to gamble.

Gambling takes many forms: card games, dice, numbers, betting on elections, buying sweepstake tickets, betting on horse racing, slot machines, betting on sporting events, various types of sports pools, punch boards, bingo (for money or prizes), buying tickets in raffles, betting on recreational activities, matching for cokes, and even pitching pennies. (qtd. in Bland 252)

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- D. When is winning something but not gambling?
1. Simply because the future result of something is unknown or by chance, of itself, does not equate to gambling.
 2. **Gambling requires a stake (the amount of which being immaterial) to create an unnecessary risk, hoping for one's gain and another's loss.**
 3. Therefore, the selection of tribal lands among the Israelites by lot (Numbers 26:55), the assignment of priestly Temple duties by lot (1 Chronicles 24:5) and the selection of a replacement apostle by chance (Acts 1:26) do not correspond to the definition of gambling, especially when one considers God's direct involvement in these particular matters, Proverbs 16:33 (Elkins, "What the Bible Teaches" 38).
 4. Flavil Nichols speaks to some contemporary lots or chances that do not constitute gambling.

One who receives a prize for having the free winning "ticket" is not gambling thereby: the merchant receives his publicity in the advertising effort, in which no risk is created or taken. This is also true where one merely "registers" at the door, or where tickets are given with each purchase. But "buying a chance" is tantamount to 'betting' the price of the ticket whether it be little or much-that the stub drawn will have your number on it! That is gambling! (26)

II. Consider how sly and persistent that promoters of gambling are.

- A. The devil and his associates never want the public to see sin for what it really is.
- Several years ago [1976] the multi-billion dollar-a-year gambling industry set about to change its image. At the Fourth National Conference on Public Gaming, keynoter Raymond Blanchard declared, "We've got to convince people we're not in the gambling business. We're in the public revenue business." (Elkins, "What the Bible Teaches" 36)
- B. The new face on lying when it comes to politics and vices is "spin."

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- C. Satan has his public relations experts or “spin doctors” working overtime to hide the hideous nature of such things as drinking, fornication, adultery and gambling with an appealing façade or false face.

III. What’s wrong with gambling?

- A. Gambling ignores one’s responsibility to be a good steward for God, Matthew 25:14-30.

1. God expects especially Christians to be good and faithful stewards of the material blessings entrusted to them, Luke 12:42; 1 Corinthians 4:2; 1 Peter 4:10.
2. One day each of us will have to give an account to God for our stewardship, Luke 16:1-2.
3. Whether we like to admit it or not, we and all we possess really belong to God, Psalm 24:1; 50:10-12; Haggai 2:8.

Gambling encourages a reckless approach to life. The true gambler has to accept the “easy come, easy go” philosophy. This type of philosophy is in open contradiction to Christian stewardship. (Jones 29)

- B. Gambling undermines the work ethic.

1. Our Creator put mankind to work, beginning with Adam in the Garden of Eden, Genesis 2:15.
2. God heightened mankind’s labor for his sustenance after the sin of Adam and Eve, Genesis 3:19.
3. God included the work ethic in the Ten Commandments, Exodus 20:9.
4. A person must rely on honest labor rather than “vanity” (“emptiness” *Biblesoft’s*) for a successful livelihood, Proverbs 13:11.
5. The work ethic, which is of divine origin, appears forcefully also in the New Testament, Ephesians 4:28.
6. We have also the noble example of a proper work ethic in the person of the apostle Paul, Acts 20:34-35.
7. The apostle Paul by inspiration specified how people are

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supposed to seek gain and sustenance in life, 2 Thessalonians 3:10-12.

- C. Gambling brings unjust gain.
 - 1. God decries “unjust gain,” Proverbs 28:6-8.
 - 2. The same Hebrew word translated “unjust gain” appears as “increase” in Ezekiel 22:12, followed by condemnation in the next verse for “dishonest gain.”
- D. Gambling is a form of covetousness, which is idolatry, Colossians 3:5.
 - 1. Coveting was forbidden in the Ten Commandments, Exodus 20:17.
 - 2. The New Testament also forbids coveting, Romans 13:9; Ephesians 5:3.
 - 3. “To ‘covet’ implies eager or inordinate longing for something which belongs to another” (Nichols 27).
 - 4. A biblical definition of covetousness appears in 1 Timothy 6:6-10.
 - 5. Gambling focuses one’s affection on the material things of this earth instead of focusing one’s attention on things above, Colossians 3:1-3.
- E. Gambling breaks the second “greatest commandment.”
 - 1. One cannot properly love another human being while trying to take as much of his material blessings as he can get, Matthew 22:37-39.
 - 2. Love does not try to harm other people, Romans 13:10.
 - 3. Gambling hardly enacts the Golden Rule of Matthew 7:12.
 - 4. Gambling does not seek the betterment of one’s fellow man but his ruin, Philippians 2:3-4.
 - 5. Christians are supposed to be harmless and especially prefer brethren rather than be adversarial toward people in general and Christians in particular, Matthew 10:16; Philippians 2:15; Romans 12:10.
 - 6. “Gambling encourages a callousness toward the interest and well-being of others” (Jones 29).

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- F. Gambling bears evil fruit, Matthew 7:18-20.
1. Gambling often robs one's family of the wages needed for its physical welfare.
 2. Gamblers associate closely with people engaged in other sins of the flesh and likely will themselves indulge additional sins of the flesh, 1 Corinthians 6:9-10; Galatians 5:19-21.
 3. Gambling breeds crime: theft, robbery, prostitution, etc., 1 Corinthians 15:33 ASV.
 4. One cannot glorify God by gambling whereas honest work is one way in which one can glorify God, 1 Corinthians 10:31.
- G. Gambling is addictive.

1. Especially Christians must be under control, not addicted to anything, 1 Corinthians 6:12.

The Internet is an effective tool used by Satan in promoting betting on sports. In an article written by Tom Weir in USA Today (Aug. 22, 2003), it was reported that the click of a mouse and the use of a credit card are responsible for the rapid increase in gambling addictions in teenagers and college students. In 1997, there were twenty-five gambling Web sites, but today there are roughly 1,800. There is even a national hotline with counselors for problem gamblers. (McWhorter 1219)

2. Especially the Internet has exponentially increased gambling:

Advances in computer and telecommunications technology have increased the availability of gambling. New technology holds the potential to change the subjective experience of gambling and to increase how often, how much, and how long people gamble. ("Executive Summary" 3)

- H. Gambling tarnishes one's otherwise good influence.
1. Gambling runs counter to providing things honest in the sight of all men, Romans 12:17 ASV; 2 Corinthians 8:21.
 2. Especially Christians must be careful not to provide opportunity for enemies of Christianity to speak reproach-

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fully of it, 1 Timothy 5:14.

3. Take, for instance, Jesus Christ as our perfect example, 1 Peter 2:21.

Who-by the longest stretch of imagination-can conceive of Christ's betting on a rooster fight? or a crap game? or a horse race? or buying a lottery ticket? Nor would you respect any preacher who is guilty. To "bet" on a golf game is no less gambling than to buck dice off a wall, high man for a dollar! Godly saints lead a better example than this! (Nichols 28)

IV. Quibbles or objections in favor of gambling.

- A. "Life itself is a gamble."
 1. "Gambling is not merely chance, but is betting on a chance" (Nichols 26).
 2. Chance, happenstance and gamble associated with life differ from definitions for gambling, which include creating unnecessary risk and wagering money to obtain the wealth of others without giving them something of equal value in return.
- B. "Farming is a gamble."
 1. "Farmers do not seek something for nothing, but engage in productive labor. . . . When a gambler prospers, someone else necessarily loses and goes home empty-handed; but a farmer does not prosper at the expense of another" (Nichols 26).
 2. Farmers operate in accordance with God's natural laws, which aside from sometimes misfortune, the farmer can expect a harvest, Genesis 8:22.
- C. "Buying insurance is gambling."
 1. "Neither the insuror [sic] nor the insured seeks something for nothing. Rather, the insuror [sic] sells a service (protection). Insurance does not violate the law of exchange of goods and services" (Nichols 26).
 2. **Insurance is a responsible activity regarding one's material possessions and family responsibilities, whereas gambling is an irresponsible activity regarding one's**

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material possessions and family responsibilities.

- D. “Playing the stock market is gambling.”
1. Garland Elkins observes that investing in the stock market is comparable to proprietorship or other business activities since those investments “represent partial ownership of productive facilities such as factories, industrial plants, transportation facilities, mines, etc.” (“What the Bible Teaches” 37).
 2. Investing in the stock market helps build industry and business, and naturally, the investors share in the profits associated with the growth of industry and business.
- E. “Gambling is not stealing because the participants agree to the terms.”
1. Sins are nevertheless sins irrespective of whether people consent to participate in them, e.g. fornication, adultery.
 2. Murder charges or attempted murder charges would still be brought against persons who agreed to try and kill each other in a duel.
 3. Garland Elkins refers to gambling as “stealing by permission” (“What the Bible Teaches” 36).
- F. Gambling funds government in lieu of higher taxes.
1. “Let it be clearly stated that even if pari-mutuel gambling provided an abundance of national wealth, it would still be sinful! It is never right to do evil that good may abound (Romans 3:8)” (Elkins, “What the Bible Teaches” 36).
 2. The ends do not justify the means, Romans 6:1.
- G. Gambling is just an innocent form of recreation.
1. The evil fruits of gambling include physical harm to gamblers, their families and society — not, then, merely an innocent form of recreation.
 2. The evil fruits of gambling include spiritual harm to gamblers, their families and society — not, then, merely an innocent form of recreation.

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V. The Bible authorizes a limited number of means for transferring wealth from one person to another.

A. Flavil Nichols notes:

There are three legitimate means of transferring money or its equivalent: (1) The Law of Labor — physical or mental — is where time and energy are expended in the production of goods or rendering of services, whereby one actually “earns” the money he receives. (2) The Law of Exchange, in which a commodity is exchanged for its value in goods, services, or money. (3) The Law of Love, in which something is GIVEN — without any desire or expectation of receiving anything in return. Gambling comes under NONE of these laws. It is a dishonorable means of transferring money or its equivalent. (Nichols 29; see also Jackson, “Christians and the Lottery” 424)

B. Garland Elkins adds:

There are three right possible ways of obtaining money: (1) Money can be earned (Genesis 3:19; Matt. 20:8; II Thess. 3:10); (2) Money can be given to one as a gift (Proverbs 17:8); (3) There are occasions when money has been found, and there was no known way to determine where it came from. These are honorable ways of obtaining money. (“What the Bible Teaches” 36)

C. In addition, one might receive a loan, which he repays usually with interest.

Conclusion:

1. Gambling is sinful!
 - a. Further, gambling is gambling irrespective of how little or how much is wagered, won or lost.
 - b. With Wendell Winkler we concur that “gambling [is]... a violation of Ephesians 4:28; Romans 12:17; Matthew 7:12...” (31).
2. The circumstantial evidence from biblical principles and inspection of the fruits of gambling convict gambling for the vice that it is, and indict anyone (including Christians) who

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embrace gambling in any way.

a. The words “gamble” and “gambling” are absent from the Bible, but biblical principles condemn gambling.

b. Hugo McCord writes:

The Bible does not [in so many words or explicitly] forbid Christians buying lottery tickets and putting money in slot machines, but since it commands them to “maintain good works,” the necessary inference follows that Christians will abstain (Titus 3:14; Ephesians 4:28). (44)

c. “Though the Bible does not specifically mention the sin of gambling, this vice is nevertheless condemned by numerous scriptural principles” (Jackson, “Gambling” 35).

d. Jerry Jones observes the value and place of New Testament principles.

If the New Testament had to have a direct specific command for every possible action or relationship in which the Christian would find himself, it would be impossible to find a pocket edition of the New Testament. Therefore, one finds in the New Testament numerous principles given by Jesus and the Biblical writers which help to establish the norm for the Christian’s conduct... If the Christian seeks to find the specific passage which says “Thou shalt not gamble” he will find the New Testament lacking. Therefore, in order to make the proper decision he must decide whether or not there are principles in the New Testament which would have a bearing upon this practice. (Jones 27)

3. Rod Rutherford summarizes, “There is no single passage in the Bible which explicitly says, ‘Thou shalt not gamble,’ but gambling is wrong because it violates a number of moral principles of the Bible” (5).

a. Gambling challenges a Christian’s purity and ethics.

b. Gambling must not be a part of a Christian’s conduct, but rather Christians ought to resist the evil of gambling, Ephesians 5:11.

The prevalence of games of chance in our modern soci-

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ety is a tragedy. Through this vice homes are destroyed; finances wasted and lives marred. Yet, in spite of these ills there is an eager acceptance of any kind of gambling. But an even greater tragedy is that the Lord's people seem to be insensitive to this. Why? Could it be that ignorance has led to silent consent? (Kachelman 3)

4. An understatement, but note this admission:

Although the recent institutionalization of gambling appears to have benefited economically depressed communities in which it is offered, gambling has social and economic costs. . . . The availability of legal gambling has increased sharply in the past 20 years. More people are gambling, and they are wagering more. As a result, there is increased concern about pathological gambling. Clinical evidence suggests that pathological gamblers engage in destructive behaviors: they commit crimes, they run up large debts, they damage relationships with family and friends, and they kill themselves. ("Executive Summary" 1).

Invitation:

1. Rather than pursuing the material world, which promises at best a temporary reward, people need to seek heavenly treasures, Matthew 16:26; 6:19-21.
2. The first step of laying up treasure in Heaven is Gospel obedience, 1 Peter 4:17; 2 Thessalonians 1:8.
3. Continued obedience of the Gospel leads to salvation from past sins now and the prospect of eternal redemption, Hebrews 5:9; Revelation 2:10.

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An Ungodly Walk

Isaiah 3:16-26

Thesis: Almighty God passes judgment (approval or disapproval) on personal conduct as well as the combined conduct of especially God's people.

Introduction:

1. In Isaiah 3:16-26, God, through the prophet Isaiah, used a reference to ungodly, worldly women (among the children of God) to depict the horrid state of the nation of Judah leading up to its destruction by the Babylonians in 586 B.C.
2. God used the Babylonian Empire providentially to (figuratively) spank His rebellious and wayward children.
3. The illustration is as informative about individual human conduct that God hates as well as what the illustration represents, which God also hates.
4. People today can learn valuable principles both from the illustration as well as what the illustration was employed to teach.

Body:

- I. **Notice Isaiah 3:16 more carefully:** “Moreover the LORD saith, Because the daughters of Zion are haughty, and walk with stretched forth necks and wanton eyes, walking and mincing as they go, and making a tinkling with their feet.”
 - A. “LORD” stands in for “Jehovah” (ASV) and means “self-Existent or Eternal; Jehovah, Jewish national name of God” (*Biblesoft's*).
 1. Almighty God in Heaven, not Isaiah, spoke despairingly of female conduct and attire in this context.
 2. Almighty God in Heaven, not Isaiah, used bad feminine conduct as an illustration to condemn the nation of Judah and Jerusalem, its capital city.
 3. Doubtless, Isaiah was credited with and blamed for the message because it was an unpopular statement both about

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women and the nation of the Jews, 1 Thessalonians 2:13.

- B. “Haughty” means “to soar, i.e. be lofty” (*Biblesoft’s*).
1. One who is haughty is a prideful person.
 2. God condemns pride (in a bad sense) throughout the Bible, Psalm 10:2-6; 73:6; 101:5; Proverbs 6:16-17; 8:13; 11:2; 15:25; 16:5, 18-19; 21:4; 29:23; Romans 1:30; 2 Corinthians 10:18; 1 Timothy 3:6; 6:4, 17; 2 Timothy 3:2, 4; James 4:6; 1 Peter 5:5; 1 John 2:16.
 3. There is a sense, of course, in which one can have pride (i.e., satisfaction or gratification) in a job well done, 2 Timothy 4:6-8.
- C. *Keil & Delitzsch* writes regarding “walk with stretched forth necks,” “They walk with extended throat, i.e., bending the neck back, trying to make themselves taller than they are, because they think themselves so great.”
1. We might say that such a person has his or her nose in the air.
 2. The body language depicted here corresponds to the accusation of being “haughty” or proud.
- D. “Wanton eyes” (KJV, ASV, NKJV), “flirting with their eyes” (NIV) or “seductive eyes” (NASV) means for the word “wanton” “to ogle, i.e. to blink coquettishly” (*Biblesoft’s*), which means “to gain the attention and admiration” (*Merriam*).
1. Adam Clarke remarks that the meaning includes that these women were “setting off their eyes with paint”; compare 2 Kings 9:30; Jeremiah 4:30; Ezekiel 23:40 for examples of the practice.
 2. Proverbs 6:13-14, 25 attributes this practice with which God is displeased to men also.
 3. **Women among the people of God were dressing and acting more like prostitutes than godly women**, Proverbs 7:10, 16-17; contrast 1 Timothy 2:9-10.
 4. We might say that a woman was all painted up with the utmost in makeup and winking or batting her eyelashes.
 5. Butler describes these Israelite women as “unchaste;

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lewd; licentious; extravagant” (106).

- E. The phrase “walking and mincing as they go, and making a tinkling with their feet” refers to what one today might call “body language” of a certain type.
1. “Mincing” means “to trip (with short steps) coquettishly” (*Biblesoft’s*).
 2. “Making a tinkling” refers to “anklets” (*Biblesoft’s*).
 3. “With their feet” means “a foot (as used in walking); by implication, a step” (*Biblesoft’s*).

They could only take short steps, because of the chains by which the costly foot-rings worn above their ankles were connected together. These chains, which were probably ornamented with bells... used to tinkle as they walked: they made an ankle-tinkling with their feet, setting their feet down in such a manner that these ankle-rings knocked against each other. (*Keil & Delitzsch*)

4. Barnes comments that these women were “walking with an affected gait — a mode which, unhappily, is too well known in all ages to need a more particular description.”

II. Observe Isaiah 3:17 more closely: “Therefore the LORD will smite with a scab the crown of the head of the daughters of Zion, and the LORD will discover their secret parts.”

- A. The first appearance of “the LORD” in verse 17 comes from another Hebrew word “*Adonay*,” meaning “the Lord (used as a proper name of God only)” (*Biblesoft’s*).
- B. The second appearance of “the LORD” in verse 17 comes from the Hebrew word transliterated as “Jehovah” (ASV), again meaning, the “self-Existent or Eternal; Jehovah, Jewish national name of God” (*Biblesoft’s*).
- C. “Discover” (KJV), “lay bare” (ASV) or “uncover” (NKJV) means ‘to make bare’ (*Biblesoft’s*).
- D. “Secret parts” refers to female genitals (*Biblesoft’s; Merriam*), or what we might euphemistically call one’s private parts.
1. God on several occasions through the Old Testament

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prophets used references to nakedness to describe his disdain for ungodliness, and that He would bring open shame especially upon His wayward people, Isaiah 47:3; Nahum 3:5; Jeremiah 13:22; Ezekiel 16:37.

2. Also, the ancient custom toward captured prisoners of war, men and women, was to strip them naked and have them march into captivity in that humiliating condition, in addition at the mercy of searing heat, biting sandstorms, the night cold, etc., Isaiah 20:4.

The description in this verse means, that God would humble and punish them; that they who so adorned themselves, and who were so proud of their ornaments, would be divested of their joyful attire, and be borne naked into captivity in a foreign land. (Barnes)

3. Butler makes an astute observation respecting purposeful conduct and unintended consequences:

Those who delight in immodest exposure will be rewarded with immodest exposure at the hands of vile men. Why are those women who delight in overtly attracting men by their immodesty always so shocked and offended when immodest and vulgar men demonstrate their attractions?! (107)

III. Verses 18-24 continue the figure of seductive women, which God vows to punish: “In that day the Lord will take away the bravery of their tinkling ornaments about their feet, and their cauls, and their round tires like the moon, 19 The chains, and the bracelets, and the mufflers, 20 The bonnets, and the ornaments of the legs, and the headbands, and the tablets, and the earrings, 21 The rings, and nose jewels, 22 The changeable suits of apparel, and the mantles, and the wimples, and the crisping pins, 23 The glasses, and the fine linen, and the hoods, and the veils. 24 And it shall come to pass, that instead of sweet smell there shall be stink; and instead of a girdle a rent; and instead of well set hair bald-

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ness; and instead of a stomacher a girding of sackcloth; and burning instead of beauty.”

A. Let's define some of the words in verse 18.

1. “Bravery of tinkling ornaments about their feet” (KJV) the ASV renders “the beauty of their anklets.”
2. “Tinkling ornaments” (KJV) is translated as “jingling anklets” in the NKJV.
3. “Cauls” means “a netting for the hair” (*Biblesoft's*) and is translated “scarves” in the NKJV; Barnes writes of such a netting made of gold and containing numerous rubies.
4. “Round tires like the moon” means “a round pendant” (*Biblesoft's*) or necklace; the NIV has “crescent necklaces.”

B. Let's define some of the words in verse 19.

1. “Chains” refers to “a pendant for the ears (especially of pearls)” (*Biblesoft's*) and is translated as “earrings” by the NIV.
2. “Mufflers” means “a long veil (as fluttering)” (*Biblesoft's*) and is translated “veil” in the NKJV.

C. Let's define some of the words in verses 20-21.

1. “Bonnet” means “a fancy head-dress” (*Biblesoft's*) and is translated “headdresses” in the NKJV.
2. “Ornaments of the legs” comes from a different Hebrew word than already appearing in this context and refers to “an (ornamental) ankle-chain” (*Biblesoft's*) and is translated “ankle chains” in the ASV; Barnes comments that, “The word denotes a small chain, with which females, when they walk, connect their feet, in order to make their steps equal.”
3. “Tablets” is translated in the ASV and NKJV as “perfume boxes” and “perfume bottles” in the NIV.
4. “Nose jewels” of verse 21 is translated as “nose rings” in several translations.

IV. Let's define some of the words in verses 22-23.

A. “Changeable suits of apparel” is translated in the ASV as “festival robes.”

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1. We might call them party or dress clothes.
 2. “Mantles” refers to “a cloak” (*Biblesoft’s*) and is translated as “outer tunics” in the NASV.
 - B. What the KJV calls “wimples,” the ASV translates as “shawls.”
 - C. What the KJV calls “crisping pins” the NKJV translates as “purses.”
 - D. In verse 23, “glasses” is translated as “hand-mirrors” in the ASV.
 - E. Also in verse 23, “fine linen” is “lingerie” (Butler 108) or “undergarments” as translated in the NASV.
 - F. In verse 23, “the hoods and the veils” are translated as “turbans and the robes” in the NKJV.
 1. Clarke describes the veil under consideration here as “transparent garments” designed to “show the shape of every part of the body, but the very colour of the skin.”
 2. Allurement through immodesty is clearly the aim of these Jewish women under consideration in this passage.
- V. In verse 24, God, through Isaiah, sets aside all the attempts at allurement practiced by seductive women among the people of God.**
- A. “It shall come to pass” speaks to the certainty of God’s announcement of judgment.
 - B. “Sweet smell” means “fragrance” (*Biblesoft’s*) and is so translated in the NIV; compare Song of Solomon 4:10 for an example.
 - C. “There shall be” comes from the same Hebrew word already in this verse translated “it shall come to pass,” again speaking to the certainty of God’s judgment.
 - D. “Stink” means “a melting, i.e. putridy” (*Biblesoft’s*) and is translated as “rotteness” (ASV), “stench” (NKJV) and “putrefaction” (NASV).
 - E. “A rent” is translated as “a rope” in several translations.
 1. Coffman, among other commentators, notes the use of the rope when formerly survivors from the northern kingdom of Israel were marched back to Assyria:

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The contrast between girdle and rope is especially tragic. When Assyria led the northern kingdom into captivity, some 30,000 were herded in long lines to Nineveh with ropes joining the captives by being passed through their ears. These are indeed tragic words for God's apostate people.

- F. "Well set hair" compares to the extravagance assigned to the hair of which the apostle Peter wrote, 1 Peter 3:3-4.
- G. "Baldness" would be a troublesome turn of events for women in general and especially for women who prided themselves in making their hair into show pieces, 1 Corinthians 11:15.
- H. In place of "stomacher," the NKJV translates "a rich robe."
- I. We would associate "sackcloth" with something like a burlap bag, which was worn by mourners, 2 Samuel 3:31; 1 Kings 20:31; 21:27; Job 16:15; Isaiah 21:11.
- J. "Burning" means "a brand or scar" (*Biblesoft's*).
 - 1. Butler comments on the treatment of defeated peoples enslaved in antiquity by their conquerors:

...instead of beauty marks, they will wear the ugly scars of the branding-irons, (it was a practice of pagan armies in that day to brand or disfigure slaves-especially by castrating men and using branding-irons on women — to forever mark them as slaves). (108)
- K. Add all this up and imagine for a moment the contrasting images of these women among the children of God.
 - 1. *Keil & Delitzsch* comments that there are "twenty-one different ornaments" described in this seductive display of womanhood among the people of God.
 - 2. On one hand, imagine women among the children of God who are arrogantly proud in attitude, reinforced by a nose held high in the air, with enough makeup on to kill, sultry glances toward all men attempting to melt their moral defenses, swaying from side to side, with clanking jewelry from head to foot to sound their presence, layers of flowing and see-through clothes, carrying decorative

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purses, holding mirrors in which they constantly admire themselves and sporting perfume bottles with which they constantly refreshed themselves.

3. Contrast that with what God had in mind to replace all that pageantry: scabs and baldness in place of hair adorned with silver, gold and jewels; complete nakedness in place of immodest apparel and abundant jewelry; scratchy and ugly burlap bags instead of costly clothes; a rope and a brand burnt into one's hide like cattle receive.
4. Contrast with both of these God's woman, Proverbs 31:10-31; 1 Timothy 2:9-10; 1 Peter 3:1-6.

VI. Verses 25-26 clearly transform God's condemnation from merely ungodly, seductive women among the people of God to the nation of Judah and the city of Jerusalem: "Thy men shall fall by the sword, and thy mighty in the war. 26 And her gates shall lament and mourn; and she being desolate shall sit upon the ground."

- A. Let us define some words in verses 25-26.
 1. "Her gates shall lament and mourn" is a common reference in Scripture to commentary on fallen inhabitants of a city, Isaiah 14:31; Jeremiah 14:2; Lamentations 1:4.
 2. The phrase "being desolate shall sit upon the ground" compares to a later prophecy by Jesus about the A.D. 70 destruction of Jerusalem, Luke 19:44.
- B. All of the description of seductive, ungodly women in these foregoing verses illustrates the despicable condition of the entire nation and especially its capital city, Jerusalem.
 1. God used condemnation of women to represent His displeasure toward a larger body of the people of God, Isaiah 32:9-14.
 2. "The significance of Isaiah 3:26 is that it unconsciously shifts from 'the women of Jerusalem,' to Jerusalem itself, indicating that the vainglorious women were a type of Jerusalem in its apostasy" (Coffman).

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- C. The contrast between how the ungodly, seductive women viewed themselves and God would bring them low illustrates God's intention to bring low ungodly Judah and Jerusalem.

VII. The deplorable condition of the populace illustrated by ungodly seductive women and God's equal displeasure with His people in general yields principles worthy of our consideration today.

- A. The purpose of one's earthly existence can be easily forgotten and amply demonstrated by the way we dress and conduct ourselves.
 - 1. Speaking of the women Isaiah described, *Wycliffe* writes, "They had devoted themselves to the latest fads in jewelry, hair style, and dress. They were wholly taken up with self-adornment, having no concern for God's law or their holy mission in life."
 - 2. **Isn't it obvious that in society today, including within the Lord's church, women often are more concerned about the latest fashion fads than interested in God's law or their holy mission in life?**
- B. The condition of the fiber of society, our nation and the church is visible through the component parts, people.
 - 1. Simple observation tells the reflective person that our society, nation and religion in general is in a lot of peril because of the faults or sins of individuals.
 - 2. The Lord's church, too, is in a lot of peril because of the faults or sins of individuals within the Lord's church.
 - 3. **Christians need to ask themselves if they are part of the solution or part of the problem.**
- C. Especially Christians should exemplify what is godly rather than reflect the conduct, fads and fashion of the ungodly world around us, John 17:15-16.
 - 1. The clothing and conduct of some people immediately makes one think that they have religious conviction.
 - 2. Yet, the clothing and conduct of most people never causes

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anyone to consider them as religious or spiritually minded.

3. When someone sees or hears you, does he think you are a spiritually minded religious person?

Conclusion:

1. Matthew Henry assesses this passage under consideration thus:

The prophet's business was to show all sorts of people what they had contributed to the national guilt and what share they must expect in the national judgments that were coming. Here he reproveth and warns the daughters of Zion, tells the ladies of their faults...

2. There was a direct correlation between the condition of womanhood in ancient Judah to the spiritual health of that nation, and a similar correlation exists in our nation, and more importantly in the church, regarding the state of womanhood.

When women are wholly vain and self-centered, the cancer of moral decay has begun to consume a nation or a people. Proper adornment and true beauty in women should never call attention to themselves but should direct the beholder's attention to God and His Son. When women cultivate beauty only for itself, they are infringing upon and detracting from the glory of God. Such vainglory might be expected in women of the world, but "the daughters of Zion" (which today is the church) must exemplify the beauty of holiness!... when women go bad, their degradation can cause such an upheaval (sic) in society that the very foundations of that society are destroyed. (Butler 106, 108)

Corruption may have spread far and done much evil in the community; but there is hope for the city or the church so long as the wives and the mothers, the daughters and the sisters retain their moral and spiritual integrity. When that is gone, all is gone. Purity and worth find their last retreat under the domestic roof; if they be driven thence, they are doomed to die; and with that death any community, church or nation shall soon perish. (Clarkson qtd. in Coffman)

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3. When Isaiah wrote, the nation of Judah and the city of Jerusalem were about to be destroyed by the will of God and at the hands of the Babylonians.
4. What was wrong with womanhood among the people of God at that time typified what was wrong with the nation of God's people.

Invitation:

1. Individuals and collectively the church need to adhere to divine instruction and put from them the walk of ungodliness, 2 Corinthians 13:5.
2. Individuals turn from ungodliness by becoming Christians, Acts 2:38; 11:26.
3. Christians turn from ungodliness that sometimes creeps into their lives by repentance and prayer, Acts 8:22; 1 John 1:9.

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Wayward Children

Isaiah 1:2-4 NKJV

Thesis: To examine the divine illustration in Isaiah 1:2-4 and apply its principles to God's children today.

Song: "Hallelujah Praise Jehovah"

Introduction:

1. Isaiah was a prophet of God to the nation of Judah.
2. Like often in the history of humanity, the children of God strayed from divine instruction.
3. Like always, God patiently called his people back to Himself through the agency of inspired prophets.
4. Like always, the children of God largely ignored the pleas of a benevolent God, causing Him subsequently to send chastisements to encourage restoration of faithfulness.

Body:

I. Let's look more carefully at our text of Isaiah 1:2-4.

- A. "Hear, O heavens, and give ear, O earth! For the LORD has spoken," Isaiah 1:2a NKJV.
 1. Reference to heavens and earth is a poetical style that personifies the totality of God's creation to arrest the attention of humanity to the message of God, Deuteronomy 30:19; 32:1 (Clarke).
 2. Matthew Henry notes that the lifeless universe will more nearly listen to and obey the God of the universe than rebellious Israel (or mankind generally): "Sooner will the inanimate creatures hear, who observe the law and answer the end of their creation, than this stupid senseless people."
 3. The word "hear" means "to hear intelligently (often with implication of attention, obedience...)" (*Biblesoft's*).
 4. The words "give ear" mean "to broaden out the ear (with the hand), i.e. (by implication) to listen..." (*Biblesoft's*); we might say to cup the hear, i.e. so we can hear some-

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thing more clearly.

5. The word “LORD” stands in for Jehovah.
 6. That Jehovah was speaking was reason enough for the children of God to listen attentively to God and comply with His divine instruction, especially in this case, complaints of God against his children (*Keil & Delitzsch*).
- B. “I have nourished and brought up children, And they have rebelled against Me,” Isaiah 1:2b NKJV.
1. The word “nourished” pertains to God making Israel physically a nation and spiritually His people, Deuteronomy 32:6.
 2. God literally, through His providence, made a little family into a great nation, Genesis 12:2; Deuteronomy 7:6-8.
 3. Nevertheless, the nation of God became a disobedient people, Jeremiah 2:6-8.
 4. The word “rebelled” means “to break away (from just authority), i.e. trespass, apostatize, quarrel” (*Biblesoft's*); Vine adds that “rebelled” means “to transgress.”
- C. “The ox knows its owner And the donkey its master’s crib,” Isaiah 1:3a NKJV; cf. Jeremiah 8:7.
1. The word “crib” means “manger or stall” (*Biblesoft's*).
 2. Even the donkey is well aware of who fills his feed dish and forgets not to eat, but not so regarding the people of God often; Barnes notes that the ox showed more gratitude toward his master than the Jews did for their God.
 3. The point is that Israel should have been ashamed that mere brute beasts exhibited more sense and loyalty than had God’s higher creation man, and more specifically God’s covenant people.
 4. Clarke verbalizes it as “[a]n amplification of the gross insensibility of the disobedient Jews, by comparing them with the most heavy and stupid of all animals, yet not so insensible as they.”
 5. The word “knows” refers to submissiveness (Barnes); the ox is submissive to its benefactor, but Israel was not submissive

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to its Benefactor, Jehovah.

D. “But Israel does not know, My people do not consider,” Isaiah 1:3b NKJV.

1. The word “know” means “(1) to know by observing and reflecting (thinking), and (2) to know by experiencing” (Vine).
2. The people of God no longer reflected or contemplated divine revelation from Jehovah.
3. The words “my people” mean “a people (as a congregated unit); specifically, a tribe (as those of Israel)” (*Biblesoft’s*).
4. The complaint changes with the ending of verse three and the beginning of verse four to lively and severe indictments by God against his beloved children.

The piercing lamentation of the deeply grieved Father is also the severest accusation. ...The lamentation of God, therefore, is changed now into violent scolding and threatening on the part of the prophet; and in accordance with the deep wrathful pain with which he is moved, his words pour out with violent rapidity, like flash after flash, in climactic clauses having no outward connection, and each consisting of only two or three words. (*Keil & Delitzsch*)

E. “Alas, sinful nation, A people laden with iniquity, A brood of evildoers, Children who are corrupters!” Isaiah 1:4a NKJV.

1. Clarke defines “sinful” as “degenerate”; *Wycliffe* defines “sin” as to “miss the mark.”
2. The word “laden” means “heavy” (*Biblesoft’s*); Barnes adds that laden means “burdensome.”
3. Mention of “nation” indicates the “epidemic” proportions of sin among the people of God or that “wickedness was universal” (Henry).
4. “Iniquity” means “moral evil” (*Biblesoft’s*).
5. Imagine a person or a whole nation weighed down under a backbreaking and oppressive load of sin.
6. The “brood” (NKJV) or “seed” (KJV) of “evildoers” refers to the harvest of wickedness, in human terms, spawn-

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ing itself from generation to generation (Barnes).

7. “Corrupters” means ‘decayed’ or ‘ruined’ (*Biblesoft’s*); *Wycliffe* says the children of God had putrefied the wholesome Word of God by their grievous sins.
 8. Summarized, the people of God had become proficient in debauchery (Henry).
- F. “They have forsaken the LORD, They have provoked to anger The Holy One of Israel, They have turned away backward,” Isaiah 1:4b NKJV.
1. “Forsaken” means “relinquish” (*Biblesoft’s*); Israel had relinquished Jehovah as God.
 2. The Israelites had “forsaken” Jehovah internally first, which manifested itself also outwardly.

The idea is that of dissolving connection with a person with violence and self-will; here it relates to that inward severance from God, and renunciation of Him, which preceded all outward acts of sin, and which not only had idolatry for its full and outward manifestation, but was truly idolatry in all its forms. (*Keil & Delitzsch*)
 3. The word “provoked” refers to the “defiance” Israel exhibited toward Jehovah (Henry).
 4. Israel had essentially abandoned (Vine) God, irrespective that it may have claimed allegiance to God when it seemed advantageous.
 5. *Wycliffe* says that Israel had essentially “joined the camp of the enemy” of God.
 6. The words “Holy One” means “sacred” (*Biblesoft’s*); Israel no longer esteemed God as sacred.
 7. “Turned away” means that Israel had made itself as a foreign nation, profane and a stranger to God (*Biblesoft’s*).
 8. Idolatry was a primary manifestation of Israel turning its back on God, Jeremiah 2:27.
 9. “Backward” means they had become “estranged” from Jehovah (*Jamieson, Fausset and Brown*).

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10. Israel was like a “backsliding heifer,” Hosea 4:16.

II. What principles might we draw from Isaiah 1:2-4 to apply to ourselves today?

- A. We need to listen and to obey the words of fathers.
 - 1. When our parents speak, that alone is enough reason to listen to them attentively and comply with their parental instructions.
 - 2. When God our Father speaks to us today through His divine Word, as we read it or when it is faithfully taught or preached, we have an obligation to heed it and adjust our lives according to divine direction.
 - 3. Sometimes we may not like what fathers have to say, but we will be best served by humbly complying, Deuteronomy 8:5; Hebrews 12:5-11.
- B. The children of God must never forget that God is the great Benefactor from whom all blessings flow.
 - 1. God bestows **physical** blessings, Matthew 5:45; 6:25-34.
 - 2. God bestows **spiritual** blessings as well, Philippians 4:19; James 1:17; 2 Peter 1:3.
 - 3. However, mankind has often forgotten God, Ephesians 4:18.
- C. Like Israel of old, man has often and still does relinquish Jehovah as God of his life.
 - 1. One way a man relinquishes God is by forsaking the assembling with the saints for worship, Hebrews 10:25.
 - 2. Returning to the world of sin relinquishes God, 2 Peter 2:20-22.
 - 3. Christians who routinely commit sin no longer esteem God as sacred to them, Hebrews 6:6.
 - 4. In part or wholly, sin in our lives means that we have joined the camp of the enemy of God, Satan’s soldiers of sin.
 - 5. Sin has reached epidemic proportions in our nation, whereby our nation is no longer “one nation under God,” Proverbs 14:34.
 - 6. Sometimes, even the children of God become proficient

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in debauchery, 1 Corinthians 5:1-13.

D. When anything rises to such importance in our lives that it crowds out God, we have turned our backs on God.

1. Material wealth is a primary impediment for many people, which for them amounts to turning their backs on God, 1 Timothy 6:6-10.
 2. We must have a greater concern for spiritual matters than material things if we want to be pleasing to God, Matthew 6:24, 33-34; 16:26.
 3. We must be submissive to our Benefactor, Jehovah, Luke 6:46.
- E. Wickedness perpetuates itself from generation to generation.
1. The sins of the parents are quickly learned by their children, Genesis 12:13; 20:2; 26:7.
 2. Before long, a sinful way of life becomes a family trait, inherited by practice from generation to generation.
 3. Parents need to muster the courage to break the family tradition of sin, beginning with themselves.
- F. Like God, despite loving our children or the children of God, there comes a time when we can no longer overlook their sins.
1. We cannot make excuses for our family members simply because we love them, Deuteronomy 21:18-21; 2 Samuel 7:14.
 2. If we truly want what is good for them in the short term as well as eternally, we will practice what has come to be known as hard love, Proverbs 19:18.

Conclusion:

1. Tragically, sometimes our children go awry, bringing great grief to us as parents.
2. Sometimes, it seems that otherwise dumb animals exhibit more wisdom than do our children from time to time.
3. We can identify with this type of disappointment.
4. Magnified many times, this disappointment is exactly how God hurts when humanity fails to comply with divine instruction and

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to manifest righteousness.

5. Like loving parents who gladly receive back to themselves wayward children, God awaits the joyful return of prodigal humanity, Luke 15:11-32.

Invitation:

1. God awaits with anticipation for every soul to take advantage of His mercy, Psalm 86:15.
2. To acquire initial salvation, every soul must be obedient to the faith, Romans 1:5; 16:26; 6:17; Mark 16:16.
3. To continue among the saved, erring Christians must acknowledge their sins and pray for forgiveness, 1 John 1:9; Acts 8:22.

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Wasted Sermons I Have Preached

1 Thessalonians 2:13

Thesis: To encourage auditors of God's Word to fully embrace it as such.

Song: "Wonderful Words of Life"

Introduction:

1. Famous biblical characters preached wasted sermons in their days.
 - a. Noah, Moses, Elijah, Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, Hosea, Amos, Zechariah and Malachi are some of the Old Testament preachers whose sermons were sometimes wasted on their hearers.
 - b. Jesus Christ, Peter, Stephen and Paul are some of the New Testament characters whose sermons were wasted often on their hearers.
2. Wasted sermons were an indictment of self-incrimination assigned in Scripture to both Old and New Testament people.
 - a. The prophet Isaiah opened the great Messianic Chapter 53 with a complaint against the children of God, Isaiah 53:1.
 - b. The apostle John recorded that Jesus Himself fared no better among the children of God than Isaiah did, John 12:37-38.
 - c. The apostle Paul assigned the same problem of wasted sermons to humanity in general, Romans 10:16.
 - d. Happily, though, in every age, there have always been some on whom God's Word in sermons preached have not been wasted, 1 Thessalonians 2:13.
3. Today, Gospel sermons, though they may be filled with God's eternal Word, frequently are wasted because of the frailty of humanity and the strength of sin.
 - a. When there is sin in our lives or when we are indifferent toward Gospel truth, even the finest preaching falls on deaf ears, Matthew 13:13-17.
 - b. The most thorough and heartfelt presentations of God's Word are wasted and useless without the appropriate**

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human response to them, Hebrews 4:2.

4. The affect of wasted sermons has eternal consequences.
 - a. Wasted sermons will cause the lost to remain lost.
 - b. Further, wasted sermons will cause saints to miss the eternal home for which they once longed.

Body:

I. I have preached wasted sermons about Christian worship.

- A. I have preached wasted sermons about giving.
 1. The New Testament teaches that Christians are to give upon the first day of each week according to their prosperity and as they purpose in their hearts, 1 Corinthians 16:1-2; 2 Corinthians 9:7.
 2. Likewise, in the Old Testament as well, the principle of giving back to God was well established, Proverbs 3:9; Exodus 25:1-2.
 3. However, my sermons regarding giving have been wasted on those who refuse to be guided by God's Word in this matter.
- B. I have preached wasted sermons about regular attendance of the assemblies of the church.
 1. Hebrews 10:25-31 condemns the willful abandonment of the assemblies of the church.
 2. Some who have not totally abandoned the assemblies but attend irregularly are nevertheless out of step or walking disorderly, from whom Paul commanded brethren to withdraw, 2 Thessalonians 3:6.
 3. I have preached wasted sermons about assembling with the saints to those who refuse to heed the Scriptures regarding this.
- C. I have preached wasted sermons about singing.
 1. The apostle Paul clearly, unmistakably taught that singing is the God-authorized musical offering to God in worship, Ephesians 5:19; Colossians 3:16.

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2. Every reference to worshipful music in the New Testament church is exclusively singing, Romans 15:9; 1 Corinthians 14:15, 26; Hebrews 2:12; 13:15; James 5:13; Acts 16:25.
 3. Nevertheless, I have preached wasted sermons about singing to those who refuse to be amenable to God's Word only.
- D. I have preached wasted sermons about preaching.
1. There is no doubt that God's preacher is obligated to preach all of God's Word, which the apostle Paul made certain that he did, Acts 20:20, 27.
 2. Further, irrespective of whether people appreciate it, preaching necessarily includes positive and negative lessons, which are designed to please God rather than men, 2 Timothy 4:2; Galatians 1:6-11.
 3. I have preached wasted sermons about preaching to those who were less interested in the Words of God and pleasing Him than pleasing themselves, 2 Timothy 4:3-4.

II. I have preached wasted sermons about Christian living.

- A. I have preached wasted sermons about marriage-divorce and remarriage.
1. Our Lord explicitly taught that there is only one God-approved reason by which an innocent person can divorce and later remarry, Matthew 19:3-9.
 2. The apostle Paul taught that divorce for any other reason requires the estranged spouses to remain celibate or reconcile, 1 Corinthians 7:10-11.
 3. I have preached wasted sermons about marriage-divorce and remarriage to those who choose to defy Almighty God regarding this biblical doctrine.
- B. I have preached wasted sermons about a variety of moral issues: adultery, fornication, homosexuality, dancing, immodesty, murder, drunkenness, etc.
1. Such sinful conduct is routinely and regularly condemned throughout the New Testament, Romans 1:17-32; 1 Corinthians 6:9-10; Galatians 5:19-21; Colossians 3:5-6;

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Revelation 21:8.

2. I have preached wasted sermons to those whose preferences set aside divine instruction about moral issues.
- C. I have preached wasted sermons about attaining spiritual maturity.
1. The early church (and doubtless the church in each generation) suffered from widespread spiritual immaturity, Hebrews 5:12-6:2; 1 Peter 2:2.
 2. I have preached wasted sermons about spiritual immaturity to those who chronically fail to fortify themselves with the Gospel of Christ.
- D. I have preached wasted sermons about imitating Christ, 1 Peter 2:21.
1. Christians have the moral obligation to imitate Jesus Christ, 1 John 2:6.
 2. Only the Christian walk with Christ can keep the saved in a saved condition, 1 John 1:7.
 3. However, I have preached wasted sermons about imitating Christ to those who were more impressed with the pleasures of sin for a season, Hebrews 11:25.

III. I have preached wasted sermons about Christian service.

- A. I have preached wasted sermons about evangelism.
1. The words of Jesus about taking the Gospel to all the world are still recorded in the Gospel records, Matthew 28:19-20; Mark 16:15-16; Luke 24:47.
 2. The words of James and Jude about rescuing fallen Christians still appear in their respective epistles, James 5:19-20; Jude 23.
 3. God's faithful children are the watchmen for the souls of erring saints and the lost world, Ezekiel 3:17-21.
 4. I have preached wasted sermons about evangelism to brethren who are unmoved by the lost souls everywhere around them.
- B. I have preached wasted sermons about benevolence.

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1. The apostle Paul plainly stated, repeatedly, that Christians (including collectively as the church) have a benevolent duty toward fellow Christians and secondarily toward non-Christians, 2 Corinthians 9:13; Galatians 6:10.
2. According to Jesus, our benevolence toward the less fortunate will determine as much as anything else where we spend eternity, Matthew 25:31-46.
3. Yet, I have preached wasted sermons about benevolence.

IV. I have preached wasted sermons about the church.

- A. I have preached wasted sermons about the eldership.
 1. The qualifications and responsibilities of elders to the church are clearly enumerated in the New Testament, 1 Timothy 3:1-7; Titus 1:5-9; Acts 20:28.
 2. Likewise, the responsibility of Christians to obey the elders is forcefully emphasized in the New Testament, Hebrews 13:7, 17, 24.
 3. Yet, I have preached wasted sermons about the eldership.
- B. I have preached wasted sermons about church discipline.
 1. Perhaps no New Testament instruction is more widely ignored by the church today than its responsibility to police itself, Romans 16:17-18; 1 Corinthians 5:1-13; 2 Thessalonians 3:6, 14; Titus 3:10, ASV; 3 John 9-10.
 2. Christians have a responsibility to be concerned about and attempt to restore erring brethren, Galatians 6:1-2; James 5:19-20.
 3. I have preached wasted sermons about church discipline.

Conclusion:

1. Sadly, every biblical topic in God's Word has been the subject of a wasted sermon on someone.
 - a. Without doubt, every sermon I have ever preached has been wasted on someone in the audiences before whom I have preached.
 - b. I have seen adults coloring in coloring books, clipping their

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nails, sleeping, talking, etc. while I have endeavored to preach the Holy Word of God.

- c. I continue to observe Christians who live disobedient and sometimes ungodly lives despite God's Word passing through my lips to their ears.
2. I am heartened, though, knowing that the preaching of God's Word has the potential of edifying others who gladly lend their ears to it.
 - a. It is possible for a sermon to contain biblical information that some auditor has not previously known.
 - b. Others who hear Gospel preaching may be caused to remember what they have previously learned.
 - c. Every truth seeker ought to be edified by listening to the whole counsel of God, over time, being preached in their presence.

Invitation:

1. Each of us decides whether the Bible holds for us numerous wasted sermons or the Words of life.
2. You who have never obeyed the Gospel of Christ by submitting to your Lord in immersion in water for the remission of your sins, is the Bible for you a collection of wasted sermons, Acts 2:38?
3. You who are unfaithful Christians, is the Bible for you a collection of wasted sermons, or will you come back, penitently to God, Acts 8:22; 1 John 1:9?

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The People Had a Mind to Work

Nehemiah 4:6

Thesis: To glean principles from Nehemiah 1-6 that can encourage God's people today to a greater level of service.

Song: "I Want To Be A Worker"

Introduction:

1. The ten northern tribes (known as the nation of Israel) disappeared into Assyrian captivity as they intermingled with foreigners in foreign lands following the fall of the city of Samaria in 722 B.C.
2. Rural citizens of the nation of Judah were taken away into Babylonian captivity in 606 B.C., though these captives were permitted to retain their ethnicity in exclusive neighborhoods.
 - a. More deportations of Jews from Judah occurred in 597 B.C.
 - b. Jerusalem fell to Babylon in 587 B.C.
3. Persia defeated Babylon in 538 B.C.
 - a. Two years later in 536 B.C., the Jews were permitted to return from captivity to Canaan and were led by Zerubbabel.
 - b. Ezra led more Jews back to Canaan in 458 B.C.
 - c. Nehemiah led still more Jews back to Canaan in 444 B.C.
4. About Nehemiah:
 - a. Son of Hachaliah, 1:1.
 - b. In Shushan the palace, 1:1.
 - c. King's cupbearer, 1:11.
 - d. This was a high and important position.
 - e. God's people often occupied high positions in foreign nations, e.g. Joseph, Esther, Daniel.
5. Nehemiah became aware of the dilapidated condition of Jerusalem and the reproach that it represented, 1:3.
 - a. Nehemiah wept, mourned and prayed, 1:4-11.
 - b. He acknowledged his sin and the sin of his Jewish brethren, 1:6-9.
 - c. The king observed Nehemiah's sadness, 2:2.

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- d. Nehemiah approached God in prayer before proposing his request to the king, 2:4.
- e. The king permitted Nehemiah to go to Jerusalem, 2:6.
- 6. Think about the principles involved in the rebuilding of the walls around Jerusalem.
 - a. Imagine what applications those principles have today to the work of the church.
 - b. Essentially, aside from the details, the principles involved in this success story relate to any success story to which the people of God, even today, commit themselves.

Body:

I. Preparation to rebuild Jerusalem's walls.

- A. Nehemiah didn't waste any time.
 - 1. He arose in the night to survey the condition of the walls, 2:12-15; some tasks must be addressed even at night.
 - 2. He took just a few men with him, 2:12; not every task requires many persons.
- B. Nehemiah observed the condition of the walls and anticipated the work that needed to be done.
 - 1. He made plans, set goals and considered the ability of the people.
 - 2. He realized that it was a good work and that God was with them, 2:18.
- C. Preparation completed, Nehemiah exhorted the people to undertake the rebuilding of the walls; good leaders are necessary to achieve any goal.
 - 1. He pointed out the condition; people must be caused to realize any challenge before they can accomplish its goals, 2:17.
 - 2. He encouraged the people to begin rebuilding the walls at once, 2:18; procrastination defeats mere good intentions.
 - 3. The residents of Jerusalem had been intimidated by the enormity of the task to rebuild; they had languished in self-defeat.
 - 4. They had given up and resigned themselves to suffer the

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scorn of their enemies.

5. The positive speech of Nehemiah uplifted the people's attitude and confidence.
- D. Their enemies, though, immediately attempted to discourage the people from rebuilding the walls.
1. Sanballat and Tobiah ridiculed the Jews and accused them of rebellion against the king, 2:19.
 2. Nehemiah repudiated the agitators and attributed the impending successful undertaking to God, 2:20.

II. The building of the walls.

- A. All had work to do; everyone joined in, 3:1-32; a coordinated and successful effort requires everyone to do his part.
- B. Sanballat and Tobiah continued to ridicule and try to raise opposition to the Jews, 4:1-3; there are critics of every good work and adversaries of every good worker.
- C. Nehemiah resorted to prayer for his consolation, 4:4-5; reliance on prayer cannot be over emphasized.
- D. The people continued to rebuild the walls despite opposition and because the people had a mind to work, 4:6; the power of determination cannot be easily stymied.

III. The enemies intensified their threats.

- A. Many enemy peoples conspired to war against the Jews to prevent the completion of the walls, 4:7-8; the number of those who oppose a good work does not itself validate that opposition.
- B. The Jews adopted procedures to permit them to continue to rebuild the walls.
1. They first prayed to God, 4:9.
 2. They armed themselves for defense and continued to rebuild the walls, 4:10-21.
 3. They remained ready to fight, if necessary, day and night by not departing to their homes outside the city and wearing their clothes except for washing, 4:22-23.
 4. The preparedness and resistance to the threats of war prevented their enemies from attacking.

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5. Nehemiah resolved interpersonal matters that otherwise could have hindered progress, 5:1-13; unrelated problems can derail a good work.
 6. The king made Nehemiah governor of Judah, 5:14-19; those who prove themselves in service are qualified to lead others.
- C. The enemies of the Jews sought to stop the completion of the walls through distraction of Nehemiah from his goal.
1. They repeatedly petitioned Nehemiah for a meeting in the plains of Ono, 6:1-4.
 2. Nehemiah responded, "...I am doing a great work, so that I cannot come down: why should the work cease, whilst I leave it, and come down to you?" 6:3.
 3. Nehemiah's enemies then resorted to false accusations, 6:5-8; unfortunately, good people engaged in good works are not immune to baseless accusations.
 4. Nehemiah reacted by praying to God, 6:9.
 5. Next, Nehemiah's enemies hired Jews who tried to frighten Nehemiah from completing the walls, 6:10-14; sometimes opposition arises from among those who are supposed to be part of the solution and fellow workers.
 6. Nehemiah, though, refused to be frightened from accomplishing the task to which God had appointed him.

IV. The wall was finished.

- A. The walls were completed in the astounding brief span of 52 days, 6:15; it is amazing what can be accomplished for the Lord when godly people dedicate themselves to the task at hand and refuse to be swayed from it.
- B. The enemies of the Jews were demoralized and forced to recognize that the rebuilding of the walls was the will of God, 6:16; often the success of godly workers sets aside former criticism, while at the same time glorifying God.
- C. The walls were completed despite the disloyalty of many of the Jews in Jerusalem who had formed ungodly alliances with the enemies of God's people, 6:17-19; disloyalty among

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the children of God saddens faithful workers, but it does not deter them from their labors.

- V. How the Jews could have responded to Nehemiah in a number of ways instead of adopting a mind to work.**
- A. “We tried that before, and it didn’t work.”
 - B. “What do you think we pay you for?”
 - C. “Who do you think you are to come here and tell us such things?”
 - D. “What’s wrong with things just the way they are?”
 - E. “You’re too negative; tell us only positive things that make us feel good.”
 - F. “Everyone in the community already knows what we believe and they don’t accept it.”
 - G. Fortunately, Nehemiah was an able leader and the people had a mind to work.

Conclusion:

1. Old Testament principles can bolster the faithful service of Christians, Romans 15:4.
2. The seemingly impossible is possible with the help of God, Philippians 4:13.
3. Faith that works is acceptable to God, James 2:14-26.
4. Qualified leaders must lead, and the rest must work together for the common goal, Titus 3:1.
5. Working together accomplishes much good and draws the workers closer to each other and God, 2 Corinthians 6:1.
6. **There’s no telling what good Christians can accomplish as long as they have a mind to work.**

Invitation:

1. The attitude that manifests itself in a “mind to work” is the same attitude and commitment required to become a child of God.
2. Do you have a mind to obey God and become a child of God, Acts 5:29; Hebrews 5:9; Acts 2:38?
3. If an erring child of God, do you have a mind to obey God once more, Acts 8:22?

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Rebuilding the Walls

Nehemiah 6:15

Thesis: To encourage heightened Christian Service.

Songs: “We’ll Work Till Jesus Comes,” “To the Work,” “I Want to be a Worker”

Introduction:

1. The account of Nehemiah and the rebuilding of the walls of Jerusalem is well known.
 - a. Upon Nehemiah’s arrival in Jerusalem, he surveyed the need to rebuild the walls, 2:11-16.
 - b. Next, he apprised his fellows of the need and presented a plan to rebuild the walls, 2:17-18.
 - c. They met great difficulties and resistance from within and from without, but they persisted, 2:19-20.
 - d. The walls were restored or rebuilt in 52 days, 6:15.
2. Whenever, wherever God’s people recognize their spiritual need, develop a biblical plan and decide to persevere despite difficulties, they will be able to build for the Lord.
 - a. Many congregations formerly were more glorious in numbers, leadership, biblical knowledge, Christian living and Christian service.
 - b. Several congregations suffer a slow death, continue to dwindle in number and finally close their doors forever.
 - c. Instead, they ought to survey their need, plan, persevere and rebuild — before it’s too late!
 - d. What will the church here do — see the need, plan, persevere and rebuild or dwindle and die?

Body:

I. The need, alias the mission of the church renewed.

A. Edification, 1 Corinthians 14:12.

1. Our children’s children need someplace to worship tomorrow.
2. Especially our young people need to be indoctrinated in

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the most holy faith and to be inoculated against religious error and ungodliness.

3. Each of us must allot enough time to study the Bible, assemble with God's people and effectively equip ourselves to practice Christianity.
 4. A precursor to a strong church is qualified and dedicated leadership (elders, preachers, teachers, etc.).
- B. Evangelism within and without, James 5:19-20; Mark 16:15-16.
1. Many Christians have gone AWOL, and by their absence, they contribute to the weakness of any congregation, Hebrews 10:25.
 2. Other Christians are far from us in spirit and only sometimes with us bodily, Hebrews 10:25 — precursor to AWOL.
 3. Often Christians practice immoralities or approve those who do, 1 Corinthians 5; Romans 1:32.
 4. Consequently, because a congregation's internal strength is sapped by AWOLS and weak brethren, coupled with the lack of infusion of converts from the world, they cannot sustain their numbers.

II. The solution.

- A. Addiction to the Faith, 1 Corinthians 16:15.
1. We must first give ourselves, 2 Corinthians 8:5.
 2. We must practice sacrificial living, 1 Chronicles 21:18-27; Romans 12:1-2.
 3. We must practice sacrificial service, 2 Timothy 3:12; Revelation 2:10; Jesus; Stephen.
 4. We must practice sacrificial giving, 2 Corinthians 8:2-3.
 5. We must immerse ourselves in the Word of God and once again become a 'Bible quot'n, Bible tot'n people,' 2 Timothy 2:15; 1 Peter 2:2.
 6. We must make time enough in our lives (i.e., use time management) to be Christians, Ephesians 5:16.
 7. We must have a deep-seated, biblically based conviction regarding the true identity of the one true church, alone

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over which Jesus is Head, Matthew 16:18; Ephesians 1:22-23; 4:4.

8. We must grow church leaders for today and tomorrow, Ephesians 4:11.
- B. Recover the fallen, 2 Peter 2:20-22.
 1. We can help prevent apostasy by fulfilling the second half of the great commission, Matthew 28:18-20.
 2. The best candidates, but sometimes among the most difficult to reach, are erring Christians, James 5:19-20; Jude 23.
 3. The second law of pardon affords Christians who have sinned to receive forgiveness, Acts 8:22; 1 John 1:9; 2:1-2.
 4. If all else fails, we must have the courage to hand off fallen Christians to Satan, 1 Corinthians 5:5; 2 Thessalonians 3:6, 14-15.
- C. Rescue the perishing, Luke 19:10.
 1. The Great Commission is obligatory on us individually and collectively, Mark 16:15-16; Luke 24:47; Acts 1:8; 2 Timothy 2:2.
 2. We must turn the world upside down with the Gospel, Acts 17:6.
 3. We must be faithful Christians, all day, every day, everywhere practicing and telling others about the Gospel, Acts 8:1, 4.
 4. Christians are the only lights for a sin-darkened world, Matthew 5:14-16; 2 Peter 1:19.

Conclusion:

1. We will not be able to rebuild this church if we do not...
 - a. ...first give ourselves, practice sacrificial living, practice sacrificial service, practice sacrificial giving and immerse ourselves in the Word of God.
 - b. ...firmly believe that we are members of the one true church, alone over which Jesus Christ is Head.
 - c. ...make an earnest, unrelenting effort to recover fallen brethren.

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- d. ...each of us personally acknowledge the obligatory nature of the Great Commission.
2. We will be able to rebuild this church if we...
 - a. ...recognize the need to rebuild.
 - b. ...pull together as one (i.e., no “we” and “they”).
 - c. ...each take personal responsibility for the present and future success of this congregation.
 - d. ...develop qualified leadership.

Invitation:

1. Are you part of the problem or part of the solution to the spiritual health of this church?
2. Erring Christians can be part of the solution by repenting, Acts 8:22; 1 John 1:9.
3. Unbaptized believers can help build up this church, first by being baptized for the remission of sins, Acts 2:38.

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Spiritual Coordination

**1 Corinthians 12:12-31; Romans 12:4-5;
Ephesians 1:22-23; 4:16; Colossians 1:18; 2:19**

Thesis: To impress on Christians the necessity of working together as a unit.

Introduction:

1. You may know someone who through illness or injury also has coordination problems.
 - a. Such may have resulted from a car accident, an elderly person who fell or a stroke.
 - b. In such cases, one or more body parts or limbs will not cooperate.
 - c. The result is a lack of bodily coordination.
 - d. Often, lack of coordination is accompanied by much frustration (anger).
2. Spiritually, the church is a body comprised of many members.
 - a. A lack of coordination in the spiritual body is no less tragic.
 - b. A lack of spiritual coordination in the spiritual body is no less frustrating to other members, elders, deacons, teachers, and preachers, as well as disapproved of God.
 - c. A member of a physical body not exercised becomes useless, whereas a member of the spiritual body that is not exercised also becomes useless.

Body:

I. All members are necessary, 1 Corinthians 12:12-22.

- A. The body is not one member, v. 14.
 1. A plurality of members comprise the spiritual body.
 2. All nationalities make up the pool from which members comprise the body (Jews and Gentiles).
 3. All social classes make up the pool from which members comprise the spiritual body — the church.
- B. Each member contributes to the overall function of the body

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and complements every other member, vs. 15-22.

1. For example, the eye guides the hands and feet.
2. Yet, a body of all eyes or all ears, etc. just wouldn't do!
3. The members of a body do different but necessary things — they need each other.

II. Members have different but related functions, Romans 12:4-5; 1 Corinthians 12:27-31.

- A. First Corinthians 12 and Romans 12 discuss in their contexts the application of different miraculous gifts in the early church.
 1. Miracles have ceased, 1 Corinthians 13:8-13; Ephesians 4:11-13.
 2. Miracles have been replaced with the written Word of God, which also records the miracles that confirmed the Word, Mark 16:20.
 3. However, the **principle** of each member of the body of Christ doing his part is applicable today.
- B. Then, there were miracle-assisted workers.
 1. V. 28, e.g. apostles, prophets, teachers.
 2. Ephesians 4:11 adds pastors (elders) and evangelists.
 3. Today, we have non-miracle-assisted workers, elders, deacons, preachers [evangelists], teachers and other members — assisted with the Word of God.

III. Members of the body are fitly joined together, 1 Corinthians 12:24; Ephesians 4:15-16; Colossians 2:19.

- A. Christians are added to the body (church) by the Lord, Acts 2:47.
 1. The body has been “**tempered**” (mixed, blended or combined — making one) together, 1 Corinthians 12:24.
 2. “**Fitly joined**” and “**compacted**” (knit) together, Ephesians 4:16.
 3. “**Joints,**” “**bands,**” “**knit together,**” “**nourished,**” Colossians 2:19.
- B. God does not want an **unfit, disjointed** spiritual body.
 1. However, the Lord's body is unfit, disjointed and uncoordinated when members ignore their personal, spiritual re-

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sponsibilities, e.g. worship, Bible classes, personal study, teaching and living the Gospel, working for the Lord with fellow Christians.

2. The Lord's church is unfit when its members practice immoralities, spout impure speech and exercise bad habits.
3. The Lord's church is uncoordinated when its members work against each other.

Conclusion:

1. Each member of a physical body **must do its part** toward the coordination of that body; likewise, each member of the spiritual body **must do his part** toward the coordination of that body, the church.
2. Malfunctioning body parts must be brought under control; are you a tongue or a leg out of control in the spiritual body of Christ?
3. Dysfunctional body parts are liabilities to the welfare and coordination of the body; are you a broken toe or a dead limb in the spiritual body of Christ?
4. Sometimes **dead** limbs or body parts must be amputated or surgically removed; sometimes a similar procedure is necessary in the spiritual body for the welfare of the whole body.

Invitation:

1. Don't you want to be a functioning member of the spiritual body of Christ?
2. If out of duty, out of service or guilty of public sins, won't you come back today?
3. If you haven't been baptized yet, won't you come today, be baptized for the remission of your sins and be added to the body by the Lord, Acts 2:38, 47?

Christian Service

Focused On Heaven

Hebrews 11:10, 14-16

Thesis: To motivate Christians to (1) develop a heightened awareness of their pilgrim status and (2) exercise a greater degree of dedicated service in their march toward heavenly portals.

Song: “Here We Are But Straying Pilgrims”

Introduction:

1. Did you think about Heaven this morning when you got up?
2. Did you specifically think sometime during the course of the day about going to Heaven?
3. Did you devise a plan for going to Heaven today or carefully review a plan you previously devised?
4. Would you say that you are focused on Heaven?
5. What about the church; would you say that it is focused on Heaven?
6. Without a clear and urgent focus on Heaven, it is highly improbable that we will ever arrive at that spiritual and eternal destination.
7. Even Christians — as individuals and as congregations — desperately need to focus on Heaven.

Body:

I. Focus on Heaven as individuals.

- A. The world in which we live presents a significant challenge.
 1. The world is a source of great temptation, 1 John 2:16.
 2. Yet, Christians must live **in** the world without becoming **of** the world, John 17:14-16.
 3. We are confronted with “ungodliness” and “worldly lusts,” Titus 2:12.
 4. The temptation is great to fit in, adopt the American Dream of material prosperity, Matthew 16:26.
 5. The purposeful goal of the society in which we live is to amass this world’s goods — nice homes, cars, boats, clothes, jewelry and techno toys, 1 Timothy 6:9.
 6. The tendency is great to forget God — even when pursuing

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honorable vocations, James 4:13-16; Luke 12:16-21.

7. Amusement and pleasure are primary pursuits of our neighbors and Christians, too, which often corrupt the children of God, Hebrews 11:25.
- B. The failure to focus on Heaven manifests itself in a number of ways.
 1. Church attendance lags, especially in addition to Sunday morning worship, Hebrews 10:25.
 2. Christians fail to purpose their giving according to their prosperity, 2 Corinthians 9:7; 1 Corinthians 16:1-2.
 3. Reading and studying the Bible are sorely neglected — virtually non-existent, 1 Timothy 4:13; 2 Timothy 2:15.
 4. Consequently, God's people suffer for a lack of knowledge, Hosea 4:6; Ephesians 4:14.
 5. Devoid of knowledge, God's children are characterized with a serious lack of conviction, James 1:8; 4:8; Matthew 6:24.
 6. Even Christians fill the void of divine knowledge and wisdom with vain human knowledge and wisdom, 1 Corinthians 1:19-21; 3:18-20.
 7. Unfortunately, Christians form greater friendships with the world than with brethren — coworkers, neighbors, family, etc., James 4:4; 2 Corinthians 6:14-18.
 8. Without a firmer biblical foundation and support from Christian fellowship, our homes fall apart — marital problems, unconverted children, Ephesians 5:22-25, 33; 6:1-4.
 9. Not focused on Heaven, the child of God is neither evangelistic toward erring Christians nor the other lost, James 5:19-20; Mark 16:15-16.
 10. Without a focus on Heaven, Christians become immoral, practice abominable sins, dress immodestly, dance, lie, gamble, assault people, murder and commit adultery, Galatians 5:19-21; 1 Corinthians 5.
 11. Taking their focus off Heaven, many Christians live like heathen and yet have the audacity to expect to go to

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Heaven, Galatians 6:7-8.

- C. How can we improve our focus on Heaven?
1. Joyfully attend every assembly (including Gospel meetings, etc.) plus Bible classes, Psalm 122:1; Acts 2:46.
 2. Dedicate a liberal portion of your material resources to the work of the Lord, 2 Corinthians 9:13; Mark 12:42-44.
 3. Feed on the Word of God, 1 Peter 2:2; Hebrews 5:11-6:2.
 4. Consequently, you will know saving truth, John 8:32.
 5. Spend as much time in Christian fellowship as you can, Romans 12:10; 1 Peter 2:17.
 6. Solidify the home with a solid biblical foundation, 2 Timothy 1:5; 3:14-15.
 7. Replace profane activities with the hope of Heaven coupled with purity and zeal for good works, Titus 2:12-14; John 17:18.
 8. Remember, Christians do not make sinning a major characteristic of their lives; we do not continue a sinful lifestyle, 1 John 3:8-9; 5:18; 1:7-2:1.
 9. Be conscious of the omniscience of the Godhead, Psalm 139:1-6; John 2:24-25, and the Divine willingness to save us, Psalm 46:1; 1 Timothy 1:12; 2 Peter 3:9; 1 Corinthians 10:13.

II. Focus on Heaven as congregations.

- A. The Lord's church faces numerous challenges from without and from within.
1. There is the challenge to be popular with government, Acts 4:18; 5:27-28.
 2. Other religions chastise the church for being exclusive, Acts 14:8-19.
 3. There is the challenge to please the membership, 2 Timothy 4:1-4.
 4. Then, there is the pressure of trying to grow numerically in an often disinterested and hostile world, Acts 17:16-21, 32; 16:22-24.
 5. Facing the quandary of what to do and how to do it, the

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church often fails to plan and consequently fails to do anything, Matthew 25:14-30; James 4:17.

6. Often the Lord's church is apathetic, Revelation 3:14-17.
 7. The church sometimes becomes jaded to sin in its midst, 1 Corinthians 5.
 8. The church is sorely challenged by false teachers whose motives are self-serving, Romans 16:17-18; 2 Peter 2:1-3.
- B. The failure to focus on Heaven by any congregation manifests itself variously.
1. The U.S. government has interfered with church discipline (leveling heavy monetary penalties), restricts public proclamation of some moral issues (homosexuality), requires equal hiring opportunities for non-church members and even immoral persons in so-called para-church organizations. How ought the Lord's church respond, Acts 4:19-20; 5:29?
 2. In other nations, members of the churches of Christ are either imprisoned indefinitely or severely restricted in practicing Christianity, especially in evangelism. How should the church respond, Revelation 2:10; Acts 7:54-60?
 3. Many congregations pursue ecumenism with their denominational neighbors — pulpit exchanges, joint services, ministerial alliances and interdenominational fellowships.
 4. To please memberships, church leaders ignore Bible doctrine on marriage, divorce and remarriage, church discipline, fellowship with non-Christians, etc., Matthew 19:9; 2 Thessalonians 3:6; 1 John 1:3; 2 John 9-11.
 5. Attempting to swell numbers, the church has been pressured by false teachers to change the plan of salvation, employ entertainment (choirs and drama), teach open fellowship, 2 John 9-11, or substitute "union" for "unity," 1 Corinthians 1:10-13.
 6. Regrettably, most congregations make no or few plans for the future, and therefore, do little beyond show up at the appointed times and perhaps have one or two Gospel meetings.

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We are largely content to sit on padded pews in air-conditioned buildings priding ourselves in our orthodoxy!

7. Typically, congregations invest more time and money in church property — lawn care, constructing and maintaining buildings or the overhead — than they do in the direct missions of the church.
 8. One *patriarch* in a local congregation put it this way when asked about the prospect of the church growing in the community: “Absolutely none! Everybody already knows what we believe and they don’t believe it.” Others say, “We tried that before and it didn’t work.” **Apathy and indifference are perhaps the besetting sins among us!**
 9. We no longer blush at sin, Jeremiah 6:15, even if the most abominable variety is displayed openly among our members (e.g., adultery).
 10. False teachers in the church are neither tested with the Scriptures, 1 John 4:1, nor challenged by elders, Titus 1:8-11. Elders ought to stop false teachers immediately upon proclamation of doctrinal error instead of providing pulpits from which they can widen their damnable influence.
- C. How can we improve our focus on Heaven as the church?
1. Regarding government interference with the Lord’s church, we need to ensure we comply to the best of our abilities, perhaps with some legal advice, but without compromising divine mandate. Then, we have no choice but to persevere despite retribution, Acts 5:29.
 2. **Our fellowship is exclusively with those who are in fellowship with God**, 1 John 1:3; 2 John 9-11.
 3. Unlike the Catholic Church and denominations that decide upon and change doctrine from time to time, the churches of Christ are dependent on **absolute, unchanging, biblical doctrine**, Galatians 1:6-9; 2 Peter 1:20-21; Jude 3. We do not have divine permission to redefine marriage, divorce and remarriage, Christian fellowship or ignore church discipline.

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4. Though unpopular, we must adhere to the divine redemptive plan, not substitute “union” for “unity” and rely on the Gospel instead of gimmickry or entertainment to promote church growth, Romans 1:16.
5. Congregations must make plans for the future; otherwise they plan to fail and to join the congregations that die-out each week, Nehemiah 2:12-16!
6. We need to get back to the Lord’s business — the Great Commission — and stop spending so much time and money on expedients. Building meetinghouses neither completely satisfies our obligations nor justifies (or sustains) our existence, Matthew 28:18-20.
7. We need to always abound in the work of the Lord and be zealous of good works — irrespective of how little favorable response we see, 1 Corinthians 15:58; Titus 2:14. We cannot afford to be apathetic.
8. We need to view sin for what it is and not allow it to continue unaddressed in our churches — or else, Revelation 2-3! If church discipline *splits the church*, it needs to split or come out from among them, 2 Corinthians 6:17. I would much rather do what God requires than pass judgment on the Word of God, John 12:48; Revelation 20:12.
9. We sorely need qualified and courageous elders today who will protect the church from wolves in sheep’s clothing, Acts 20:29; Matthew 7:15.

Conclusion:

1. Individually as Christians and collectively as the church, we simply must focus on Heaven.
2. Our souls’ salvation depends on it.
3. The eternal redemption of others, in part, also depends on the focus we have on Heaven!
4. We must never forget that we are only pilgrims ever marching toward the heavenly horizon. This earth is not our home!

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5. We must remember who we are, from whence we came and where we are going.
6. Brethren, **let's go to Heaven together!**

Invitation:

1. If you have not been baptized for the remission of your sins, your focus hitherto has not been on Heaven, Acts 2:38.
2. Or, you may be a child of God whose focus on Heaven has wavered whereby you have sinned publicly, Acts 8:22.

Christian Service

Seek Ye First the Kingdom of God

Matthew 6:24-34

Thesis: To inspire Christians to greater service in the kingdom with less concern and anxiety for material matters.

Song: “Seek Ye First the Kingdom of God”

Introduction:

1. This is not a lesson directed primarily to the unsaved, but rather it is primarily intended for the saved.
 - a. The saved need to know how to remain saved and to be encouraged toward that end.
 - b. In addition, the saved need encouragement from time to time about taking the Gospel to others that they might be saved, too.
2. Matthew 6:33 contains a charge from Jesus Christ by which both the saved and the unsaved can realize spiritual and material benefits.
 - a. Every accountable person needs to put first things first!
 - b. Christians as well as unbaptized believers need to put God’s kingdom first in their lives.
 - c. Does God guide your life through His inspired Word, the Bible, Proverbs 3:5-6?
3. To help us put first things first and put God’s kingdom first in our lives, the following must occur.
 - a. We must seek the law of God earnestly, i.e. study the Bible daily, 2 Timothy 2:15; Acts 17:11.
 - b. We must apply the Gospel to our own lives, Romans 2:1.
 - c. We must teach the Gospel to others, Hebrews 5:11-14; Ezra 7:10.

Body:

- I. **Matthew 6:24-32 lists the physical necessities of life for which all men seek, sometimes with anxiousness.**
 - A. Verse 24 advises us that we cannot serve two masters with equal devotion.
 1. We cannot successfully serve our divine master, Who is

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Jesus Christ, while serving the adversary, the devil, 2 Corinthians 6:14-17.

2. We cannot will to be rich and still serve God with the devotion He deserves, 1 Timothy 6:9-10.
- B. Verse 25 warns followers of Christ not to be overly concerned about material matters.
1. The pursuit of this world's riches leads to much anxiety.
 2. Service to Jesus Christ leads to peace of mind and contentment.
 3. Obviously, the work ethic and responsible behavior whereby one may provide for his family and himself is not diminished, 1 Timothy 5:8; 2 Thessalonians 3:10; Romans 12:11.
 4. The acquisition of food, clothing and shelter is the chief concern of the worldly, but the children of God ought to realize the importance of seeking the kingdom of God first.
- C. Verse 26 illustrates the providence of God toward birds, the same providence of God on which the children of God should rely while seeking the kingdom first.
- D. Verse 27 demonstrates the futility of anxiousness over material prosperity; worrying never solved anything.
- E. Verses 28-29 further illustrate with references to wildflowers the providence of God toward His creation, of which mankind is part; therefore, there is no reason for mankind to exhibit more concern for material things over spiritual matters.
- F. Verses 30-31 state that the lilies of the field for which God cares are insignificant when compared to mankind.
1. Jesus explicitly instructs the children of God not to be anxious or worrisome about material prosperity.
 2. Jesus affirms that the providence of God is reliable, so that man need not have more concern for material things than for spiritual matters.
 3. When we become obsessed with the quest for acquiring material prosperity, we exhibit a lack of faith in God.
- G. Verse 32 refers to the Gentiles to represent all persons who

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are not the children of God and who seek primarily material prosperity in this life.

1. Non-Christians are not aware of the providence of God.
2. The chief goal of non-Christians is the acquisition of things!
3. Jesus intended to contrast the priority of non-Christians with the priority of Christians.
4. Therefore, Christians act like non-Christians when they prioritize their lives respecting this material world in which we live, instead of seeking first the kingdom of God.

II. Matthew 6:33 notes that it is more important to seek the kingdom of God than the physical necessities of life.

A. Definition of terms:

1. “Seek” means to search or strive for.
2. “Ye” refers to those who determine to be the children of God.
3. “First” means primarily, above or before all else.
4. “Kingdom of God” refers to the Christian’s daily goal as well as the eternal goal (when the kingdom is removed to Heaven).
5. “His righteousness” refers to right doing or according to God and His Word.
6. “All things” refers to the material blessings intimated in the preceding verses, i.e. food, clothes, shelter.

B. The contrast of life goals is sharp and vivid.

1. Non-Christians make their chief aim in life the amassing of wealth.
2. Christians will attain physical blessings anyway through the providence of God as they seek first the kingdom of God.
3. Therefore, **Christians should not act like non-Christians who diminish spiritual pursuits in favor of material prosperity.**

III. Matthew 6:34 records Jesus directing those who would truly follow Him to prioritize their lives to seek spiritual matters and that the physical necessities of life will also come our way.

A. Life on this planet is accompanied with varying measures of

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material blessings anyway, Matthew 5:45.

- B. Seeking the kingdom of God is more important because its blessings are more enduring.
 - 1. Christians receive blessings in this life that are not afforded non-Christians, Romans 8:28; Ephesians 1:3.
 - 2. Blessings afforded Christians outlast planet earth, Revelation 2:10; 2 Peter 3:9-11.

IV. What should “seek ye first the kingdom of God” mean to us?

- A. Ordinarily, if we seek the kingdom of God first, we will have enough of this world’s physical blessings anyway, 1 Timothy 6:6-8.
- B. When we do seek the kingdom of God first, we will devote ourselves to swelling the borders of the kingdom of God with the infusion of converts to the Gospel.
 - 1. Every Christian’s **vocation** needs to be Christianity!
 - 2. Every Christian’s **avocation** needs to be the way in which he makes a living for his family and himself.
 - 3. Christianity should be our whole life and everything else, including material prosperity, should be secondary to us.
- C. When we arrive at the persuasion that nothing in this life is more important than spiritual matters, we will finally be seeking the kingdom first.
 - 1. Christians will practice Christianity, inclusive of Christian living.
 - 2. Christians will long for and seek every opportunity to spend time with other Christians and to worship God every time they can.
 - 3. Individual Christians and congregations will make every effort to influence the world with the Gospel of Christ, and Christians will truly be lighthouses in a sin darkened world, Matthew 5:16.

Conclusion:

- 1. God’s providence coupled with honest labor will abundantly

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provide for faithful children of God.

- a. God's provisions may seem meager compared to our high hopes.
 - b. However, God's provisions will be sufficient.
2. Therefore, we can and must put the kingdom of God first in our lives.

Invitation:

1. Are you choked with the cares of this world?
 - a. If so, the Word of God will not grow in your heart, Luke 8:14.
 - b. Cares for this life will be a snare in the last day, Luke 21:34.
2. Erring Christians who are willing to put Christ and His kingdom first in their lives again can do so through penitence and prayer, Acts 8:22; 1 John 1:9.
3. Unbaptized believers can put Christ and His kingdom first in their lives by submitting to God's plan of salvation, which appears upon the pages of the New Testament, Mark 16:16; Luke 13:3; Matthew 10:32-33; 28:18-20.

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Seeking and Serving the Lord

1 Chronicles 28:9

Thesis: To encourage greater activity in seeking and serving the Lord.

Song: “Seeking the Lost”

Introduction:

1. In the context surrounding 1 Chronicles 28:9:
 - a. King David assembled all the chief men of Israel.
 - b. He then announced that God had selected Solomon from among David’s sons to be the next king.
 - c. He also announced that God had chosen Solomon to build the Temple. (David had prepared the materials to build the Temple, but God had forbidden him to build it because he was a man of war).
2. David’s inspired advice and instruction to Solomon appears in 1 Chronicles 28:9.
 - a. The instruction was befitting the monumental task Solomon was about to undertake soon — to be king and to build the Temple.
 - b. Shortly after the context of 1 Chronicles 28, David died and Solomon became king, 1 Chronicles 29.
3. Today, we intend to examine the instruction David gave to Solomon.
 - a. This charge to Solomon is well worth application to us.
 - b. We need to seek and serve God with the same active intensity with which Solomon was charged.

Body:

I. Know thou the God of thy father.

- A. The reference is to the Lord God Whom we also worship.
 1. There is no justification here for worshipping false gods or ancestor worship.
 2. David was not advising Solomon that religiously whatever-

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er was good enough for mom and dad was good enough for him, too — Old Time Religion.

3. Instead, like Joshua years earlier, David commanded Solomon to worship the true God Whom he worshipped, Joshua 24:15.

B. Know thou God.

1. Know implies an intimate awareness of God and His Word that is only attainable through study, 2 Timothy 2:15.
2. We are to know God as Creator and Ruler, Psalm 100:3.

C. Knowing God equates to obeying God.

1. We know that we know God through obedience to God, 1 John 2:3.
2. Empty professions of God instead of obeying will result in God refusing to acknowledge those who are disobedient, Matthew 7:21-23.
3. God will deny knowing or approving of those who are unprepared (and thereby disobedient), Matthew 25:12.

II. Serve Him with a perfect heart.

A. Faithful children of God are servants of God.

1. We must serve God foremost, Matthew 6:24.
2. The children of God must serve God only as God and wholeheartedly, 1 Samuel 7:3; Joshua 22:5; Deuteronomy 6:13.
3. We must serve Jesus Christ, Colossians 3:24.
4. Like the Thessalonians, man needs to turn from sin and “serve the living and true God,” 1 Thessalonians 1:9; Hebrews 9:14.

B. What is a perfect heart?

1. Mankind never attains sinless perfection, but he can serve God with a heart that has been perfected or made complete.
2. The perfect heart selflessly follows the Lord, Matthew 19:21.
3. Completeness or perfection is our goal, Matthew 5:48.
4. Though perfection is our goal, we are not perfect or complete in this life, Philippians 3:12.
5. Yet, the Bible calls faithful children of God perfect,

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1 Corinthians 2:6; Philippians 3:15; 2 Corinthians 13:11; Ephesians 4:13; Colossians 1:28; 4:12; Hebrews 12:23; 13:21; James 3:2.

III. With a willing mind.

A. It is not enough that men outwardly do the will of God.

1. For instance, to be acceptable to God, giving in New Testament worship must not only be according to one's prosperity, but it must be as one purposes in his heart, 1 Corinthians 16:1-2; 2 Corinthians 9:6-7.
2. For instance, he who would serve as an elder must "desire" and be willing to serve, in addition to meeting the qualifications set forth in the New Testament for elders, 1 Timothy 3:1; 1 Peter 5:2.
3. God wants willing disciples, Judges 5:2.

B. The willing mind is not self-willed.

1. Self-willed men cannot be elders, Titus 1:7.
2. Often, ungodly persons are self-willed, 2 Peter 2:10.
3. The "will worship" that some practice is an example of being self-willed and ungodly, Colossians 2:23.

IV. The Lord searcheth all hearts and understandeth all the imaginations of the thoughts.

A. The Lord examines the hearts of men to discern whether they are "perfect."

1. God shall try the works of men with fire, 1 Corinthians 3:13.
2. God shall try men's hearts, 1 Thessalonians 2:4; 1 Peter 4:12.
3. Since God will examine us, we should first examine ourselves, 2 Corinthians 13:5; Galatians 6:4.

B. Our omniscient God will judge even the secrets of men.

1. Nothing can be secreted from God at the Great Judgment, Ecclesiastes 12:13-14; 2 Corinthians 5:10.
2. Not only can no one fool God in Judgment, plea-bargaining will not be allowed, Matthew 7:21-23.

V. If thou seek Him, He will be found of thee.

A. Anyone who seeks the Lord will find Him.

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1. This is a comforting hope for us embedded in Scripture.
 2. The world is just not looking for God or looking for God in the wrong place.
 3. Jesus assures in Scripture that seekers will be finders, Matthew 6:33; Luke 11:10.
- B. One cannot find God unless he seeks Him.
1. God can be found through the Gospel.
 2. God cannot be found in the creeds and institutions devised by men.

VI. If thou forsake Him, He will cast thee off forever.

- A. God turns from those who turn from Him.
1. God can save, but He will not save those who turn from Him in sin, Isaiah 59:1-3.
 2. God responds to those who respond to Him on His conditions, John 9:31.
- B. God will cast off the unrighteous for eternity.
1. The general resurrection will be followed by the assignment of the righteous and the unrighteous respectively to Heaven and to Hell, John 5:28-29.
 2. There are only two eternal destinies awaiting accountable souls at the Judgment, Matthew 25:46.
 3. After the return of Jesus Christ, disobedient souls will be banished from the presence of God to a place of unending torment, 2 Thessalonians 1:7-9.

Conclusion:

1. David counseled Solomon to seek and to serve the Lord.
 - a. Solomon was to know, to serve and to seek.
 - b. No one can render acceptable service to God while being religiously apathetic or indifferent, Revelation 2-3.
2. To forsake God has grave consequences.
 - a. God can be forsaken through sins of commission and sins of omission, James 4:17.
 - b. Sin of any kind that is still chargeable against a person when

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he dies results in spiritual death, Romans 6:23.

3. Each of us needs to actively serve God.
 - a. Indifference and apathy (lukewarmness) will eternally condemn one.
 - b. Hebrews 11 lists a number of Bible characters who actively served God, who serve as our examples of godly service.
 - c. Let each of us determine to not be like Solomon who failed the solemn charge given to him by his father, David.

Invitation:

1. Rather, let us imitate the faithful of Hebrews 11, 1 Corinthians 11:1.
2. Faithful service begins with obedience to the Gospel and continues based on continued obedience of the Gospel, Romans 1:16; 6:17; Mark 16:16.

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Here Am I

Genesis 22:1; 1 Samuel 3:4

Thesis: To emphasize the need for the child of God to be willing and ready to serve God.

Song: “Who Will Follow Jesus”

Introduction:

1. The context of 1 Samuel 3:2-10 records God’s call of Samuel to be His prophet.
 - a. Young Samuel was a servant to and instructed by the prophet and priest Eli.
 - b. Samuel exhibited a willingness to serve, saying, “Here am I.”
 - c. Samuel exhibited a readiness to be directed by God, saying, “Speak for thy servant heareth.”
2. There are similarities between God’s calling of Samuel and God’s calling of Christians.
 - a. Biblically accurate religious instruction is invaluable also today for those who become Christians and prepare to serve God.
 - b. God selects servants from among those who have chosen Him as Lord.
 - c. Christians must exhibit a willingness to serve: “Here am I.”
 - d. Christians also must exhibit a readiness to be directed by God: “Speak for thy servant heareth.”
3. There are some differences, too, between the call of Samuel and the call of Christians today.
 - a. Samuel heard a verbal, audible call from God, whereas people now are called to be Christians and servants of God through the written Word of God — the New Testament.
 - b. Samuel was singled out among other Israelites to serve God, but today all men are called to be Christians and to be servants of God, 1 Corinthians 12:12-31.
4. Let’s consider for a few moments the ramifications for us of the principles embedded in the phrases: “Here am I” and “Speak for

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thy servant heareth.”

Body:

I. “Here Am I.”

- A. This sentence displays an attitude of submissiveness and humility before the higher will of God.
 - 1. Likewise, every Christian needs to demonstrate these characteristics as a faithful child of God.
 - 2. Both testaments enjoin humanity to pursue humility before God, Micah 6:8; James 4:10.
- B. The Bible records the names and deeds of numerous godly persons who were willing and ready to serve God.
 - 1. Noah, Genesis 6:22; 7:5.
 - 2. Abraham, Genesis 12:1-4; 22:1-3, “Here am I.”
 - 3. Jesus Christ, John 6:38; 4:34.
 - 4. Dorcas, Acts 9:36.
 - 5. Especially the New Testament enjoins on Christians a willingness and a readiness to serve God, Titus 3:1; 1 Peter 3:15; 2 Timothy 2:21.
 - 6. The apostle Paul commended the readiness of brethren, 2 Corinthians 9:2.
- C. Other Bible characters, though they were servants of God, exhibited a reluctance to perform the tasks for which God selected them.
 - 1. Moses was afraid of ridicule, failure and rejection when God called him, so he resisted God’s call to service five times, Exodus 3:11, 13; 4:1, 10, 13.
 - 2. Jonah fled from the mission on which God sent him, Jonah 1:1-3.
 - 3. Esther was afraid for her life, but served God anyway, Esther 4:8-14.
 - 4. God became angry at Moses for his reluctance to serve, Exodus 4:14; Mordecai was provoked by Esther’s reluctance to serve, Esther 4:13-14; our reluctance to serve

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God angers Him and provokes our brethren.

- D. Christians today must serve God in whatever capacity He has chosen for them to perform.
 - 1. Whether willingly and ready or reluctantly and with apprehension, Christians must serve God or risk divine disfavor — now and eternally.
 - 2. No Christian can or should do everything that needs to be done in the service of God, but there is something for each child of God to do, 1 Corinthians 12:12-31.
 - 3. It is not enough to be Christians, but we must serve God, too, Ephesians 4:1; Philippians 3:14; 1 Thessalonians 2:12; 2 Peter 1:10; Titus 2:14.

II. “Speak for Thy servant heareth.”

- A. This is precisely the attitude that Christians must have regarding God and His Word, which every non-Christian and erring Christian rejects.
 - 1. The apostle Peter taught that Christians are obligated to resort exclusively to divine instruction in religion, 1 Peter 4:11.
 - 2. The apostle Paul taught that anyone who alters the Word of God warrants divine condemnation, Galatians 1:6-9.
 - 3. Jesus Christ repeatedly charged humanity with the urgency of hearing the Godhead exclusively, Matthew 7:21; John 12:48; Revelation 22:18-19.
 - 4. People who partially or wholly reject the Word of God bring divine condemnation upon themselves: erring Christians, non-Christians, denominationalists, Buddhists, Muslims, Jews, atheists, agnostics, etc.
 - 5. In addition, any portion of Scripture that Christians or the church refuse to teach or to practice (if applicable) is the extent to which Christians and the church condemn themselves.
- B. The churches of Christ serve the Lord exclusively according to the Word of God.
 - 1. The Bible alone is our only source of faith and doctrine

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(religious authority), 2 Timothy 3:16-17.

2. We purposely worship and serve God as the churches of Christ worshipped and served God 2,000 years ago, Romans 16:16.
 3. In contrast, denominations and world religions owe their origin to worldly wisdom and human doctrine; therefore, neither denominations or world religions can serve God acceptably.
- C. Today, Christians serve God by doing what the Word of God instructs them to do.
1. Knowledge of God's will must be translated into action, James 4:17.
 2. Unless our allegiance to Jesus Christ is translated into action, we have no basis for addressing Him as Lord, Luke 6:46.
 3. The word "serve" itself is indicative of action and following Jesus Christ, John 12:26.
 4. Jesus Christ is our best example for serving God, Matthew 20:28.
 5. Christian service is noticeable even to non-Christians, whereby they will take notice and glorify God, Matthew 5:16.
 6. Christians also need to prod fellow Christians to serve God, Hebrews 10:24.

Conclusion:

1. Both phrases, "Here am I" and "Speak for thy servant heareth," demonstrate willingness and readiness with which every Christian must determine to serve God.
2. The godly attitude of Samuel, if imitated by the church and Christians, will lead us to new heights of service to God.
3. Are you willing and ready to serve God; if so, say within yourselves, 'Here am I, speak for thy servant heareth.'

Invitation:

1. Willingness and readiness to serve God begins with becoming a child of God and continues with the same willingness and

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readiness to serve as obedient children of God.

2. Non-Christians must submit themselves to the Word of God and bring themselves to believe, repent of sins, profess Jesus as Lord and be immersed for the remission of sins, Romans 10:9-10, 17; Acts 2:38.
3. Erring Christians must bring themselves once again under the jurisdiction of the Word of God, repenting and praying, Acts 8:22; 1 John 1:9.

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God Is an Equal Opportunity Employer

Galatians 3:28

Thesis: To emphasize the opportunity and the responsibility to serve God.

Introduction:

1. Galatians 3:28 teaches that all races, all classes of society and both genders can be one in Jesus Christ.
2. Both testaments of the Bible demonstrate that God does not discriminate against anyone on the basis of age, family heritage or educational opportunities.
 - a. Moses was 80 when God called him to deliver the Israelites and 120 when Israel arrived at the Jordan River.
 - b. Samuel was a child when God called him to be a prophet; likewise, David was a youth when God called him to serve Him.
 - c. Ruth was from hated and evil Moab; on the other hand, John the Baptist was from a priestly family.
 - d. The apostle Paul received the best available education of his day, whereas Peter, Andrew, James and John were uneducated fishermen.
3. God is no respecter of persons, Acts 10:34; Romans 2:11.
4. However, God does discriminate on the basis of one's religious belief or the lack of religious belief, Hebrews 5:8-9; John 12:48.

Body:

I. After one's compliance with God's plan of salvation, God does not hold against him his past sins.

- A. One's past is contrasted with his present faithfulness to God, Romans 6:17.
- B. The children of God were drawn from every imaginable type of sin and debauchery to become Christians, 1 Corinthians 6:9-11; Colossians 1:21; 3:5-7; Ephesians 2:2; Titus 3:3-5.
- C. The great apostle Paul himself had been responsible previous to his conversion for the death and the imprisonment of Christians, Acts 7:58; 8:1; 9:1-2; 22:3-5; 26:9-12.

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- D. The apostle Peter had denied Jesus Christ, and the other disciples fled.
- E. God does not remember against anyone the sins he has discharged through forgiveness, Hebrews 8:12; 10:15-17.
- F. God's plan of salvation for people living in the New Testament era is fundamental to the forgiveness of sins.
 - 1. One must turn to God's Word exclusively, Romans 10:17; Galatians 1:6-9; 2 John 7-9.
 - 2. One must believe that Jesus is the Christ, John 8:24.
 - 3. One must repent of his sins, Acts 17:30.
 - 4. One must publicly acknowledge that Jesus is the Christ, Romans 10:9-10; Acts 8:37.
 - 5. One must be immersed in water for the remission of sins, Acts 2:38; 22:16; Mark 16:16; 1 Peter 3:21; Romans 6:3-5; Colossians 2:12.
 - 6. One must continue to be faithful to Jesus, Matthew 24:13; Revelation 2:10; 1 Corinthians 15:58.

II. God permits and expects each Christian to work at Christianity.

- A. If there is any work for Christians to do (and there is), then Galatians 3:28 implies that all races, all classes of society and both genders can and must work.
- B. However, Galatians 3:28 does not teach that each Christian has the same task to perform.
 - 1. For instance, God designated different roles for men and women in both the home and in the church, 1 Corinthians 14:34; Titus 2:3-5.
 - 2. God charged men with leading Christian worship, leading the church and being responsible for the home, 1 Timothy 2:8-15; 3:1-13; Ephesians 5:21-33; 6:4.
- C. Yet, Christians have many mutual responsibilities.
 - 1. The Parable of the Talents teaches that each child of God must do his part or anticipate divine disfavor, Matthew 25:14-30.
 - 2. Christians are many members of one spiritual body, where

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each child of God must do his or her part for the body to be coordinated and effective, Romans 12:4-8; 1 Corinthians 12:12-31.

III. An equal opportunity employer is useless without willing workers.

- A. Any congregation where its members do not work together for Christ is a paralyzed, uncoordinated and lame spiritual body.
- B. When it comes to fruitful works for the Lord, each child of God is either part of the solution or he is part of the problem.
- C. No one can or should do everything, but everybody can and must do something.
- D. Jesus spoke at length of Christianity in the vein of individual responsibility, for which there will be an individualized Judgment, Matthew 25:31-46; 2 Corinthians 5:10.

IV. Moses made the mistake of offering excuses to God, hoping to avoid doing what God assigned him to do.

- A. Moses' attempt to evade his responsibility angered God, Exodus 3:11, 13; 4:1, 10, 13.
- B. Esther's uncle warned her of the severe personal consequences were she to evade her responsibility to rescue her people, Esther 4:8-14.
- C. Jesus illustrated the tragic consequences of ignoring the invitation of God to feast with Him in His kingdom, Luke 14:16-24.

Conclusion:

1. There is a place of service for each child of God in the church of God.
2. The apostle Paul referred to irresponsible persons who would not work for a living, which in principle, is equally important respecting working spiritually for our Lord, 2 Thessalonians 3:10.
3. If God's people do not do the work of the Lord, it will not be done.

Invitation:

1. Jesus has a job for you to do, which you cannot perform until you become a faithful child of God.
2. Unbaptized believers must repent and be baptized, Acts 2:38.
3. Erring Christians must repent and pray, Acts 8:22; 1 John 1:9.

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Life with the Right Purpose

1 Corinthians 10:31

Thesis: To emphasize that the right purpose of one's life is to glorify God, and that even good pursuits are not themselves the right purposes for which to live one's life.

Introduction:

1. The inquiring minds of adults ask young children, "What do you want to be or do when you grow up?"
2. Persons of any age may sometimes express the need *to find themselves*.
3. Presidents nearing the end of their terms in office seek legacies by which they will be defined in history books of the future.
4. People growing older and contemplating their own mortality ponder whether they have lived useful lives and interacted sufficiently with their children and their children's children, by which they will be remembered fondly.
5. Of course, many people appear to have no aspirations in life (or eternity), but these we just listed are all essentially about living lives with purpose.
6. **What is the right purpose for which everyone, and especially God's people, must live their lives to please God?**

Body:

- I. **Immediate, legitimate objectives can obscure the right purpose for living one's life.**
 - A. What is the right purpose for which one needs to live his life?
 1. Jesus Christ came to this sin-forlorn planet "to seek and save that which was lost," Luke 19:10.
 2. However, technically, this was not the ultimate purpose for which Jesus Christ came to this earth, and even saving souls is not the ultimate purpose for which Christians should live their lives either, Mark 16:15-16; 1 Corinthians 1:17.
 3. Because God deserves glory, especially mankind needs to

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glorify God, Revelation 15:4.

- B. The overriding purpose of the ministry of Jesus Christ was to glorify God the Father, John 14:13.
 - 1. The very death of Jesus Christ on the cross glorified God, John 17:1; 21:19.
 - 2. The redemption of mankind was merely a means of glorifying God, John 17:4.
 - 3. Neither the death of Christ nor even the salvation of souls, though important, was a satisfactory goal apart from the glorification of God the Father.
- C. Consequently, a long list of church work, though noble pursuits harmonious with inspired biblical instruction, cannot substitute for glorifying God.
 - 1. The following quotation from brother T. Pierce Brown underscores this often overlooked biblical principle.

I am persuaded that whenever a person does anything without any concern about whether it pleases God, he fails to glorify him as God. ...It may shock you, but I assert that even programs like the ones with which I have been heavily involved for the past 40 years, of personal evangelism, correspondence Bible courses and world evangelism may become so important that one may let them take central place in his life rather than the glory of God. Surely every person who reads this is aware that some persons get so “high” on their own plan, program or effort that they lose sight of the central purpose of life, and even go so far as to try to damage or undermine some other activity which is planned to advance the cause of Christ. ...The ultimate purpose for which Christ came, and the ultimate purpose of everything he did was to glorify God. It is true that the most effective way to glorify God is to help in the salvation of a soul. But to make the means to an end the end itself is to pervert the truth and put ourselves in the same position those Gentiles were, about whom Paul speaks [Romans 1:21]. ...But when any

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project, person or thing, no matter how worthy, becomes the center of our concern rather than the glory of God being the center, we are in mortal danger. (Brown)

2. No congregational program or church edifice deserves more attention than glorifying God.
3. Unfortunately, while church programs are established presumably to glorify God, it is quite possible and often happens that “we cannot see the forest for the trees!”
4. When this occurs, the overall goal of glorifying God disappears in the shadows of the means at hand by which we propose to glorify God.
5. Any innocent venture or program by which we may glorify God can, unless we keep our focus where it belongs on God, actually glorify man instead of God.

II. Every aspect of one’s life needs to be evaluated respecting the right purpose for living one’s life — which is to glorify God.

- A. The children of God must glorify God, Psalm 22:23.
 1. Anciently, God required the child of God to glorify His name, Psalm 86:12.
 2. The child of God needs to glorify God in troublesome times, Psalm 50:15; 1 Peter 4:14, 16.
 3. The faithful child of God glorifies God through his fruitful labors, John 15:8.
 4. Fruitful labors by the child of God prompt non-Christians to also praise the Heavenly Father, Matthew 5:16; 1 Peter 2:12; Acts 4:21.
 5. Christians are supposed to glorify God as though they do it with one mind and with one mouth, Romans 15:6.
- B. It has been God’s longstanding desire that all of mankind glorify him, Psalm 86:9.
 1. The apostle Paul referred to God’s longtime plan for the Gentiles to participate in glorifying God, Romans 15:9.
 2. Right-thinking Jewish Christians in the first century glorified God when they realized that God included Gentiles in

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His plan of redemption, Acts 11:18; 13:48; 21:20.

3. Jewish Christians also glorified God later respecting Gentile Christians when Christianity led the Gentile Christians to provide famine relief for Jewish Christians, 2 Corinthians 9:13.

C. Every waking moment should be evaluated to see if it glorifies God.

1. Christians are obligated to glorify God in both physical and spiritual pursuits, 1 Corinthians 6:20.
2. Even what the child of God *does on his own time* falls under the requirement of glorifying God.
3. Every right thing that may be done (i.e., including how we use our time and money, our vocations, family and home responsibilities, our recreation, marital intimacy, etc.) glorifies God because we are Christians and because we conduct ourselves according to the revealed will of God, 1 Corinthians 10:31.
4. Hence, every thing that one may do that is either sinful or some right practice we do outside the instructions of God detracts from glorifying God.

Conclusion:

1. Some Christians' whose lives are so obviously amok of the purpose for which God wants them to live their lives may have to be disciplined by other Christians, 1 Corinthians 5:1-13; 2 Thessalonians 3:6.
2. For the rest of us, we need to honestly examine the purpose for which we live our lives and make whatever adjustments are necessary to make sure we glorify God in everything we do, 2 Corinthians 13:5.

Invitation:

1. You are not glorifying God if you are not a baptized believer — a Christian, Mark 16:16, but you can remedy that shortfall in your life at this very hour.

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2. You are not glorifying God if you are not a faithful, fruitful child of God whose life's focus is on actively glorifying God with his or her whole life, 1 Corinthians 10:31; 1 John 1:9.

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Christian Service

An Allen Wrench in the Toolbox of God

Matthew 25:14-15

Thesis: To emphasize Christian service irrespective of one's abilities and opportunities.

Song: "I Want to Be a Worker"

Introduction:

1. Recently I discovered that some toolboxes cost thousands of dollars (without any tools in them); I have no intention of buying one.
 - a. Tools themselves are expensive and come in all shapes and sizes to suit a variety of needs.
 - b. One's array of tools might include little hammers and big hammers, little wrenches and big wrenches, screwdrivers of every dimension, several sets of pliers in a variety of sizes, etc.
 - c. The list of tools is nearly endless, and new tools are being devised with some frequency.
2. *Merriam Webster's Collegiate Dictionary* definition for the word "tool" includes:
 - a. "a handheld device that aids in accomplishing a task" or "one that is used or manipulated by another."
 - b. Often in my prayers I pray that others and I may be useful tools in the hands of God to accomplish His will on the earth.
3. With that in mind, I just want to be an allen wrench in the toolbox of God.
 - a. By that, I mean that I don't have to do something stupendous to be a profitable servant of God.
 - b. However, I must do something, and that something must be the best that I can do, Colossians 3:23-24.
4. Too many people, including Christians, excuse themselves from Christian service because they cannot do something great.
 - a. An allen wrench is one of the smallest tools that one might have in his toolbox.
 - b. Yet, the allen wrench, which itself comes in a variety of siz-

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es, is essential for some applications.

- c. Every Christian is essential in the work of our Lord's kingdom, irrespective of how limited he may esteem his abilities and opportunities, Matthew 25:14-30.

Body:

I. I want to be an allen wrench in the toolbox of God when it comes to worshipping Him in His own appointed way.

A. God through the New Testament has designated the way in which He wants to be worshipped on the Lord's Day.

1. Public worship must occur a minimum of once weekly (unless on some occasions beyond one's control he cannot assemble for worship) on the Lord's Day, Hebrews 10:25; Acts 20:7; 1 Corinthians 16:1-2.
2. I can pray with the assembly whether leading the prayer or saying "amen" to it, Philippians 4:20; 1 Corinthians 14:16.
3. I can sing with the assembly whether leading the songs or humbly trying my best to participate, Ephesians 5:19; Colossians 3:16.
4. If not preaching the sermon, I can participate in that aspect of worship by paying close attention to the Word of God as it is spoken, Acts 17:11.
5. Even if not officiating at the Lord's Table, I can participate in the weekly observance of the Lord's Supper to commemorate the death of Jesus Christ for us, 1 Corinthians 11:23-26; Acts 20:7.
6. I can participate in the weekly collection whether I help take up the Lord's money and whether I personally have much or little to give, 1 Corinthians 16:1-2; 2 Corinthians 9:7; Mark 12:41-44.
7. I can be an allen wrench in the toolbox of God through my public worship as long as I worship my God in His own appointed way.

B. I can be an allen wrench in the toolbox of God through my

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personal worship opportunities daily.

1. Christians ought to pray often, and almost any moment of any day in any place provides an opportunity to pray, 1 Thessalonians 5:17.
2. The frequent prayers of Christians are effective in soliciting God's providential blessings, Luke 18:1-8; James 5:16.
3. Some times during each day naturally lend themselves to approaching God in prayer, such as three mealtimes, Matthew 6:9-13; John 6:11, 23; Acts 27:35; 1 Timothy 4:3-5; Romans 14:6; Psalm 55:17; Daniel 6:10.
4. We can pray when we arise in the morning and when we retire at night, Psalm 5:3; 88:1.
5. We need to pray for any who are in any trouble, Acts 12:12.
6. We need to pray for political and civil rulers, 1 Peter 2:17; 1 Timothy 2:1-2.
7. I can be an allen wrench in the toolbox of God through my personal worship with frequent prayers.

II. I want to be an allen wrench in the toolbox of God when it comes to Christian service.

- A. I must always be ready to serve God, Titus 2:14.
 1. I can be a tool in the hands of God by giving a defense of the Christian faith, Philippians 1:17; 1 Peter 3:15.
 2. I can provide honorable service to God by attending to the needs of the less fortunate, Matthew 25:31-46; James 1:27; Acts 6:1-7.
 3. Many Christians have the opportunity and the responsibility to serve God by rearing their children properly, Ephesians 6:1, 4.
 4. We can serve God by attending to the necessary details concerning the maintenance of our place of worship, Exodus 25-40; Numbers 4:15.
 5. I can be an allen wrench in the toolbox of God if I am "always abounding in the work of the Lord," 1 Corinthians 15:58.

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B. I must prepare myself for greater service to God, 2 Timothy 2:15.

1. We must prepare ourselves to be able to teach the Word of God, Hebrews 5:12-14.
2. We can prepare ourselves for greater service by reading ourselves to preach the Word of God, 2 Timothy 2:2; Acts 21:9.
3. I can be an allen wrench in the toolbox of God if I develop my abilities and seize every opportunity to serve God.

III. I want to be an allen wrench in the toolbox of God when it comes to godly living.

A. I must realize that the way in which I conduct myself has an influence on others around me.

1. Each of us influences our family, friends, neighbors, co-workers, fellow students and even people we do not know with whom we come in contact in public, e.g. at the grocery store, other drivers, etc.
2. We must be a light to the world and not add to the darkness already abundant, Matthew 5:16; Proverbs 4:18; Ephesians 5:8; Philippians 2:15-16.
3. A tool in the hands of God does not curse, does not tell lies, is not dishonest, is not lazy, is not divisive, does not murmur, does not imbibe alcohol, does not approve of the sins of others, etc., Ephesians 4:29; Colossians 3:8; 1 Peter 2:12; 2 Thessalonians 3:10; 1 Corinthians 1:10; 10:10; Philippians 2:14; Galatians 5:21; Romans 1:32.
4. I can be an allen wrench in the toolbox of God if I wield a Christian influence.

B. I must realize that I have a responsibility to exhibit the highest degree of morality.

1. However, if I make my closest associates the ungodly of this world, I will hurt my influence and quite possibly be drawn into sin, 1 Corinthians 15:33; 2 Corinthians 6:14-18.
2. We must turn from ungodliness and lusts in the world,

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Titus 2:12; 1 Corinthians 6:9-10.

3. I can be an allen wrench in the toolbox of God if I am driven by the Word of God rather than by the lusts of this world, 1 John 2:15-17.

Conclusion:

1. If I am not a tool in the hands of the living God, I am next to worthless.
2. I may only be as an allen wrench in the toolbox of God, but I aim to be as useful a tool in His hands as I can be.
3. How productive could a congregation and the brotherhood of Christ all over the world be if every Christian would resolve to be a tool in the hands of the living God, even if only an allen wrench in the toolbox of God?

Invitation:

1. Frankly, one cannot be a tool in the hands of God until he becomes a Christian.
2. One becomes a Christian through faith, repentance, confessing Jesus to be the Son of God and immersion in water for the remission of sins, John 8:24; Luke 13:3; Romans 10:10; Acts 2:38; Colossians 2:12.
3. In addition, only a faithful Christian can be a tool in the hands of God, Revelation 2:10; Acts 8:22.

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Christian Service

Redeeming the Time

Ephesians 5:15-17

Thesis: To encourage Christians to earnestly and wisely use their time profitably in the service of God.

Songs: “Hold to God’s Unchanging Hand,” “Rescue the Perishing”

Introduction:

1. The words “redeem,” “redeemed” and “redeeming” and the Greek word for them appear four times in the New Testament.
 - a. Ephesians 5:16 and Colossians 4:5 pertain to redeeming time.
 - b. Galatians 3:13 and 4:5 pertain to redeeming our souls.
2. “Redeeming” means “to buy up, ransom or rescue from loss.”
 - a. Human souls have been ransomed by Jesus Christ (i.e., those souls who will permit the ransom of Christ’s blood to save them).
 - b. Christians are to ransom or rescue from loss the very minutes and hours of time afforded them.
3. The apostle Paul demonstrated in his life the principle involved in “redeeming the time,” 1 Corinthians 15:9-10.
 - a. He tried to live every present moment as though by using time judiciously he could make up for the ill-spent time before when he persecuted the church.
 - b. Likewise, we need to use present moments as though by using time wisely we could make up for wasted time in the past.
4. There are several practical ways by which we can learn to use our time for the Lord more effectively.

Body:

I. “Redeeming the time” is all about time management.

- A. Every Christian needs to manage his or her time for the Lord to accomplish good works for the Lord, Titus 2:14.
 1. One way to do this is to have a weekly “To Do List.”
 2. Another more intensified “To Do List” is to keep an appointment book that has enough space to list several items

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daily that one hopes to accomplish.

3. Anyone who has little structure to his daily schedule (e.g., a preacher, especially who has an office in his home) needs to plan his days and appear to God as well as to his fellow Christians that he is working for the Lord.
- B. Hence, “To Do Lists” and appointment books suggest that the Christian should have goals relative to Christian service.
1. We will not accomplish much unless we plan to serve God in certain ways.
 2. Many of those goals will be near goals, able to be accomplished weekly or in a little amount of time.
 3. Some of our goals should be distant goals, which will take time to accomplish — maybe weeks, months or even years.
- C. After awhile, it may become necessary to prioritize things we plan to do for the Lord.
1. Triage developed on the battlefield to recuperate first the soldiers who could more rapidly return to warfare.
 2. Triage in domestic life is directing medical attention to patients who need it the most desperately.
 3. Christians who have undertaken many works for the Lord need to apply triage to the candidates for their time — attend to the most important works first or whatever is due next.
 4. Triage in the life of Christians is more than simply putting spiritual matters first, because that we were supposed to do when we became Christians, Matthew 6:33.
- D. Family time and recreation need inclusion in one’s time management program.
1. The natural tendency is to spend time with family or engage in recreation (including favorite TV programs) or sports, leaving little if any time for serving the Lord.
 2. Instead, Christians need to exercise self-discipline and plan works for the Lord.
 3. However, Christians also need to make allowances for family and recreation — one’s time for serving the Lord

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and for self needs to be budgeted.

II. Time management pays big dividends.

A. More work for the Lord occurs when the children of God plan to serve God.

1. Jesus Christ taught the necessity of fruitfulness in the kingdom of God, John 15:2.
2. Christian labors are not limited to what Christians may do on a congregational basis.
3. Christians who manage their time wisely can complete many fruitful works in a lifetime.
4. Profitable service to God pays big dividends, Mark 8:36; 2 Timothy 4:8; Revelation 2:10.

B. Working for the Lord has double-duty benefits.

1. Each item that can be crossed off one's "To Do List" or in one's appointment book, no matter how little the task, brings a sense of accomplishment — a psychological pat on the back.
2. The work we do for the Lord often benefits others (e.g., through benevolence, evangelism or edification) as well as rewards the church and us personally, Matthew 25:31-46.
3. The effort we expend can be reapplied to other opportunities (e.g., a preacher's sermon can be adapted to an article, a newspaper lesson, a radio message or with other material into a book).

C. In a real way, one's work can be an extension of himself.

1. Particularly, as we grow older and realize more our own mortality, we want our lives to have meant something more to those who come after us than that we simply took up space and occupied time on earth.
2. Good works for God make a suitable legacy to leave behind when we no longer draw breath.
3. Imagine leaving behind the example of being a dynamo for the Lord, whereby family members and church members may be encouraged to also serve the Lord vigorously

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in their lives.

Conclusion:

1. The Bible is full of Scripture that depicts praiseworthy service of the living God, Hebrews 11.
2. The Bible often exhorts and encourages the children of God to conscientiously work for the Lord, 1 Corinthians 15:58; Revelation 2:3; 14:13.
3. If we work for the Lord in this life, we will have ample opportunity to rest in Heaven with God, Hebrews 4:9-11.

Invitation:

1. We can begin redeeming the time by making sure that we are in a saved relationship with God.
2. Erring Christians can begin redeeming the time by acknowledging the sin in their lives, 1 John 1:9.
3. Unbaptized believers can begin redeeming the time by being immersed in water for the remission of their sins, Colossians 2:12; Acts 22:16.

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Now Therefore Perform the Doing of It

2 Corinthians 8:1-15; 9:1-7

Thesis: To exhort brethren to give themselves, their money and their service to God through the local church.

Song: “I Gave My Life for Thee”

Introduction:

1. The Bible uses examples of real people to encourage desirable practices and discourage undesirable practices.
 - a. Scripture uses Abel to encourage faithfulness, Hebrews 11:4.
 - b. Scripture, though, uses Abel’s brother Cain to represent sinfulness, 1 John 3:12; Jude 11.
2. Accordingly, the apostle Paul used examples of people in his exhortations.
 - a. The apostle warned the Corinthian church by referring to those who perished in the wilderness wandering, 1 Corinthians 10:1-11.
 - b. However, Paul also used the Corinthian Christians as a good example to the Macedonian Christians, before then using the Macedonian Christians as an example to the Corinthian Christians, 2 Corinthians 9:2-5.

Body:

I. Paul used the Macedonians as an example to the Corinthians for giving money in response to needy saints.

- A. Famine in Judea resulted in great need among saints or Christians.
 1. The prophet Agabas predicted such a famine, Acts 11:27-28.
 2. The (Gentile) church in Antioch of Syria sent relief to (Jewish) Christians in Judea, Acts 11:29-30.
- B. The (Gentile) church in Corinth also purposed to send monetary relief to their Jewish brethren in Judea.
 1. The Corinthians volunteered a year before the writing of 2 Corinthians to make a contribution for needy saints in

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Judea, 2 Corinthians 8:10; 9:2.

2. Paul used the willingness of Christians at Corinth to help needy saints in Judea to encourage Christians in Macedonia to give also, 2 Corinthians 9:2.
- C. Going full circle, Paul then used the Macedonian Christians whose contribution was ready to encourage Christians at Corinth to make ready their contribution for needy saints, which they had promised a year earlier.
 1. Initially, the apostle Paul instructed the Corinthians to make a monetary contribution for brethren in Judea, 1 Corinthians 16:1-5.
 2. Subsequently, the Corinthians responded with a readiness to contribute to needy saints in Judea, 2 Corinthians 9:1-2.
- D. Paul, though, knew that it was possible that the church at Corinth might have procrastinated in his absence.
 1. Previously, Paul gave explicit instructions how to gather the contribution (weekly), 1 Corinthians 16:1-2.
 2. Before returning to Corinth, Paul sent messengers ahead in case the church had not fulfilled their purpose, 2 Corinthians 9:3-5.
- E. Paul commanded the Corinthians to finish what they started, 2 Corinthians 8:10-11; 9:3-5.
 1. He wrote, “Now therefore perform the doing of it,” 2 Corinthians 8:11.
 2. Not only first century Christians and churches needed that admonition, “Now therefore perform the doing of it.”

II. Contemporary Christians and churches also need the exhortation: “Now therefore perform the doing of it.”

- A. There are needs today that also require the giving of money by Christians and the church.
 1. Today, too, needs include benevolence toward Christians (and non-Christians), Galatians 6:10; 2 Corinthians 9:13.
 2. The other two facets of the church’s mission also must be funded by giving, i.e. evangelism and edification, Mark

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16:15-16; 1 Corinthians 14:12.

- B. Since the church incurs financial responsibilities, it is imperative to know how God wants those financial responsibilities met.
 - 1. Necessarily, Christians must contribute some of their money to meet the church's financial responsibilities.
 - 2. Paul provided the method of financing the work of the church when he wrote about the weekly collection for benevolence, 1 Corinthians 16:1-2.
- C. If any Christian must contribute, all Christians must give of their money to support the work of the church, Luke 21:1-4.
 - 1. Each child of God should purpose or decide to give cheerfully and as much as possible, 2 Corinthians 9:6-7.
 - 2. Yet, no one is expected to give beyond his ability to give, 2 Corinthians 8:12; 1 Corinthians 16:2.

III. The principle of “Now therefore perform the doing of it” extends to more than money.

- A. Paul's exhortation to the Corinthians to “perform the doing of it” is a responsibility each local congregation must bear.
 - 1. Imagine a congregation where its members consistently performed their Christianity, e.g. attending every assembly and Bible class possible, seeking opportunities to teach the Gospel to others or arranging studies for other brethren to teach, distributing literature, etc.
 - 2. Nobody else has the responsibility to evangelize this community, and no one else will evangelize this community with the pure Gospel of Christ if this congregation does not do it.
 - 3. The church of Christ is not a social club, the prosperity and continued existence of which being of little consequence; this is the church for which the Son of God died to establish.
- B. “Now therefore perform the doing of it” is a principle equally applicable to individual Christians.
 - 1. Every material thing over which we have control, including our very selves, needs to be put into the service of Jesus Christ.

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2. During every waking moment, the child of God needs to be consciously aware if not actively pursuing the urgency of reaching lost souls with the Gospel of Jesus Christ.
3. Mothers and fathers, “Now perform the doing of it” respecting childrearing.
4. Husbands and wives, “Now perform the doing of it” regarding your marriages.
5. Children, “Now perform the doing of it” respecting your relationship with your family.
6. “Now perform the doing of it” respecting our entertainment choices, the use of our time and how we spend our money.
7. “Now perform the doing of it” regarding the urgency with which we purposely live the Gospel before and take the Gospel to everyone with whom we come in contact, e.g. work, school, neighbors, extended family, etc.
8. “Now perform the doing of it” regarding conscious efforts to further the cause of Jesus Christ in this community, i.e. grow the church spiritually and numerically strong.

Conclusion:

1. New Testament Scripture records that the method of financing the work of the church is through planned, cheerful, freewill, weekly giving.
2. Every child of God has this responsibility and opportunity, irrespective of whether one has much or little that he or she is able to give.
3. “Now perform the doing of it” in principle applies to varied congregational and individual Christian responsibilities.

Invitation:

1. It is past time for every child of God today to get serious about Christianity!
2. It is past time to obey the Gospel if you haven’t done that yet, Mark 16:16.
3. It is past time for Christians to put away sin and wholly commit themselves to the cause of Christ, Romans 6:1-2.

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It's About Time

Ephesians 5:15-17

Thesis: To encourage one another to make an investment of themselves and their time in the work of the local church.

Songs: “Why Stand Ye Idle?”, “Take My Life and Let It Be,” “Must I Go Empty Handed?”, “Time Enough Yet”

Introduction:

1. Time is a biblically valuable commodity that each of us has as long as we continue to draw breath.
 - a. Each of us has 24 hours in a day.
 - b. However, we do not all have the same number of days during which to live, and we do not all have the same number of days remaining in our lives.
 - c. Therefore, it is extremely important that we use life's available moments in the most expedient way possible, i.e. “redeem the time,” Ephesians 5:15-17.
2. How much of our time should we invest in the local church?
 - a. When we fully comprehend and acknowledge the significance of the local congregation of the Lord's church, we will know how much of our time ought to be invested in the local church.
 - b. When we fully appreciate what it means to be a Christian or a disciple of Christ, we will know how much of our time ought to be invested in the local church.
 - c. When we fully embrace the concept of conversion and our subsequent consecration to the Lord, we will know how much of our time ought to be invested in the local church.

Body:

- I. **What is the local church that I should invest my time in it?**
 - A. The local church is a part of the churches of Christ, Romans 16:16.
 1. Jesus Christ personally built His church, Matthew 16:18.
 2. Further, our Lord purchased His church with His blood,

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Acts 20:28.

3. Jesus saves people with His blood and then adds these saved to His church, Revelation 1:5; Acts 2:47.
 4. The church of Christ, then, is blood-bought and blood-washed.
 5. That means that each local congregation of the Lord's church likewise is blood-bought and blood-washed!
 6. How much time should the child of God be willing to invest in the Son of God, blood-bought and blood-washed local church?
- B. The Lord's church is referred to as the bride of Christ, Revelation 22:17.
1. Likewise, individual congregations of the Lord's church share this figurative relationship with Jesus Christ, 2 Corinthians 11:2.
 2. That means that each local congregation of the Lord's church needs to be as devoted to the Lord as a bride is to her husband.
 3. Every local congregation is composed of its members — Christians, Romans 12:5; 1 Corinthians 12:12.
 4. Therefore, individual Christians who comprise the local church need to be as devoted to the Lord through the local church as a bride is devoted to her husband.
 5. How much time should the child of God be willing to invest in the local church since it is the bride of Christ?

II. What is a Christian that I should invest my time in the local church?

- A. First, a Christian is Christ-like.
1. Jesus Christ is the child of God's perfect example that he imitates to the best of his or her ability, 1 Peter 2:21.
 2. Jesus blazed the spiritual trail, and Christians are obligated to walk in His footsteps, 1 John 2:6.
 3. Jesus devoted Himself to the redemption of humanity and sacrificed Himself on the cross of Calvary for us.

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4. How much time, then, should the child of God be willing to invest in the church for which He died?
- B. Second, a Christian is a disciple of Christ.
1. The word “disciple” means to be a learner and a follower.
 2. The disciple considers it his duty to accept the doctrine of his leader and proclaim it everywhere he can, Mark 16:15-16; Acts 8:1, 4.
 3. How much time should the disciple of Christ be willing to invest in the local church by which Christ’s message is spread to the local community?
- C. A Christian is also a steward of those things entrusted to his care for the kingdom’s sake.
1. The Parable of the Talents illustrates individual responsibility to be a good steward for our Mater, Jesus, Matthew 25:14-30.
 2. The qualifications of elders teach that elders are stewards of the congregation over which they have been appointed, Titus 1:7.
 3. Every thing that a child of God has in his possession rightfully belongs to God, and we are only stewards, Psalm 50:10-12.
 4. Besides material things, even our time belongs to our Lord, and Christians are called upon to “redeem” that time, Ephesians 5:16; Colossians 4:5.
 5. Christians are forbidden to invest their time in the sinful ways of the world of which we previously repented, 1 Peter 4:1-4.
 6. How much time, then, should a Christian be willing to invest in godly endeavors, such as the local church?

III. What about conversion and consecration of my life to the Lord should lead me to invest my time in the local church?

- A. Conversion means that the child of God no longer conforms to the wicked world in which he lives, but he now molds himself with the Word of God.
1. The world is no longer the standard by which the converted order their lives, Romans 12:1-2.

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2. James warned that an unduly high appreciation of the world in which we live makes one an enemy of God, James 4:4.
 3. Christians have been converted by a “form of doctrine” and continue to heartily embrace it, Romans 6:17.
 4. Nothing is more important to the converted soul than Jesus and His church, 2 Corinthians 8:1-5.
 5. How much time, then, should the convert to Christianity be willing to invest in the Lord’s church?
- B. Consecration of our lives to our Lord means that He is first in our lives — nothing withstanding!
1. Our devotion must be to God first, above even our natural love for parents, spouses and children, Matthew 10:37-38.
 2. Jesus demands that His followers seek spiritual matters first above all else in life, Matthew 6:33.
 3. Along those lines, New Testament writers exhort Christians to prefer brethren rather than non-Christians, Romans 12:10; 1 Peter 2:17.
 4. How much time, then, should the child of God be willing to invest in the church of God, including the local church that is comprised of Christians, 1 Corinthians 1:2?

Conclusion:

1. Even club memberships require time and money from their members; should the Lord’s church expect less of its members?
2. Isn’t it about time that the children of God commit to investing their time in the success of the local congregation of which they are members?
3. How much time should the child of God be willing to invest in the local church?

Invitation:

1. There is no better way to invest one’s time than to invest it in spiritual pursuits.
2. For erring Christians or unbaptized believers, it is time to be saved, Romans 13:11; 2 Corinthians 6:2.

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Revive Us Again

Psalm 85:6

Thesis: To plead for a revival or renewed vitality in worship and service of God.

Song: “Revive Us Again”

Introduction:

1. The nation of Israel frequently needed a revival, Ezra 9:8-9; Habbakkuk 3:2.
 - a. The Israelites had been a rebellious nation throughout their history, for which cause God permitted foreign nations to dominate them and which culminated in the 70 years of Babylonian captivity
 - b. Each time the Israelites repented and turned back to God, God covered their sins and restored their nation again.
 - c. The psalmist called for a revival of Israel and petitioned God for divine guidance, Psalm 85:1-13.
 - d. Without a revival, the consequences for Israel would have been severe and eternal.
2. Likewise, the Lord’s church today, as well as the world in general, needs a revival of first century Christianity in our day.
 - a. Too many, like ancient Israel, “are at ease in Zion” or indifferent to God-ordained religion, Amos 6:1; Revelation 3:14-22.
 - b. Like Israel in the time of the Judges, sometimes even the Lord’s church today seeks to imitate the ungodly world around it instead of following Jesus Christ, 1 Samuel 8:5; 1 Peter 2:21.
 - c. Dear God, revive us again! Psalm 85:6.

Body:

I. We need a revival in biblical preaching.

A. Biblical preaching is Gospel preaching!

1. Jesus commissioned the apostles to preach the Gospel, Mark 16:15-16.

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2. The apostle Paul directed Timothy to preach the Gospel, which is the Word of God, 2 Timothy 4:1-2.
 3. Paul condemned any alteration of the pure Gospel, Galatians 1:6-9.
 4. True Gospel preachers are compelled to preach the Gospel, 1 Corinthians 9:16.
- B. The Gospel must be preached with urgency!
1. The apostles prayed for courage to preach the Gospel with boldness, Acts 4:29; Ephesians 6:19.
 2. Even severe persecution could not dissuade first century preachers from boldly preaching the Word of God, 1 Thessalonians 2:2.
 3. Love for God and fellowmen motivated them to preach the Gospel or the Truth, Ephesians 4:15.
- C. Only biblical preaching should occur in the pulpit.
1. The pulpit is no place for secular politics, except as politics sometimes has to do with biblical and moral issues.
 2. The pulpit is no place for entertainment.
 3. The pulpit is no place for opinions, theories, philosophy or purely human wisdom.
 4. The pulpit is no place for the compromise of biblical truth, irrespective if compromise is clothed with manmade doctrine, human preferences that conflict with the Word of God, the social Gospel or anything else that appears more palatable to mortals than the unadulterated Word of God, Matthew 15:9, 13; Philippians 1:17; Jude 3.
 5. The pulpit is no place for spineless preaching.
- D. Biblical preaching is balanced.
1. Balanced preaching includes “all the counsel of God,” Acts 20:27.
 2. Balanced preaching contains both the “do’s and the don’ts” of Christianity, 1 Timothy 4:2.
 3. Biblically balanced preaching saves souls, Romans 1:16.

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II. We need a revival in Christian worship.

- A. Acceptable worship must be according to “spirit and truth,” John 4:23-24.
 - 1. Spiritless or heartless worship has never been acceptable to God, Malachi 1:6-13.
 - 2. Worship must accord with the form of doctrine God has given us, which is the New Testament, Romans 6:17.
 - 3. Our worship, as every other aspect of Christianity, must be authorized, Colossians 3:17.
 - 4. God condemns manmade substitutes in religion, 1 Samuel 15:22-23.
- B. Christian worship must be conducted in a manner befitting the occasion — coming before Almighty God.
 - 1. We must not make a mockery of worship as the Corinthian church did by corrupting the Lord’s Supper, 1 Corinthians 11.
 - 2. We must not make a mockery of worship as the Corinthian church did through confusion and disorderliness, 1 Corinthians 14:33, 40.
 - 3. We must remove from our minds and hands unnecessary distractions that otherwise prevent us from worshipping our God in a way that pleases Him.
- C. Biblically authorized Christian worship is five fold, in no particular order.
 - 1. The first century church had preaching and the Lord’s Supper in worship every first day of the week, Acts 20:7.
 - 2. The collection was part of New Testament Christian worship every first day of the week, 1 Corinthians 16:1-2.
 - 3. The primitive church also prayed and sang hymns in the worship assembly, 1 Corinthians 14:15.

III. We need a revival in biblical knowledge.

- A. Salvation is impossible without knowledge, infant baptism notwithstanding.
 - 1. Jesus taught that baptism is for believers, Mark 16:16.

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2. The apostle Paul wrote that knowledge and faith precede salvation, Romans 10:13-14.
3. The writer of Hebrews contrasted Judaism with Christianity by teaching that under Christianity a person knows the Word of God before he becomes a member of the church, Hebrews 8:8-11.

B. Christian zeal must be guided and regulated by biblical knowledge.

1. The Jewish nation of the first century was a classic example of zeal devoid of biblical knowledge, Romans 10:1-3.
2. Though often discounted by mere mortals, true knowledge is divine in origin and comes from above, 1 Corinthians 1:21.

C. Bible knowledge only comes through regular Bible study.

1. Paul praised Timothy for his study of God's Word, 2 Timothy 2:15.
2. Likewise, the Bereans were praised for comparing religious teaching with God's Word, Acts 17:11.
3. Christians are called upon by God to arm themselves with biblical knowledge so that they can answer the questions asked by the world around them, 1 Peter 3:15.

D. We need a working knowledge of the Bible.

1. The Jews' knowledge of God's Word was deficient, John 5:39; Acts 3:14-17.
2. It is not enough to know the words, etc. in the Bible; one must be able to apply biblical knowledge.
3. Parrots say words, but only accountable souls can make appropriate biblical application of the Word of God.

IV. We need a revival of our dedication and willingness to serve Jesus Christ.

A. Each accountable person needs to evaluate the priorities in his life.

1. Jesus Christ must be foremost in our lives, Matthew 6:33.
2. God demands that we love Him before we love even our families, Matthew 10:37-39.

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- B. We must conform to God rather than conform to the ungodly world in which we live, Romans 12:1-2; 1 Peter 2:5.
- C. Our dedication to Jesus Christ will reflect itself in our regular attendance of church assemblies, Hebrews 10:25; Psalm 122:1.
- D. We can demonstrate our dedication to Jesus Christ by financially supporting His church.
 - 1. The apostle Paul instructed that Christians give as they purpose or decide in their hearts, 2 Corinthians 9:6-7.
 - 2. One's giving should be regulated also according to his prosperity and should occur each Lord's Day, 1 Corinthians 16:1-2.
- E. The way in which we live our lives also demonstrates our dedication to serving Jesus Christ.
 - 1. The grace of God saves those who have expunged sin from their lives and embraced godliness, Titus 2:11-12.
 - 2. Further, faithful Christians practice pure religion, James 1:27.
- F. Faithful Christians evidence their dedication to Jesus Christ by actively working for the Lord.
 - 1. There will be no end to laboring for the Lord this side of the grave, 1 Corinthians 15:58.
 - 2. We must not tire of serving God, Galatians 6:9.
 - 3. Both references indicate that God reserves a reward for His faithful servants.
- V. We need a revival in our determination to be active participants in spreading the Gospel.**
 - A. It is not enough that we may be keepers of orthodoxy.
 - 1. Unlike the Pharisees of Jesus' day, we must be doers, too, Matthew 23:2-3.
 - 2. Besides sins of commission, one may be guilty of sins of omission, James 4:17.
 - B. We must do more than *talk a good ballgame*; we must live Christianity.
 - 1. Talking without doing leads to a sad eternity, Matthew 7:21-23.

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2. Talking without doing essentially denies Jesus Christ as Lord, Luke 6:46.
- C. Jesus Christ died on the cruel cross of Calvary that we and the whole world might have the opportunity to be saved.
 1. We have the obligation to take the saving message of the Gospel to as many around us and throughout the world as we can, Mark 16:15.
 2. We need to teach others who can be extensions of ourselves whereby the Gospel might have a larger audience, 2 Timothy 2:2.
 3. We need to go out of our way to take the Gospel to others, 1 Thessalonians 1:8.

Conclusion:

1. Without a continual revival of God's people, there will be a dearth of faithful children of God.
 - a. We need a revival in our preaching.
 - b. We need a revival in our worship.
 - c. We need a revival in Bible knowledge.
 - d. We need a revival in dedication to Jesus Christ.
 - e. We need a revival in our determination to take the Gospel to the world.
2. Before anyone of us can be of any assistance to others, we must first make sure that our lives are in order before God.
 - a. We must say with the psalmist, "Revive us again."
 - b. The spirit of Psalm 85:5 needs to permeate the Lord's church today.

Invitation:

1. To revive us again is also an appropriate plea toward erring Christians; once loyal children of God who have strayed need to return to the Lord, penitently and prayerfully, Acts 8:22.
2. Unbaptized believers also need a spiritual revival, baptism into Christ whereby that child-like innocence is recaptured, Galatians 3:27; Matthew 18:3.

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Conscience Void of Offence

Acts 24:16

Thesis: To encourage first the proper education of the conscience, and secondly, the proper use of the conscience to serve God.

Introduction:

1. The English word “conscience” appears 31 times in the singular and once in the plural in the Bible (all instances being in the New Testament).
2. Though the word “conscience” does not appear in the Old Testament, the model of the human conscience appears expressed in other words, 2 Samuel 24:10.
3. “Under both the old covenant and the new covenant the conscience must be formed by the will of God” (*Nelson’s*).
4. The Greek word *suneidesis* translated “conscience” is a compound word in its parts, meaning ‘with awareness’ (*Biblesoft’s*).

Body:

I. Just what is the conscience?

A. Consider these useful definitions of the word “conscience.”

The awareness that a proposed act is or is not conformable to one’s ideal of right and manifesting itself in the feeling of obligation or duty. ...Conscience is not so much a distinct faculty of the mind, like perception, memory, etc., as an exercise of the judgment and the power of feeling, as employed with reference to moral truth. It implies the moral sense “to discern good and evil” (Heb 5:14) and a feeling, more or less strong, of responsibility. ...the testimony of conscience certainly rests on the foundation of a divine law... (*New Unger’s*).

1. “A person’s inner awareness of conforming to the will of God or departing from it, resulting in either a sense of approval or condemnation” (*Nelson’s*).
2. Vine says of “conscience”:

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...that faculty by which we apprehend the will of God, as that which is designed to govern our lives'; hence (a) the sense of guiltiness before God; Heb 10:2; (b) that process of thought which distinguishes what it considers morally good or bad, commending the good, condemning the bad, and so prompting to do the former, and avoid the latter; Rom 2:15...

3. An English dictionary definition for the word “conscience” is: “the sense or consciousness of the moral goodness or blameworthiness of one’s own conduct, intentions, or character together with a feeling of obligation to do right or be good” (*Merriam*).
- B. Generally, every human has a conscience.
1. Easton identifies “conscience” as “that faculty of the mind, or inborn sense of right and wrong, by which we judge of the moral character of human conduct. It is common to all men.”
 2. The first indication of the human conscience in action pertains to Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden when they hid themselves from God, Genesis 3:8 (*Bible History*).

II. What relationship does one’s conscience sustain to right and wrong?

- A. One’s conscience approves of a person’s conduct when it perceives or is aware that it is in harmony with what the conscience believes is godly.
1. A conscience only has reference to one’s perceived relationship with God, 1 Peter 2:19.
 2. If there were no God, there would be no conscience.
 3. However, mankind does have a conscience, an awareness of right and wrong, thereby indirectly affirming that there is a God and that He has revealed His will to mankind.
- B. One’s conscience disapproves of a person’s conduct when it perceives or is aware that it is not in harmony with what the conscience believes is godly.
1. The first occasion of the word “conscience” illustrates the

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condemning capacity of one's conscience, John 8:9.

2. Everyone who realizes that he or she has not conducted himself or herself according to a moral code of conduct (ethics) to which he or she subscribes feels the pain of conscience.
 3. It is quite possible and often is the case, though, that one subscribes to an imperfect moral code of conduct, devised by himself or by his peers.
 4. **The mechanism of conscience is by God's design, but what mankind does with it is of his own making.**
- C. In the truest sense, the conscience pertains to the morality of what is right and what is wrong, based on what God's Word (the Bible) reveals, 2 Peter 1:3; Jude 3.
1. A moral person is one whose conscience approves of his conduct based on his conformity with the Word of God.
 2. An immoral person is one whose conscience disapproves of his conduct based on lack of conformity to the Word of God.
 3. An amoral person is one whose conscience is inoperable because he does not subscribe to any moral code of ethics (not the Bible for sure).
 4. The majority of our society has moved from not only immorality but to amorality!

III. How can one have a "pure conscience"?

- A. First, one's conscience can be wrong.
1. Though the apostle Paul was careful never to violate his conscience, improperly educated, Paul's conscience incorrectly commended him formerly for persecuting Christians to imprisonment and death, Acts 23:1; 24:16; 26:9-11; Galatians 1:13.
 2. Obviously, then, the conscience alone is not a safe guide; the popular expression, "Let your conscience be your guide," is erroneous.
 3. However, a conscience properly educated by the Word of God can be a great help in seeking the approval of God in this life and for the life to come.

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- B. Tragically, a person can disarm the benefits of the mechanism of conscience that God instilled in each person.
1. A person can violate his conscience, which brings mental pain and anguish, Romans 13:5.
 2. One's conscience can be weak because it is not adequately educated by the Word of God to know certainly the difference between right and wrong, 1 Corinthians 8:1-13.
 3. If one violates his conscience often enough, he 'sears his conscience' so that he can commit unspeakable acts without discomforting his mind, 1 Timothy 4:2.
 4. One can have a 'defiled conscience' where he continues to do what he believes to be sinful, Titus 1:15.
- C. There is only one way to have a "pure conscience," 1 Timothy 3:9; 2 Timothy 1:3.
1. We want a pure conscience because one's pure conscience approves of one's conduct as being in harmony with the Word of God and brings peace of mind, 2 Corinthians 1:12.
 2. We all want and need "a good conscience," 1 Timothy 1:15, 19; Hebrews 13:18; 1 Peter 3:16.
 3. A pure conscience was not attainable under either Patriarchy or Judaism, for there was always an awareness of sins, Hebrews 9:9; 10:2.
 4. Only through Jesus Christ can one's conscience be 'purged,' Hebrews 9:14.
 5. One's conscience is properly cleansed by the washing of water through baptism, Hebrews 10:22; 1 Peter 3:21.

Conclusion:

1. *New Unger's Bible Dictionary* well summarizes and contrasts the good conscience with an evil conscience.

If a man knows his doing to be in harmony with this law his conscience is good (Acts 23:1; 1 Tim 1:5,19; Heb 13:18; 1 Peter 3:16,21), pure (1 Tim 3:9; 2 Tim 1:3), and void of offense. If what he does is evil, so also is his conscience, inasmuch as it is conscious of such evil (Heb 10:22); it is

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defiled (Titus 1:15; 1 Cor 8:7) when it is stained by evil deeds; or seared with a branding iron (1 Tim 4:2) when it is branded with its evil deeds, or cauterized, i.e., made insensible to all feeling.

2. Chiefly, “[f]or the right management of conscience, we should,
1. Endeavor to obtain acquaintance with the law of God...”
(*McClintock and Strong*).
3. Conscience is a religious and moral instinct that only humans have by which one accuses or excuses his own conduct respecting his understanding of revealed revelation from God, Romans 2:15.
4. Finally, we ought to obey a conscience correctly educated with the Word of God, Hebrews 13:18.

Invitation:

1. Each of us ought “to have always a conscience void of offence toward God, and toward men,” Acts 24:16.
2. Our consciences are correctly purified by obeying the Gospel of Christ, 1 Peter 3:21.
3. After baptism, we must arm ourselves with the Word of God so we know the difference between right and wrong and act accordingly; we must repent when we find ourselves out of harmony with the Word of God, Hebrews 5:14; Acts 8:22.

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Christian Service

Life as a School

2 Timothy 3:15

Thesis: To emphasize that all of life lived is preparation for life to live in the future, especially regarding Christian service.

Song: “I Want to Be a Worker”

Introduction:

1. Life is a school!
 - a. We learn until we die.
 - b. Every day lived prepares one for a future day, a future job, a future relationship or a future mission in life.
2. Every child of God has been preparing all his life for the Christian service that lies before him now.
 - a. Not only so, but life lived hereto now and one’s current Christian service foreshadows Christian service that may lie before him or her in the future.
 - b. The Bible contains examples in the lives of biblical characters where either preparatory time preceded some great service, or useful service throughout one’s life prepared him or her for even greater service later in life.

Body:

I. Notice some Bible characters whose lives lived prepared them for godly service at some later date in their lives.

- A. Noah was no spring chicken when God called upon him to build an ark to preserve a remnant of humans and animals from the universal flood.
 1. Noah was more than 500-years-old when God called upon him to build the ark, Genesis 5:32.
 2. Noah had demonstrated for hundreds of years that he was a righteous man, though living in an extremely ungodly world, Genesis 6:8-13.
 3. Noah’s long life of godly living prepared him for great service, without which through him or someone like him,

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all humans and most of the animal kingdom would be extinct today.

B. Moses was one such Bible character who could not serve God in the task God had in mind for him until many years had passed.

1. When Moses was 40-years-old, he thought to liberate his people, the Israelites, from Egyptian slavery, Acts 7:22-25.
2. However, Moses attempted to operate on his timetable instead of the timetable of God.
3. Only after four more decades passed was God ready for Moses to liberate Israel from Egyptian slavery, Acts 7:30-34.
4. Ironically, when Moses was ready to serve God in this way, God wasn't ready, but when God was ready for Moses to lead Israel out of Egypt, Moses wasn't ready, Exodus 3-4.
5. In part, Moses was in the school of life for 40 years, waiting the moment in time (after another 40 years) when God would have him lead Israel from Egypt to Canaan.

C. Both John the Baptist and Jesus Christ began their respective ministries when they were 30-years-old.

1. Jesus experienced the preparatory period of childhood where He was subject to His parents and grew physically and in wisdom, Luke 2:40, 51-52.
2. Our Lord began His ministry at the age of 30, evidencing the preparatory preface to His ministry expected of those in the flesh, Luke 3:23.
3. Likewise, John the Baptist, who was six months older than his cousin, Jesus, matured in body and spirit previous to the beginning of his ministry, Luke 1:24-27, 80.
4. John began his ministry at the age of 30, evidencing the preparatory preface to his ministry expected to those in the flesh.

II. Notice some Bible characters whose lives of service prepared them for even greater service later in their lives.

A. The prophet Samuel was a Bible character who served God from a very young age throughout the balance of his life.

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1. From childhood, Samuel served his fellow man and God faithfully, 1 Samuel 2:26.
 2. Samuel was one through whom God revived new revelation to mankind, and Samuel became a great prophet, 1 Samuel 3:1-20.
 3. Samuel became also a Jewish priest, 1 Samuel 13:8-13.
 4. In addition, Samuel became one of the greatest and the last judge of Israel, 1 Samuel 7:15.
 5. Every aspect of Samuel's life was preparatory for the next stage of godly service.
- B. Josiah is an example of a Bible character whose service to God increased with time.
1. Josiah became king of Judah when he was 8-years-old, 2 Kings 22:1.
 2. When Josiah was 16-years-old, he especially turned his attention to God's Word, 2 Chronicles 34:3.
 3. At age 20, Josiah began to rid the Jewish tribes of idolatry, even beyond the tribes over which he was king, 2 Chronicles 34:3-7.
 4. At the age of 26, Josiah repaired the Temple and restored Jewish worship, 2 Chronicles 34:8-35:19.
 5. Successively, godly service in Josiah's life led him to even greater service to God later in life.
- C. The first century evangelist Timothy was a Bible character whose godly service began while he was young and continued.
1. In Timothy's case, his grandmother and his mother taught him early about God and His Word, 2 Timothy 1:5; 3:15.
 2. Timothy became a young evangelist, 1 Timothy 4:12.
 3. Timothy was one on whom the apostle Paul could rely for faithfulness and Christian service, Philippians 2:19-20.
 4. Earlier Christian service paved the way for Timothy's expanded and future Christian service.

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Conclusion:

1. Life is a school whereby God's children prepare themselves day by day for even greater service later in life.
2. Several Bible characters illustrate that life is preparatory for godly service presently, as well as ongoing godly service.
3. How have you and how will you have lived your life on earth?
 - a. Are you a young person who has become a Christian and is now serving God?
 - b. Have you been serving God tirelessly and faithfully for decades?
 - c. If an older person, how have you spent your 60 or 75 years or so?

Invitation:

1. It is never too late to come to Jesus Christ and become His servant, Matthew 20:5-6.
2. A life of service, irrespective of one's age, begins with becoming a Christian, Acts 2:38; 11:26.
3. Only by remaining or becoming again a faithful Christian can one be an effective servant of our Lord, 2 Timothy 4:7-8; Revelation 2:10; 1 John 1:9.

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Thirty Years Old

2 Samuel 5:3-5

Thesis: To notice occasions of godly service associated in the Bible with one being thirty years old, and to encourage people of a similar age today to be active in Christian service.

Introduction:

1. It is interesting to notice the various ages at which God's servants throughout the Bible were active in godly service.
2. The child of God ought to be active in serving God at every milestone in his earthly pilgrimage, i.e. at every age.
3. Notice some of what the Bible reveals about God's servants who were 30-years-old.

Body:

I. First, anciently people had varying responsibilities and opportunities based on how young or old they were at any given time.

A. Among the Jews, children passed from childhood to early adulthood around age 13.

1. Age 13 was a milestone in maturity for a Jewish boy.

The Jewish boy was recognized as entering manhood at thirteen years of age... By New Testament times a boy of thirteen became a "son of the law." ...Only after age thirteen did the child qualify to become one of the ten men who could constitute a synagogue. (Gowers)

2. Twelve, 13 and 18 to 20 years old were steps toward maturity for both Jewish boys and girls anciently.
3. "The Jewish rabbis set the minimum age for marriage at twelve years for the girl, and thirteen years for the boy. A boy should certainly be wed by the time he was eighteen to twenty" (Jackson 80).

B. Jewish elders were older men who were responsible collectively for making decisions for the well being of their respective communities.

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1. Jewish elders were heads of families, Deuteronomy 32:7.
 2. The word elder means senior, mature or older.
...an older man of experience. Men under 40 years old are never called elderly. ...Calling anyone under 30 years of age and “elder” is a clear violation of what the word elder means! (Rudd)
 3. “While no specific age is given, this term emphasizes the character of the elder and implies maturity, dignity, experience, and honor” (“Elder (Christianity)”).
 4. The concept of the Jewish elder or older and mature man was transported to the New Testament as well regarding its qualified leaders, Titus 1:5-11.
- C. God used various Bible characters of all ages in His service.
1. Noah was 500 years old when God assigned him the Ark Project (escape pod for a world gone awry and subject to divine destruction), Genesis 5:32; 6-8.
 2. Moses was 80-years-old when God sent him on a mission as a savior of the Israelites and as a lawgiver, Acts 7:22-37.
 3. According to the Jewish historian, Josephus, Samuel (1 Samuel 3) was 12-years-old when he began to prophesy (*Antiquities* vol. 5 10:4).

II. Second, notice some of what the Bible reveals about God’s servants who were 30-years-old.

- A. Joseph was 30-years-old when he first stood before the Egyptian pharaoh, Genesis 41:46.
1. Joseph was 17-years-old when his envious brothers sold him into slavery, Genesis 37:2.
 2. Joseph first served as steward in Potiphar’s house, but he was imprisoned because of a false accusation by Potiphar’s wife, Genesis 39.
 3. Joseph spent 13 years in slavery and imprisonment before he stood before Pharaoh.
 4. Despite the likely discouragement during his slavery and

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imprisonment, Joseph rose to the occasion of godly service after it all, Genesis 45:1-5.

- B. Under Judaism, Levites were expected to serve in various capacities in the Tabernacle from age 30 through age 50, Numbers 4:3, 23, 30, 35, 39, 43, 47.
 - 1. Later under Judaism, the Levites served in the Temple from 30 years old through 50 years old, 1 Chronicles 23:3.
 - 2. We, too, can serve God for decades in the prime of our lives.
- C. King David was 30-years-old when he began to reign over Judah, 2 Samuel 5:4.
 - 1. David served as king for 40 years.
 - 2. At one time in his life, David was in the eyes of God a man after His own heart, 1 Samuel 13:14; Acts 13:22.
 - 3. We can serve God in such a way as to imitate being men and women after God's own heart.
- D. Jesus Christ began His earthly ministry at the age of 30-years-old, Luke 3:23.
 - 1. The ministry of Jesus Christ lasted only about three years.
 - 2. However, no one ever accomplished anything that affected more people in this world and in eternity than did Jesus Christ, John 3:17.
 - 3. While we cannot out do our Lord, we can serve God well for a few years or for many years.

Conclusion:

- 1. Given enough time and reasonable health, each of us will experience all of the years characteristic of the human lifespan, Psalm 90:10.
- 2. At whatever age we may be and at every age we attain, we need to be the best possible servants of God that we can be, John 9:4; Ecclesiastes 9:10.

Invitation:

- 1. The journey of lifelong Christian service begins when one becomes a Christian.

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2. One becomes a Christian through appealing to the Word of God exclusively for religious instruction (especially the New Testament), Romans 10:17; believing that Jesus Christ is the Son of God, John 8:24; turning from one's sins, Luke 13:3; acknowledging before others one's confidence that Jesus Christ is the Son of God, Romans 10:9-10; and being immersed in water for the remission of sins (imitating the death, burial and resurrection of Jesus Christ), Romans 6:3-5.
3. Are you still on the journey of Christian service, or do you need to turn from sins once more and pray for forgiveness, Acts 8:22; 1 John 1:9?

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Christian Service

Spiritual Immaturity

Hebrews 5:11-14

Thesis: To encourage Christians to grow spiritually in the service of God.

Song: “None of Self and All of Thee,” “True Hearted, Whole Hearted”

Introduction:

1. The apostle Paul used a familiar illustration to teach an important spiritual lesson.
 - a. God’s prophets throughout the ages often used illustrations with which people were familiar when teaching and preaching.
 - b. Jesus Christ Himself resorted frequently to parables.
2. The reference to spiritual immaturity in Hebrews 5:11-14 was directed to Jewish Christians of the first century.
 - a. The spiritual immaturity addressed in the general epistle of Hebrews did not represent an isolated but a general problem in the first century church.
 - b. The church at Corinth exhibited spiritual immaturity as well, 1 Corinthians 3:1.
 - c. The general epistle of 1 Peter also addressed the problem of spiritual immaturity in the church of the first century, 1 Peter 2:2.
3. There is every reason, then, to expect a degree of spiritual immaturity in the Lord’s church in each generation.
 - a. We should not be surprised to find spiritual immaturity in our own generation, too.
 - b. Hence, biblical information addressed to the first century church regarding its spiritual immaturity can help us today overcome spiritual immaturity in the Lord’s church.

Body:

- I. **Spiritual immaturity interferes with comprehension of the Word of God, Hebrews 5:11.**
 - A. The words “of whom” refer to Jesus Christ from the preced-

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ing verses.

1. One cannot properly understand Jesus Christ Who we are supposed to serve if we are spiritually immature.
 2. Neither can we adequately understand the doctrine or teachings attributable to Jesus Christ if we are spiritually immature.
- B. The difficulty in comprehension was not attributable to some failing upon the part of inspired, first century teachers, but the fault was with spiritually immature Christians.

II. The complaint in this context pertained not to new babes in Christ but to longtime members of the Lord's church who had not grown spiritually, Hebrews 5:12.

- A. While it is not sinful to be spiritually immature (as new Christians), it is sinful to remain spiritually immature.
- B. The spiritually immature are dependent on someone reminding them repeatedly of the first principles of the Gospel of Christ.
1. One could say that these immature Christians were “ever learning and never coming to the knowledge of the truth,” 2 Timothy 3:7.
 2. Rather, we are supposed to “grow in grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ,” 2 Peter 3:18.
- C. The writers of Hebrews, 1 Corinthians and 2 Peter did not relegate first principles to irrelevance and the unimportance.
- D. Obviously, spiritual maturity does not occur simply because of the passing of time.
1. Time had passed, according to the writer of Hebrews, and spiritual maturity had not developed among those addressed therein.
 2. Had those addressed by Hebrews 5:11-14 diligently studied God's Word, they could have taught new Christians the first principles of the Gospel, 2 Timothy 2:2.
- E. The words “are become” suggest that Christians who do not consciously endeavor to grow spiritually actually retrogress to earlier spiritual immaturity.

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1. First century Jews began abandoning Christianity and returning to Judaism.
 2. Today, Christians often turn their backs on Christianity by turning back to the ungodly world from which they were rescued by the Gospel.
- F. Hebrew Christians were guilty of not progressing beyond the alphabet of Christianity!

III. The spiritually immature are obviously babes in Christ and recognizably so to everyone often except the babes in Christ themselves, Hebrews 5:13.

- A. The proper use of the milk of the Word of God is to grow babes in Christ into healthy, mature Christians, 1 Peter 2:2.
1. Every Christian has the responsibility to study the Word of God, 1 Timothy 2:15.
 2. Every child of God must assume his rightful place in the work of the Lord's church; *there are no non-participating memberships available in the church.*
 3. No perpetual babe in Christ is approved of God.
- B. As in the home, in the church, babies are liabilities.
1. Babies in one's family consume resources without giving back materially to the family, Matthew 24:19.
 2. Babes in Christ consume time and resources without contributing to the stability and the growth of the Lord's church.

IV. Only the spiritually mature can discern effectively between good and evil, Hebrews 5:14.

- A. The "strong meat" represents the weightier matters of doctrine, whereas "milk" represents basic principles.
- B. The words "full age" represent spiritual maturity.
- C. The "spiritual exercise" of Hebrews 5:14 is more important than physical exercise for the body.
- D. Hebrews 5:14 teaches that *the spiritually immature cannot distinguish adequately between good and evil.*
1. Therefore, new Christians need to be taught the Word of God — the milk of the Word followed by the meat of the Word.

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2. Spiritual immaturity underlies virtually all the problems affecting local congregations.
3. Only a spiritually mature church can prosper for the Lord and prevent apostasy.
4. Evidently, right and wrong is not always as easily discernible as black and white.

Conclusion:

1. Elders, preachers and teachers must be about the business of teaching both first principles and meatier matters in the Word of God.
2. Every child of God must feast on the Word of God to become spiritually mature so that he may discern truth from error.
3. Every Christian must do his or her part to grow from a babe in Christ to become a mature Christian so the work of the church can go forward.

Invitation:

1. Anyone who has not been baptized into Jesus Christ for the remission of his sins is not a babe in Christ yet.
2. However, through the new birth (baptism), one can become a babe in Christ, John 3:5.
3. Erring Christians need to repent, pray and remain faithful, Acts 8:22; 1 Corinthians 15:58.

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The Perfect Church

1 Thessalonians 1:8

Thesis: To ponder the exemplary, faithful service of some of God's first century servants and compare our service to theirs.

Song: "The Church Is One Foundation"

Introduction:

1. Sometimes young preachers are overheard saying they are in search of the perfect church with which to labor.
 - a. Older preachers know better; perfection is not a human characteristic, and so, the collection of souls into a congregation will make a less than perfect congregation.
 - b. A wise, old preacher once said, "There is no perfect congregation, and if there were a perfect congregation, it would be imperfect once you arrived!"
 - c. Hence, *there is no point looking for a perfect congregation.*
2. There are, though, servants whose admirable service is commendable and is recorded by inspiration.
 - a. A congregation of such persons would appear to be composed of perfect servants.
 - b. We might think a congregation like that is perfect.
 - c. What if this congregation and every congregation were comprised of outstanding servants who are recorded in the New Testament?

Body:

- I. **What if every member were like Peter and John as they stood before the Sanhedrin, Acts 4-5?**
 - A. When commanded not to preach Jesus, they refused, Acts 4:19-20.
 - B. When beaten and threatened, they continued to preach the Gospel, Acts 5:40-42.

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II. What if every member were like Stephen as he stood before the Sanhedrin and subsequent mob?

- A. Stephen boldly proclaimed the Gospel to its severest critics, Acts 6-7.
- B. Stephen condemned sin without respect to persons.
- C. Stephen did not waver even in the face of death.

III. What if every member were like the apostle Paul who suffered greatly to preach the Gospel of Christ, Acts 13-28; 2 Corinthians 11:23-28; Philippians 3:4-11?

- A. Paul preached the same Gospel to kings, Gentiles, Jews, infidels, elders, Christians and fellow apostles — without respect to persons.
- B. He condemned sin wherever he found it and demanded repentance.

IV. What if every member were like Ananias, Acts 9, 22?

- A. Ananias was afraid to serve, but he was willing to do the bidding of the Lord anyway, Acts 9:10-19.
- B. Ananias was devout and of good report, Acts 22:12.

V. What if every member were like Dorcas?

- A. Dorcas was a benevolent Christian woman who provided coats and garments for the needy, Acts 9:36-39.
- B. She was full of good works and almsdeeds, Acts 9:36.

VI. What if every member were like the Bereans, Acts 17:11?

- A. The Bereans received the Word of God with all readiness of mind.
- B. They also searched the Scriptures daily to confirm what they were being taught.

VII. What if every member were like Peter in Galatians 2:11-14 and Simon in Acts 8?

- A. When Peter sinned and his sin was brought to his attention, he repented.
- B. Likewise, Simon repented of his sin when he became aware of it.

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VIII. What if every member were like the Thessalonians, 1 Thessalonians 1:8?

- A. The congregation in Thessalonica was dedicated and zealous, which after it had obeyed the Gospel, members of that church broadcast the Gospel message to others, too.
- B. They did not suppose that the proclamation of the Gospel was solely the preacher's responsibility.
- C. That first century congregation went out of its way to sow the seed of the kingdom outside its own city in two Roman provinces, Luke 8:11.

Conclusion:

1. Biblical examples of faithful servants in the New Testament could be multiplied.
2. Indeed, it would be wonderful if more Christians today were like these Bible characters we examined today.
3. The Bible, though, also lists unprofitable servants in the early church, to include: Ananias and Sapphira, the man who had his father's wife, Demas, Diotrephes and others.

Invitation:

1. Do you contribute to the success or to the failure of the church here? There is no middle ground, Matthew 12:30!
2. Erring Christians certainly contribute to imperfection in the church, 1 John 1:9.
3. Unbaptized believers are not assets to the local church and need to be baptized for the remission of their sins, Acts 2:38.

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Prepare to Meet Thy God

Amos 4:12

Thesis: To encourage brethren to continue diligently serving God.

Song: “Prepare to Meet Thy God”

Introduction:

1. Meet Amos.
 - a. He was a native of Tekoa in Judah, about six miles south of Bethlehem, Amos 1:1.
 - b. Amos was a herdsman and dresser of sycamore trees, not a prophet of God, Amos 7:14.
 - c. He was called by God in about 765 B.C. to be a prophet to the northern kingdom of Israel, Amos 7:15.
 - d. Amos prophesied the death of King Jeroboam II as well as the destruction and captivity of the northern kingdom of Israel, Amos 5:27; 7:10-11.
 - e. The evil prophet Amaziah commanded Amos to stop prophesying and return to Judah, Amos 7:12-13.
 - f. Amos responded by delivering a prophecy of God against Amaziah, his family and the nation of Israel, Amos 7:16-17.
2. Amos was bidden by God to deliver several prophecies.
 - a. Amos delivered prophecies of doom and catastrophe in a time of prosperity, which especially made his prophecies unwelcome, Amos 8.
 - b. His prophecies were against many nations: Syria, 1:3-5; the Philistines, 1:6-8; Phoenicia, 1:9-10; Edom, 1:11-12; Ammon, 1:13-15; Moab, 2:1-3; Judah, 2:4-5 and Israel, 2:6-8.
 - c. These kingdoms were to suffer the punishment of God as surely as God had destroyed the Amorites whose land God had given to the Israelites, Amos 2:9-10.
3. Amos especially prophesied regarding the northern kingdom of Israel.
 - a. Amos enumerated the multiple sins of Israel throughout the

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Book of Amos.

- b. He also graphically announced forthcoming punishments of God that Israel would suffer.
 - c. The prophecies, in advance of their fulfillment, were warnings from God, which if Israel had heeded, it would have been spared from the appointed doom, Amos 5:4.
4. However, God's patience toward the impenitent is not without end.
- a. A time comes when *impenitent souls must prepare to meet an angry God*, Amos 4:12.
 - b. Today, God is also longsuffering, but a time will come when we, too, must meet God, 2 Peter 3:9-12.
 - c. Time will end and Jesus will come again at a time of which no man is aware, Mark 13:32-33; Matthew 24:36-51; 25:13.

Body:

I. Israel was in need of much preparation to meet God.

- A. Israel had corrupted holy men.
 - 1. Nazarites were given wine to drink and prophets were forbidden to prophesy, Amos 2:12; 7:12.
 - 2. Judah likewise forbade its prophets from presenting the Word of God, Isaiah 30:8-11.
 - 3. In the New Testament, we read that the Sanhedrin tried to silence the apostles, Acts 4:18-20.
 - 4. Today, God's people must not discourage Gospel preachers from preaching the whole counsel of God, and Gospel preachers must not allow the Word of God to be silenced, 2 Timothy 4:2; Acts 20:27.
- B. Ungodly people learn how not to know to do right.
 - 1. Israel had unlearned righteousness in spite of God's willingness to provide ample instruction, Amos 3:10.
 - 2. Applied to Judah, but applicable to ancient Israel, Jeremiah 4:22 cited man's knowledge to do evil but lack of knowledge to do good things.
 - 3. Sometimes, even God's people know to do good and do

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not act accordingly, James 4:17.

4. Sometimes, people refuse to keep a knowledge of God and His Word in their minds and pursue all manner of sins, Romans 1:28-32.
- C. Israel polluted worship to God.
1. Even God-appointed worship was refused by God since Israel also practiced idolatry, Amos 5:21-27.
 2. Likewise, Judah's worship was despised by God because true worship was mingled with idolatry, Jeremiah 14:10-16.
 3. The remnant of the Jews that returned from Babylonian captivity cheapened their worship with defective animal sacrifices, which indicated they did not worship God with a proper attitude; God rejected this type of worship, Malachi 1:6-14.
 4. Jesus Christ also warned about vain worship, Matthew 15:9.
- D. Israel oppressed the poor.
1. Israel's mistreatment of the powerless poor precipitated God's announcement of judgment against the northern kingdom, Amos 2:6-7.
 2. The rich cheated the poor in the marketplace to become richer and live luxuriously, Amos 4:1; 5:11-12; 8:4-6.
 3. Throughout the Book of Amos and elsewhere in the Bible, God expressed His great disdain for everyone who oppresses the poor, Proverbs 17:5; 30:14.
- E. Israel had departed from the Word of God.
1. God brought all manner of calamity upon Israel in its departure, but the northern kingdom would not return to God, Amos 4:7-11.
 2. Israel no longer practiced righteousness, Amos 5:7.
 3. Israel hated good men and anyone who attempted to correct them, Amos 5:10.
 4. The apostle Paul warned that Christians would also depart from the Word of God and desire falsehood, 2 Timothy 4:3-4.

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- F. Israel had become apathetic.
 - 1. Both Judah and Israel set themselves at ease or became arrogant and careless as the children of God, Amos 6:1.
 - 2. Likewise, the first century church at Laodicea had become indifferent and self-contented, Revelation 3:15-16.
- G. Israel was guilty of fornication.
 - 1. The most repulsive kinds of sexual sins became commonplace in Israel, Amos 2:7.
 - 2. Christians in first century Corinth, perhaps imagining themselves to be open-minded, also approved of the most repulsive type of fornication, 1 Corinthians 5:1-2.
- H. Israel adopted dishonest business practices.
 - 1. The prophets Amos and Micah documented the dishonest business dealings of Israel, Amos 8:5-6; Micah 6:10-11.
 - 2. Judaism strictly forbade dishonest weights and measurements in the market, Leviticus 19:35-36.
- I. Despite all the nation's sins, God was willing to save the penitent.
 - 1. God promised His grace to sinful men and promised that they would live, if they would seek Him, Amos 5:4, 6, 14-15.
 - 2. Likewise, Jesus promised that mankind could find God by seeking Him, Matthew 7:7-8.
 - 3. The writer of Hebrews also noted that God responds favorably only to those who truly seek Him, Hebrews 11:6.
 - 4. Both testaments record God calling upon mankind to repent, Acts 17:30.

II. God determined to punish impenitent Israel.

- A. Amos foretold that Israel would be defenseless before God, Amos 2:14-16.
 - 1. Men of valor would flee as cowards.
 - 2. All strength in Israel would become weakness.
- B. Amos announced that an invading army would destroy Israel, Amos 3:11; 6:14.
 - 1. God had determined to defeat Israel, due to its sins, by

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- granting victory to another nation.
2. The entire land of Israel would be overrun, and Israel's palaces would be destroyed.
- C. God withheld rain to ruin their crops and sent pestilences against wicked Israel, Amos 4:7-10.
- D. Central to the punishment of wicked Israel was captivity in Assyria, Amos 5:5, 27; 6:7; 7:17.
- E. God sent locusts to eat the crops, Amos 7:1-3.
- F. Then, God sent fire to evaporate the water in the land, Amos 7:4-6.
- G. God promised a great slaughter wherein the land would be littered with dead bodies and no one would be able to escape God's wrath, Amos 8:3; 9:1-3.
- H. Amos prophesied that the sun would go down at noon in Israel, Amos 8:9.
1. This was a figurative reference to the utter destruction of Israel's economy and sovereignty.
 2. The departing of the sun from one or from a nation illustrates the departure of God's favor, Jeremiah 15:9; Micah 3:6.
 3. Similar references occur in the Bible regarding other nations, Babylon, Isaiah 13:1, 4, 10.
 4. Similar references occur regarding the ending of Judaism, at which time the church began, Joel 2:23-3:2; Acts 2:16-21.
 5. Similar references occur respecting the destruction of Jerusalem, Matthew 24:29.
- I. God determined to bring a famine of the Word of God on Israel, Amos 8:11-12.
1. Israel repeatedly had refused the Word of God through His prophets.
 2. God determined that He would not send Israel any more instruction but certain punishment instead.
 3. At times, God has determined to conceal His truth from those who would misuse it, Matthew 11:25.
- J. All the punishments of God upon Israel would cause much

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mourning, many lamentations and a flood of tears, Amos 8:10; 9:5.

Conclusion:

1. Israel, because of its sins, was no better than other kingdoms that God destroyed, and consequently God destroyed the northern kingdom of Israel, too, Amos 6:2; 9:7.
 - a. Sinning Jews were no better than sinning Gentiles, Romans 1-3.
 - b. Today, sinning Christians are no better than other sinners, Romans 6:23.
2. God gave up on impenitent Israel.
 - a. God determined that Israel would have no more opportunities to return to Him, and He used a basket of spoiled fruit and a builder giving up on his construction project to illustrate His decision, Amos 7:8; 8:2.
 - b. God will reject us, too, if we reject Him, John 12:48; Matthew 10:33.
3. God will be exalted as Sovereign — one way or another!
 - a. He prefers our willing submission with adoration, Matthew 22:37-38.
 - b. However, God will humble the disobedient, Romans 14:11.
4. All of the warnings in the Book of Amos ought to be warnings to each of us as well.
 - a. The Old Testament contains valuable information suitable for our learning, Romans 15:4.
 - b. Examples of righteousness and especially of wickedness are lessons from which we can learn, 1 Corinthians 10:6, 11.

Invitation:

1. Self-examination is always in order to assure ourselves that we are pleasing to our God, 2 Corinthians 13:5.
2. Unbaptized believers and erring Christians alike must obey God to be saved, Acts 6:7.

Redemption

God's Redemptive Plan

God's Part

Love (John 3:16)
Grace (Ephesians 2:8)
Mercy (Titus 3:5)
Gospel (Romans 1:16)

Christ's Part

The Blood of Christ (Revelation 1:5)
Our Mediator (1 Timothy 2:5)

Holy Spirit's Part

Revelation — the Bible or the Gospel (2 Peter 1:20-21)

Man's Part

Bible Faith (John 8:24)
Repentance (Acts 17:30)
Confessing Christ (Romans 10:9-10)
Baptism (1 Peter 3:21)
Obedience (Hebrews 5:8, 9)
Purity (Revelation 22:14)
Faithfulness (Revelation 2:10)
Love (1 John 2:10)
Hope (Romans 8:24)
Works (James 2:24)
Endurance (Matthew 10:22)
Being Born Again (John 3:3-5)
Laying Aside Evil (James 1:21)
Preaching (1 Corinthians 1:18, 21)
Calling on the Name of the Lord (Romans 10:14)
Knowledge of the Scriptures (2 Timothy 3:15)

